

- the lowlands. See Rival (2002) for a review of these arguments. See also Wolf (1961).
12. Of proto-Arawak and proto-Tupí stock, according to Clement (person. comm. August 2005). Proto-Arawak groups then moved north and west, and continued to perfect the domestication of sweet manioc and peach palm. Proto-Tupí groups moved east and south, specialising in the domestication and improved diversification of bitter manioc.
 13. Mithen (2006: S48) usefully reminds us that '[H]uman genetic diversity is highly constrained, with significantly greater differences between chimpanzees separated by a few kilometres in Africa than between humans living at the opposite ends of the earth and engaged in quite different lifestyles.'
 14. Similarly, changing alimentary markers are used to signify the choice of new political and economic alliances, particularly inter-ethnic trade. For the Matsigenka who have controlled an important long distance trade route for several centuries, to consume salt is to be human. Salt has also become an important ethnic marker among Ecuador's lowland Quichua and Shuar speakers. And when the missionarised Huaorani speak of 'civilising' uncontacted Huaorani groups such as the Tagaeri, they always mention that these wild Indians must now eat proper food like sugar and rice. Traditionally, the Huaorani identified as eaters of boiled monkey meat. Old Huaorani still refuse to eat salt, or meat other than monkey and forest bird.
 15. See *The Belem Declaration on Isolated Indigenous Peoples* signed on 11 November 2005, and the creation of the International Alliance for the Protection of Isolated Indigenous Peoples.
 16. '[T]he economy of any society always defines an important aspect of human relationships with the environment. Beliefs and values regarding the natural world and humanity's place within it provide powerful motivations both with regard to economic practices and other types of human actions' (Winthrop 2001: 205).
 17. Or, rather, it was, at least until the advent of Mendelian science.
 18. 'All human "others" can only be "others" to the extent that they are the same in a very important way. But the search for that sameness involves us in a whole range of theoretical wrangles that most of us prefer to avoid. The result has been a single-minded emphasis on "difference" as the factor defining our field' (Piña-Cabral 2005: 126).

Chapter 4

THE BIOLOGICAL IN THE CULTURAL: THE FIVE AGENTS AND THE BODY ECOLOGIC IN CHINESE MEDICINE

Elisabeth Hsu

The three bodies and the body ecologic

The first article in the first issue of *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987) outlines theoretical angles whence medical anthropologists are exhorted to approach the anthropology of the body. The authors explicitly say that they wish to prevent researchers from taking the common approach to the body that is grounded in Cartesian mind-body dualism. The 'three bodies' they outline are not topical bodies (as conceptualised by other authors who spoke of five, six or seven bodies). Rather, the understanding of each of the 'three bodies' arises from a different theoretical approach towards the study of the body. Thus, an investigation informed by phenomenology explores the 'individual body', a study informed by structuralist analysis of symbolic representations describes the 'social body', and a post-structuralist / postmodern Foucaultian approach assesses the 'body politic'. To be sure, the boundaries between the three bodies are fluid, and the social body and body politic, in particular, show overlappings. The triad is, then, to be understood as a holistically integrated fan of perspectives.¹

This article presents a fourth theoretical approach towards the body, the 'genealogical approach', which further extends the holistic image. This genealogical approach consists of uncovering layers of

past meanings contained in currently used body concepts which allude to ecological experiences. A study informed by the genealogical approach describes what I propose to call the 'body ecologic'.² In many medicines, humans are considered co-substantial with the natural environment, and accordingly, as is argued here, many key terms, such as hot and cold or wind and fire, convey culture-specific knowledge about experiences of ecological processes. How exactly such knowledge about ecological realities is contained in contemporary medical terminology is not a straightforward matter; however, it certainly would be futile to assess it by means of ethno-scientific tables only. Nor would a cognitive scientific approach that seeks for intrinsic qualities in the superiority of, for instance, dry over wet prove fertile to explain the esteem that the quality *jangala* (dry) enjoys over *anupa* (wet) in Ayurveda. Rather, inspired by Zimmermann's (1987) historical approach to cultural geographies, I advocate a genealogical method for investigating contemporary body concepts that ultimately are derived from ecological experiences. I argue that 'ecological realities' contained within contemporary medical terminology have become worked into elaborate learned languages (so-called 'symbolic systems') in the course of complex historical processes. It is the task of anthropologists and historians alike to unravel these complex histories.³

In recent years, several thinkers (three of whom are mentioned below) have emphasized that the past is contained in the present, that history is made into nature, and that accordingly, anthropology is a form of engaging in historical research. Rather than essentialising culture and culturalising contemporary social practices, anthropologists have increasingly become interested in the contiguous social and political histories of the localities that have produced these cultural practices.

How exactly an anthropologist accounts for the diachronic dimension contained in contemporary practice and usage of current indigenous terminologies depends on the particular problems investigated. This study, which concerns medical reasoning in terms of the five agents (*wuxing*) – wood, fire, earth, metal and water – in contemporary Chinese medicine (for details, see Table 4.1, p. 101), is inspired by Brian Morris's (1990) idea of engaging in a 'historical sociology', Michel Foucault's (e.g. [1971] 1991) 'archaeologies' and 'genealogies' of knowledge and Reinhart Koselleck's (e.g. 2002) 'conceptual history' (*Begriffsgeschichte*). Morris, Foucault, and Koselleck all emphasize that people's usage of concepts has distinctive histories, and that certain aspects of the history of how a concept was used is important for understanding its current meanings. Although people may use the same linguistic term in different time periods, nuances and shadings of meanings of any such term are bound

to change over time. Both Foucault and Koselleck are interested in explaining the present by unearthing meanings of previous time periods that currently tend to be overlooked. It is not only situational circumstance that imbues these terms with meaning but importantly also the (unknown) histories of how people used them in the past.

Regardless of whether or not a human propensity for creating systems of correlative thinking can be demonstrated by neurobiology (Farmer et al 2000), this body-ecological account aims to find answers in the history of the culture-specific ways in which common ecological, climatic and seasonal realities were initially understood and later systematised. In other words, it attempts to account for the biological in the cultural through a historically sensitive study.

A note on methodology

Brian Morris (1990) would not regard himself as a specialist in Chinese medicine, but when confronted with its contemporary technical terminology, he advocated that anthropologists engage in 'historical sociology' to elucidate the meanings of currently used Chinese medical terms. 'Historical sociology' is a project that explains the meaning of currently used terminology in the light of its sociology in a previous historical time period. For instance, it has variously been pointed out that in the Han dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) the concepts of the Han administration like sovereign, minister, general and the like described the functions of the heart, lungs, liver and other viscera (*Suwen* 8). Of anthropological concern here is that medical contents of this kind continue to be taught in the People's Republic of China (PRC) as basic knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). It would be futile to explain the contemporary usage of these terms in a structuralist manner by alluding to the administrative institutions of the PRC. Contemporary physicians invoke Han times, the period of the formation of what Porkert (1974) called the 'medicine of systematic correspondences'.

The leap back to the Han has produced many master narratives, and in his article on the 'historical sociology' of Chinese medical terms, Morris replicated some. The historical sociological approach has to be valued for making the anthropologist aware of diachronic dimensions in contemporary terminology. However, the historical sociological approach insufficiently accounts for the fact that meanings have been modified continuously for two thousand years, and that they have a history that predates the period of the master narratives. These histories, with their many complications, interest the anthropologist who investigates the 'body ecologic' because they are relevant for current understandings of the terminology in question.

In this context, Foucault's idea of 'genealogy' becomes important. In contra-distinction to 'master narratives' that often assume a linear progression and a continuous development from a point of 'origin' to contemporary practice, Foucault emphasized that genealogies uncover unknown histories of how people use concepts. Foucault saw sharp discontinuities in the history of knowledge, (a stance he apparently had adopted from Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem and Louis Althusser), and he did so in contrast to the *Annales* school that postulated slow transitions and long-term continuities (Hacking 1986: 29–30). His concept of history, in accordance with Nietzsche's, was not one of a linear trajectory controlled by 'destiny' or 'regulative mechanisms'. Rather, it resulted from responses to 'haphazard conflicts' (Foucault 1991: 88). The histories that emerge from the genealogical approach are opposed to the history that sets out to discover the 'origin' of a tradition and 'roots' of current identity. Accordingly, a genealogy of contemporary Chinese medical terminology does not jump back into the Han dynasty for elucidating contemporary meanings. Rather, it sifts through 'a vast accumulation of source material' (ibid: 77) to uncover unknown events relevant to its current understanding.⁴

In addition to the Foucaultian inspiration, the body ecological exploration presented here will build on methodological considerations that allow for a distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic events. Foucault's 'discursive practices' do not differentiate between non-linguistic and linguistic events, for 'discourse' comprises both. Moreover, Foucault does not give much methodological guidance on how to engage in genealogies of linguistic terms. However, if one considers the 'five agents' a linguistic term, one can differentiate between linguistic and non-linguistic events, and make use of the methodological considerations Reinhart Koselleck outlines in his 'conceptual history'.

In his work on the conceptual history of mainly political terms ('crisis', 'democracy', but also 'marriage', 'emancipation', etc.), Koselleck (e.g. 2002) thought extensively about the interrelation between language and non-linguistic events in history. His conceptual history is not a history just of ideas, precisely because it takes seriously social institutions and social practices, i.e. non-linguistic events in their relation to the spoken/written word. His understanding of history contrasts two 'temporal structures', namely the 'repeatability of linguistic phenomena' versus the 'uniqueness of the sequence of events' (1989: 656). He posits that semantic structures change at a slower rate than historical events and that, due to their greater durability, linguistic terms can re-appear in different time periods, seemingly static, when people then invest them with new meanings (ibid: 657). He emphasizes that concepts have a 'diachronic thrust'

that cannot be fully controlled by the speakers, and that they therefore have an 'internal temporal structure' distinct from that of events, 'events that they [the concepts] help bring about and that they are supposed to comprehend' (ibid: 659). A conceptual historical account of the term 'five agents' would thus uncover implicit meanings of the currently used term's internal temporal structure.⁵

In summary, I have sketched out three very different possibilities of how to account for the 'diachronic thrust' in contemporary medical terminology, namely Brian Morris's 'historical sociology', Michel Foucault's 'genealogical approach' and Reinhart Koselleck's 'conceptual history'. The following account, partly inspired by conceptual historical considerations, outlines a genealogy, in Foucault's sense, of one aspect of the body ecologic in Chinese medicine, namely reasoning in terms of the five agents.

The five agents in Chinese medicine

Reasoning in terms of the 'five agents' (*wuxing*) is generally considered an aspect of a natural philosophical system of 'correlative thinking'.⁶ It puts different domains of experience more or less systematically in correlation with each other. It divides the universe into five great rubrics – of wood, fire, earth, metal, water – which each are co-substantive with many different aspects/entities of the universe that stand in correlation with each other. It is a cosmological scheme that has attracted the interest of many Western scholars.⁷ In Chinese medicine, reasoning in terms of the five agents often explains change, for instance, devices of treatment are formulated in terms of specific interrelations between the five agents.⁸ One may therefore wonder why yet another article should be devoted to this theme. The argument put forth here is that reasoning in terms of the five agents, with several layers of historically grown meaning aspects, ultimately represents a culture-specific variation on a common ecological theme, namely the seasonality of illness.⁹

The genealogical study in what follows begins with an exploration of contemporary medical practice and corroborates the well-known viewpoint that medical reasoning in terms of the five agents has been accorded the status of a *scientific theory* only as recently as in the communist-socialist interpretation of Chinese medicine, i.e. in TCM, since the late 1950s. As one sifts through textual material of the medical archive, it becomes obvious that reasoning in terms of the five agents had already an important *epistemological* significance in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), namely as a 'heuristic device' for enhancing one's knowledge by correlating hidden processes with

externally observed ones. However, if one goes back a millennium, from the Ming dynasty to the Tang dynasty (618–907), it appears that reasoning in terms of the five agents in the Tang dynasty was not primarily valued as a heuristic device or a scientific principle, but rather as an idiom that expressed a *moral concern* of a status-conscious elite aiming to live a 'life style' endowed with prestige. Working backwards from there five hundred years to the Eastern Han dynasty (AD 25–220), one finds that reasoning in terms of the 'five agents' satisfied the Han preoccupation in governmental regulation through the *politics of prognostication*. This genealogical study will show that it was by means of collapsing temporal and spatial concerns that Han physicians were able to refashion already given ecological and medical knowledge in the language of prognostication. By doing so, these Han physicians for the first time in medical history reasoned in terms of the five agents. However, contrary to the widespread assumption that it was reasoning in terms of the five agents that had them see a correlation between seasons and illnesses, this genealogical study will show that they elaborated, in fact, on an ecological theme that pre-Han physicians (before 206 BC) had already attended to, namely the seasonality of illness. To be sure, the seasonality of illness is a phenomenon cross-culturally known to many peoples, not only the ancient Chinese. Accordingly, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents in Chinese medicine is best viewed as a historically grown, culture-specific elaboration of a cross-cultural common ecological experience.

By providing evidence that in medicine ancient elite physicians' interests were ecological, this study provides an alternative to Joseph Needham's (1956: 243) master narrative that locates the first mentioning of the five agents in so-called 'proto-chemistry', in the chapter called 'Great Plan' (Hongfan) of the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu*).¹⁰ The 'Great Plan' passage has been extremely influential throughout Chinese history, and continues to be widely cited in Western scholarship (e.g. Unschuld 2003: 102, Lloyd 2004: 78), although it is now generally considered a late addition to the *Book of Documents* (Sivin 1987: 71) that has little to do with the concept of the five agents discussed here (Sivin 1995a: 16, n20).

It is likely that the pattern of reasoning in terms of the five agents arose in other contexts than medicine, probably that of the prognosticatory arts as practised at court during the Warring States (475–221 BC),¹¹ where 'ecology' may or may not have played as important a role as it did in medicine.¹² It is noteworthy that once reasoning in terms of the five agents was imported into medicine, by Han physicians, it took on a prominent role, particularly in the *Basic Questions* (*Suwen*), the first book of the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (*Huangdi neijing*), which to the present day has remained the

most revered scripture in Chinese medicine.¹³ It is conceivable that due to the (potentially empirical) validity of prognostications of seasonal illness occurrence, medical reasoning in terms of the five agents was very successful, and that therefore it was much elaborated in medicine. It is not inconceivable that, at a later stage, it may have been exported in its elaborate form from medicine into other fields of learned knowledge and practice.

The genealogical approach

Contemporary TCM education is the starting point for the genealogical exploration that follows, which, as one traces a genealogy, works from contemporary to ancient times. If TCM is innovative in that it considers correlative thinking in terms of the five agents a 'scientific theory', wherein lay the significance and purpose of reasoning in terms of the five agents in earlier time periods of Chinese medical history? The study investigates book structures, chapter structures, sentence structures and word structures in the Ming, Tang, Han and Warring States periods in order to uncover the layers of meaning of the texts that outline the core contents of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM. Each layer of meaning will be shown to reflect time-period-specific attitudes of physicians towards reasoning in terms of the five agents.

The five agents (*wuxing*) are presented as universal principles of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in the opening chapters of the two main introductory TCM textbooks called *Interpretation of the Inner Canon* (*Neijing jiangyi*; Cheng 1984) and *Fundamentals of TCM Theory* (*Zhongyi jichu lilun*; Yin 1984). The introductory textbook *Interpretation* reproduces the entire classical Chinese text of, first, *Suwen* chapter 5 and then, *Suwen* chapter 4 (in this sequence), under the heading 'The Theory of Yin Yang and the Five Agents' (*yinyang wuxing xueshuo*).¹⁴ The text of *Suwen* 5 and 4, found on pages 21 through to 42, forms the core of this genealogical study (that focuses on this one single text of TCM education). At the core of this text, on pages 26 through to 30, there are two sections, namely chapter sections *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, which present 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in a very systematic way.¹⁵ They constitute the core of the theory which students have to memorise.

Strangely, 'The Theory of Yin Yang and the Five Agents' is not discussed in combination with the contents presented in the following chapters of the introductory TCM textbooks, entitled either 'Organ Clusters' (*zangxiang*) or 'Five Organs' (*wuzang*). Although everyone would agree that the 'organ clusters' and 'five organs' are an aspect

of the 'five agents'. However, the introductory TCM textbooks discuss them in separate chapters. The 'five agents' are presented as universal principles of a theory on the workings of the universe, and the 'organ clusters'/'five organs' as comparatively materialist entities within a body-enveloped-by-skin.

In my previous research I found that the structure of knowledge presentation, i.e. the sequencing of chapter headings, in the introductory TCM textbooks is much the same as that given in the *Canon of Categories (Leijing)* of 1624 (Hsu 1999: chapter 6). There was continuity for three hundred years between the *Canon of Categories* and the TCM textbooks, but the *Canon of Categories* consisted of a radical re-ordering of all text passages in the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon (Huangdi neijing)*. The *Canon of Categories* discussed the text passages that form the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM, namely *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, under the heading of *zangxiang* (*Leijing* III and IV). In contrast to introductory TCM textbooks, which discuss *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 in separate chapters, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents constituted an integral part of the discussion of *zangxiang* in the *Canon of Categories*. The notion *zangxiang* in the *Canon of Categories* thus must have had slightly different meanings from *zangxiang* meaning 'organ clusters' and, for reasons given in more detail below, has been translated as referring to 'the hidden and apparent'. Correlative thinking in terms of the five agents, I argue, was useful to physicians who were interested in recognising how apparent phenomena in the universe resonated with hidden ones inside the body-enveloped-by-skin; the use of reasoning in terms of the five agents was that it was a 'heuristic device' for the enhancement of the scholar-physician's knowledge of the body ecologic.

As already stated, the *Canon of Categories* of 1624 consisted of a complete re-organisation of the contents of the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* and did away with the latter's subdivision into the two books *Suwen* and *Lingshu*. The *Suwen* had been edited by Wang Bing in 762 (and re-edited in 1067 under Li Lin), the *Lingshu* is of no further concern to us here. In Wang Bing's *Suwen* edition, the text passages in question, *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, appear among the five opening chapters *Suwen* 1–5, which are mainly concerned with principles of self-cultivation. In *Suwen* 1–5, as will be shown below, reasoning in terms of the five agents appears to have had the main purpose of providing a proscriptive exhortation to a moderate life style.

The sentences in the *Suwen*, as some have argued (e.g. Keegan 1988), are composed according to Han dynastic grammar. By investigating the structure of all the sentences mentioned in *Suwen* 5 and 4, yet another layer of meaning contained in contemporary 'Theory of the Five Agents' is uncovered: a careful analysis of the patterning of those

sentences shows that Han dynasty physicians used it particularly in those contexts of medical practice that concerned the seasonality of illness, i.e. in the contexts where they put seasons into correlation with the occurrence of specific illnesses. The numerology of five predominates in those sentences because the primarily spatial notion of the five 'directions' (north, south, east, west, and centre) represented the temporal notion of the 'seasons'. This was possible in Han dynastic medical cosmology because time and space were not conceived as different dimensions but as an intrinsically co-substantive continuum.

The genealogical method uncovers that the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents', as given in *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, interrelates the five directions (implicitly meant to refer to the five seasons) with ecological and pathological changes within the 'body ecologic', but not with nosological entities such as 'cough' or 'intermittent fevers'. The correlation between seasons and specific illnesses is given in other sentences of *Suwen* 5 and 4, but not in the core theoretical texts *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3. The genealogical method thereby demonstrates that physicians' observations that specific illnesses occur during certain seasons is fundamental for the emergence and historical development of 'The Theory of the Five Agents', but, paradoxically, no longer explicitly contained in its core texts.

An analysis of the structure of the words occurring within *Suwen* 5 and 4 highlights that reasoning concerned with the seasonality of illness pre-dated correlative thinking in terms of the five agents in medicine: sayings relating to the seasonality of illness alluded to a numerology of four rather than five. This suggests that the seasonality of illness was recognised by physicians before correlative reasoning in terms of the five agents became prominent in medicine.

Inspiration from the conceptual historical method can lead the genealogist only so far. The genealogy highlights many layers of meaning contained in 'The Theory of the Five Agents' today, but it cannot explain why correlative thinking in terms of the five agents became prominent within medical language during the Eastern Han dynasty. Based on social historical considerations, the article then postulates that reasoning in terms of the five agents was initially integrated into medicine in those contexts where physicians had already recognised regularities that could be used for formulating prognostications. It suggests that medical reasoning that adopted the language of the arts of divination and prognostication, which was cultivated among retainers at the courts of kings and nobles (Sivin 1995b), enhanced the prestige of physicians. Medical practice, which always tends to be relegated to a manual skill and denied scholarly status, thus may have gained the recognition of a courtly art among the elite of Han China by excelling in the application of the terminology

of the prognosticatory arts. The medical insights that lent themselves to the formulation of prognostications in terms of the five agents built on a pre-Han recognition of the seasonality of illness.

The genealogist furthermore observes that in this process of elaborating reasoning in terms of the five agents, medical practitioners became more sensitive to the subtleties of visceral changes. Accordingly, the importance of concepts that account for such subtle changes, like *qi* and *zang* (viscera/organs), which are central to the 'five agents theory' in TCM but not in sayings dating to the Han, must have been enhanced in those contexts of medical reasoning that were framed in terms of the five agents. Ironically, this happened at the expense of neglecting the concepts that initially had made possible the adoption of this pattern of reasoning into medicine, namely the seasons and the seasonally specific illness entities, and their correlations.

The genealogical exploration of the five agents as an aspect of the body ecologic in Chinese medicine that has been sketched out above will now be discussed in more detail, thereby uncovering layers of meaning inherent to 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in contemporary TCM.

A genealogy, inspired by conceptual history, of layers of meaning contained in the contemporary concept of the 'five agents' (*wuxing*)

TCM textbooks of 1984: the five agents as universal principles of 'The Theory of the Five Agents', a highly elaborate and culture-specific learned language

The so-called 'Theory of the Five Agents' (*wuxing lun* or *wuxing xueshuo*) figures prominently in TCM education, and also in clinical practice; it is considered scientific (*kexuehua*).¹⁶ The first year students learn from the *TCM Fundamentals* cycles of change and these scripts of how changes occur in cycles are indispensable for formulating complex considerations of treatment (Hsu 1999: 210). First year students furthermore learn the correlates of each of the five agents (*xing*), ranging from tones (*yin*), flavours (*wei*), colours (*se*), types of transformation (*hua*), kinds of *qi*, directions (*fang*), and seasons (*ji*) to inner organs (*zang*), bowels (*fu*), orifices/offices (*guan*), kinds of tissue (*xingt*), feelings (*qingzhi*), [human] sounds (*sheng*), and [pathological] movements (*biandong*) (*TCM Fundamentals* 1984: 20, reprinted in Hsu 1999: 203). The second year students read the *Interpretation of the Inner Canon*, which quotes and annotates *Suwen* 5 and 4.

The contents of the 'The Theory of the Five Agents' that TCM students learn are given in Table 4.1. *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 are remarkable for the systematic way in which they postulate correspondences

between the five directions and their correlates. In Table 4.1, only the correlations of one direction, the east, are given, but *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 also spell out the interrelations for the other four directions. They provide most of the information contained in the tables of the five agents and their correlates in modern TCM textbooks.¹⁷ No doubt, these correlations represent a highly sophisticated culture-specific understanding of the natural world, but it is difficult to see how exactly they relate to an immediate ecological experience. Hence the genealogist attempts to uncover the relevance of these correlations

Table 4.1 *The contents of the 'The Theory of the Five Agents' that students of Traditional Medicine learn*

Suwen 5.3 begins with a direction (e.g. the east), which is said to give rise to a climatic illness factor (e.g. wind), which gives rise to an agent (e.g. wood), that in turn gives rise to a flavour (e.g. sourness), that gives rise to a viscus (e.g. the liver), that gives rise to a tissue (e.g. the sinews), that in turn gives rise to another viscus (e.g. the heart). The text then mentions the aperture (e.g. the eyes) that is governed by the viscus. This is followed by an enumeration of the corresponding climatic illness factor in heaven (e.g. wind), the corresponding agent on earth (e.g. wood), and the corresponding tissue (e.g. the sinews), viscus (e.g. the liver), colour (e.g. blue), tone (e.g. *jue*), [human] sound (e.g. to shout out), movement (e.g. to shake), aperture (e.g. the eyes), flavour (e.g. sourness), and intent (e.g. anger). Thereupon follow the interrelations between the intent (e.g. anger) harming the viscus (e.g. the liver) and the intent (e.g. grief) that can overcome this intent (e.g. anger); the climatic illness factor (e.g. wind) harming the tissue (e.g. the sinews) and the climatic illness factor (e.g. dryness) that can overcome this factor (e.g. wind); the flavour (e.g. sourness) harming tissue (e.g. the sinews) and the flavour (e.g. acidity) that can overcome this flavour (e.g. sourness). These correspondences are systematically given for wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. The text in *Suwen* 4.3 provides extensive information on the interrelations of direction (e.g. the east), colour (e.g. blue-green), viscus (e.g. the liver), aperture (e.g. the eyes), illness (e.g. convulsions), flavour (e.g. sourness), agent (here referred to as *lei* rather than *xing*; e.g. herbs and wood), animal (e.g. the rooster), grain (e.g. wheat), star (e.g. Jupiter), seasonal *qi* (e.g. spring *qi*) in tissue (e.g. the head), tone (e.g. *jue*), number (e.g. eight), tissue (e.g. the sinews), and smell (e.g. foul smell, as that of urine), with slight variations for each of the five entries.

by viewing them as a historically grown system of knowledge. The following comparison of the contents of *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 suggests that the five agents have been interpreted in increasingly internalising ways (Young 1976).

Suwen 5.3 contains more extensive correlations than *Suwen* 4.3, and includes also information on the interrelations between each of the five agents, namely giving birth (*sheng*) and overcoming (*ke*). Moreover, *Suwen* 5.3 refers to aspects inside the body-enveloped-by-skin not mentioned in *Suwen* 4.3, namely the apertures (*qiao*), the different kinds of intent (*zhi*), and [pathological] movements (*bian dong*). However, *Suwen* 4.3 mentions correlates in the outside world, not mentioned in *Suwen* 5.3: the animals, grains, stars, numbers, smells as well as a seasonal *qi*.

It is difficult to know the exact date of the composition of each of the text passages recorded in the *Suwen*. Parts of *Suwen* 5 are sometimes said to belong to the *Suwen* chapters of uncertain origin.¹⁸ Therefore, *Suwen* 4.3 may represent an earlier stage of reasoning in terms of the five agents in medicine than *Suwen* 5.3. If this were the case, one could point to a tendency to emphasize aspects of the five agents' correspondences that refer to processes inside the 'body-enveloped-by-skin', at the cost of neglecting aspects of the outside world; one could speak of an historical development away from an externalising medicine towards an internalising one (Young 1976).

The tendency to provide an internalising interpretation of the five agents is particularly blatant in the contemporary textbook *TCM Fundamentals*. Introductory lectures for TCM students before mid-term examinations in the first year centre on so-called physiological-functional (*shengli zuoyong*) processes inside the body-enveloped-by-skin (Hsu 1999: table 6.8), most importantly, those of the five organs (*wuzang*): the liver (*gan*), heart (*xin*), spleen (*pi*), lungs (*fei*) and kidneys (*shen*).¹⁹

On a village health station, by contrast, I overheard people talking of fire, wood and water when they were speaking about their bodily states (Anning, September 1989). On another serendipitous occasion, I met with acupuncturists from rural Henan, who presented me with a picture of the human body with acupuncture points that referred to the five agents. This representation of the body showed no channels, but instead depicted five central acupuncture points in the centre of the abdomen: the earth in the middle (at the position of *guanyuan* or *zhongji*) and the fire, metal, water and wood around it. It also showed various other spots of the body onto which acupuncture points were projected in a similar concentric way. These acupuncturists thought of bodily processes in terms of earth, wood, fire, metal and water, which

they knew were co-substantive with the five organs, but they did not explicitly name the latter (Kunming, December 1989).

In summary, while most people compare and contrast TCM primarily with Western medicine, and therefore consider correlative thinking in terms of the five agents typical of a comparatively 'holistic medicine', the above suggests that if one compares TCM to some contemporary rural practices of medicine, it displays tendencies of an internalising medicine. It would seem likely that the emphasis in TCM on internal bodily concepts, like the five organs, results from biomedicine being the dominant medicine practised in contemporary China. However, a close analysis of introductory TCM textbooks reveals that the foundations for such an internalising interpretation of the body were laid already three to four hundred years ago, before Chinese medical doctors had come into close contact with Western medicine. By paying attention to the footnotes and sources of the citations given in the textbooks on the *Interpretation of the Inner Canon* (*Neijing jiangyi*) and the *TCM Fundamentals* (*Zhongyi jichu lilun*), in the fashion of Foucault's meticulous genealogist, I found that TCM textbook compilers frequently referred to the *Canon of Categories* (*Leijing*).

Zhang Jiebin's Leijing of 1624: the five agents as an epistemological heuristic device for the enhancement of the scholar-physician's knowledge

In the *Canon of [ordering knowledge according to] Categories* (*Leijing*) of 1624, Zhang Jiebin (1562–1640) completely re-organised the knowledge presented in the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon*. He said it was necessary to re-order it in a thematic way (*Lei jing* ([1624] 1985: 1–8). Interestingly, the thematic chapters or, in his words, the 'categories' (*lei*) he created, continue to structure the overall presentation of medical knowledge in the introductory textbooks *TCM Fundamentals* and *Interpretation of the Inner Canon* (Hsu 1999: table 6.4). There are variations, no doubt, but nevertheless it is noteworthy that introductory Chinese medical books have maintained the same overall structure of knowledge presentation, despite the enormous political upheavals that China has seen in the last three to four hundred years.²⁰

The notion of *zangxiang* figures prominently in the *Canon of Categories* of 1624 and also in the TCM textbooks of 1984. The conceptual historian expects that the same linguistic term has been reapplied within a different programme of action. This is indeed so. Rather different text extracts from the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* are assembled under the respective chapter headings *zangxiang* (see Hsu 1999: tables 6.6 and 6.9). Accordingly, the contents differ: the text passages assembled under *zangxiang* in the *Canon of Categories* concern a 'body ecologic', while the *zangxiang* chapter in the *Interpretation*

contains text passages that allude mostly to a 'body-enveloped-by-skin'. To be sure, in TCM *zangxiang* also relate to variables outside the 'body-enveloped-by-skin', but, as demonstrated above, there is an undeniable tendency to interpret the five agents in an internalising way.

Zangxiang in TCM has been approximated as 'orbs', 'visceral systems' or 'organ clusters', but what meaning did Zhang Jiebin himself invest into the notion of *zangxiang*? In his comments on *Suwen* 8, which he cites in the first section of the *zangxiang* category, he says that he uses the notion *zang* in the sense of *kucang*, which means 'to store' (*Leijing* [1624] 1985: 30). In the context of commenting in the second section of the *zangxiang* category, when commenting on *Suwen* 9, he asks: 'What are *zangxiang* like? [*zangxiang he ru?*]' 'Xiang', he answers, 'is the appearance/ image/ configuration of a form' [*xiang xing xiang ye*]. 'The *zang* are located on the inside [of the body], [their] forms appear on the outside, hence one speaks of *zang xiang* [*zang ju yu nei, xing jian yu wai, gu yue zang xiang*] (ibid: 33). These comments suggest that Zhang Jiebin assembled textual extracts from the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* under the heading *zangxiang*, which accounted for the resonance of external and internal bodily dynamics, hidden and apparent ones.²¹ His preoccupation with the inner and outer, the hidden and the apparent, is obvious also in his choice of the textual extract from *Lingshu* 3 for the third section in *zangxiang* category. It concerns the inner and outer (*biaoli*) aspects of the *zangxiang* (ibid: 34–35). *Zangxiang* in Zhang Jiebin's sense seems to allude to apparent and hidden aspects of the body ecologic (for more detail, see Hsu 2000a: 175 and 178–183).

In summary, Zhang Jiebin discussed the textual extracts of *Suwen* 5 and 4 in two different categories, *yinyang* and *zangxiang*, depending on whether they were framed in a numerology of two or five. He had the body ecologic in mind, and used reasoning in terms of the five agents as a heuristic device for correlating the apparent to the hidden. Despite the striking continuity in the overall structure of knowledge presentation, which arises from comparing the chapter headings in the *Canon of Categories* of 1624 and the introductory TCM textbooks of 1984, subtle variations in the regrouping of the textual extracts discussed under the chapter headings in question reveal important differences in the interpretation of the five agents. Continuities are found in the attitude of the doctors and in the significance they attributed to reasoning in terms of the five agents that was valued then, as it is now, as knowledge enhancing.

*Wang Bing's Suwen of 762: the five agents as a proscriptive device
outlining an honour-seeking status group's life style*

Whereas the footnotes and citations in introductory TCM textbooks led the genealogist from TCM textbooks to Zhang Jiebin's *Canon of*

Categories, Zhang Jiebin himself explicitly refers to the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon*, which consisted of two books, Wang Bing's *Suwen* edition of 762 and a *Lingshu* edition of no further concern to this study. Strictly speaking, a genealogy would focus merely on the analysis of *Suwen* 5.3. and 4.3, because they form the core texts of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM. However, the significance of *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 becomes evident only if one widens the focus and examines the context in which they are mentioned. How far should one widen the scope of context? Should one discuss merely *Suwen* 5 and 4, or examine these two chapters together with the preceding three? I eventually found that *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 contained textual contents that thematically formed a continuum with others discussed in the five opening chapters in Wang Bing's *Suwen* edition.²²

Table 4.2 compares the positions in which *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 are mentioned in the *Suwen* of 762, the *Canon of Categories* of 1624 and the TCM *Interpretation* of 1984. It shows that *Suwen* chapters 1 and 2 are discussed in the first category of the *Canon of Categories* but at the very end of the TCM *Interpretation*, in its chapter 9. *Suwen* 3 is neither in the *Canon of Categories* nor in the *Interpretation* discussed in the opening chapters. *Suwen* 5, by contrast, is in the TCM textbook *Interpretation* discussed first, followed by *Suwen* 4. This would suggest that in TCM the contents of *Suwen* 5, which concern the 'The Theory of Yin Yang and the Five Agents', are valued highly; they are 'scientific'. By contrast, Wang Bing esteemed particularly the contents of *Suwen* 1. So, what were the contents of *Suwen* 1 that mattered so much to Wang Bing?

The contents of *Suwen* 1 and 2 emphasize, in the words of contemporary TCM doctors, 'preventive health principles' (*fangzhi yuanze*). Considering that in the *Suwen* these contents are mentioned in the first chapter, rather than a later one, 'preventive health' appears to have been a preoccupation of the editor Wang Bing in the Tang dynasty. The fact that 'preventive health' is discussed in the very last chapter of the introductory TCM textbooks would suggest that TCM textbook compilers put more emphasis on therapy. It is well known that internalising medicines tend to be therapy-oriented. This again may come as a surprise to those who generally compare TCM with Western biomedicine and hail it as a medicine that endorses preventive health. But if TCM is compared to the medicine advocated in Wang Bing's *Suwen* and Zhang Jiebin's *Canon of Categories*, it is therapy-oriented.

The contents of the following *Suwen* 3 emphasize the importance of *yangqi*, but these contents are not mentioned among the opening 'categories' (*lei*) of the *Canon of Categories* (but as late as in category 13). One wonders why. It is likely that Zhang Jiebin's understanding of *yinyang*, and particularly that of *yangqi*, differed from Wang Bing's. It is possible that in Late Imperial China the gender-specific aspects of

Table 4.2 Chapter sections of the first five chapters in the *Suwen* edition of 762 as cited in the *Categories* (1624) and the *Interpretation* (1984)

Suwen (Han/Tang/Song) (Basic Questions)	Leijing (Ming) (Canon of Categories)	Neijing jiangyi (PRC) (Interpretation of the Inner Canon)
Chapter sections 1.1–5.4.4 according to Ren (1986)	Roman no. for categories Arabic no. for sections	Chapters 2.1–9.2
Suwen 1.1 <i>shanggutian zhenlun</i>	Leijing I.1 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	Neijing jiangyi 9.1 (entire Suwen 1)
Suwen 1.2	Leijing I.2 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 1.3	Leijing III.13 (<i>zangxianglei</i>)	
Suwen 1.4	Leijing I.3 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	Neijing jiangyi 9.2 (entire Suwen 2)
Suwen 2.1 <i>siqi tiaoshen dalun</i>	Leijing I.4 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 2.2	Leijing I.5 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 2.2 (end)	Leijing I.6 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 2.3	Leijing I.6 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 2.3 (end)	Leijing I.7 (<i>sheshenglei</i>)	
Suwen 3 <i>shengqi tongtian lun</i>	Leijing XIII.5 (<i>jibinglei</i>)	—
Suwen 4.1 <i>jingui zhenyan lun</i>	Leijing XV.27 (<i>jibinglei</i>)	Neijing jiangyi 2.2 (entire Suwen 4)
Suwen 4.2	Leijing II.5 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 4.3	Leijing III.4 (<i>zangxianglei</i>)	Neijing jiangyi 2.1 (entire Suwen 5)
Suwen 5.1 <i>yinyangyingxiangdalun</i>	Leijing II.1 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.2	Leijing II.1 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.3	Leijing III.5 (<i>zangxianglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.4.1	Leijing II.2 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.4.2	Leijing II.2 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.4.3 (1st part)	Leijing II.3 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.4.3 (2nd part)	Leijing II.4 (<i>yinyanglei</i>)	
Suwen 5.4.4	Leijing XII.8 (<i>lunzhilei</i>)	

yinyang had become more pronounced, and that therefore *yin* and *yang*, more emphatically than before, were seen as a pair. In medicine, the women's department (*fuke*) gained importance after the Song dynasty (Furth 1999), in addition to the canonical medical view of taking men's bodies as the model for the ungendered body (e.g. Despeux 1996: 107); likewise, in the context of self-cultivation practices, manuals specifically for women's meditative practices started to be published in the Qing dynasty (Valussi 2003); and in pulse diagnostics differences between women's and men's pulses were emphasized not so much in the Han as in Late Imperial China (Hsu 2000b). No doubt, *yin* and *yang* formed a pair already in Han and Tang China, but in Late Imperial China the *yinyang* dualism was perhaps more stressed than before. In *Suwen* 3, *yang* is clearly imbued with positive qualities; by contrast, *yin* often alludes to the shady, dark and hidden, and sometimes even the pathological. The understanding of *yangqi* that seemed directly relevant to well-being for Wang Bing in the Tang dynasty does not seem to have been shared by the physician Zhang Jiebin in the Ming dynasty nor by contemporary TCM textbook compilers.

Suwen 5 and 4, and *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, in particular, have already been discussed in detail since they constitute the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM. What, however, was Wang Bing's aim in mentioning reasoning in terms of the five agents among the opening chapters of the *Suwen* notably, not in the first chapter but the fourth and fifth? Catherine Despeux (2001) and Paul Unschuld (2003) provide an answer. Despeux (2001: 129) cites Wang Bing as declaring in the preface to his *Suwen* commentary: 'In my youth, I liked Daoism and the techniques for tending the vital principle.' Unschuld (2003: 41) corroborates this: Wang Bing's commentary on the *Suwen* emphasizes self-cultivation. Unschuld furthermore remarks that in the process of his restructuring and amendment of the *Suwen*, Wang Bing apparently moved the first chapter sections there from a later chapter (ibid: 48), and downplayed sections on prognostics by moving them into less a prominent position and by renaming them (ibid: 45).

Notably, the opening chapters of the *Suwen* are concerned with 'techniques for tending the vital principle' and 'self-cultivation'. Likewise, Zhang Jiebin's *Canon of Categories* also discusses the contents of *Suwen* 1 and 2 as aspects of the first category called *shesheng*, 'self-cultivation',²³ and the *Interpretation*, chapter 9, as *yangsheng xueshuo*, which means 'theory of nurturing life'. Only the *TCM Fundamentals*, chapter 8, discusses the same contents under the heading 'preventive health principles'.

It is not irrelevant that the same textual contents were once conceived as self-cultivation, and now as preventive health care. While self-cultivation and preventive health can both be framed as medical

practices, they importantly also have moral and political implications. Preventive health care is a public health practice; self-cultivation practices, by contrast, evolved in a different moral and political order. Preventive health ideally should apply equally to every citizen in a nation-state, but self-cultivation, for reasons given below, was probably an aspect of a 'life style' fostered among a group of people who sought 'distinction' from others.

I use the word 'distinction' in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), who showed how taste and aesthetics rather than wages and salaries segregate people into different groups, and I refer to the notion of 'life style' in the sense of Max Weber, whose definition differs sharply from the current common sense notion of 'life style' and its definition by the World Health Organization in that it alludes to a notion of 'honour' (*Ehre*).²⁴ 'Distinction' and 'life style', in the sense used here, both allude to aesthetics and the judgement of taste, which according to Bourdieu shaped 'social capital' and according to Weber expressed 'social power'. Since Bourdieu's ethnography concerns late twentieth century Europe, while Weber had also premodern societies in mind, I will use the latter's notion of 'life style' in what follows. If reasoning in terms of the five agents can be shown to have been relevant for carving out a particular 'life style' within the moral order that prevailed in the feudal bureaucracy of Imperial China, rather than being used as a 'heuristic device' for enhancing knowledge, yet another layer of meaning inherent to the contemporary 'Theory of the Five Agents' becomes apparent.

Strictly speaking, Max Weber used the idioms of 'life conduct' (*Lebensführung*) and the 'stylisation of life' (*'Stilisierung' des Lebens*), words that have been rendered in translation as 'life style' and have, more recently, been re-translated into German as *'Lebensstil'*. Weber ([1921]1980: 535, 537) mentions these notions only briefly in his essay on 'Political communities', in the context where he features three distinct groups of people – classes, status groups, and political parties – identified as such by the power distributions within a community. Weber points out that there are qualitatively different forms of authority and power in society: classes are identified in respect of economic power, parties in the realm of political power, and status groups in respect of power in the social domain. Within the social domain, Weber declares, power takes the form of prestige, and the notion of 'honour' (*Ehre*) is crucial. Status groups, he says, express 'honour' usually in the form of a certain 'life style', which is concerned with social interaction that is not primarily economically oriented.

Weber's allusion to 'honour' and 'status groups' in his discussion of 'life style' lends itself very well to the analysis of the social order of much of the Tang. If one accepts that the members of the various elite

groups in the Tang formed a status group and not a class, 'honour' and prestige may well explain adherence to peculiar elite medical practices.²⁵ One can then read the opening chapters of the *Suwen*, and their insistence on self cultivation, as indicative of an elite status group's preoccupation with endorsing and expressing its power/honour through a certain life style. Self-cultivation, as presented in the opening chapters of the *Suwen*, is then understood to emphasize a certain life style. Perhaps, for Wang Bing, the significance of the *Suwen*, in addition to being a medical treatise, was also as a manual for etiquette, advising elite status group members on how to endorse/express their power/honour?

It has variously been noted that the *Suwen* contains ample information on life style, appropriate conduct in respect of age and season, proper diet and physical exertion (sexual conduct), together with information on principles of treatment, medical ethics, and the workings of the universe. Western researchers generally stress life style as an aspect of preventive health and emphasize self cultivation for the sake of longevity. Without denying the longevity enhancing aspects, it needs to be kept in mind that self cultivation has a social and moral significance that goes beyond their medical purpose. The Tang edition of the *Suwen* may well have provided prescriptive guidance for persons seeking to behave in accordance with a certain status. The emphasis on life style in a book otherwise known as a medical treatise may have appealed to an honour-seeking status group.

In other words, the opening chapters of the *Suwen* were perhaps not so much preoccupied with the modern idea of 'preventive health', as many modern doctors and researchers stress, but with prestige, etiquette and life style of an honour-seeking status group. The genealogist notes that 'The Theory of the Five Agents' as outlined in chapters 4.3 and 5.3 is mentioned in the context of self cultivation in Wang Bing's *Suwen*. The systematic correspondences that *Suwen* 4.3 and 5.3 outline prescribe regularity and moderation, i.e. a distinctive life style. Rather than being valued as a heuristic device for epistemological purposes, as in the Ming and as a science in TCM, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents may have been esteemed for its prescriptions of a certain life style in the Tang. To be sure, in TCM, 'The Theory of the Five Agents' is also understood to proscribe a regular and moderate life style, although in the PRC its medical rather than its status-enhancing aspect is stressed.

*Sayings in the Suwen from the Han dynasty (206 BC to AD 220):
the five agents as an ecological prognostic device for the regulation of
government*

Keegan (1988) found that the sentences of the *Suwen* are written in Han dynasty grammar. Thus, while the overall organisation of the chapters of the *Suwen* may date to the Tang, the sentence structures may well date to the Han. The genealogist interested in uncovering the layers of meaning contained in the contemporary 'Theory of the Five Agents' as given in *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, may now set out to examine specific sentences. Again, a focus on the chapter sections *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 proves too narrow, while interesting findings result from keeping the scope of analysis wide enough to include the entire chapters of *Suwen* 4 and 5 (or of *Suwen* 1–5 as done in Hsu 2001a: chapter 3, which yields basically the same results).

The main problem that now arises is how one recognises that a specific sentence concerns reasoning in terms of the five agents. There are sentences, that explicitly mention one of the five agents – wood, fire, earth, metal, and water –, but they are too few to make the analysis interesting. This in itself is a worthwhile finding; it suggests that although everyone speaks of 'The Theory of the Five Agents', the 'agents' (*xing*) themselves were not a central concept within this pattern of reasoning in its early stages.

Rather than focusing on a particular linguistic term, the examination of Han dynastic sentences was undertaken by investigating their patterning: if sentences succeeded each other with the same syntactic structure more than twice,²⁶ and if they mentioned one of the correlates/terms known from the core texts *Suwen* 4.3 and 5.3, I considered them to relate to reasoning in terms of the five agents. This has led to the finding presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 lists paragraphs with phrases of grammatically identical structure that are sometimes four, sometimes five, and sometimes six lines long. With one exception (namely *Suwen* 4.1.a), they mention a term relating to the outside world in the beginning of each sentence, such as the 'eastern wind' (*Suwen* 4.1.b), 'spring *qi*' (*Suwen* 4.1.c), 'spring time' (*Suwen* 4.1.d), and the like, and they refer to aspects of or processes arising inside the body-enveloped-by-skin at the end of each sentence, such as the 'neck and head' (*Suwen* 4.1.b), the 'head' (*Suwen* 4.1.c), 'nose bleeding' (*Suwen* 4.1.d), and the like. These phrases thus establish a correlation between aspects of the external and internal world (with the skin as dividing line between the two). In a first approximation, the phrases in table 4.3 appear to be epistemologically relevant and do much the same as 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM and the text passages assembled in the *zangxiang* category of the *Canon of Categories*.

There is a notable difference, however. In most cases, the sentences in table 4.3 establish an interrelation between an ecological variable and a specific illness. *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, which enumerate many correspondences between macrocosmic and microcosmic aspects of the universe, do so as well, but not as evidently (see table 4.1). A close analysis of the text passages in table 4.3 suggests that these sentences set up correlations between seasons and illness entities (see *Suwen* 4.1.b, 4.1.c, 4.1.d, and 5.2.6). They mention seasons at the beginning of a sentence and specific illness entities at the end. *Suwen* 5.2.6, for instance, reads in translation:

If in winter you get harmed by the cold, in spring there must be a warmth disorder (*wenbing*),
if in spring you get harmed by the wind, in summer there will be diarrhoea (*canxie*),
if in summer you get harmed by the heat, in autumn there must be an intermittent fever (*kenüe*),
if in autumn you get harmed by the damp, in winter there will be coughing (*kesou*).

This is an interesting finding that does not directly emerge from reading *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3. Neither *Suwen* 5.3 nor *Suwen* 4.3 mention illness entities like warmth disorders, diarrhoea, intermittent fevers, or coughing. *Suwen* 5.3, in particular, which is hailed as the most representative text of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM, does not even mention the seasons or seasonal *qi*.

The sentences recorded in Table 4.3 clearly suggest that reasoning in terms of the five agents was grounded in ecological experiences. Han elite physicians were aware of the seasonality of certain illnesses, and they used reasoning in terms of the five agents to account for such seasonality.

Seasonality of illness is a subject that human ecologists have extensively studied and documented. Malaria (which, *inter alia*, may have been meant by the term 'intermittent fever' in the above quote of *Suwen* 5.2.6) is a prime example of such seasonal illness occurrence; it typically arises in the rainy season. According to Ulijaszek and Strickland (1993b), diarrhoea is another seasonal illness which has its peak in the wet season, while coughing and other diseases of the respiratory tract occur in particular during the dry season, when ritual events are numerous and crowding is frequent. According to Harrison (2004), not only infectious diseases, but also affective disorders, like depression, can occur in seasonal cycles.

The seasonality of illness is a phenomenon known not only to modern scientists. Chinese physicians formulated the sentences in

Table 4.3 The repetitive phrases alluding to one aspect of five-phase theory in chapters 4 and 5 of the Basic Questions

4.1(a) The sequence of seasons overcoming each other

春勝長夏	spring overcomes the long summer
長夏勝冬	the long summer overcomes winter
冬勝夏	winter overcomes the summer
夏勝秋	summer overcomes autumn
秋勝春	autumn overcomes spring

(b) The interrelations between wind, season, organ-*shu*, complaints

東風生於春 病在肝俞 在頸頭	if the Eastern wind arises in spring, the illness resides in the liver <i>shu</i> , in the neck and head
南風生於夏 病在心俞 在胸脅	if the Southern wind arises in summer, the illness resides in the heart <i>shu</i> , in the chest and flanks
西風生於秋 病在肺俞 在肩背	if the Western wind arises in autumn, the illness resides in the lung <i>shu</i> , in the shoulders and back
北風生於冬 病在腎俞 在腰股	if the Northern wind arises in winter, the illness resides in the kidney <i>shu</i> , in the waist and thigh
中央為土 病在脾俞 在脊	the centre is earth, the illness resides in the spleen <i>shu</i> , in the spine.

(c) The interrelation between the *qi* of a season and a symptom

春氣者 病在頭	if there is spring <i>qi</i> , the illness is in the head
夏氣者 病在臍	if there is summer <i>qi</i> , the illness is in the viscera
秋氣者 病在肩背	if there is autumn <i>qi</i> , the illness is in the shoulders and back
冬氣者 病在四支	if there is winter <i>qi</i> , the illness is in the four limbs

(d) The seasonal propensity of illnesses

春善病鼽	in summer one has a propensity to ail from nose bleeding
仲夏善病胸脅	in mid-summer one has a propensity to ail in the chest and flanks
長夏善病洞泄寒	in the long summer one has a propensity to ail from diarrhoea and internal coldness
秋善病風虐	in autumn one has a propensity to ail from wind-induced intermittent fevers
冬善病痺厥	in winter one has a propensity to ail from obstructions and numbness

Table 4.3 continued

3.3 Introductory remark: 五藏應四時

extensive interrelations of directions with ... see Table 4.1

4.4.4 Interrelation between climatic factor and pathological condition in the body

風勝則動	if wind predominates, then there is agitation
熱勝則腫	if heat predominates, then there is a swelling
燥勝則乾	if the arid predominates, then there is dryness
寒勝則浮	if coldness predominates, then there is oedema
溼勝則濡瀉	if dampness predominates, then there is a moist discharge

5.2.6 Interrelation between season, climatic factor, illness

冬傷於寒 春必溫病	if in winter you get harmed by the cold, in spring there must be a warmth disorder
春傷於風 夏生餐泄	if in spring you get harmed by the wind, in summer there will be diarrhoea
夏傷於暑 秋必痎瘧	if in summer you get harmed by the heat, in autumn there must be an intermittent fever
秋傷於濕 冬生欬嗽	if in autumn you get harmed by the damp, in winter there will be coughing

5.3 Extensive interrelations between direction and ... See Table 4.1

End remarks on *yin* and *yang* (notably, the seasons are not mentioned)3.3.3 Interrelation of various kinds of *qi* with six viscera

天氣通於肺	heavenly <i>qi</i> connects with the lungs
地氣通於嗌	earthly <i>qi</i> connects with the throat
風氣通於肝	wind <i>qi</i> connects with the liver
雷氣通於心	thunder <i>qi</i> connects with the heart
谷氣通於脾	grain <i>qi</i> connects with the spleen
雨氣通於腎	rain <i>qi</i> connects with the kidneys

Table 4.3. Likewise, the ancient Greeks were well aware of the seasonal occurrence of certain illnesses. The *Epidemics* in the Hippocratic corpus record 'constitutions' in which reference is made to seasonal and climatic factors, followed by an enumeration of various fevers and other illnesses (Lloyd [1950]1983). Not only the ancient Chinese and Greeks, but also pre-modern African peoples were aware of the seasonality of illness. Eva Gillies (1976: 384) writes in a footnote to a footnote: 'The Somali of Zaila seem to have attributed malarial fever to mosquito bites in 1853, well in advance of Ross and Manson. Burton comments wisely in a footnote that 'the superstition probably arises from the fact that mosquitoes and fevers became formidable at the same time'.' (Ironically, the 'superstitious' Africans knew better than their later conquerors.)

The sentences in Table 4.3 may refer to details about the seasonal occurrence of illness that are inaccurate according to biomedicine. This should not deter the genealogist from the important issue, which is that these sentences concern a cross-culturally acknowledged ecological reality, namely the seasonality of illness. This finding gives reasoning in terms of the five agents an ecological dimension and grounds it in the daily life experience of people who live in geographical areas where there are seasons.²⁷ It shows that Chinese physicians were interested in regularities (contrary to Don Bates's impression, forthcoming), namely patterns of seasonal regularity. It suggests that reasoning in terms of the five agents may well have been integrated into medicine primarily within the context of ecologically motivated reasoning, namely the seasonality of certain illnesses.

Suwen 4.3 and 5.3, which are considered by TCM textbook compilers as presenting the most systematic account of reasoning in terms of the five agents, do not begin their sentences by referring to the seasons. The first term they both mention in a paragraph on one of the five agents (e.g. wood) is a direction (e.g. the east, *dongfang*). Both chapters sequence the five directions in the same order – east, south, centre, west, north – and from this sequencing it is easy to see that the directions represent the seasons – spring, summer, long summer, autumn and winter.²⁸ However, why should the directions rather than the seasons be mentioned in *Suwen* 4.3 and 5.3? The answer is probably best found in numerological considerations: the seasons were originally – and still are – conceived to be patterned within a numerology of four, while by Han times the notion of there being five directions was well accepted.

John Major (1993) and Wang Aihe (2000: 23–74) have made a strong case that reasoning in terms of the five agents built on an understanding of space derived from Shang (sixteenth to eleventh century BC) conceptions of the four directions (*sifang*) and the centre.

It is this spatial division of the universe that laid the foundations for the late Zhou and Han cosmologists, who adopted the numerology of five in Chinese cosmology. By Han times, this cosmology collapsed spatial and temporal dimensions into one.²⁹ It cannot be overemphasized how intertwined the temporal and spatial order are in Han cosmologies, and already some pre-Han ones (e.g. Granet 1934: 113). Processes taking place in time are intricately linked to their movement through space. This applies also to Han Chinese medicine (e.g. Hsu 1994). An illness, for instance, as it becomes protracted in time, moves from spatial locations on the body surface, such as the skin, flesh and channels, to internal ones, such as the viscera and bones. Likewise, seasons (*shi*) were intrinsically related to directions (*fang*) (e.g. Hsu 1999: 81–82 and 110–11).

The ecological variable that relates directions to seasons is wind. Wind provides the key to understanding why directions and seasons should be aspects of one and the same rubric: winds can effect weather changes, and they are often closely linked to seasonal changes. They are often conceived as predominately coming from a certain direction during a certain season, as described by Pandya (1993) for the Ongee on the Andaman islands. In Chinese medical writings it is implicitly given, as for instance in *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, where the winds of the five directions are mentioned in place of the seasons.

In summary, sayings from the Han dynasty (listed in Table 4.3) pertaining to correlative thinking in terms of the five agents reflect an ecological concern and account mostly for the seasonality of illness. Since seasons were originally and still are generally framed within a numerology of four, it became common practice in medicine to refer to the five directions instead of the four seasons in the context of reasoning in terms of the five agents, as a careful reading of *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 would suggest. The collapse of the spatial and temporal dimensions into one made this possible in Han cosmology. Seasonal regularity is yet another diachronic thrust contained in the 'Theory of the Five Agents' of TCM. However, today it is generally not known that the predominant pair of correspondences that Han physicians emphasized linked a specific season to a specific nosological entity like diarrhoea and intermittent fevers. The genealogical method uncovered this.

Pre-Han idioms and words in the Suwen (c. third century BC): the seasonality of illness, a cross-cultural 'ecological reality'

From investigating the structure of the sentences in *Suwen* 4 and 5, it became apparent that reasoning in terms of five agents was primarily used for accounting for the seasonality of illness. However, if physicians used reasoning in terms of the five agents in order to

account for the seasonal regularity of certain illnesses, why did they allude to five agents when they explicitly referred to the 'four seasons' (*sishi*), an idiom that pre-dates Han medical writings (e.g. *Lüshi chunqiu*)? As the above cross-cultural examples suggest, peoples all over the world developed an awareness of the seasonal occurrence of certain illnesses, and this also seems to have been the case in ancient China, long before reasoning in terms of the five agents became predominant in medical language.

Interestingly, the idiom 'four seasons' (*sishi*), and not 'five seasons', is invariably used to refer to the seasons, even if five seasons are then enumerated. The 'four seasons' are often associated with *yin* and *yang*, whereby spring and summer are classified as *yang* and autumn and winter as *yin*, or, in terms of directions, the east and south are associated with *yang* and the north and west with *yin*. The idiom 'the four seasons, *yin* and *yang*' (*sishi yinyang*) suggests that the four seasons were framed in *yinyang* cosmology, before reasoning in terms of the five agents became predominant in medical language. Furthermore, the four seasons are delimited by mono-syllabic terms, spring (*chun*) and autumn (*qiu*), winter (*dong*) and summer (*xia*), while the fifth one is a compound word, the 'long summer' (*changxia*), which suggests more recent coinage. Thus, by focusing on particular words and idioms, the genealogist uncovers yet a further layer of meaning contained in the texts currently presented to TCM students as fundamental to 'The theory of the Five Agents'.

The fifth viscus, the 'spleen' (*pi*), which correlates with the 'long summer', was probably added to an already existent four at a later stage. This is generally accepted wisdom among historians of Chinese medicine. There are text passages (e.g. in *Suwen* 2.1 and 2.2, see Hsu 2001a: table 3.2) where the four viscera are put in correlation with the four seasons, and where neither a fifth season nor a fifth viscus is mentioned. *Suwen* 4.1.b also shows such an intermediary stage (see Table 4.3). It systematically correlates the winds from the four directions with the *shu*-areas of the viscus in which the illness resides,³⁰ and with the corresponding body parts affected, and in the fifth line correlates the 'centre' with the spleen, but the rhythm of this line is irregular in comparison to the previous four. There is little doubt that this fifth line represents a later amendment to a well-established earlier saying.

There are also various other text passages in the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon*, that hint at the possibility that the spleen became established as one of the five viscera only at a fairly late stage. Thus, in *Suwen* 9.5 the spleen does not figure as one of the five viscera. Rather, the heart, the lungs, the kidneys and liver are grouped together, followed by a comment on *piwei* (the spleen and stomach), the large

and small intestine (*dachang xiaochang*), the triple burner and the bladder (*sanjiao pangguang*). This text passage refers to four viscera, and the spleen and stomach do not belong among them.

It may well be that the stomach rather than the spleen was originally the fifth viscus. Thus, *Suwen* 17.7 lists as five viscera kidneys, liver, stomach, lungs and heart and mentions them as opposites to the centre of the abdomen (*fu zhong*), the diaphragm (*ge*), the spleen (*pi*), the chest (*xiong zhong*), and the centre of the chest (*dan zhong*). This suggests that the stomach rather than the spleen was considered on a par with the other four viscera. Notably, the stomach is also considered more important than the spleen in the Mawangdui vessel texts. Thus, there is a vessel (*mai*) called the 'vessel of the stomach' (*wei mai*); it is the 'foot's great *yin* vessel' and its course begins in the stomach (Mawangdui medical manuscripts 1985: 11).³¹

The above suggests that the fifth season was the long summer, and the fifth viscus the spleen or stomach, and that physicians already had an arsenal of sayings that pertained to the seasonality of illness before reasoning in terms of the five agents became predominant in medicine. This is a finding that only the genealogist is able to make with respect to 'The Theory of the Five Agents'. It is a meaning aspect not much emphasized in TCM. The question that then arises is: why were Han elite physicians prepared to adopt reasoning in terms of the five agents, with the numerology of five, into their medical reasoning that was sensitive to the seasonality of illness in respect of four seasons? The conceptual history approach cannot answer the above question with the textual material at hand.

Summary

So far, we have seen how the five agents have been singled out as rather disembodied universal principles of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM. This 'theory', which builds on *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, is paradoxically presented in a different chapter than that called *zangxiang*, which discusses the five organs (an intrinsic aspect of the five agents) in comparatively materialist ways and with a focus on the body-enveloped-by-skin.

In a genealogical manner, we then traced reasoning in terms of the five agents back to the *Canon of Categories* of 1624, and found that the text passages which formed the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM, *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, were mentioned within the *zangxiang* category in the *Canon of Categories*. Already in the Ming, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents was valued in particular for its epistemological purposes and use as a 'heuristic device' for enhancing knowledge: it put the apparent in correlation with the hidden. By contrast, the editor of the *Suwen* of 762 discussed *Suwen* 4.3 and

5.3 in the context of self-cultivation practices that we interpreted as prescribing a moderate 'life style' for an honour-seeking status group.

As the genealogist dug deeper, and analysed the sentence structure of the texts assembled in *Suwen* 5 and 4, which reflected Han dynasty grammar, it became apparent that reasoning in terms of the five agents was primarily used in the context of prognosticating the seasonal occurrence of certain illnesses. Yet, as, in conceptual historical manner, we analysed the idioms and words in those sentences, it became apparent that Chinese physicians had already formulated sayings that accounted for the seasonality of illness before reasoning in terms of the five agents became integrated into this domain of medicine. This happened presumably in pre-Han times, i.e. the Warring States. The question that then arises is: why did Han physicians adopt correlative thinking in terms of the five agents theory into medicine at all, why did they not just reason in terms of the four seasons? To answer this question, we cannot scrutinise the text passages in question any further in a conceptual historical fashion, but must turn to social history.

A social historical consideration

In the medical context, five agents correlations are already recorded in the so-called iatromantic manuscripts of Shuihudi (iatromancy concerns the art of predicting medical events), which date to the third century BC (Harper 2001). According to these manuscripts, diviners made use of reasoning in terms of the five agents in combination with the system of the ten 'stems' and twelve 'branches'. The latter was well-established within divinatory practices by the fourth century BC (as testified through manuscripts unearthed from Baoshan). They combined the two for making medical prognostications about a given morbid condition of 'slight curing', 'great curing' or 'life and death'.³² This would suggest that reasoning in terms of the five agents was primarily adopted in the context of medical prognostication in the Shuihudi manuscripts. Those prognostications concerned the course of a given illness, and in particular whether its outcome was lethal or not.

It has variously been noted that not only a diviner's but also a physician's ability to prognosticate death provided legitimization for medical practice. The physician Chunyu Yi of the second century BC, for instance, refused to treat any patients whom he prognosticated to have a lethal illness, and infallibly cured all the patients he decided to treat (Hsu 2001b). Prognostication was not an exclusively medical practice. Much as statistics is held in high esteem among government planners today, reasoning in terms of the five agents was often used

in the context of prognostications that regulated government in Han and pre-Han times. Astronomers and other diviners who were kept as retainers at the court of a king, or other nobility, made use of highly sophisticated schemas of prognostication, often within the framework of the five agents (Sivin 1995b). The numerology of five alluded to the five rubrics of space and the five directions. It is to be expected that medical doctors who were able to make medical prognostications within the framework of the five agents were aspiring to a similarly prestigious social standing.³³

Reasoning in terms of the five agents may have been adopted in medicine primarily in the context of predicting the seasonal occurrence of certain illnesses. The mentioning of either the five directions or the winds coming from the five directions when commenting on the seasonality of illness helps explain how it was feasible to adopt the pentic pattern of correlative thinking from the prognosticatory arts into medical reasoning. Prognostications for the seasonal occurrence of certain illnesses, for which there might have been an empirical basis, may well have become one of the most successful and most respected, and therefore most elaborate, aspects of elite medical practice.

Five agents prognostication and the visceral language of *qi*

In *Suwen* 4.1.b the seasons are correlated with illnesses through the intermediary of the viscera (or, more precisely, the *shu*-areas of the viscera), i.e. each of the five sentences begins with mentioning a seasonal aspect of the illness (e.g. the east wind arises in spring) and ends with naming a certain kind of illness (e.g. an illness residing in the neck and head); in the middle it mentions an intermediary (e.g. the liver-*shu* area). One could say that in these sentences the viscera represent what Unschuld (1988) has called 'mediating links'. Reasoning in terms of 'mediating links' allows one to get away from the directly observable, and speak in more general or abstract ways about the topic in question. It is noteworthy that most sentences concerned with the seasonality of illness in *Suwen* 5 and 4, do not accord the viscera a prominent role (see Table 4.3), while the viscera and their correlates inside the body-enveloped-by-skin figure prominently in *Suwen* 5.3.

In other words, it is conceivable that doctors initially recognised seasonal patterns of certain illnesses, like diarrhoea and intermittent fevers, and that initially the viscera were not important for recognising those seasonal patterns. Considering how prominent the viscera are in *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3, where five agents theory is very elaborate, it

is likely that the viscera gradually gained in importance within the framework of medical reasoning in terms of the five agents. This is a generally accepted view among historians of Chinese medicine, and the genealogical method reconfirms this with new evidence.

One could furthermore point out that ecological correlations, which emphasized the prevalence of certain illnesses during certain seasons, gradually fell into oblivion. *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 are explicit about various aspects of the viscera and their correlates, but mention neither seasonal illness entities nor the seasons (seasonal *qi* is mentioned in chapter 4.3 but not in 5.3). In other words, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents enhanced reasoning relating to visceral states at the expense of reasoning that concerned easily observable seasonal patterns of illness occurrence.

Why should reasoning in terms of the invisible 'mediating links' have become more interesting to medical doctors than reasoning that built on the observation of season-specific illness patterns, which, as cross-cultural examples have shown, are often known to lay persons and experts alike? I suggest that precisely their invisibility and subtlety made them useful entities for correlative speculation in terms of the five agents. Since visceral changes and *qi* are not easily perceived, but require specialists adept in the diagnosis of pulse (*mai*) or complexion (*se*), prognosticated changes are not easy to falsify. By working with entities like *qi* and *zang* (viscera), whose subtle changes are difficult to discern, the regularities imputed to them predominate over any blatantly obvious irregularity. Precisely the subtlety of the recognition of visceral changes allowed doctors to systematise and present them in an internally consistent manner.

Contrary to Don Bates's impression that the Chinese were not interested in regularities, Chinese physicians' preoccupation with prognostications shows that they were. However, they accounted for them, not in terms of purposeful organic mechanism, but in terms of subtle potentialities that were captured by the language of *qi* (Hsu 2001b). Unlike the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, who distrusted the tangible material world and spoke of 'purposeful instruments' (i.e. they imputed mindful purpose to the instruments they described), Chinese physicians seem to have had an unbroken relationship to matter. *Qi* and *zang* (viscera) were matter, and simultaneously exerted agency; they were subtle 'matter-agencies'. The Chinese physicians who reasoned in terms of the five agents were interested in the regularities imputed to these subtle matter-agencies.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the notion of *qi* and reasoning in terms of the visceral states (*zang*) became prominent within the same medical lineages. This close interrelation between the language of the atmospheric (*qi*) and the visceral (*zang*) goes against

the intuition of the modern practitioner who stresses that *qi* flows within the vessels (*mai*). However, the Mawangdui vessel texts of the early second century BC do not report on *qi* circulating within the *mai*.³⁴ It needs to be borne in mind that the language of *qi* became important to Han physicians only as they became interested in the dynamics of the visceral states, *zang*.³⁵ *Qi* starts to be perceived to be in the vessels, *mai*, only after the viscera, *zang*, are connected to *mai*. The earliest evidence for this can be dated with fair certainty into the mid-second century BC and is recorded in Chunyu Yi's (*215 BC) medical case histories (Hsu 2001a, 2001b and 2005).³⁶

In summary, medical reasoning which postulated the seasonality of certain illnesses provided a suitable framework for promoting correlative thinking in terms of the five agents within medical language. As it became more elaborate, the terms for the four seasons were replaced with terms that implied the seasons but explicitly referred to the five directions (as in *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3). Moreover, nosological terminology referring to 'warmth disorders', 'diarrhoea', 'intermittent fevers', and 'limpness and numbness', which testified to pre-Han medical doctors' interest in seasonal illness occurrences, was eventually no longer mentioned in the context of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' (nor does it occur in *Suwen* 5.3 nor 4.3). In the course of elaborating reasoning in terms of the five agents, medical specialists focused on the invisible and subtle, namely subtle atmospheric and visceral changes. This made them sensitive to potentialities and allowed them to make prognostications of regularities that are not easily falsified.

Discussion

The above genealogical approach to 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM uncovered, step by step, layers of meaning contained in the contemporary notion of the 'five agents' and resulted in the description of one aspect of the body ecologic in Chinese medicine. To be sure, correlative thinking in terms of the five agents represents but one facet of the Chinese medical body ecologic. It is to be expected that in Chinese and other medicines further experiences of ecological realities, encoded in highly learned language, can be elicited through a genealogical study.

The genealogical approach that results in an assessment of the body ecologic is meant to represent an addition to Scheper-Hughes and Lock's 'three bodies' in that it provides a non-Cartesian approach to engaging in an anthropology of the body. While the 'three bodies' outlined by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) can be assessed through

the study of synchronous dynamics in society, the genealogical approach uncovers meaning aspects of earlier time periods in currently used medical terminology and focuses on their diachronic thrust. As scholarship in the social sciences has emphasized in recent years, there is an increasing awareness that contemporary social practice is history turned into nature, that the past is contained in the present, and that contemporary usages of current terminology have a diachronic dimension. This applies also to the anthropology of the body.

The Foucauldian genealogical approach aims to uncover unknown events relevant to its current understanding, and thereby has the potential to unmask master narratives of a historical sociological kind. The unknown event found in this study is that physicians in pre-Han times were already aware of the seasonality of illness before correlative thinking in terms of the five agents became predominant and that, as correlations between the five agents were elaborated, the initial correlation between a certain season and the occurrence of a certain illness, which is a cross-cultural ecological experience, was no longer mentioned.

This study dealt with a highly complex learned language that has a long history, and the analysis has therefore been protracted. The concept of time was defined through the events that had occurred in time (e.g. the time of the compilation of the *Canon of Categories*, the time of the edition of the *Suwen* chapters, the time of composition of the sentences contained in those chapters, etc.), and not by clock time, and it importantly did not assume linear trajectory. 'The Theory of the Five Agents' is one of the most elaborate aspects of Chinese medical reasoning and it is likely that a genealogical approach to other body concepts may result in a body ecological description that is not as technical.

The method for making possible the genealogical approach in this study was inspired by conceptual history and Koselleck's observation that there exist two separate temporal structures between linguistic phenomena and non-linguistic events. Thus, Koselleck (1989: 660) maintains: 'Concepts' [or rather: 'linguistic terms' (EH)] ... 'are of extraordinary constancy and are capable of repeated application, even in cases where, in practice, they help ground completely different programs of action.' Accordingly, people may imbue the same term with different meanings, depending on the text and the authors', compilers' and readers' attitudes towards the text in which it is mentioned, which often are characteristic of specific historical time periods.

The article furthermore insists that those interested in how biology is contained in culture have to turn to history. It is through complex historical processes that ecological experiences become integrated into highly elaborate systems of cultural signification. The genealogy

given here started with TCM, which comprehends the 'five agents' as universal principles of a 'theory' that should explain the workings of the universe, and discusses them separately from the 'five organs' that are understood in more materialist terms. While this understanding of the five agents differs from that of the Ming due to its undeniable tendencies towards an internalising and therapy-oriented medicine, it nevertheless resembles it in that it attributes the five agents epistemological significance. In the Tang, Han and pre-Han periods, by contrast, reasoning in terms of the five agents was shown to have primarily a ritually prestigious, government regulatory and medical ecological significance. Reasoning in terms of the five agents as an aspect of a body ecologic was used for prognosticatory purposes and for regulating human conduct, as is characteristic of externalising and preventive medicines.

Notes

1. This article synthesizes ideas developed over the last decade that were presented in London 1997, Cambridge 1998, Singapore 1999, Taipei 1999, Paris 2000 and Montreal 2003, and in parts published in Hsu (1999: 78–83 and 2001a: chapter 3). The discussion of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) recapitulates Hsu (1999: chapter 6 and 2000a), but the framing of the project as a 'genealogical approach' is new, thanks to a perceptive remark by Stefan Ecks and help from Lewis Mayo. I am indebted to Erling Høg for unrelenting encouragement as well as Barbara Gerke, Ann Lever, Geoffrey Lloyd, David Parkin, and Katherine Swancutt for valuable comments on an earlier draft.
2. Although researchers of the Chinese medical body have not specifically referred to the article by Scheper-Hughes & Lock, one can retrospectively discern their theoretical approaches to the three bodies as follows: Ots' (1990) discussion of the vocabulary of patients' complaints, often identical to expert terminology, throws light on the individual body in Chinese medicine; Unschuld (1980: 62; 2003: 133), who compares the functions of the viscera to offices of the Imperial administration, highlights aspects of the social body in Chinese medicine; and Farquhar's (1999) discussion of the recent sub-discipline 'men's medicine' (*nanke*) alludes to the body politic in post-Maoist China (see Hsu 2001c and 2003 in German).
3. The study of the 'body ecologic' undeniably also has a thematic aspect in that it accounts for ecological knowledge and its culture-specific perception. Its defining aspect, however, is the theoretical approach that consists of exploring in a genealogical fashion the diachronic thrust in contemporary social practice.
4. The above summary of some points Foucault ([1971]1991) raised in Nietzsche, Genealogy, History barely touches on power relations. However, a genealogy not only rearranges evidence into new configurations that provide new insights (Flynn 1994: 33), but is also interested in power relations (ibid: 36). Foucault's works that contain genealogies, such as *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1979) and *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, ([1976] 1990), become fully intelligible only when one considers how they deal with issues of power and knowledge, regardless of whether they take the form of an 'archaeology', a 'genealogy' or a 'problematisation' (e.g. Rabinow [1984] 1991, Hacking 1986, Flynn 1994).

5. Gry Sagli (2003) and her supervisor, Christoph Harbsmeier, drew my attention to Reinhart Koselleck.
6. *Wuxing* was in translation first rendered as 'five elements', in analogy to the four Greek elements (Matteo Ricci cited in Sivin 1987: 73). Richard Wilhelm spoke of 'Wandlungsphasen' in German and in medicine, Manfred Porkert (1974) coined the phrase 'five evolutive phases' or 'five phases'. More recently, Kalinowski (1991: 111), Harper (1998) and Unschuld (2003) have started to use the term 'five agents' to refer to *wuxing*.
7. E.g. Granet (1934), Needham (1956), Henderson (1984), Graham (1986), Kalinowski (1991, 2003), Major (1993), Queen (1996), Wang (2000), and many others.
8. E.g. Porkert (1974), Unschuld (1980, 2003), Sivin (1987), Farquhar (1994), Hsu (1999), Despeux (2001), and many others.
9. It takes issue, for instance, with Unschuld (2003: 99), who postulates an ecological reality for the numerology of two of *yin-yang* reasoning (shady and sunny side of a mountain), but none for that of the five agents: 'In contrast to the dualism underlying the *yin-yang* doctrine, the pentic numerology of the five agents [*wuxing*] doctrine lacks an obvious antecedent in man's natural environment.'
10. Graham (1989: 326) suggests that 'The *xing* [the five agents] would seem to be the processes specific to each material', but Sivin (1987: 71) claims that 'the word refers not to aspects of the physical world but to five moral qualities'.
11. Correlative thinking was mentioned in the context of government at least as early as in the third century BC (e.g. Queen 1996: 3), and is, for instance, recorded in the *Lüshi chunqiu* (Mr Lü's Spring and Autumn) of the third century BC. It is often assumed that it was elevated to a politically relevant notion of world order during the Western Han (e.g. Wang 2000: 129–172). However, Queen (1996: 100–104) makes a convincing argument that the texts attributed to one of its main architects, Dong Zhongshu (c. 179–c. 104 BC), probably date to a later time period. They are continuously documented only from as late as from the sixth century AD onwards.
12. Manuscripts from the third century BC (Harper 2001, see below), which testify to the use of the five agents for making medical predictions, show no explicit ecological awareness; they are medical from a modern viewpoint in that they concern illness (in particular the prediction of its course and outcome), but they may have been conducted by another group of retainers rather than the physicians who actually treated illness.
13. According to Unschuld (2003: 106), twenty-six of the seventy-two pre-Wang Bing chapters in the *Suwen* allude to reasoning in terms of the five agents. There are seven chapters, namely *Suwen* 66–71 and 74, which are considered later additions by the editor Wang Bing of the eighth century (Unschuld 2003: 393, though consider also p. 100). They constitute one third of the *Suwen* and concern reasoning in terms of the *wuyun liuqi* (five circulatory phases and six seasonal *qi*), discussed as 'phase energetics' by Porkert (1974). See also Despeux (2001), Zheng and Tessenow in Unschuld (2003: 395–488) and Feng (2003).
14. The *Suwen* (Basic Questions) and *Lingshu* (Divine Pivot) each comprise 81 treatises/chapters, and form together the scripture called the *Huangdi neijing* (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon). The standard references on its complicated history are Ma (1990) and Sivin (1993). Probably, it was first compiled in the Western Han (206 BC to AD 9) with some text passages that date to the Warring States (475–221 BC), yet in its rendition relevant for its extant version in all likelihood dates to the Eastern Han (AD 25 to 220; Unschuld 2003: 5).
15. The concordance to the *Huangdi neijing* of 1986, edited by Ren Yingqiu, divided all *Suwen* chapters into thematic sections. This numbering is adopted here.
16. This point has been made univocally by Unschuld (1980, Sivin (1987), Ots (1987), Farquhar (1994), Hsu (1999), Scheid (2002), Taylor (2005). Strictly speaking, the

- common word for 'theory' is *lilun* in modern standard Chinese; the term *xueshuo* can mean 'learning', 'doctrine', as well as 'theory'.
17. Tables are ubiquitous in the secondary literature on Chinese medicine. Rather than drawing up yet another one, I have translated verbatim what the canonical texts actually say, which form the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM education.
 18. See notes 13 and 14.
 19. Evidence for this internalising interpretation of the five agents comes from the recording of the themes of the introductory lectures (Hsu 1999); the analysis of diagrams of textbook representations of the correlates of the five agents, which showed in the 1984 edition the five agents at the centre of the diagram, but in the 1988 edition the five organs at its centre (figure 6.3); and from conversations with and observation of TCM practitioners during the clinical encounter (fieldwork 1988–89).
 20. What motivated Zhang Jiebin to re-order the *Inner Canon*? Had printing produced such a wealth of knowledge that it had to be newly ordered? And why was the notion of category (*lei*) considered useful for ordering knowledge? Li Shizhen reorganised *materia medica* knowledge in terms of categories (*lei*) (Métailié 2001). Finally, why did Zhang Jiebin's reorganisation of medical knowledge, despite enormous socio-political changes, remain in place? We observe a tension between non-linguistic events of drastic change and a basically unchanged linguistic event.
 21. My translation of *zangxiang* as 'hidden and apparent' stresses the meaning aspect of the concept as one concerned with external as well as internal processes of the body ecologic. No doubt, *zangxiang* also had the meaning aspects of 'viscera' and 'organs'.
 22. The contents of *Suwen* 1–5 are listed in detail in Hsu (2001a: chapter 3, table 3.1).
 23. The exception is *Suwen* 1.3, which Zhang Jiebin moved into the *zangxianglei*.
 24. The WHO Health Education Unit (1986: 118) defined life style as: 'A general way of living based on the interplay between living conditions in the wide sense and individual patterns of behaviour as determined by socio-cultural factors and personal characteristics.' This definition does away with Weber's notion of 'honour'. Yet precisely this notion of 'honour' is relevant for understanding self-cultivation practices as a form of 'life style' in Chinese feudal bureaucracy.
 25. McMullen (1988), without explicitly opposing these terms to each other, provides information on the sociology of Tang scholarship that would characterise it as a status-conscious social group rather than a class.
 26. Incidentally, *Suwen* 4 and 5 contain many sentences on *yinyang* interrelations. Some scholars consider 'yinyang theory' an aspect of 'five agents theory', but historically viewed, *yinyang* and *wuxing* (five agents) were two distinctive doctrines (e.g. Queen 1996: 3). Therefore sentences framed in *yinyang* complementarities will be left aside in this analysis.
 27. This finding in itself is not new (e.g. Kuriyama 1993), but the genealogical method has produced detailed textual evidence.
 28. Notably, seasons are mentioned neither in *Suwen* 4.3 nor in 5.3, which form the core of 'The Theory of the Five Agents' in TCM. Seasonal *qi* is mentioned in *Suwen* 4.3, but not in *Suwen* 5.3. Instead, *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 speak of directions. Ironically, Sivin (1987: 209, table 1.2) does not mention the five directions, despite their indisputable importance in contemporary TCM.
 29. See, for instance, the *Zuozhuan*, as cited in *Shiji* 60 ([1959]1975: 2115): 'The land of the son of heaven has an ancestral altar. In the east, it is bluegreen, in the south, it is red, in the west, it is white, in the north, it is black, on the top, it is yellow.'

30. The *shu*-areas are mentioned in *Shi ji* 105 (1975: 2811), discussed in *Huangdi neijing lingshu* 1 (1986: 265 and 267–8), today known as 'alarm points'.
31. Unschuld (2003: 109) maintains that in *Shiji* 105.2 [case 15] the stomach was treated as though it was a viscus, associated with the colour red. The case in question concerns a damaged spleen and mentions *qi* coming from the stomach that is yellow (not red!) (Hsu forthcoming). The evidence is insufficient to make the former statement, and the latter statement is incorrect.
32. The interrelations of directions and colours in those manuscripts are with few exceptions (Harper 2001: 111, fn 42) identical to the ones in the *Suwen* 5.3 and 4.3 and *Shiji* 60, see note 29 above.
33. This would refute Don Bates' impression (forthcoming 77) that the credibility of Chinese doctors did not depend on them being natural philosophers.
34. Harper (1998) and many others state that it does without, however, providing any textual evidence from a primary source that explicitly mentions the circulation of *qi*.
35. This happened as emotions became medicalised or medicine became psychologised (Hsu 2001a).
36. The resonance of *qi* resonating with the viscera (*zang*), rather than the *mai*, is also variously given in phrases of the *Suwen* 3.3.3: 'The *qi* of the four seasons, when they *gengxxx*, they injure the five viscera' or *Suwen* 5.4.4: 'The noxious influences from heaven, when they resonate, then they harm the five viscera of the person.'

Chapter 5

ON THE SOCIAL, THE BIOLOGICAL AND THE POLITICAL: REVISITING BEATRICE BLACKWOOD'S RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Laura Peers

Over the past decade in Britain, human remains have emerged as a sensitive category of objects whose value and meanings to science and to families and communities of origin have been widely contested.¹ At one level the nature of this sensitivity has been played out as a power struggle over who should have control of such material, although such control would seem to rest on the ability to define and categorize human remains in one way or another. Increasingly, it would seem, human remains in scientific collections cannot be defined solely as biological, nor can they be defined solely as social in meaning. They are both, and very political as well.²

If one of the fundamental problems surrounding human remains today is their multiple sets of meanings, and the tensions between these, then they seem a useful focus for thinking about a new holism in anthropology. The idea of holism is not new in anthropology, of course, but has been integral to the discipline since E.B. Tylor's 1871 definition of culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.' Anthropology as a discipline was similarly comprehensive from the start, embracing biological, linguistic, material, social and cultural aspects of human life and the

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