

The Role of Human Will (Zhi) and the Spirit of Bladder-52 (Zhi Shi)

Abstract: The author examines the concept of human will (zhi) and its function as it relates to acupuncture point Bladder-52. Will is described as "the purpose of the heart-mind (xin) growing into the world directed by its own focused intention." The physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of will are discussed relative to illness, health, and the fulfillment of destiny. The functional relationships between jing, shen, qi, zhi, and ming men are discussed as they relate to the spiritual path. By examining a diverse source of alchemical, philosophical, and medical literature, a concept of will is arrived at that may help practitioners reach both themselves, and their patients, at deeper levels of body/mind/spirit.

ACCORDING to China's oldest herbal text, (1) the Shen Nong Ben Cao, the highest level of healing involved helping the patient fulfill his destiny (ming) (2) and allowing him to live out his years allotted by heaven. The next level of healing was the nourishment of man's nature (xing). The symptomatic treatment of physical illness was considered the lowest level of medicine. (3) The acupuncture meridians are maps of the functional relationships present in the human body/mind/spirit. These maps help the practitioner focus his intention on that precise aspect of the patient's being which is calling to express itself at any given moment. Just as Emperor Yu traveled throughout China learning about the nature of the spirits present in the mountains and marshes, so must the traditional acupuncturist know the nature of the spirit present in each acupuncture point.(4) It is often the knowledge of the symbolism present in the imagery of each point that can make the difference between symptomatic treatment and reaching a depth of the patient's mind or spirit that promotes true healing. Each acupuncture point accesses a quality of energy that exists in both the macro- and microcosm. The images contained in the point names do not ultimately define point functions, but serve as foci for discussions about particular aspects of being.

Acupuncture point BL-52/47 (5) (zhi-shi: "room of will") is intimately associated with the relationship between the human heart-mind (xin) (6) and the fulfillment of destiny (ming) through the recognition and cultivation of inborn potential as stored in jing (essence). It is the intention of this article to address these relationships with special emphasis on the nature of human will (zhi) and its place in Chinese medicine as a science of mind/body/spirit.

Notes:

1) The exact date of the Shen Nong Ben Cao is not known. According to Unschuld, the bibliographical section of a book he considers to be the official history of the Western Han dynasty (206 BC-8 AD) includes a reference to a book entitled Shen Nong Huang Di Shi Jin. However, the relation of this lost text to the one cited here is not known (see Unschuld, 1986, p. 113). The passages quoted here were already present in the work as it was compiled by the second century AD (see Gwei-Djen, L., Needham J., p.176) and cited by He Gong (Bao-Pu Zi: AD 280-340) in his Nei Bian, an early text of internal alchemy (Ware, J.R., trans.: Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in China of AD 320. Dover Publications, New York, 1966, p.6). 2) The importance of the fulfillment of destiny to the practice of traditional

Chinese medicine, and the functions of specific acupuncture points, has been discussed by: Jarrett, L.S., Oct. '92.

3) Shen Nong Ben Cao: Summary of the introduction to the three sections.

4) For a discussion of the mythological symbolism associated with emperor Yu, flooding in ancient China, and Governor-20, see Jarrett, L.S., Apr. 92.

5) This point is numbered Bladder-47 in some traditions and is the "outer" associated effect point of Bladder-23, the shu point of the kidney official (see endnote 8).

6) The Chinese character xin is often translated as either "heart" or "mind" which I believe may represent an artificial dichotomy not present in the source material. Throughout this article when I refer to the heart-mind, I refer to the xin. When quoting authors who have translated xin as "mind," I have often inserted the word "heart" in brackets to read "(heart-) mind." This is to emphasize the inner (corresponding to the spiritual heart) and outer (corresponding to the mental faculty) implications of the quote.