

On the Psychological Significance of Heart Governing Shen Ming

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ABSTRACT

According to the *Huangdi Neijing, Suwen* Chapter 8, the heart is the ruler of the body and the host for spirit brightness (*shen ming*). The paper examines the meaning and contribution of the heart with spirit brightness (*xin zhu shen ming*) to Chinese medical thinking. From earliest times, Chinese medicine's analysis of health and illness included the physical, sensory, emotional, social and cognitive aspects of the person's lived experience. The *shen*-mind with *ming*-brightness was said to radiate peace, virtue, clarity and intelligence, and the cultivation of *shenming* was thought to enhance one's physical health and longevity. In Part One, we discuss the conditions that influence the development of *shenming* and the maturation of mental-emotional intelligence. In Part Two we discuss its opposite, the heart without spirit brightness (*xin zhu bu ming*) to identify its mechanisms and the consequences for health. *Xin zhu bu ming* leads to the distortion of sensory perceptions and emotional responses, and refers to a person with mental-emotional instability and poor adaptive ability. Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism identify the influences affecting *shenming*-spirit brightness and explain the connections between ethical conduct, correct qi, and mind-body health. Mental-emotional development and the cultivation of *shenming* is discussed and contrasted with the social consequences and clinical manifestations of human mentality without spirit brightness.

KEYWORDS Chinese medicine, intelligence, mental health, mental illness, mind and body, personality, psychology, self-cultivation.

Introduction

Although the Chinese medical tradition did not develop a distinct branch of medicine for psychological disorders, it analyses all manifestations of human life without separating physical, mental and emotional features. This means Chinese medicine is uniquely equipped to identify and treat body-mind illnesses because from ancient times it 'perceived the interior of the living body as a cosmos, combining cognitive ingredients, social ideals, physical data, and sensual self-awareness'.¹ The heart (*xin* 心) was seen as a physical organ as well as the abode of the spirit-mind (*shen* 神). The *xin-shen* received and coordinated sensory perceptions, generated cognitive processes,

and managed emotional responses; and while the heart lodged the *shen*, the *shen* for its part governed the body form and its external appearance.

One of the earliest explanations of the relationship between the *xin-shen* (心神) and the body form (*xing* 形), between the inner spirit-mind and the external appearance, can be found in a Huang-Lao (Daoist) text of the early Warring States period (475–221 BCE). 'If the heart [in this context *xin* 心 is the heart-mind] is complete within, the [body] form will be complete without ... When a man is capable of being correct and quiescent, His flesh is full, His ears and eyes sharp and clear, His muscles taut, and His bones sturdy'.²

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Porkert explains *shen* as ‘configurative force’, meaning the ‘directing influence’ which shapes the body form and guides the materialization of qi.³ Hay agrees with this reading of ‘*shen* as the force which shapes the materialization of [qi], in a process from active states (yang) through structured states (yin)’; he adds that the *shen*’s influence also ‘conditions the character and the cohesion of the personality’.⁴

While the *Huangdi Neijing (HDNJ)* does not comment on contemporary notions of psychology as such it does contain many references to the *xin-shen* (heart-mind). This paper will examine a small section of the *HDNJ Suwen* Chapter 8 that describes the *xin*-heart as the sovereign ruler (*jun zhu* 君主) and host of the *shen*, and affirms the role of the heart with respect to spirit brightness (*shenming* 神明). *Shenming*-spirit brightness refers to a person with intelligence, perspicacity and clear insight,^{3,5} and the heart’s relationship with *shenming* invokes some of the core features of the Chinese perspective on human mentality.

According to the *Suwen* Chapter 8: ‘the heart fills the role of sovereign ruler from whom emanate directing influence [*shen* 神] and clear insight [*ming* 明]’.³ From this we may condense Chinese medical psychology to two basic ideas:

1. the heart-host with spirit-mind brightness (*xin zhu shen ming* 心主神明); and its opposite,
2. the heart-host without brightness (*xin zhu bu ming* 心主不明).

The first statement uses the *Suwen*’s analogy – the heart is the ruler and host of spirit-mind brightness – to indicate a healthy mind and personality. The second statement, the negative of the first, indicates a state of mental disarray and personality problems. The *Suwen* Chapter 8 is a key chapter describing the duties and relationships of the body’s visceral systems, and here is some of the context for the heart and *shenming* statements above:

The heart holds the office of eminent ruler, spirit brilliance emanates from it.

... Therefore, the ruler with *ming*-brightness radiates virtue, peace and mental clarity, if one cultivates life one keeps the *shen* bright and has health and longevity. If the ruler governs with *shenming*, the country is great and glorious.

If the ruler-host does not radiate brightness the twelve offices [the senses and their orifices] are in danger, the spirit path is closed and obstructed, the body form is severely damaged, if one cultivates life without *shenming* it is disastrous, if governing without *shenming* then the country will be ruined.^{3,6-8}

The *Suwen* here condenses the complexity of psychological phenomena to emphasise two characteristics: the heart-host with and without the clear insight of *ming*-brightness (*ming*

bu ming 明不明). *Xin zhu shen ming* and *xin zhu bu ming* form the basis of Chinese medicine’s perspective on human consciousness and its ideas of psychological health and illness.

Our paper will discuss the significance of this short section of the *Suwen* Chapter 8 for human life and mentality, and the implications for medical practice. Our examination of this topic shows that the expression *xin zhu shen ming* not only encapsulates the notion of a healthy mind but refers to a state that facilitates our ability to cultivate heart-mind brightness. In Part One, we concentrate on *xin zhu shen ming* and its cultivation. In Part Two the discussion will shift to the problems of psychological obstruction and disorder resulting from *xin zhu bu ming*.

Part 1: *Xin zhu shen ming*

In the *HDNJ*, the body is analogous to a nation with a governing bureaucracy of offices that coordinate and manage its qi functions, movements and resources. In the *Suwen* Chapter 8, the *HDNJ* uses the importance of *shenming* for the ruler governing the nation to explain *shenming*’s directing influence on the human form, its life and health. Within the body/nation, the internal viscera and their associations are systems and configurations of orderly process, power and influence, and the *HDNJ* repeatedly emphasises the idea of health and illness as states of order and disorder respectively. The *zang*-viscera govern (*zhu* 主) the sense organs, body tissues, and the transformations and distribution of substances. The idea of *zhu*-governance bound together the body form (*xing* 形) and its functional processes, including its mental-emotional processes, and the *HDNJ* endowed the heart with clarity and intelligence (*shenming*).

The heart’s governance of the five *zang* and six *fu* is a well understood tenet of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and all the *zangfu* have their own responsibilities that follow the associations of systematic correspondence. *Zhu* (主) also means to host, as in to receive or entertain. So just as a country’s head of state, the *jun* (君) gentleman, lord and sovereign, receives its important guests, *xin zhu ming* means that the heart-host provides lodging for the *shen* and cultivates *ming*-brightness. If the heart-host receives *ming*-brightness, the people communicate harmoniously through all the nation’s agencies and officials. And if the heart-ruler exerts his authority in a ‘goodly manner’ the effects of virtuous leadership spread throughout the empire.⁸

XIN ZHU – THE HEART RULER AND HOST

So to help its readers understand *xin zhu shen ming*, the *HDNJ* describes the living body as a nation with the heart as its eminent ruler – ultimate authority and control resides with

the head of state, who receives and takes care of the nation's guests. In the microcosm of the human form this is the role of the heart-mind (*xin-shen* 心神). To perform these functions the heart-mind and the ruler of a country must be bright and clear rather than marred, dull or confused. If the heart-host is without brightness, then intelligence, cultured life and general health are in danger.

In fact all the *zang* contribute to psychological health and intelligence (*shenming*). In reference to the *Suwen* Chapter 2 and *Lingshu* Chapter 8, Rochat de la Vallee says, 'When the clear and pure essences are nourished through the work of the five *zang*, then life is brilliant and the radiance of the spirits, *shen ming* (神明) is able to appear'.⁹ In its management of the body's administrative offices (*zangfu* systems and *guan*-offices), the heart-mind receives and co-ordinates all their materials and influences, and to effectively govern the human form and its life functions, the *xin-shen* must have *ming*-brightness rather than dullness or confusion. A nation's ruler in fact needs exceptional qualities (*ming jun* 明君) to govern the country well and bring prosperity to its people, and just as the ruler with *ming*-brightness brings great glory to the country, the heart-host with brightness brings a cultured life with intelligence and longevity.

XIN ZHU SHEN MING – HEALTHY PSYCHOLOGY AND PERSONALITY

Many inherited and lifetime factors contribute towards *xin zhu shen ming*. At conception the new life begins with the inherited essence and spirit (*yuan jing* 元精 and *yuan shen* 元神) that provide the foetus with basic developmental resources, information, and instinctual functions. After birth, pre-natal resources are stored in the life gate (*ming men* 命门) and kidneys, and according to Li Shizhen (1518–1593) *yuan shen*, the pre-natal spirit-mind, is stored in the brain – 'the house of the original spirit'.⁷ The pre-natal *yuan shen* governs instinctual functions, such as breathing, heart beat and digestion. These abilities are unlearned and inherited from our biological evolution.

Post-natal consciousness (*shi shen* 识神) consists of the sensory information, feelings, thoughts and perceptions we experience during our lifetime,^{10,11} and the heart is the host of the post-natal spirit-mind. So, the brain (*nao* 脑) houses the *yuan shen* (元神) and the heart is the ruler-host of the *shi shen* (识神). After birth, post-natal *shi shen* activities combine with those of the five spirits (*wushen* 五神), five yin viscera (*wuzang* 五脏 [五脏]), five senses (*wuguan* 五官) and five tissues (*wuti* 五体) functions, responses and processes. Their harmonious interactions accomplish human life so that one is able to act in the world.

At birth the *shi shen* is in an uncultured, unenlightened state, having little intelligence (*meng mei*, veiled and dark 蒙昧), and as the person develops and matures it gradually evolves towards a state of clarity (*ming xi*, never in a dark state, having good judgement 明晰). The psychological processes involved are lengthy and complex and in Chinese medicine, they are regarded as the development of the *shi shen* from *meng mei* to *ming xi*. Our progress towards *ming xi* from birth refers to the development and maturation of mental-emotional intelligence and cognitive powers such as analysis, discernment and judgement.

The development of *shi shen* psychological resources and character are strongly influenced by family environment, cultural, social and economic background and the level and style of education received; and intelligence (*li zhi* 理智) relies on the correct course of development. So what is correct for the development of intelligence and healthy psychology?

Sivin's examination of the *HDNJ* texts notes their use of political terms for early medical ideas. Health and illness are described as 'order' and 'disorder' respectively; *zhi*-treatment (治) is another political term meaning 'to overcome disorder'.¹² 'Sivin's explanation ... enables one to perceive bodily health and healing in continuity with the self-cultivation of the superior man and the management of family, local, and state affairs'.¹³ The notion of 'correct' (*zheng* 正) also links the cultivation of social and personal ethical conduct with familiar Chinese medicine concepts concerning correct qi (*zheng qi* 正气), and its opposite, evil qi (*xie qi* 邪气). *Xie*-evil is often translated as pathogenic in contemporary texts, replacing *xie*-evil with a more biomedical interpretation and avoiding the moralistic connotations of 'evil' for Westerners. Yet *zheng*-correct and *xie*-evil are purposely borrowed from the socio-political sphere of administrative ethics and invoke the moral dimensions of social relations.

Ethical conduct and the cultivation of virtue have been major topics of Chinese philosophy since very early times. Many Daoist and Confucian classics and other pre-Qin texts contain discussions on how to train and cultivate oneself. The *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing* 易经) 'provides guidance for choosing appropriate action if action is called for and an inspiration for self-disciplining and self-cultivation of oneself toward better moral development'.¹⁴ To cultivate the goodness of human nature, Mengzi (372–289 BCE) emphasised four virtues – benevolence (*ren* 仁), dutifulness (*yi* 义), propriety (*li* 礼), and moral intelligence (*zhi* 智). He stressed that one's qi (气) – in this context, *xin* is the heart-mind and qi is one's 'moral and physical energy – should not be forced', but gently lead by the will (*zhi* 志).¹⁵ For the Confucians in particular, practices assisting the processes of ethical enhancement included rituals that helped bind their participants to upright behaviours.¹⁶

While Confucian texts argued for the cultivation of strength, respect and wisdom, the Daoists preferred non-assertiveness, quietude and simplicity. They replaced Confucianism's 'conformist methodologies for one that was non-imposing (*wuwei*) and did not seek to control the spontaneous expressions of the people (*Daodejing* 49)'.¹⁷ Chinese Buddhist texts meanwhile identified wholesome and unwholesome mental factors, their resultant mental states, and appropriate corrective strategies. For example, ignorance and mental cloudiness lead to misperceptions and confusion and could be corrected by cultivating mental clarity. Aversion and ill will could be countered by loving kindness, selfish attachment by equanimity, laziness by effort and enthusiasm, and so on. In this way they developed a simple 'operational definition' of mental health and its cultivation.¹⁸

Overall, in terms of personal intentions and behaviours, the meaning of 'correct' in Chinese culture and medicine seems to have taken more account of one's social responsibilities and effectiveness than does the Western preoccupation with internal struggles and individual agency. The *HDNJ*'s political state/embodyed self analogy becomes less metaphoric and more directly connected when we keep the two (social and personal) levels of lived experience in mind.

HEART-HOST IS CULTIVATED BY THE ETHICAL PERSON

Confucianism urges everyone to become a true gentleman (*junzi* 君子), a wise, ethical, exemplary person. Such a person always works to improve and strengthen him- or herself and to move forwards, so for example in the *Yi Jing's Great Appendix* the Heaven (*qian* 乾) and Earth (*kun* 坤) hexagrams state that:

The [true gentleman] due to ['Heaven moves in strength'] is himself ceaseless in activity,

and:

The [true gentleman] uses this rich virtue ['Earth power'] to support all creatures.¹⁹

The exemplary person with the power of heaven is untiring and consistently strong in character. With the power and devotion of earth s/he is able to bear all things, good and evil, without exception.²⁰

In the *Daodejing*, Chapters 8 and 33, Laozi says:

The highest good is like water. Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending.

It needs observation to know others, but reflection to know oneself. Physically strong, one can conquer others; mentally strong, one

can conquer oneself. Content, one is rich; with strong will, one can persevere.²¹

Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist philosophical currents proposed injunctions that created a system of rites and dutiful actions, admonitions that encouraged the development of kindness and humanity, and simple moral rules that helped one abstain from harmful acts and guard against unwholesome influences. Daoist texts in particular linked the five precepts (against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, intoxication) and the five virtues (benevolence, wisdom, righteousness, propriety, faithfulness) with the *wuxing* (five transformative phases 五行) and the *wuzang* (the five yin organ systems). They explained that 'bad behaviour comes from a lack of control over the senses', that indulgence in the senses disturbs the *wushen* and causes 'confusion and darkness' and that in that state the *wuzang* can no longer function properly. Thus, 'Morality becomes an aspect of psycho-physical health and the proper qi-flow in the individual'.²²

According to Buddhism *shenming* brightness is like a mirror which cannot become darkened by negative factors and misperceptions: if *shi shen* is correct (*zheng* 正), this means there is *ming*-brightness, and if *shenming* is bright, then the heart is correct and negative ideas cannot form. Furthermore, the inter-promoting qualities of host brightness, bodily health and a cultured life are said to give longevity. The wise and ethical person therefore practises virtue, temperance and restraint, and ethical behaviour shapes one's mental-emotional life and personality. Determination applied to continued, focussed, ethical practices helps to develop healthy psychological resources and to cultivate the body and mind.

So to correct the heart and brighten the *shen*, one must conquer oneself, know oneself, be content, and be strong. Thence: *xin shi jian feng, xin zhu jian ming, ren ge jian quan* (心识渐丰, 心主渐明, 人格渐全). Heart recognition is gradually plentiful, the heart host is gradually bright, and the person is gradually perfected.

To summarise the discussion so far we can say that the meaning of *xin zhu shen ming* in the *HDNJ* has three interlocking parts. Firstly, the heart is the host of the *shen*: the term heart-mind (*xin-shen*) refers to this meaning. Secondly, the *xin-shen* is to the body form as the ruler is to a nation: this part includes the heart as ruler of the *zangfu*. Thirdly, the *shen* must be *ming* and the heart governs/hosts *shenming*. Here in Part 1 we have examined the importance of *xin zhu shen ming* for the cultivation of positive mental and physical resources. In Part 2 we will continue the discussion to focus on *xin zhu bu ming* – the mechanisms and consequences of *bu ming* dullness and confusion.

Part 2: *Xin zhu bu ming*

In Part One – *Xin Zhu Shen Ming* – we discussed the *Suwen*'s analogy of political governance and how it draws attention to the role of a country's head of state. With regard to human life systems, the heart is the head of state. As befits its role, the heart governs and coordinates the *zangfu*, their functions and associations, and as host the ruler brings *shenming* to the nation and its people. In Part One we saw that the *Suwen* Chapter 8 affirms the correct and eminent fulfilment of the heart's role – *xin zhu shen ming* – and that for contemporary readers, this refers to a healthy mental-emotional state.

Where there is *xin zhu shen ming* the person's mental-emotional stamina and stability are strong; their adaptive abilities and responsiveness to change are positive and appropriate. Their emotions are not easily disturbed or only briefly disturbed, and they are not easily roused to extreme emotional responses. Such a person does not easily suffer from psychological disturbance. Their clarity and brightness (*shenming*) can be observed in their appearance, eyes, temperament and conversation.

Suwen Chapter 8 says that if the head of state (the heart) is dull and confused (*bu ming* 不明) the country (the body) is in chaos and its citizens are in danger. Thus, *xin zhu bu ming* is the basis of psychological obstructions (*zhang ai* 障碍), personality flaws (*que xian* 缺陷) and abnormalities (*bian yi* 变异). Generally speaking, the person whose heart is without *ming*-brightness has very little mental stamina; their emotional stability and adaptive ability are poor, and their psychological responsiveness and regulative ability are reduced. They cannot face, adapt to, or manage social or environmental changes. They cannot deal appropriately with social interactions, or with success, defeat, setbacks or frustrations. When faced with failure, their emotions and mental state are easily disturbed and their reactions are disproportionate because it is very difficult for them to regulate their heart state. In this situation extreme behaviours such as suicide and murder can occur, and they are more likely to suffer from psychological disorders and psychosis.

The post-natal *shi shen* (ordinary consciousness 识神) resides in the heart. The heart-*shen*'s management of sensory information, feelings, thoughts and perceptions is determined by the development of its *shenming* clarity and intelligence. The cultivation of *shenming* is influenced by inherited and acquired tendencies and involves all the *zangfu*, their associated tissues, substances and senses. In particular, orderly *shi shen* activities include the reception, co-ordination and analysis of information from the external world and received by normal sensory and perceptive functions. Specifically, those sensory functions are: visual perception (*yan shi* 眼识), auditory perception (*er shi* 耳识), olfactory perception (*bi shi* 鼻识), taste perception (*she*

shi 舌识), and tactile perception (*shen shi* 身识). The heart-mind (*xin-shen* 心神) receives, coordinates and manages this complex stream of information and influences, so the orderly functioning of the five sense organs (*wu guan* 五官) belongs to the function of ordinary human consciousness, the *shi shen* (识神).

The *shi shen* is also called *shen shi* (神识) – the recognition, understanding and acquisition of knowledge and skills. *Shen shi* is heart *shi*, which means that everything we do depends on the heart. The heart-*shen* without *ming*-brightness is dull, confused and muddled; its reception, analysis and interpretations of sensory information are disordered and distorted. But *shen shi* recognition and understanding is not a singular function – it is performed by the unified activities of the five spirits (*wu shen* 五神) and their associated senses.²³ The role of the senses, our reception and interpretation of the external world, is crucial to how we experience life.

Even before the compilation of the *HDNJ*, Mencius (c. 371–289 BCE) and Xunzi (330–227 BCE) emphasized that the senses are ruled by the heart-mind and can interfere with ordering the person. Even earlier, in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (770–404 BCE), the ears, eyes, nose and mouth were the four officials that guarded against excess pleasures that could enter and corrupt the body, and if the *shen* 'fixed on an external desire it could find itself permanently exiled from its dwelling place'.² In an essay called *Jie bi* (Dispelling obsessions), Xunzi explained that the 'sense appetites react mechanically to attractive objects, which cover (*bi* 蔽), that is, blind or obsess them', and similarly, the heart-mind can be 'obsessed, so that it blindly pursues a wrong course thinking it to be right'.¹⁵ Disordered sensory perceptions distort our lived experiences and cause negative emotional responses, which then influence *zangfu* functions and lead to the situation described in the *Suwen* Chapter 8 where, 'if the host does not have *shen ming* then the twelve sense orifices are in danger, the spirit path is closed and obstructed, the body form is severely damaged' (see Part One).

Negative influences on a person's emotions and mentality can easily lead to a variety of somato-psychic illness (*shenxin ji bing* 身心疾病) such as hypertension, asthma or diabetes, or to psychological disorders, psychosis, self-harm or suicide. The cultivation of *shenming* was discussed in Part One. Here we will discuss other influences, negative influences, and their ramifications for medical practice.

XIN ZHU BU MING – DISORDERED PSYCHOLOGY AND CULTURED LIFE IN DANGER

Buddhism holds that a person's psychology is determined by two main kinds of influences – inherited and acquired. Inherited tendencies are sometimes called instinctual or acquired at birth,

and refer to a person's innate psychological disposition (such as extroverted/introverted, gentle/rough, sanguine/insecure). 'Acquired influences' mean that one can gradually form and develop some characteristics by study and cultivation (such as prudence, patience, stability, experience). Cultivated tendencies are acquired with practice and habit (*xin xun* 新熏).

From birth, the five senses begin to take in the outside world and the heart-mind begins to be 'smoked' or habituated (*xun xi* 熏习). Environmental influences are sometimes called 'smoking and dyed' (*xun ran* 熏染) – *xun*-smoking means subtle, on-going influences, and *ran*-dyed refers to more sudden or specific influences. 'Acquired at birth' is determined by inherited factors, while 'acquired with practice' is determined by life circumstances and personality factors. Together, inherited and acquired influences decide the degree and nature of *xin zhu shen ming*.

Whether an adult's heart-host (*xin zhu*) is bright or dim is decided in part by childhood experiences, and environmental factors will influence the person throughout their life in different ways and degrees. Generally, a wholesome and positive environment enriches the person, because the more positive the environment the more one can cultivate correct (*zheng* 正) recognition and understanding (*shen shi* 神识), and then the potential for the development of heart-*shenming* is very high. The cultivation of heart-*shen* brightness ideally should start from birth and early childhood. But at any stage of life positive influences can repair and correct (*xiu xi* 修习) unwholesome ideas and habits, they can replace harmful perceptions and habits with benevolence and kindness, and change the heart-host-*shen* from *bu ming* to *ming*.

As we know, a normal healthy mental-emotional life in childhood does not guarantee a healthy mind in later life, and nor does an unstable early environment lead inevitably to psychological illness. But a person growing up in an unstable, unsafe or unhealthy environment can form dysfunctional mental-emotional patterns and social disposition more easily than one growing up in a stable, safe and positive environment. They see more social darkness and are more sensitive to it; they grow up with higher levels of anxiety and suspicion and can more easily form delusions, paranoia, dysfunctional personality traits, or anxious/depressive responses.

XIN ZHU BU MING – HEART-HOST WITHOUT BRIGHTNESS

According to Chinese medicine, normal human development includes the development of the heart-*shen*, and heart-*shen* maturation is influenced by complex social and environmental factors, mechanisms and *xunran* (smoking/dyeing) influences. Historically, Chinese societies embraced the ethical principles of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. In every age, East

and West, a person's character and morality is shaped by social systems, personal actions, and the 'habitus' of injunctions, admonitions, precepts and laws that forms the reality and identity of a community and its members.²²

Family, friends and educational environment have a deep and lasting impact on the complex factors and processes of psychological development and maturation. Schooling and family life generally provide positive *xunran* influences and environment, but not in every case and not all of the time. Today for example, there are many external influences that encourage the desire for material possessions, fame, wealth and success. If those influences are persistent and persuasive they can perpetuate habits and heighten desires that result in negative psychological states. Over time this can cause the heart-mind to change from *ming* to *bu ming*, and a person who cultivates such desires may risk more seriously damaging behaviour such as corruption and embezzlement.

Medically, *shenming* clarity and brightness are qualities we associate with the senses (*guan* 官) and their orifices (*qiao* 窍), the eyes, ears, nose and so on. A sense orifice is a body aperture, a window to the external world, and by the time the *HDNJ* was compiled, the Chinese had noted many of their physiological features, processes and interactions. Sensory information and activities enable human consciousness; but sensory desires can 'distract the heartmind from its ability to think and accomplish its aims [and lead] toward inauspicious and immoral extremes'.¹⁶

Because sense orifices belong to the *shen* orifice (*shen qiao* 神窍), the correct reception and analysis of sensory information relies on *xin zhu shen ming*. When there is *xin zhu bu ming*, the *shi shen's* senses and perceptions are distorted and misguided. As in the *Suwen* Chapter 8, this is *shi dao bu tong* (使道不通) – the road where the *shen* is coming and going is obstructed. A person in this state for example, can hear but cannot listen or understand. *Shi dao bu tong* means in effect 'psychological obstruction' because misguided sensory information negatively affects psychological activities, mental clarity and all aspects of human life. In these cases the person's five sense organs still receive information from the external world but their inner experiences are deviated and abnormal.

Chinese medicine attempts to ascertain the clarity and brightness of the senses and their apertures, as well as that of the heart-*shen*. The orifice of the heart (*xinqiao* 心窍) encompasses all the sense orifices because it coordinates, analyses and interprets the information they receive: the heart-*shen* orifice signifies the alertness, receptivity, strength, clarity and flexibility of human consciousness. Medically, the heart orifice must be clear and open; if it is blocked, the heart-*shen* is confused and lost.

From the point of view of Chinese medicine psychology, the analysis of mental, emotional and spirit diseases helps to demonstrate this relationship to the heart-*shen ming bu ming*. The expression *cai mi xin qiao* (财迷心窍) means 'wealth confounds the heart orifice', and describes a person who is obsessed by the desire for wealth. They want only affluence and possessions and will attain them by any means. Similarly for money – *qian mi xin qiao* (钱迷心窍) – when 'money confounds the heart orifice' it means the person's mind is dimmed or filled up with money, so much so that they will go to extremes (such as fraud, theft, robbery) to acquire it. *Mi* (迷) means to be confused and lost, and to be fascinated by – 'fascination' here meaning an obsessive or fixated attention. Where there is *xin mi* (心迷) the heart is confused and lost. The expression is used medically and in common language to indicate that the heart-mind is obstructed, blocked or dimmed, and that the person has lost their bearings. Many mental-emotional factors can overcome, confuse and bewilder the mind.

In cases where *qing mi xin qiao* (情迷心窍), feelings and emotions overflow and obstruct the heart orifice. Lovers' suicide is an example – when emotions are high, intelligence (clear insight) and actions are misguided. *Quan mi xin qiao* (权迷心窍) applies to someone who is obsessed with power – they crave leadership and control, and become ruthless in their pursuit of an ever more powerful position. Even beauty can dim the heart orifice (*se mi xin qiao* 色迷心窍). An example could be the person who becomes sexually inappropriate, addicted, or aggressive because they continually lust after younger and more beautiful sexual partners. If their heart is *mi*-fixated they will experience this kind of sexual dysfunction, if *ming* their sexual behaviour is appropriate.

Medically, the terminology for this kind of *shen* disorder is *tan mi xin qiao* (痰迷心窍) – phlegm misting the heart orifice; sometimes this is given as *tan meng xin qiao* (痰蒙心窍) – phlegm clouding the heart orifice. The other common TCM pattern is *yu zu xin qiao* (瘀阻心窍) – blood stasis confounds heart orifice. Phlegm and blood stasis are pathological products that obstruct the orifices leading to clinical manifestations such as blurred vision, diminished hearing and smell, or slurred speech or aphasia. In the context of mental-emotional disorders, they often result from liver qi stagnation: qi stagnation leads to blood stasis, or to the stagnation of untransformed body fluids, which in turn leads to obstruction of the heart orifice. All three patterns (liver qi, blood stasis, phlegm stagnation) are common in cases of depression, mania, severe insomnia and psychosis.

The post-natal cultivation of *xin zhu shen ming* can prevent the formation of negative mental-emotional habits and tendencies and the obstruction of the heart orifice. But it is worth keeping in mind that while orifice obstructions can be inherited and/or gradually cultivated over time as described above, they can also

be accidentally induced by physical trauma. For example, in older patients with senile dementia or children with ADHD, a variety of patterns can be found including phlegm and/or blood stasis obstructing the orifices. In Hou²⁴ phlegm-clearing and stasis removing medicinals are given in cases of 'undernourished orifices due to obstruction of channels caused by blood stasis', and modifications of Wang Qingren's (1768–1831) *Tong Qiao Huo Xue Tang* (Opening Orifices and Activating Blood Decoction) are recommended for ADHD and senile dementia patients. Blood stasis obstructing the orifices patterns in children may have its origins in a history of birth injury, and in older patients, a history of TIAs or simple lack of mobility will impair the circulation of blood.

Conclusion

Just as greed and arrogance corrupt good governance, anger and discontent pollute the heart-mind. In the *HDNJ*, the *xin-shen* as eminent ruler means that, just as the country cannot do without its head of state for one day, the body cannot do without the *shen*; and just as the ruler with *ming*-brightness brings peace, safety and glory to the whole country, *xin-shen ming* brings mental clarity and accomplishment to human life.

Xin zhu shen ming is both a description encapsulating the healthy mind, and the causal influence for its ongoing process and development. *Xin zhu shen ming* gives us the ability to regulate our psycho-emotional receptivity, responsiveness and adaptability so we can respond to life's successes, failures and infractions reasonably and constructively. *Xin zhu shen ming* also guides the formation of positive life values and personal qualities – to cultivate cognitive and emotional intelligence, and acquire psychological resilience the *shen* must have *ming*-brightness. Without *ming*, the *xin-shen* is dim and obscured.

Xin zhu shen ming guides the gradual maturing of a person's character and humanity, the development of their *xin-shen* and *wushen* activities from simple to complex, from veiled to unveiled, from dull to clear and bright. Furthermore, *shenming's* clear insight is the light of virtue. When it shines, 'the person has presence, their eyes are bright, they radiate liveliness',⁸ and its brilliance and radiance manifests everywhere throughout the empire/body.

The level or degree of *zhu ming/shen ming* is different for every person, and human psychology has great potential and malleability. Although at the beginning of life everyone's *shi shen* (ordinary consciousness) is veiled and dim, correct educational and developmental conditions cultivate the *shi shen* towards a healthy, bright, unveiled intelligence. Over time, if one continually accumulates positive influences, habits, knowledge and experience, one's *shen shi* (understanding and recognition) gradually improves and the heart-host becomes brighter.

The *HDNJ's Suwen* Chapter 8 states two essential features for Chinese medicine psychology: the heart-host with brightness enables normal, healthy human life and mentality; the heart-host without brightness causes abnormal, unhealthy human life and mentality. *Xin zhu shen ming* and *xin zhu bu ming* therefore are the basis of a fundamental topic (*ming ti* 命题) in Chinese medicine, but healthy psychology is not only a matter for medical research and practice.

A person's psychology is related to inherited factors, cultivated by personal effort and shaped by early influences and events, family, personal relationships and the wider socio-cultural environment. The *xin-shen* can be influenced and trained throughout one's life; it can change from dim to bright but also from bright to dim. The accomplishment and maintenance of healthy psychology (*xin zhu shen ming*) and the effective prevention of abnormal psychology (*xin zhu bu ming*) is both a personal and social responsibility.

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Clinical Commentary

Xin zhu shen ming 心主神明 (heart governing spirit-mind brightness) is a fundamental topic in Chinese medicine because it is essential to its analysis of health and illness. The paper identifies the consequences, mechanisms and manifestations for our patients of the *shen* (spirit-mind) with and without *ming*-brightness. Medically, we associate the clarity of *shenming* with the sense orifices, including the heart orifice. If the sensory and heart orifices are obstructed the person experiences mental dullness and confusion, and their sensory perceptions and emotional responses are distorted and inappropriate. The *xin*-heart without *ming*-brightness negatively affects not just our mental-emotional life, but also our physical state and our ability to cultivate life and good health.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | | |
|-------------------------|------|--|
| <i>bi</i> | 蔽 | cover, conceal; obsess, blind |
| <i>bi shi</i> | 鼻识 | olfactory perception |
| <i>bian yi</i> | 变异 | abnormal changes, abnormal personality/ character traits |
| <i>bu ming</i> | 不明 | without brightness, dull and confused |
| <i>er shi</i> | 耳识 | auditory perception |
| <i>junzi</i> | 君子 | the ideal of a true gentleman or exemplary person |
| <i>jun zhu</i> | 君主 | eminent ruler |
| <i>li zhi</i> | 理智 | <i>li</i> is logical and reasonable, <i>zhi</i> is wisdom and intelligence |
| <i>li</i> | 礼 | propriety, courtesy |
| <i>meng mei</i> | 蒙昧 | <i>meng</i> means covered, or blindfolded; veiled and dark/dim; here the expression means there is little intelligence (<i>ming</i>) when one is born |
| <i>mi</i> | 迷 | confused, lost, fascinated, fixated attention, obsessed |
| <i>ming</i> | 明 | clear, clean, bright, radiant, brilliant [On the left side of the character is the sun and on the right side is the moon. Together they give light night and day so we never lose our way.] |
| <i>ming jun</i> | 明君 | exceptional qualities |
| <i>ming men</i> | 命门 | life gate, gate of destiny |
| <i>ming ti</i> | 命题 | named topic, proposition |
| <i>ming xi</i> | 明晰 | <i>ming</i> means bright, and <i>xi</i> is an accomplished ability for analysis, discernment and judgement; with <i>ming xi</i> , the person is never in a dark state – <i>ming xi</i> is the opposite of <i>meng mei</i> |
| <i>nao</i> | 脑 | brain |
| <i>que xian</i> | 缺陷 | deficient, lessened, sunken, defect, drawback, flaw; in this context, a personality defect |
| <i>ren</i> | 仁 | benevolence |
| <i>she shi</i> | 舌识 | taste perception |
| <i>shen</i> | 神 | spirit-mind |
| <i>shenming</i> | 神明 | intelligence, spirit-mind brightness, radiance, brilliance |
| <i>shen shi</i> | 身识 | tactile perception |
| <i>shen shi</i> | 神识 | recognition and understanding |
| <i>shen qiao</i> | 神窍 | spirit-mind (mind, heart) orifice |
| <i>shen xin ji bing</i> | 身心疾病 | body-mind (somato-psychic) illness – physical illness that develops or worsens due to psychological stresses or emotional disturbances |

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (continued)

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------|---|
| <i>shi shen</i> | 识神 | ordinary (acquired, post-natal) consciousness |
| <i>tan meng xin qiao</i> | 痰蒙心窍 | phlegm obscures, dims or blindfolds the heart orifice (see <i>meng mei</i>) |
| <i>tan mi xin qiao</i> | 痰迷心窍 | phlegm blocks the heart orifice |
| <i>wu guan</i> | 五官 | five offices (meaning, the five sense organs) |
| <i>wu shen</i> | 五神 | five spirits |
| <i>wu xing</i> | 五行 | five transformative phases |
| <i>wu ti</i> | 五体 | five tissues |
| <i>wu zang</i> | 五脏(五藏) | five yin organs [In the <i>HDNJ</i> all references to the 脏/臟 <i>zang</i> are written藏, without the flesh radical. Because our topic is about <i>shen</i> , we feel the original character is more suitable.] |
| <i>xie</i> | 邪 | evil |
| <i>xin</i> | 心 | heart – the <i>zang</i> -organ system; in early Chinese texts <i>xin</i> also means the mind |
| <i>xin qiao</i> | 心窍 | heart-mind orifice |
| <i>xing</i> | 形 | (body) form |
| <i>xun ran</i> | 熏染 | literally, smoking and dyeing; an expression for gradual/immediate influences on and changes in human psychology and personality – <i>xun ran</i> meaning gradual and sudden changes respectively; the binome also meaning to contaminate or corrupt |
| <i>xun xi</i> | 熏习 | <i>xun</i> – gradual ('smoking') practices; <i>xi</i> – practice, habit or 'habitus' |
| <i>yan shi</i> | 眼识 | visual perception |
| <i>yi</i> | 义 | dutifulness, righteousness |
| <i>yu zu xin qiao</i> | 瘀阻心窍 | blood stasis blocks heart orifice |
| <i>yuan jing</i> | 元精 | original (inherited, pre-natal, ancestral) essence |
| <i>yuan shen</i> | 元神 | original (inherited) spirit-mind (consciousness) |
| <i>zhang ai</i> | 障碍 | blocked sight/eye, or obstruction on the road; in this context meaning psychological obstruction |
| <i>zheng</i> | 正 | correct |
| <i>zhi</i> | 智 | moral intelligence, wisdom |
| <i>zhi</i> | 志 | will, mind |
| <i>zhi</i> | 治 | treatment |
| <i>zhu</i> | 主 | ruler-host |