

MEDICINE AND DIVINATION

The Han universe was filled with different kinds of correspondences. The correspondences between the three realms of the Cosmos, the Earth, and Human society were a major feature of writings that advocated matching human society to the patterns of the Way (see Chapter 4). The three realms were all seen to be subject to the same natural cycles, and, as a result, understanding these cycles provided insight into the workings of everything in the universe.

Among the natural cycles was the alternation between the yielding and hard principles of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, corresponding to shade and sunlight, feminine and masculine, and moon and sun, respectively. The binary pair of *yin* and *yang* fills the three realms and alternates with the four seasons. Another key cycle is the five phases (*wuxing* 五行), which usually succeeded one another in one of several fixed rotations: wood (*mu* 木), fire (*huo* 火), earth (*tu* 土), metal (*jin* 金), and water (*shui* 水). The phases corresponded to other sets of fives, including the five organs in the body (*wuzang* 五臟: liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys) and the five tastes (*wuwe* 五味: sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, and salty), and they were even applied to historical periods. The calendar provides other sets of cycles, including the sexagenary cycles of sixty terms that were used as a relative scale for dates and years alongside more absolute scales like dynastic reign periods and unique historical events. The sixty terms were each made of a stem (*gan* 干) and a branch (*zhi* 支). The stems went through their own cycle every ten days or years, whereas the twelve branches did so every twelve days or years, with the association of each branch with an animal becoming the basis of a popular horoscope system.

Taken together, the material cycles of alternating *yin* and *yang* and the revolving five phases connected up to the temporal cycle of the seasons and the two cogs of ten stems and twelve branches inside the larger wheel of the sexagenary cycle, resembled nothing more than a giant clockwork. A clockwork might be a good metaphor for

Han cosmology, were it not for the fact that a clockwork only begins to tell the story of the how the world was thought to work. For whereas Chinese medicine and divination utilized the universe of correspondences to construct a wide variety of technical disciplines, the foundation on which they were built included a pantheon of the celestial spirits, assumed the exceptionality of the sage kings, and relied on etiologies of illness featuring demons.

An early example of the mixture of natural-cycles theory and the belief in powerful forces normalized into these cycles—in this case, demons and spirits—is the late-Warring States *Chu Silk Manuscript* (Chu boshu 楚帛書), excavated in Hunan Province in 1942. The manuscript contains twelve fantastic hybrid spirits arrayed in a square around two blocks of text. The spirits are those of the twelve months, and notes next to them list days and months that are auspicious or inauspicious for certain activities. The blocks of text are rhymed accounts of the origins of the calendar, emphasizing the importance of sacrifice to secure the protection of Heaven and its agents, the spirits. On one level, this manuscript continues the classical attitude to the spirits already seen in the pre-Han period (see 7.2 “Discriminating Things”). On another level, it foreshadows the way that the spirits would become integrated into the orderly cycles of early imperial correspondence schemes. Marc Kalinowski has written that the *Chu Silk Manuscript* “outlines a mode of management of the relations between humans, nature, and the gods based on cultic practices and calendrical observations,”¹ and his description could easily be applied to some of the major technical disciplines in the Han, too.

The readings in this chapter show how medical texts made connections between particular organs, tastes, seasons, and days and, more generally, how many different kinds of texts argued that events

1. “Technical Traditions in Ancient China and *Shushu* Culture in Chinese Religion,” in *Religion and Chinese Society*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004), 233. For a translation of this manuscript by Li Ling and Constance A. Cook, see *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. Constance Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 171–76.

in human society and in the Cosmos corresponded with each other through natural cycles. Discoveries in tombs excavated over the past few decades have shown the popularity of technical disciplines.² The chapter will focus on two major technical disciplines, divination and medicine, which are introduced below. Judging from the number of works in diverse areas in the catalogue of the Han imperial library, however, these were just a few of the many disciplines of this nature.³ An example of these diverse arts, from a handbook of meteorological portents discovered in the Han, is the first selection.

The distinction in English between reading omens and divination is the absence or presence of a divinity, respectively. Given the complexity of the world of demons and spirits in Han China, the question of what qualifies as a “divinity” is not an easy one to answer. Perhaps this is why the most famous “divination system” of early China really does not depend in any way on a divinity. Yet the presence of responses (*ying* 應) in nature, and images (*xiang* 象) with which the Cosmos responds to human events, indicates that the reading of omens was very important in the early empire. In addition to the celestial response to a world-unifying general translated in this chapter, we have seen omen theory in numerous other selections in this book. Phenomena that make use of the idea of cosmic “responses” include Lu Jia’s 陸賈 (fl. 210–157 B.C.E.) explanation that the Cosmos “reformed [living creatures] through disasters and sudden changes, and explained things to them using signs of auspiciousness” (4.1 “The Basis of the Way”); the unicorn, phoenix, Yellow River chart, and Luo River writings that may or may not signal the rise of a sage king (Chapter 5); and Xiang Kai’s 襄楷 (fl. 165–184 C.E.) memorial to the throne that states eclipses and

2. An excellent overview, based on excavated Han materials and their precursors, is Donald Harper’s “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward Shaughnessy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 813–84.

3. An overview based on that catalogue is Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Han Cosmology and Mantic Practices,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 53–73.

other celestial phenomena are evidence of the ruler's misconduct (6.3 "Memorial to Emperor Huan"). At least by the late-first century B.C.E., being able to interpret omens was a boon to an official career, and major figures such as Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 B.C.E.; see 7.2 "Discriminating Things") were very concerned with such arts. Besides this interest in omens that grew alongside correspondence theory, other systems survived that are often, but not always accurately, labeled as early Chinese divination.

The earliest written records in China are divination records, statements inscribed on cattle scapulae and tortoise plastrons that were heated until they cracked, with the cracks being read as communications from the ancestors. Although versions of this kind of divination were used throughout the Warring States period and into the early empire, systems using basic symbolic elements over time eclipsed them in popularity. The sixty-four hexagrams (*gua* 卦) of the *Classic of Changes* are part of a Zhou dynasty divination method that determined the natural potential of the moment of divination by casting milfoil stalks and numerically manipulating the result to determine the lines of a hexagram or hexagrams.⁴ The six lines are either solid (*yang*) or broken (*yin*), and the symbolic system of the *Classic of Changes* was considered complete in the sense that it corresponded to all possible kinds of change that might exist at any given moment. The practices of divining with shells and stalks continued in the Han, but perhaps even more profound was the impact of the *Classic of Changes* as a symbolic system on the culture as a whole.⁵ An important example of a Han philosophical/cosmological essay based on that notion is the *Appended Phrases* (Xici 繫辭) commentary.⁶

4. According to the classical application of that method, the potential at the moment is governed by the tension between the base hexagram and another where the "nine" or "six" lines (i.e., *lao* 老 [old] lines) are read as "eight" or "seven" lines (i.e., *shao* 少 [young] lines), respectively. Thus the outcome of a divination is not simply the hexagram, but rather the hexagram in flux.

5. A survey of the state of these methods in the Han is Michael Loewe's "Divination by Shells, Bones, and Stalks during the Han Period," *T'oung Pao* 74 (1988): 81–118.

6. Several heretofore lost texts related to the *Classic of Changes* were found at the Mawangdui site along with a Han version of the *Appended Phrases*, and

On the popular level, divination was more concerned with hemerology, the art of divining auspicious days for different activities using almanacs (*rishu* 日書), also called hemerology. As Donald Harper has written, in the late Warring States, people “still sought guidance in turtle and milfoil divination, but hemerology routinized decision making in ways that older forms of divination had not.”⁷ The division between the world of elite Confucian officials and poor hemerologists is at the heart of the third reading in this chapter.

As practiced today, Traditional Chinese Medicine uses elaborate maps of circulatory routes for the body’s pneumas, which are the basis of the methods of acupuncture and moxibustion. Pneumas circulate like blood and lymph but travel through a unique set of conduits: channels (*jing* 經), collaterals (*luo* 絡), and vessels (*mai* 脈). So, for example, the Hand Great Yin (*Taiyin* 太陰) channel associated with the lungs originates at the *zhongfu* 中府 point in the chest, ends at the *shaoshang* 少商 point near the thumbnail, and contains eleven points along the way. Each channel is associated with illnesses in certain parts of the body, and problems with its circulation are indicated by certain symptoms. In the case of the channel just mentioned, these indications include lung-related complaints like cough or asthma.⁸ The fourth reading below shows that already in the Han, major elements of this model were in place, embedded in a robust natural-cycles theory.

Both medicine and divination techniques exploit the correspondence schemes that became ubiquitous in the Han.⁹ The Han understanding of the universe implied that by mastering principles of

all have been translated by Edward L. Shaughnessy in *I Ching: The Classic of Changes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1996).

7. Harper, “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought,” 832.

8. This description is based on the Chinese Ministry of Public Health’s summary in Liu Yanchi, *The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

9. Some have called this “correlative thinking,” and indeed correlations are a particular way of talking about correspondences (see Introduction, note 3, for some insightful treatments of this issue). Here, I use the term “correspondence” to avoid the implication that drawing such connections was necessarily based on empirical observation.

change and alternation one could enhance any technique that already existed, whether it deals with pneumas, demons and spirits, or virtues and social hierarchies. It illustrates the later Warring States and early imperial periods' faith in the efficacy of "natural procedures" (*tianshu* 天數).



The first of the four selections below is a single reading from an augury, an omen based on events in nature. We have seen the importance of the unicorn augury for one tradition of classical scholars (see 5.2 "The Hereditary House of Kongzi" and 5.3 "Asking Questions about Kongzi"). Han "Cosmic patterns" (*tianwen* 天文, the modern word for astronomy) texts were concerned with the stars and with omenological readings of astronomical and meteorological phenomena. This reading is concerned with a particular kind of cloud called the "Dipper Cloud," which portends the rise of a great general. The general, interestingly, has a birthmark on his left thigh, the same place where the founder of the Han dynasty had one. The reason that such a portent arises is that phenomena in the realms of the Cosmos and human society, linked by the medium of pneumas, correspond with one another.

Turning to divination, the third of the four readings highlights a social dimension of that technical art. An anecdote from the *Records of the Historian* (Shiji 史記) portrays an encounter between Confucian officials and a hemerologist. The underlying tension between elite and popular divination practices is explained by Li Ling 李零:

Although the [*Classic of Changes*] has been read as a freestanding text by both ancient and modern researchers into the principles of change, as a divination text that people consult, it has always been connected to the casting of stalks. Separate it from the casting of stalks, and it loses its divinatory significance. However, texts for selecting auspicious days and calendrical prohibitions arrange the days to engage in or abstain from each kind of activity, so that from the moment the text is laid out the auspicious and inauspicious are immediately visible and there

is no need to rely on the cosmic board. As a result, a person can master it without special training.¹⁰

Differences in divination methods may, as the reading implies, be strongly connected to social class.

The second and fourth readings are applications of the five phases to political and medical contexts, respectively. One interesting aspect of these two works is the similarity of their explanations of the five phases. Both relate each phase to a season, although the way they do so is different. In the case of the second reading, from the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露), the four seasons are aligned with the five phases by making one phase exempt because of its grave importance. The fourth reading instead adds a fifth season, that of “long summer” (*changxia* 長夏), the sixth month of the traditional agricultural calendar. Turning back to the “wheels within wheels” analogy for Han correspondence theory above, it is clear that sometimes making everything come out evenly was a difficult task. But these works illustrate the degree to which the five phases were used to explain things as different as hierarchies in Confucian ethics and why particular tastes could cure particular illnesses.

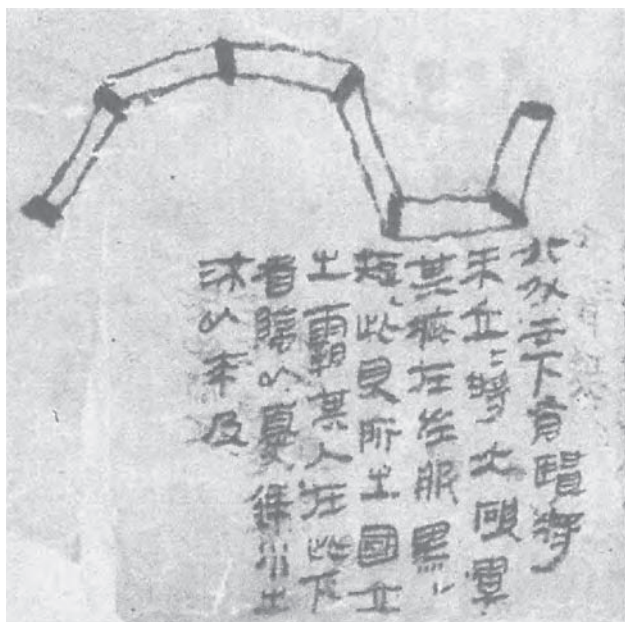
10.1 “Dipper Cloud” (Beidou yun 北斗雲), in the *Miscellaneous Readings of Cosmic Patterns and Pneuma Images* (Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文氣象雜占) excavated at Mawangdui 馬王堆, c. 168 B.C.E.

The Miscellaneous Readings of Cosmic Patterns and Pneuma Images (Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文氣象雜占) is a chart that was excavated at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in the 1970s. Prior to its discovery, the tomb had been closed since 168 B.C.E. The chart provides a number of divinations related to the appearances of

10. Li Ling 李零, *Zhongguo fangshu kao* 中國方術考, rev. ed. (Beijing: Renmin Zhongguo, 2000), 43. A cosmic board (*shi* 式) is used to align different sets of natural cycles in technical fields like geomancy (now called *fengshui* 風水); see Harper, “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought,” 831–43.

natural phenomena influenced by *pneumas* such as clouds, comets, and haloes around stars.

The following selection is only one of dozens of illustrations on the chart, each of which is accompanied by a short interpretation. Sometimes there are multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon, attributed to different diviners. The importance of the spirit of the Dipper as a celestial ruler (as in two of the Chapter 9 talismans) is echoed here, where the descent of a cloud shaped like, or perhaps lightly covering, the constellation is taken as a sign of a great leader. Particularly interesting is the birthmark on the leader's left thigh, in light of the Records of the Historian's account that Emperor Gao 高 was born with a face like a dragon's and 左股有七十二黑子 "seventy-two black moles on his left thigh."¹¹ This indicates either that both texts are alluding the same earlier prophecy, or that the augury chart is alluding to Emperor Gao.



11. *Shiji* 8.342. The location of distinctive markings (*ci* 疵) was an important part of divinatory correspondence systems. For example, in the Qin dynasty

北斗云下有賢將
 未立_二 將大破軍
 其疵在左股 黑
 短 此見所之國立
 之霸其人 在此下
 者陰 以憂逆水之
 流以來及

If a Dipper Cloud¹² descends, there is a worthy general who has not yet been established. Once established, he will wreak great destruction on [enemy] armies. He will have birthmarks on his left thigh; they will be black and irregular.

The states where [the cloud] is visible will establish [the general] as hegemon over their people. Those in the shadow under [the cloud] will, because of their anxiety over opposing the flow of the river, come to meet [the general].

10.2 Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 198–c. 104 B.C.E.), “The Meaning of the Five Phases” (Wuxing zhi yi 五行之義), Chapter 42 of the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露), c. 104 B.C.E.

This essay is attributed to Dong Zhongshu (see 1.1 “An In-Depth Investigation into Names”), but it was probably actually written in

hemerological texts found at Shuihudi 睡虎地, we find a set of physical descriptions of thieves associated with the twelve branches of the sexagenary cycle. Like the popular horoscopes, the set makes use of correspondences between branches and animals, so the thief associated with the branch *wu* 午 has the characteristics of a deer, including a 長頸小脰 “long neck and narrow shins” and a 疵在肩 “distinctive marking on the shoulder.” Similarly, the birthmarks on the emperor’s thigh may have had the effect of the pattern of the scales of a dragon. See “Rishu, Jia” 日書甲, *Shuihudi Qinmu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1990), 219.

12. Whereas there is much speculation about what a “Dipper Cloud” might be, worship of the Dipper was part of the sacrificial ceremonies carried out by Han Emperor Wu. In fact, a passage in the *Records of the Historian* that mentions such a ceremony in 113 B.C.E. contains the words “Dipper Cloud,” even though the word for cloud has always been read by translators as a final

the first century B.C.E. The application of the “five phases” scheme to ethics and politics is clearly documented as early as the third century B.C.E., so it is not impossible that Dong wrote it.¹³ Some of the internal clues indicate that this essay might have been written at the time of Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.E.) or Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 C.E.).¹⁴

“The Meaning of the Five Phases” has two different goals: to argue for earth as the supreme phase, and to argue for the behavior of the five phases as a model for the behavior in the human realm. The former goal is consistent with the late-second- and first-century B.C.E. identification of the Han with the earth phase (prior to 104 B.C.E. it aligned itself with water, and after 26 C.E., with fire). The latter goal justifies filial piety and loyalty as “natural” and uses the sequence of the five phases to justify hierarchies among officials. Like Lu Jia’s 陸賈 (d. 178 B.C.E.) derivation of the Human Way from Nature’s Way (see 4.1 “The Basis of the Way”), this essay “naturalizes” older elements of Confucian ethics.

Nature has five phases. The first is called “wood,” the second “fire,” the third “earth,” the fourth “metal,” and the fifth “water.” Wood is the beginning of the five phases, water is the end, and earth is the

particle (as punctuation). The passage describes sacrifices to Great Unity (*Taiyi* 太一) and the Five Emperors (*wudi* 五帝), and then to sundry spirits: 其下四方地 為餽食神從者及北斗云 “Below these [platforms], on the ground in all four directions they laid out offerings to fete their spirit followers and the Dipper [Cloud?].” See *Shiji* 12.469 (compare a possibly similar use of *yun* 云 in 12.477 and 12.479), *Hanshu* 25a.1230, and David W. Pankenier’s translation of Chapter 12 of the *Records of the Historian* in William H. Nienhauser Jr., *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 219–55.

13. Two examples are the excavated Warring States period “Five Kinds of Action” (Wuxing 五行) and the “Echoing [Things of] the Same [Kind]” (Yingtong 應同) chapter of the 239 B.C.E. *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋.

14. A long-standing objection to the authenticity of the chapters of the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* that treat the topic of the five phases is that the standard histories fail to corroborate Dong Zhongshu’s use of the five phases in omen interpretation. Sarah A. Queen’s analysis of

center. This is their naturally arranged sequence. Wood produces fire, fire produces earth, earth produces metal, metal produces water, and water produces wood. This is their “parent-child relationship.” Wood resides on the left, metal on the right, fire in front, water in back, and earth in the center. This is the sequence of their “parent-child relationship,” according to which they sustain one another and so they are distributed in this way. This is the reason that wood sustains water, fire sustains wood, metal sustains earth, and water sustains metal.

What bestows anything is always the “parent,” what accepts it is always the “child.” Constantly relying on the parent to direct the child is the Way of Nature. This is the reason that once wood is born, fire nourishes it. Once metal dies, water collects it. Fire takes pleasure in wood and so nourishes it with *yang*; water defeats metal and so attends to its funeral with *yin*; and earth serves fire with the utmost loyalty. Therefore, the five phases are actually the actions of the filial child and the loyal minister.¹⁵

those chapters concludes that “they were likely written by a later exegete of the *Documents*,” referring specifically to readings like those of the Lius that drew on the “Great Plan” (Hongfan 洪範) chapter of the *Classic of Documents*. See *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, according to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101–4, 217–25. That the five phases are listed here in their “natural growth from their predecessor” (*xiangsheng* 相生) order, which Michael Loewe says was championed by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, supports this thesis. See Michael Loewe, “Water, Earth, and Fire,” in *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 55–60. Whether this was written by Dong in the second century B.C.E. or by the Lius in the first century B.C.E. or early first century C.E., it is likely a Han document, and so is included here.

15. In this sentence, “phases” and “action” are the same word in Chinese. Whereas *xing* 行 is conventionally translated as “phase” in the context of “five phases,” as a noun in this sentence it means “conduct” or “action.” Indeed, the term “five phases” was also applied to the Confucian virtues and so might be translated as “five kinds of action.” In the Han, the latter sense of “five phases” was changed to “five virtues” (*wude* 五德, also sometimes translated as “five powers”), which is the sense in which the phrase “virtue of earth” (*tude* 土德) is used later in the essay to refer to loyalty.

Is what people routinely called the “five phases” the same as the “five kinds of action”? This is exactly the reason that they got that name.

The sages understood this. Therefore, they [established the imperatives that parents should] intensify their caring and diminish their strictness, and [children should] generously nourish them in life and attentively attend to their funerals after death as “natural regulations.” If as a child one’s approach to one’s elders is to nourish them like fire taking pleasure in wood, if one attends to one’s parent’s funeral like water’s defeating metal, and if one serves the ruler like earth reveres Nature, then one may be called “a person of action.”

The five phases move each according to its place in the sequence. The five phases take office, each giving play to its own abilities. Therefore, wood has its place in the east, and authority over spring pneumas. Fire has its place in the south, and authority over summer pneumas. Metal has its place in the west, and authority over autumn pneumas. Water has its place in the north, and authority over winter pneumas. This is the reason that wood rules life, metal rules death, fire rules heat, and water rules cold. Human beings have no choice but to go by their sequence, and officials have no choice but to go by their abilities. For such are “Nature’s procedures.”

Earth has its place in the center and is called “Nature’s moistening.” Earth is Nature’s “right arm,”¹⁶ and its virtue is verdant and beautiful. It cannot be assigned a name restricting it to the events of a single season. Therefore, among the five phases and four seasons, it is earth that is universal. Metal, wood, water, and fire each have their own duties, but if they did not depend on earth they could not establish their direction, just as sour, salty, spicy, and bitter would not be able to become tastes if they did not rely on sweet. Sweet is the basis for the five tastes, just as earth is the ruler of the five phases.

16. *Gugong* 股肱 literally means “thigh and upper arm” but here connotes a vital assistant. Here, the term translated as “Nature” can also be translated as “the Cosmos” when it is contrasted to “the Earth.” In this passage the terms “earth phase” and “Nature” are the same words in Chinese as the pairing “the Earth and the Cosmos.”

That the five phases are ruled by earth pneumas is like the five tastes' having the sweet: without it they could not come about. This is the reason that none of the sage's actions are as valuable as loyalty, and [loyalty] is called the "virtue of earth."

For the greatest offices in the human realm, the duties are not named. The [office of] chancellor is an example of this. For the greatest offices in the realm of the Cosmos, what they produce is not named.¹⁷ Earth is an example of this.

10.3 Sima Qian, from "Traditions Surrounding the Diviners of Auspicious Days" (Rizhe liezhuan 日者列傳), Chapter 127 of the *Records of the Historian* (Shiji 史記)

The Records of the Historian has been introduced (see, e.g., 5.2 "The Hereditary House of Kongzi"), but many scholars have speculated that the chapter selected here is actually a later work. The chapter centers on a visit by Song Zhong 宋忠 and Jia Yi 賈誼 (see, e.g., 1.2 "Protecting and Tutoring") to a market, where they encounter a diviner who delivers an astonishing polemic on divination and the Way.

With the exaggerated tone of a person telling a hard-luck story, Sima Jizhu 司馬季主 (literally, "Sima who controls the seasons") delivers a defense of his occupation as a diviner. The account itself reads more like it was written by the kind of scholar to whom Sima is lecturing, albeit one with a fondness for the

17. Earlier, the essay said that "earth produces metal," yet here the text says "what it produces is not named." This seeming contradiction may be explained as follows. Since the second statement follows the discussion of the earth phase as being on a higher level than the other phases, like a chancellor wielding authority over lower-level officials, its lack of production must refer to the earth phase's lack of its own "season." That is the sense in which the effects that the earth phase produces in the phenomenal world cannot be named. This lack of effect may be contrasted with wood, which has authority over spring pneumas, and so presumably has a specific "duty" that can be named: fostering the growth of seedlings.

Laozi 老子. *This selection, which begins with Kongzi and ends with Laozi, talks about the social importance of the diviner, and argues that the diviner actually has the characteristics of a good Confucian.*

“A transmitter and not a maker” is the role of the Gentleman.¹⁸ Now, a diviner must model on the Cosmos and the Earth and be the image of the four seasons. Conforming to benevolence and righteousness, [the diviner] divides the stalks and fixes on a hexagram, turns the cosmograph, and arrives at the right foundation. Only then will he speak of what is beneficial or harmful in the Cosmos and on the Earth, or of the success or failure of different matters.

In the past, when King Wen 文 of Zhou settled the state and its families, he had to first use shells and stalks to choose the right date, and only then did he dare replace [the Xia]. Only after arriving at the time and day did he return to his family, and when [his consort was] pregnant he had to first do a reading of what was auspicious and inauspicious, and after that [his consort] had the child. After Fu Xi 伏羲 created the eight trigrams, King Wen of the Zhou developed them into 384 line statements [*yao* 爻] and the world came to be well-governed.¹⁹ King Goujian 句踐 of Yue imitated King Wen [with his use of the] eight trigrams and so was able to destroy his enemies and become a hegemon over the world. Talking about it in this light, what negatives does divination by shells and stalks have?

Moreover, the diviner by stalks and shells first sweeps clear the place where he will sit, straightens out his hat and sash, and only then will do business. This shows he is ritually proper. Once [the diviner] speaks, it is with his words that the demons and spirits may accept [offerings], [with his words] that the loyal ministers serve their ruler, [with his words] that the filial children provide for their parents, and [with his words] that the kind parent raises his child. This shows he has virtue.

18. An allusion to *Analects* 7.1.

19. Each of the sixty-four hexagrams has six such statements, which the diviner consulted for every line that was an “old” line (see note 4).

Yet by spending several tens of cash, [with the diviner's words] the sick may recover, and the dead may even come to life! [With his words,] disasters may be averted, and ventures brought to successful completion! [With his words,] one's married daughters and daughters-in-law may raise and give birth [to children]! If this is why he is called virtuous, how could it only be worth several tens of cash?

About this, the *Laozi* 老子 would say, "The highest virtue is without virtue, which is the means by which one has it."²⁰ Today, the diviner by stalks and shells benefits others greatly but receives almost nothing in return. In what way are the *Laozi*'s words any different?

10.4 From "A Discussion of How Pneumas of the Five Organs Model on the Seasons" (Zangqi fa shi lun 藏氣法時論), Chapter 22 of the *Basic Questions of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic* (Huangdi neijing taisu 黃帝內經太素), second or third century C.E.

Among the Han medical texts listed in the bibliographical chapter of the History of the Han (Hanshu 漢書) are the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic (Huangdi neijing 黃帝內經) and the Yellow Emperor's Outer Classic (Huangdi waijing 黃帝外經). Scholars generally believe that the Basic Questions of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic (Huangdi neijing taisu 黃帝內經太素) is not one of those two texts but that its content likely overlaps with that of those two lost works. Paul Unschuld's recent study of the text follows Donald Keegan in concluding that the language and ideas in the text date to between 400 B.C.E. and 260 C.E.²¹

20. *Laozi*, Chapter 38.

21. See Paul U. Unschuld, *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3; and Nathan Sivin, "On the Dates of Yang Shang-shan and the Huang-ti Nei Ching T'ai Su," *Chinese Science* 15 (1998): 29–36.

This chapter contains a dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and his adviser Qi Bo 岐伯, a narrative structure that was likely added to lend authority to the contents of the text. The subject matter is an introduction to the organs of the body. Each organ has two circulatory channels, and “rules” a season and two days out of every ten. If there is a problem with the circulation of pneumas connected with that organ, it may be counteracted by eating something that rebalances it. So, for example, the heart may cause sluggishness. Since the heart is associated with the fire phase, ingesting something sour (associated with wood) will be a counterbalance because wood promotes fire. The following selection is only the first part of the chapter. The conversation continues to cover diseases associated with each organ, correlating treatment outcomes to particular seasons, days, and times of the day.

The Yellow Emperor said: “In the method of adapting the human form so that it models on the four seasons and five phases, I would like to understand the principles of how one knows if one is following or resisting them, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so?”

Qi Bo said: “The five phases are metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. They alternate being valuable or valueless, and this is the means by which one knows about dying or surviving, and one decides upon success or failure. One may stabilize the pneumas of the five organs, the timing of the severe and mild, and the period of dying or surviving.”

The Yellow Emperor said: “I would like to hear the complete story.”

Qi Bo said: “The liver rules spring. The Foot Fainting Yin [Jueyin 厥陰] and Minor Yang [Shaoyang 少陽] [channels] rule its treatment. Its days are those [in the sexagenary cycle] beginning with *jia* 甲 and *yi* 乙. The liver afflicts one with rapidity, and so one should quickly ingest something sweet to slow things down.

“The heart rules summer. The Hand Minor Yin [Shaoyin 少陰] and Great Yang [Taiyang 太陽] [channels] rule its treatment. Its days are those [in the sexagenary cycle] beginning with *bing* 丙 and

ding 丁. The heart afflicts one with sluggishness, and so one should quickly ingest something sour to affect [the heart].

“The spleen rules long summer. The Foot Great Yin [*Taiyin* 太陰] and Yang Bright [*Yangming* 陽明] [channels] rule its treatment. Its days are those [in the sexagenary cycle] beginning with *wu* 戊 and *ji* 己. The spleen afflicts one with warmth, and so one should quickly ingest something bitter to heat things up.

“The lungs rule autumn. The Hand Great Yin [*Taiyin* 太陰] and Yang Bright [*Yangming* 陽明] [channels] rule its treatment. Their days are those [in the sexagenary cycle] beginning with *geng* 庚 and *xin* 辛. The lungs afflict one with pneumas that rise and block, and so one should quickly ingest something bitter to clear things out.

“The kidneys rule winter. The Foot Minor Yin [*Shaoyin* 少陰] and Great Yang [*Taiyang* 太陽] [channels] rule its treatment. Their days are those [in the sexagenary cycle] beginning with *ren* 壬 and *gui* 癸. The kidneys afflict one with heat, and so one should quickly ingest something spicy to moisten things, opening the textures and interstices [of skin and muscle], bringing out body fluids and circulating pneumas.”

GLOSSARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

affective dispositions, *qing* 情. Those aspects of personality that are not part of general human nature. Other accepted translations are “emotions” and “dispositions.”

benevolence, *ren* 仁. The virtue of treating others with compassion, based on sympathetic recognition of their common humanity. Other accepted translations are “humaneness” and “co-humanity.”

Classical Studies scholars or Classicists, *Ru* 儒. Experts in Zhou period ritual and music, and the Five Classics associated with Kongzi. The usual translation is “Confucians.”

Confucian. An English word applied to the early community and teachings of Kongzi, to Classical Studies scholars, to the Five Classics, and to many aspects of Chinese government and history (see Introduction).

Cosmos, *Tian* 天. Whereas it sometimes means an anthropomorphized higher power, the term also refers to the sky in daytime or nighttime, and by extension to the Cosmic order. In this work, *Tian* is sometimes translated as “Heaven” or “Nature.”

Daoist. An English word applied to the early texts *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, as well as the institutionalized religious traditions that grew out of the Celestial Masters movement. Since both the texts and the movements value the term *Dao* (meaning “Way”), “Daoist” is often used to refer to one or both (see Introduction).

demon, *gui* 鬼. A postmortem continuation of a person that is devoid of key aspects of personality and cognition, a dearth sometimes seen to result from not receiving ancestral sacrifice. The most common translation of this term is “ghost.”

essential pneuma, *jingqi* 精氣. A type of pneuma that is most centrally associated with human life, thought, and reproduction. Whereas “essence” (*jing* 精) may refer to a bodily substance, the compound “essential pneuma” is sometimes used in the more general sense of life force.

filial piety, *xiao* 孝. The virtue of both respecting and taking care of one's parents, and sometimes the complex of duties that bind parent and child.

Five Emperors, *Wudi* 五帝. Five of the earliest exemplary rulers of China: Huangdi 黃帝, Zhuan Xu 顓頊, Di Ku 帝嚳, Yao 堯, and Shun 舜.

five phases, *wuxing* 五行. Five states of matter: metal, water, earth, wood, and fire. When seen as producing or as conquering one another in series, they form one of the basic natural cycles behind Han correspondence theory. An outdated translation of this term is "Five Elements."

forms and names, *xingming* 刑名. The strategy of matching duties of officials exactly to the descriptions of the offices.

Great Peace, *Taiping* 太平. A future utopian age that is well governed.

Great Unity, *Taiyi* 太一. A deity associated with an asterism, with the creation of the universe, and with visualization meditation in the early imperial period.

Heaven, *Tian* 天. Originally the name of a Zhou sacred deity replacing the ancestral deity of the Zhou's predecessors; the term gradually was naturalized into a general ordering principle in the world. In this work, *Tian* is sometimes translated as "Cosmos" or "Nature."

HuangLao 黃老. The techniques of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, which focus on nonaction and attaining immortality.

human nature, *xing* 性. The sum of qualities innate to all humans that do not show individual variation.

image, *xiang* 象. A sign or symbol that may be exhibited in the Cosmos in response to an event in the human realm.

Kingly Way, *Wang Dao* 王道. The normative model of rulership transmitted from the sage kings to Kongzi.

law, *fa* 法. An ideal model or standard. Also, more specifically, laws and statutes.

Legalist. An English word applied to a number of texts associated with the position that the uniform rule of law is the most important requirement for a successful state (see Introduction).

masters of methods, *fangshi* 方士. Practitioners who claimed to have extreme longevity and to have ability in matters of spirit transcendence.

mysterious virtue, *xuande* 玄德. An interior quality that lends special insight. It is mentioned in the *Laozi*.

natural procedures, *tianshu* 天數. The cyclical alternation of the seasons, or other aspects of change in the natural world that may be modeled by the human world.

Nature, *Tian* 天. The naturalized “Heaven,” and the ordering principles in the world. In this work, *Tian* is sometimes translated as “Cosmos” or “Heaven.”

Nature’s Way, *Tian Dao* 天道. The principles of the nonhuman order, especially the motions of the night sky.

nonaction, *wuwei* 無為. A strategy of not taking purposive action, but instead following one’s nature. See Chapter 3.

numinous, *ling* 靈. Pertaining to the sacred power of spirits. May also connote the animate spirits of features of natural world.

pneuma, *qi* 氣. The theoretical substance that underlies all matter, but also specifically the life-giving fluid that invisibly courses through the human body or shines from the sun and stars.

preserving the one, *shouyi* 守一. A practice, usually involving concentration and visualization meditation, through which one protects one’s body.

quiescence, *qingjing* 清靜. A practice involving the reduction of desires and achievement of a level of understanding that permits nonaction.

response, *ying* 應. An event in the celestial or earthly realms that results from an event in the human realm, or vice versa.

righteousness, *yi* 義. The virtue of carrying out a duty unselfishly. Another accepted translation is “duty.”

ritual propriety, *li* 禮. The virtue of acting in accordance with the ritual order.

sanction of Heaven, *Tianming* 天命. In the Zhou period, the endorsement of a virtuous ruler by Heaven, which allowed that ruler to rule China. Elsewhere translated as Heaven's Mandate.

sexagenary cycle, *ganzhi* 干支. The sixty-term cycle, made up of combinations of ten “stems” and twelve “branches,” used to keep track of days and years.

spirit, *shen* 神. Both a faculty of the living person related to intelligence and consciousness and a class of otherworldly entities, primarily postmortem souls who were either virtuous in life or whose intact body is being provided sacrifices by descendants.

talisman, *fu* 符. An object that binds a social inferior to the order of a superior, whether in a military (emperor/general) or a religious (celestial spirit/demon) context.

techniques, *shu* 術. The arts and methods by which one is able to attain a desired end, based on manipulating either natural cycles or otherworldly beings.

Three Brightnesses, *Sanguang* 三光. The sun, the moon, and either the stars or the Five Planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

virtue, *de* 德. The sacred power that derives from ethical or magical exceptionality.

Way, *Dao* 道. Both the normative path for one's life and a metaphysical principle of order in the universe. See Chapter 4.

yin 陰 and ***yang*** 陽. The feminine and masculine duality (e.g., moon and sun, dark and light) that pervades the phenomenal world. When they are seen as alternating, this is one of the basic natural-cycles theories behind Han correspondence theory.