

THE IMAGINATION OF THE BODY AND THE HISTORY OF EMBODIED EXPERIENCE: THE CASE OF CHINESE VIEWS OF THE VISCERA

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Images of the viscera in traditional Chinese medicine pose a riddle. They at once look like anatomical figures, yet look nothing like anatomical figures. It isn't obvious how they should be seen.

The labels on this plate from the *Leijing tuyi* (1624; Plate 1) name organs that might well be uncovered in dissection: the brain and the spinal column, the heart and the lungs, the stomach and intestines, the kidneys, the liver, the spleen. On the other hand, stylistically, in its casual sketchiness, in its seeming indifference to true shapes and proportions, Zhang Jiebin's figure seems worlds apart from the precise, finely-etched portraits of inner structures that define our image of anatomy. It looks strangely primitive and crude.¹

I say strangely, because we know that neither Chinese art nor medicine was primitive or crude. We have seen the ethereal refinement of Song and Yuan landscapes, and know that painters in China were capable of exquisite skill. And although skeptics may debate the balance of sophistication and sophistry in the Chinese medical classics, no one can deny that they weave theories of ingenious subtlety.

Lack of interest could be one explanation. After all, it isn't easy to untangle the complex structures packed in a cadaver. An untrained glance finds merely bloody gore. European dissectors teased out the intricacies of anatomical order only gradually, through passionate, repeated, cumulative observation over centuries. But no such tradition of dissection took root in China. The official histories report just a small number of autopsies scattered over two millennia.

From this viewpoint there may be nothing odd in the vagueness of Chinese



Plate 1

1. A recent Chinese attempt to grapple with this problem of crudeness is Zhang Zhijie, "Xiang bu xiang, you guanxi-tan woguo chuantong keji chatu de qushi," *Kexue yuegan* 27 (1996): 848-855.

depictions of the viscera, the false ties that they indicate and the vital connections that they miss. Their inexactitudes may simply reflect the limits of what can be gleaned from a few isolated autopsies. As for the crudeness of style, well, we wouldn't expect the talents of skilled artists to be brought to bear on a subject about which doctors themselves were indifferent.

But this interpretation leads us to expect an absence of pictures, whereas what we confront instead are puzzling pictures. Were the figure from the Leijing tuyi the sole illustration of its kind we might finesse it as a stray exception. But similar images recur in numerous medical works—for example, the *Zhenjiu juying* (1529), *Yixue rumen* (1575), *Shanghanlun tiaobian* (1589), *Zhenjiu dacheng* (1601), *Zangfu zhichang* (1639), and *Shenti tuhui* (1644). Moreover, we encounter like illustrations in nonmedical texts as well, in the *Xingming guizhi* (1615), a treatise of Daoist self-cultivation, and in the *Sancai tuhui*, the popular Ming encyclopedia.² Plainly, these images once had a significance that now eludes us.

Our difficulty, of course, is that we contemplate these figures at the end of the twentieth century, and not in Ming dynasty China. We thus cannot resist comparing them with the images that are familiar to us, contrasting them implicitly in our mind's eye with modern anatomical pictures whose like Chinese doctors would never have seen.

But suppose that we were entirely innocent of Renaissance art and dissection and their legacy. Suppose that we had never laid eyes on a modern anatomical atlas. Suppose that we were Chinese contemporaries of Zhang Jiebin. How would our perceptions differ? How would Chinese charts of the viscera appear to us if, instead of setting them, say, against the plates in Grant's *Anatomy*, we replaced them in the world for which they were intended, amidst other Chinese images?

What would we see then, that we cannot see now?

A moment ago, I associated the oddity of the Chinese images with their casual schematism. But there is another, more revealing clue of the distance separating them from the anatomical figures to which we are accustomed. It lies in a characteristic that is plainly visible, but which by its very nature is easily overlooked. I mean their fleshless transparency.

For the dissector, the viscera are truths buried in and under dense flesh, and fat, and bone (Plate 2); they are secrets that have to be uncovered. But the Chinese images present another view. They matter-of-factly display and label the brain, the heart, the liver and intestines, with no trace of the gruesome maneuvers that would

2. For surveys of the history of "anatomical" images in China, see Watanbe Kozo, "Genzon suru Chugoku kinsei made no gozō roppu zu no gaisetu," *Nihon ishigaku zasshi* 7 (1956); Miyakawa Hiroya, "Chūgoku dentō igaku no shuyō na zōfu setsu oyobi zu ni tsuite," *Daikei* 76 (1995): 15-21.

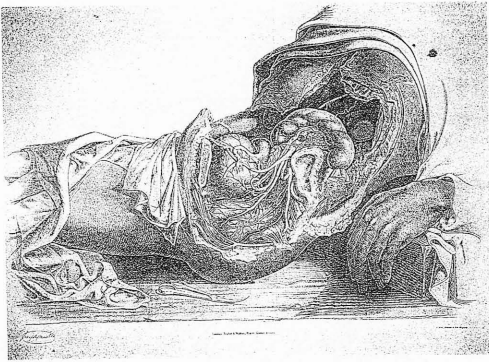


Plate 2

I linger on this, because a keen sense of the body's resistant secrecy figures critically in the history of dissection. Narratives of scientific progress typically identify anatomy with science, and science with dispassionate observation; and so we tend to forget how anatomy at once stirred and was stirred by voyeuristic desire, the fierce craving to glimpse forbidden realms. Think, though, of the frontispiece of Vesalius's *Fabrica* (Plate 3), and the tussling crowd of men elbowing each other to peep into the dissected womb--as if to miss out on the spectacle were to miss out on some indescribable delectation. Or consider this portrait of a dissection in nineteenth century Japan. The ferocious greed of the hunched observer's gaze verges on the pornographic; it recalls the leer of men at a striptease.

Augustine speaks in his *Confessions* of the "lust of the eyes" (*concupiscentia oculis*). No phrase perhaps more neatly captures the perverse cupidity manifest in curiosity. "Pleasure," he observes,



Plate 3

pursues beautiful objects--what is agreeable to look at, to hear, to smell, to

taste, to touch. But curiosity pursues the contraries of these delights with the motive of seeing what the experiences are like, not with a wish to undergo discomfort, but out of a lust for experimenting and knowing. What pleasure is to found in looking at mangled corpse, an experience which evokes revulsion? Yet wherever one is lying, people crowd around to be made sad and to turn pale.³

What is the logic of this visual hunger? How do science and lust meet in curiosity? Research into the history and psychology of ocular yearning is indispensable to a history of conceptions of the body. But no less needed is study of other, less concupiscent modes of seeing. It is one of these alternative modes that I wish to probe here. Illustrations like Zhang Jiebin's testify to definite interest in envisioning the body's interior. Yet somehow this interior was not truly interior, and this interest had nothing of the pulse-quickenened urgency and intensity that suffused European anatomical theaters. Whatever else one might say about Chinese visions the viscera, this much seems certain: they neither sprang from nor provoked leering lust. They weren't driven by curiosity.

There is of course a substantial corpus of Chinese erotic art so it would be wrong bluntly to divorce seeing and desiring in China.⁴ But even here, where we expect leering absorption, we find instead an atmosphere of almost detached nonchalance.

Contemporary Japanese scholars have pronounced the so-called spring palace pictures (*chungonghua*) of China "the dullest in the world."⁵ The description is surely unfair, but it is easy to guess why specialists of Japanese *shunga* might feel this way. For compared to their Japanese counterparts, Chinese erotic paintings, like Chinese anatomical illustrations, seem peculiarly lacking in dramatic intensity. Japanese erotic prints often appear obsessed with capturing the ecstatic frenzy of intercourse--to peer into the core of sexual experience. By contrast, the men and women in Ming and Qing dynasty *chungonghua* look ever relaxed and faintly bemused, and betray little trace of sexual transport. Inspecting their faces alone one might suppose people out for a pleasant stroll in the park, admiring plum blossoms in the spring air.

And what is true for the portrayal of pleasure also holds, returning to medicine, for the imagination of pain. Who would guess, without the captions, that

3. Augustine, *Confessions* X.55.

4. For a recent lavishly illustrated volume, see *Dreams of spring; erotic art in China from the Bertholet collection* (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1997).

5. In her chapter on Chinese erotic art, Nakano Miyoko cites this opinion as "almost the universal consensus." See her *Ryū no sumu randosukepu* (Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1991), 283.

these images illustrate excruciating afflictions. The children here appear to be delighting in their new toys.

Let me be clear. By querying the nonchalance of Chinese illustrations, I don't mean to imply that it is more natural to crave a glimpse of the body's entrails, or to be avid for scenes of ecstasy and pain. The Vesalian frontispiece and the erotic prints of Edo Japan, so redolent with voyeuristic lust, also require investigation. Curiosity, too, is a riddle.

But my concern this morning is with the imagination of the body in Chinese medicine, and the enigma of an incurious gaze.

The Claims of the Imagination

A crucial clue appears in the fact that views of the viscera weren't confined to medical texts, but also played a prominent role in Daoism. In their visions of the body's interior, medical and Daoist perspectives often merged. By late antiquity the *Huangting neijing jing* already detailed the technique of visualizing each of the major organs and its ruling deity.⁶ But the exposition of the viscera in this Daoist treatise relied heavily upon the foundational classic of Chinese medicine, the *Huangdi neijing*. Thus while some hybrid images reflect their specifically Daoist use as aids to meditation, and are densely inscribed with divinities, other Daoist illustrations, like that from the *Xingming guizhi*⁷, look virtually indistinguishable from those studied by doctors.

Influence flowed in the reverse direction as well. Zhang Jiebin's image of the body's interior, for instance, sports the allusive title, *Neijing tu*--a label that almost certainly echoes the *Huangting neijing jing*. Particularly notable in this regard--because it recurs in nearly all medical representations of the viscera--is the prominence of the brain and the spinal column. For the graphic implication that these were major organs in the body received little support in medical writings. Chinese doctors knew no concept of nerves; and although they referred to the brain from time to time as a locus of pains and disturbances, they assigned it no significant function. A person's vital core was identified, emphatically and unambiguously, with the so-called five *zang* and six *fu*, with abdominal and thoracic viscera such as the kidneys and the spleen, the liver, lungs, and heart. The pointed attention to the nexus between brain, spinal chord, and kidneys in acupuncture treatises can only be interpreted as the shadow of Daoist sexual and inner alchemical disciplines, especially the technique called "the circulation of essences and the nourishing of the brain" (*huanjing bu nao*).

6. On this important treatise see Mugitani Kunio, "Kôtei naikai kei shiron," *Tōyō bunka* 62 (1982): 29-59.

7. My thanks to Dr. Li Jianmin for calling to my attention this figure, as well as the article in note 1 above.

At the outset of the paper, I remarked how the background against which we view an image shapes our perception of it--how the context in which we eye the plate from the *Leijing tuyi* today must differ radically from that in which it was originally seen. I now wish to argue that Daoist meditation charts offer suggestive insights into this original context. To appreciate medical habits of *seeing*, I urge, we must look more carefully at Daoist practices of *imagining*.

In everyday speech, seeing and imagining often figure as opposing poles: we see things that truly exist, physically, out there, in the world, whereas the objects of imagination are immaterial, and exist, if they are allowed to exist at all, only in our thoughts. Sight passively registers natural facts, while the visions of the imagination are literally fictions, images "made up" by the mind. Skeptical critics of Chinese medicine have leaned heavily on this dichotomy. Chinese conceptions of the body stagnated in baseless fantasies, they have urged, because Chinese doctors neglected the discipline of sober observation--because they chose merely to imagine rather than to see.

But this account is much too simple. Recent histories of Western anatomy have stressed how even the most "realistic" anatomical gaze is shaped by the imagination; and there is little doubt that Daoist masters, for their part, saw visceral divinities not as empty hallucinations, but real presences. It is often impossible sharply to isolate what we see from what we imagine; and analyses of the imagination, in turn, regularly suppose a kind of inner seeing.⁸

The enigma posed by medical images of the viscera thus cannot be dissolved by appeals to a choice of imagining over seeing. Any plausible solution must elucidate a particular style of imagining^{and} seeing.

The Perspective of Landscape

The Baiyunguan temple in Beijing houses a beautiful painting called the *Neijing tu* (Plate 4).⁹ It is arguably the most artistically finished image of the body's interior in Chinese history; it is, at the same time, almost unrecognizable as an image of the body's interior. We aren't used to seeing ourselves in

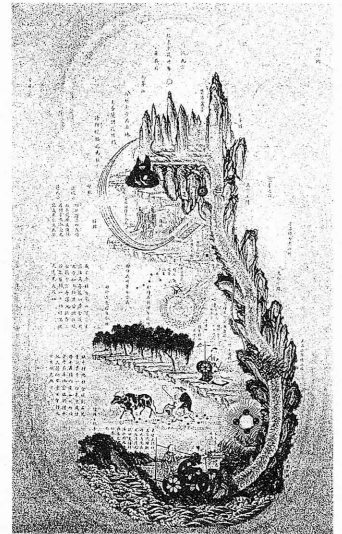


Plate 4

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8. Mary Warnock's *Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) provides a concise review of philosophical treatments of the subject.
9. Though indistinguishable in romanization, this Daoist *Neijing tu* is written with different characters from the name of the figure in the *Leijing tuyi*. See the Appendix.

this way.

Modern textbooks have trained us to picture a cavity packed with a dense tangle of organs, nerves, and bloodvessels, rather than an airy scene of misty mountains and streaming rapids. We struggle to imagine the lower belly as fertile fields, the spinal column as a rushing river, and the brain as Mt. Kunlun. Scholars such as Sakade Yoshinobu and Catherine Despeux have expertly catalogued the genealogy and symbolism of these features.¹⁰ Yet the vision still strains our comprehension.

Yes, it is easy enough to cite connections to familiar discursive tropes. In China, as in many areas of the world, analogies between the human body and the earth were a commonplace. Ancient philosophical texts such as the *Guanzi* and the *Lunheng* thus described rivers as "the blood and breath of the earth," and the medical classics, conversely, identified each of the six principal veins of the body with six specific rivers on the earth. Experts in geomancy (*fengshui*), the mantic art of "wind and water," diagnosed the flow of the earth's veins (*dimo*), and in a geomantic treatise like Yang Yi's *Tonglong pian*, we can find Mt. Kunlun characterized as the earth's spine, the Yellow River as the large intestine, and the Yangzi River as the bladder.¹¹

But for us these are merely idle conceits, a *façon de parler*-whereas for those who meditated on images like the *Neijing tu* what was at stake was not just a manner of speaking, or even a philosophical doctrine, but literally a way of seeing. These are what should appear to the introspective eye, the *Neijing tu* advises, as it inspects the body. Fields and waters, clouds and mountains.

How would our sense of being change if we could truly see the body in the earth, and the earth in the body? One consequence would surely be this: our gaze would be drained of voyeuristic avidity. The contemplation of lofty peaks and misty horizons may induce feelings of restful calm, or alternatively inspire a sense of awe and the sublime. But not the intense ocular desire of the anatomical theater, or of pornography. Not curiosity.

Chinese erotic paintings, again, are instructive. For one of their most striking traits is how frequently they show men and women making love in the open air, among rocks and trees. Was this because sex *alfresco* prevailed in traditional China? One rather suspects not. No, we have to do a particular style of imagining.

The accent on spacious gardens may have been intended to evoke a lifestyle

10. Sakade Yoshinobu, "Naikeizu to sono enkaku," in Yamada Keiji and Tanaka Tan eds., *Chigoku kodai kagaku shiron; zoku hen* (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jimbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1991), 45-85; Catherine Despeux, *Taoïsme et corps humain; le Xiuzhen tu* (Paris: Editions de la Maisnie, 1994).

11. Unno Kazutaka, "The geographical thought of the Chinese people: with special reference to ideas of terrestrial features," *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 41 (1983): 83-97.

of genteel, leisured wealth. Or again, the setting of rocks and flowering trees may have been designed to underline the naturalness of intercourse, echoing philosophical notions of sexual union as the harmonizing of the yin and the yang, an act of "rain and clouds." Whatever the reason, sexual play somehow had to be imagined against a background of greenery and fresh air. So that even when the lovers are nominally inside their homes, they are rarely completely "indoors": garden verdure peeps in through large open windows, or is painted on the surrounding screens.

I called attention before to the contrast between the relaxed atmosphere of Chinese erotic paintings and the voyeuristic intensity of their Japanese counterparts. Eyeing them once more, we now perceive that one factor underlying this divergence is the disparity in physical settings. The feverish passion exuding from the Japanese print here is inseparable from an almost claustrophobic enclosure within a cluttered, disordered interior; the mood of elegant nonchalance in the Chinese paintings owes much to the suggestion of open air.

This observation actually speaks not just to portraits of erotic experience, but also and more broadly to the perception of human existence itself. On the whole, we don't see people in quite the same way indoors as we do outside.

Facing you, framed by the walls of a small room, a person assumes a concentrated presence, a dense otherness, which tends to disperse or fade outdoors. This is partly because the walls focus our sight, blocking out the limitless expanse and variety of the world. In part, too, it is a matter of relative scale: an individual who looks tiny in the midst of a vast plain, or at the foot of soaring peaks, can seem to fill up a room. But the perception of dense presence or its lack also derives from alternate readings of human identity.

In the boundlessness of the open air, it is possible to imagine a human being as an inhabitant of the earth, a creature shaped by the same natural forces that forged the surrounding craggy peaks and winding rivers. By contrast, the confines of a department store or classroom, say, elicit a social gaze, and this by the very fact that it is a department store or a classroom, that these are sites designed by humans for specifically social purposes. Encountering a person in such contexts, we cannot help but see an unctuous salesman or a hesitating customer, a stern teacher, a bored student. Almost irresistibly, we perceive an unfathomable Other.

The Japanese print called the *Yōjō kagami*, about which we shall hear more in Professor Shirasugi's paper, mimicked the Daoist tradition of tying the cultivation of life (*Yōjō*; Chinese, *yangsheng*) to a vision of the viscera. But in the Japanese version, the bucolic landscape of the *Neijing tu* would be transformed into a bustling city devoted to capitalist production (Plate 5).

It is a revealing change. Already at the end of the seventeenth century, Japanese writers like Saikaku and Chikamatsu had exposed with ruthless clarity how in

an urban world ruled by money, greed and desire masquerade under a thousand disguises, and the truth about people is ever obscure. Examined in this context, the *Yōjō kagami's* displacement of the Daoist landscape hints at an intriguing possibility, namely, that the ocular lust so striking in Edo culture--the craving for insight into the inner reality of others--may be related to a resolutely social, and especially economic gaze. Edo sensitivity to the curiosity-provoking density of people, that is, may result from an eye that could not imagine human being as Daoist adepts imagined it, on a cosmic scale, could not place the body in landscape.



Plate 5

But the enigma of Japanese curiosity must be left for other papers. My concern is with the odd fleshlessness of Chinese medical illustrations; and my argument



Plate 6

is that these images must be set in the context of the wide open air. Sometimes this context is only implied, as in acupuncture models whose drapes float up as if wafted by invisible breezes (Plate 6). At other times, the evocation of airy exteriors is explicit, and occasionally, bizarre. We may not blink at treatises of Daoist yoga depicting the body among rocks and trees; but how else, if not in terms of the imagination of the body in landscape, are we to interpret the recurring pictures, in manuals of pulse diagnosis and treatises of acupuncture, of hands and limbs emerging out of the clouds?

All perceptions are framed by backdrops. Sometimes, the backdrop against which an object is perceived becomes so conventional that it is no

longer seen or even shown, but is taken utterly for granted. Yet in the end, we can never fully understand why something appears the way it does unless we recall and recognize this forgotten frame. Our incomprehension before Chinese "anatomies" is partially a problem of this sort. Our own probing visions of the viscera are framed by the voyeurism of the anatomical theater. In traditional China, however, the non-chalance and transparency of medical illustrations reflected a gaze that placed the body amidst mountains, waters, and winds, and imagined human beings immersed in streaming cosmic ethers.

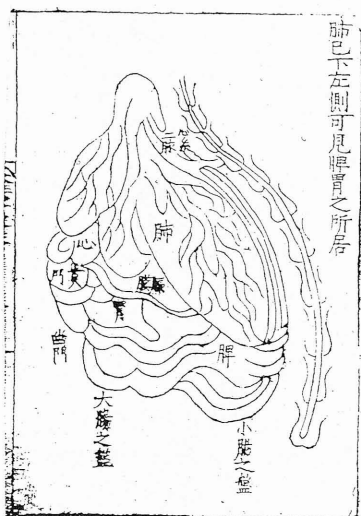


Plate 7

at it alongside this image from a traditional encyclopedia (Plate 8), and we are suddenly reminded of another kind of geographic vision, a way of imagining the earth much older than landscape. It occurs to us that Wang Haogu may have been trying not so much to portray the appearance of the viscera in the way, say, that a painter tries to portray a person, but rather to *chart* the viscera much as geographical maps chart the earth. We glimpse the possibility that the depiction of the body in Chinese medicine was shaped above all by the logic of cartography.

Another plate in Wang Haogu's work, laying out the body's main conduits, provides impressive confirmation (Plate 9).¹² For what is this network of sites, connections,

The Psychology of Presence

How does it feel to inhabit, and moreover, to be acutely conscious of inhabiting, a sea of ethers? Thus far we have approached Chinese images of the body mainly as a problem in ways of seeing. But the preceding remarks hint that the final crux of interpretation may lie in the subtler problem of ways of being--or, to be precise, in the *relationship* between ways of seeing and ways of being.

Consider this plate from Wang Haogu's *Yi Yin tangye Zhongjing guang wei dafa* (1234; Plate 7). Approach it as an anatomical picture, and we see merely a confused jumble. But look

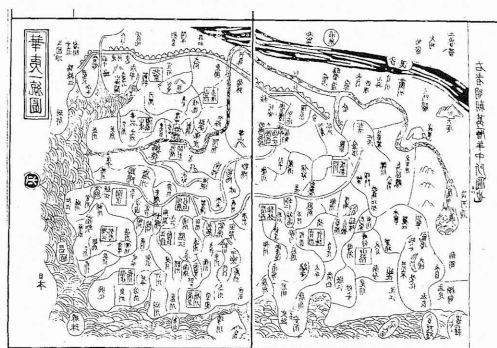


Plate 8

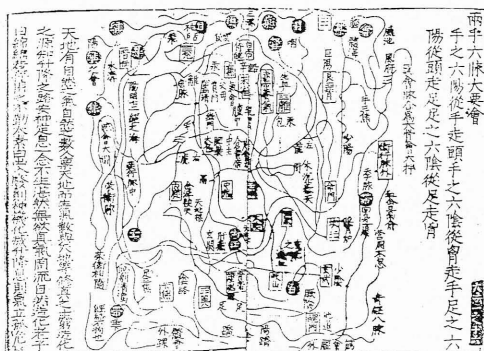


Plate 9

12. Thanks here are due here to Mayanagi Makoto, who drew my attention to this illustration in his seminar presentation here on September 25, 1998.

and confluences but a map of human vitality? The resemblance to maps here is not coincidental. As Wang explains in the accompanying commentary, the flow of vital breaths around the body derives from--and thus follows the patterns of--the flow of breaths on the earth and in the heavens. Earth and body were depicted in the same style, because both belonged to the same vision of being.

It is thus fitting that acupuncture charts should claim the majority of body images in Chinese medicine. For these charts represent the most direct and detailed expressions of the equation of bodily imagination and cartographic display (Plate 10). They map the surface of the skin just like geographers map the surface of the earth, and this not just by locating hundreds of needling sites and tracing the routes between them, but also by explicitly naming sites after terrestrial landmarks. So we have acupuncture points called marshes and springs, ponds and seas, gulleys and ravines, hills and Kunlun mountain.

Recognizing this cartographic attitude offers fresh insight into the blandness and transparency of Chinese views of the viscera. The map that a local inhabitant draws to orient us in an unfamiliar city will most likely not reproduce the actual appearance of the streets and buildings, as solid physical presences. And we don't expect it to: it is a map and not a picture, that is to say, it is a sketch whose purpose is to indicate places and give their names, and not to portray things and how they look.¹³ Whereas fleshly organs, by their opaque resistance, may stir desires to peer into them, places, in and of themselves, are open and empty. Nothing remains to be seen.

But this remark leads us straight to a further puzzle—the final and subtlest problem surrounding Chinese images of the viscera. And that is: What is the point of mapping empty places? Why should places matter so?

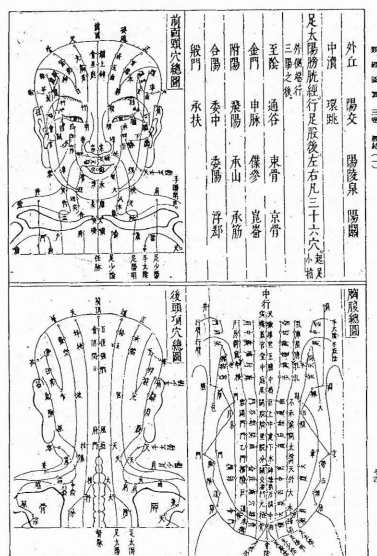


Plate 10

13. Of course, maps and pictures aren't mutually exclusive. They can, and frequently do, blend one into the other. Much of the confusion surrounding Chinese images of the viscera arises precisely from the fact that they are not purely cartographic, but also pictorial. The organs in Zhang Jiebin's *Leijing tuyi* do resemble, if only vaguely, anatomical structures.

Still, such picturing was secondary. Tourist maps may be a good analogy. Famous sites may be marked not only by a location and name, but also by diverse icons. These icons, however, are nothing more than mnemonic aids; they help to individualize a place, keep it more distinct in the mind, but they aren't indispensable. The essence of a map, its defining science, is the exposition of places.

If maps of a region guide the peregrinations of the body, Daoist charts of the viscera directed the attentions of the mind. In the meditative technique known as *cunsi*, adepts focused successively on each organ and envisioned the deity residing within. Both the bare diagrams of the *Hunyuan zhixuan tu*, and more elaborate illustrations like the *Neijing tu* mapped the itinerary for such tours. "To pursue the Way," the *Laozi zhongjing* advised, "you must first tour the viscera (*lizang*) and see all their gods."

With its deity lodged inside, an organ was impervious to the intrusion of demons and noxious influences. But let the deity wander off and vacate an organ, and that organ at once became vulnerable to attack. *Cunsi* summoned and secured the presence (*cun*) of guardian deities by the force of the imagination (*si*). One had but lucidly to visualize a particular organ and its deity, and there it would be, a divine power that could banish all sickness, repel all evils.

Such visualization of deities was foreign to orthodox medicine. But for doctors, too, health and sickness turned on the dialectic of presence and absence. Only instead of gods, doctors spoke of *qi*, vital spirit. Let *qi* remain within and fill the viscera, and even fierce winds and bitter cold could wreak no harm, they had no room to intrude.¹⁴ Allow *qi* to disperse and the viscera to become empty, and you invite certain pain, and worse, allow your very existence to slip away.

The odd fleshlessness of Chinese medical images thus reflected intuitions of the body as a realm of empty places, of receptacles open to the tenuous gathering, and all-too-easy departures, of divine life. "Life is the concentration of *qi*, death is its dispersal." Zhuangzi's famous aphorism summed up what remained the deepest intuition about embodied being. The cartographic perspective reigned not only because of analogies between the body and the earth, but because for dwellers in a sea of flowing ethers, the essence of the soul was presence, and the governing logic of presence was place.

The notion of a universe of ethers can be found in Europe as well, of course, most notably in Stoicism. But Stoic intuitions of power—which through the work of Galen would exert a decisive if still underrecognized influence on the history of European conceptions of the body—centered around the idea and experience of tension (*tonos*). Tension was crucial to our ability to see and hear; slackness dimmed the senses. A debilitated body had to be restored with tonics; for debility was above all a matter of a body gone slack. The strenuous exertions that would make European modes of exercise (Plate 11) so remarkably different from those of China aimed to maintain and improve muscular and psychic tone.

14. For extended discussion of the theme of depletion in Chinese medicine see Kuriyama, *The expressiveness of the body and the divergence of Greek and Chinese medicine* (New York: ZONE Books, 1999), Chapters 5 and 6.

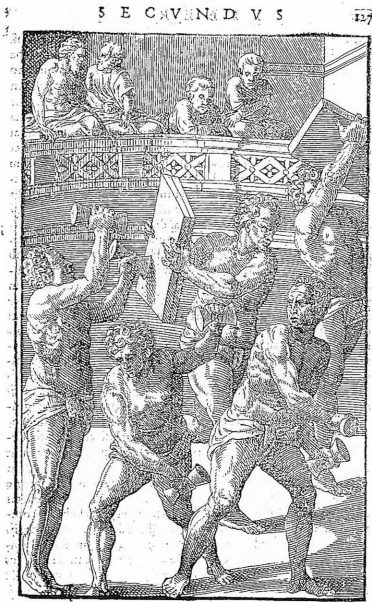


Plate 11

and fullness each lead ultimately to a different feel for life.

There is, then, an intimate connection between styles of picturing and styles of embodied feeling. We cannot fully comprehend the mapping the body in China without pondering the Chinese experience of power as local presence and weakness as vacancy. In the end, the puzzle of the nonchalant gaze is inseparable from the question of why the Chinese sense of embodied life came to be so haunted by the fear of emptiness.

Much of what in Europe appears framed in the dichotomy of tenseness and looseness would be cast in China as problems of fullness and depletion. Buyao, those drugs that have been for so long—and still continue to be—consumed so voraciously in China, are referred to in English as "tonics". But a more literal rendering would be "supplements": their aim was no so much to tighten slackness as to fill in emptiness. And while the phenomenology of slack and empty bodies overlap to some extent, the contrast between the painful straining of the weightlifting gymnast and the relaxed plenitude of this Chinese yogi (Plate 12) reminds us that the two ideals of tenseness



Plate 12