

ZHUANGZI III. YANG SHENG ZHU
A MEDICAL READING
Dra. Electra Peluffo MD. PhD
Master Course of Acupuncture
Faculty of Medicine. University of Valencia

This **Yangshengzhu** short story is composed of fables that allow you to analyze the relationship among literature and medical themes still in force because Zhuangzi texts transmit us concepts and reflections on his time and ancient Chinese traditions as well reflected in nowadays medicine.

Objectives: Bring to light concepts, data, and information which come from Ancient Classic text and can be applied both to the teaching and to the practice of current Chinese medicine.

Method: To do this we studied different Spanish, English, and French translations of *Zhuangzi*, Chapter III, **YANGSHENGZHU**, *Nourishing the Vital Principle*, so as to reinterpret in an analytical manner the text of interest seeking to locate medical references in it.

ABSTRACT:

Yangsheng, *Caring for personal life* (body- mind unit) arises from the principles of filial piety coming from the certainty that the world beyond the grave was so true in the Heaven as the world of living was on Earth, though sometimes it was doubted that the dead knew what was happening on Earth.

The first parable reflects on our human condition, whose limitations should be recognized and not exceeded so as not to get exhausted when the sought unlimited knowledge cannot be reached: a mental hygiene leads to a healthy emotional system. **Yangsheng** means keeping the Original Breath and make it circulate through the body.

Therefore, *Zhuangzi III* advises to remain in **du**, the center, site of the void full of energies. The *center du* points to the middle line which runs through the back of the body: the *extraordinary* vessel **dumai** called *governor* because it both oversees and watches (there is an eye on the lower part of the sinogram). This message promotes the proper use of knowledge, which must be limited to that what serves peace of spirit.

Center and void are the foundation of health and disease, no activity is possible without the void, which means potentiality. This idea connects the first fable with the second one where **Ding** the cook explains his professional skills through the void.

Ding narrates how he uses his body while cutting up an ox. All the movements **Ding** does and describes and his observations about the ox he is chopping up, serve me to link animal anatomy and human anatomy. Taoist **Ding** no longer sees the ox, he rather feels it, and more than on anatomy he talks about functions, dynamics: he stands, watches, moves slowly, slithers the knife and the ox drops to the ground.

The third fable introduces us to a crippled man: the Commander of the Right who has only one foot. Is it congenital, heaven work, or acquired, man made?

It is important to clarify his disability: if it is acquired it would mean that the subject failed to keep all life elements together in order to preserve it, proof of little wisdom. If congenital, it shows an internal failure which prevents the subject from being virtuous; he lacks the essences needed to invigorate breaths. The Heaven always does things right and makes a one-footed subject perfect, the perfection of a “onefooted”, *unipies*.

Next parable speaks on the pheasant that nourishes its life walking while eating and drinking: it prefers freedom to a “safe” cage. Nature is nourishing its life and that happens only in freedom. **Zhi** 雉 is a homophone of **zhi**, knowledge.

The last parable is about the mourning of the death of **Lao Dan**: **Qin Shi** voices out three cries and withdraws. In China, three ritually marks periods of testing and passage, from birth to death. Three lamentations are the symbolic minimum to accompany the passage of the diseased. Life has been lived and its bunch of energy disintegrates, it's not **Lao Dan** any more, its now part of universal life. In Medical theory, three describes, among other things, the three main sources of energy.

KEY WORDS: Zhuang Zi, life nourishing, Chinese medicine, Taoism, void, center, extraordinary vessels.

INTRODUCTION

I took part in FEIAP Valencia 2008 meeting with a communication based on **Qi Wu Lun**, second of *Zhuangzi* inner chapters through which and with cautious modesty I dared to link literature, thought and medicine in China where the unitary medicine - perception of the body mind both in health and in disease- always drew from philosophical thought. And from there, its theoretical foundations are taken, foundations still in force for the study, comprehension, and practical use of Chinese Medicine.

This time I would like to repeat that gesture and relate the interinfluence of thought-literature-medicine in China and its tight coexistence, interpreting at the same time the medical information I find in the *Zhuangzi* third chapter, **Yang Sheng Zhu** “Nourishing the Vital Principle”.

This short text (mutilated?) is composed of fables containing data which allow me to analyze the relationship between the philosophical-literary reflection and subjects of Medicine from the author times still in force nowadays. *Zhuangzi* is a primary source of the Taoist thought intellection of its time, not only of the Taoist one since its stories can coincide and also differ with the sustained by other coeval or previous schools.

1. Vital Principle

Yang Sheng, caring for your personal life, for natural qualities (body-spirit unit) was a practice born out of the filial piety derived from the certainty that the world of the dead that existed beyond the grave was as true in Heaven as the world of living ones was on Earth. However, at times doubts arouse about whether the dead knew, whether they were aware, of what was happening on Earth.

Mo Zi¹ dedicated Chapter 31 of his work to silence those who did not believe that the dead and their spirit “existed” and, not only that but considered sacrificial ceremonials a waste of time and food. For **MoZi** (V century BC) these ceremonies helped gather people together and improved relationships between neighbors. But, the uncertainty about whether the dead had the capacity to know what was thought about them on Earth, still remained. Those asking this -the hedonists²-shifted their attention from spirits to the living bodies: it was better to enjoy all the possibilities in life regardless of *postmortem* reputation we would leave. They called their doctrine **Yang Sheng**: nurture, nourish life and the living as opposite to nourishing the dead.

And for Hedonists, what most nourishes life is the happiness obtained through the freedom of fulfilling desires, although for many of them this was not so elementary or simple since there were guidelines such as those in the 8th chapter of *Ben Shen* (Root Spirit) classical text *Ling Shu*³ which help us to wisely preserve full health so as to avoid the attack of evil energy and live long without declining. Thus **Yang Sheng** is equivalent to observe the four seasons and know how to adapt to cold and heat, to harmonize joy and anger to be quiet both at rest and activity, to regulate yinyang and to balance firmness and softness. This capacity or skill leads to the capacity for well living: we must cultivate, indefinitely, what was given to us by Heaven. Chapter 8 of *Su Wen*⁴, another medicine classic, also points out that in order to achieve longevity the 12 Governments (our 12 organs and their energetic vessels among which, the heart is the sovereign) must be coordinated among themselves and keep harmonious under mandate, **zhu**. One of **zhu** meanings⁵ is to be the master of-in your own home.

Zhuang Zi names his text **Yang Sheng Zu**. All wellbeing advises need a master who inspires (methodizes?) vital dynamism⁶ and, for us humans, this mastery is exerted by our own heart, our guide in life. As parallel situation, in our society this is the task of the Emperor, the heart of the State.

Those were turbulent times,(IV century BC) each philosophical school- Confucian, forensic, Mohism and others proposed a concrete plan of action to reform both the individual and the society and thus getting to rid the world of all its evils⁷ through

¹ Watson Burton. *Mo Tzu Basic Writings* Columbia University Press. New York and London 1963 :94

² Waley, Arthur. *A Study of the Tao Te Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought*..Grove Weidenfeld..New York 1958 :40

³ *Ling Shu. Ben Shen*.Versión García J.JG Ediciones.Madrid 2002 : 68

⁴ Rochat de la Vallée,E.Pere Larre. *Su Wen.Les Onze Premiers Traités*. Maisonneuve. 1993: 251

⁵ *A Chinese-English Dictionary*. Foreign Languages Press.Beijing 1996

⁶ Larre,C. Rochat la Vallée,E. *Zhuangzi-La Conduite de la Vie. De Vide en Vide*. Institut Ricci. Desclée de Brouwer Paris 1995 :18

⁷ Watson Burton. *Zhuang Zi Basic Writings*. Columbia University Press New York 2003 : 3

reasonable solutions and achieve social, political and ethical reforms with them. But **Zhuang Zi** influenced or not by his social and cultural background and, of course, by his personality, only proposes an essentially mystical answer under the imprint of the Taoist School he represents: individually get free from the world. The word freedom may summarize the central theme of *Zhuangzi*.

2. First Parable. Center and Void

The first **Yang Sheng Zhu** parable already provides us with data regarding Medicine. It reflects on our human condition, whose limitations should be recognized and we should not try to overpass them so we do not risk exhausting ourselves when the pursued unlimited knowledge is not achieved.

Lao Zi XXXII tells us:

... ” *know that it is time to stop.*

Only by knowing when it is time to stop can danger be avoided

And in order to do so, **Zhuangzi III** recommends that we remain at the *center* where the plenty of energy *void* resides: we must reject the fame that might come from doing good and the punishment for doing evil, it is at the center where life can be preserved. Different translations coincide when considering *center du* a reference to the middle central line that runs along the back of the body: **du mai**, the *extraordinary* vessel named *governor*, oversees and watches (there is an eye on the lower part of the sinogram). **Dumai** stimulates and controls the flow of the **yang** energy of the organism.

Dumai starts at lower abdomen and exteriorizes at the perineum, from where climbing up the spine reaches the cranium to finish, always along the central line, at the superior maxillary gum. It describes a primary axis for Taoist exercises of longevity, which is to say we are in front of the central line, the one which guides life. Due both to its path and to some symptoms of its pathology⁸, it is associated with central nervous system although for authors who insist that vessels follow blood paths **dumai** would not be anything else but the aorta. In his essential study on the eight extraordinary vessels, **Li Shi Zhen**⁹ shows his interest in the inner alchemy, in the spiritual growth –**yang sheng**- when considering **du, ren** (conception) and **chong** (crossroads) **mai** the most important vessels among the eight ones. We will be back on **qi jing ba mai**, extraordinary vessels.

Chinese Medicine, through its unitarism inside pluralism, unifies organic and mental emotional life so **Zhuangzi**, (well-documented original source of Taoist reflections that continues to present day being the foundation of this Medicine), suggests in the first part of Chapter III *nourishing the vital principle* which is a sort of mental hygiene leading to a healthy emotional system including Confucian filial piety, because it is the whole taking care of the integrity of the individual what makes us live long. The message is aimed at the good use of knowledge which should be limited to those fields serving peace of spirit. Accept life as Heaven grants it to us. In order to do so, he mentions good and evil,

⁸ Larre,C. and Rochat de la Vallée,E. *Spleen and Stomach*. Monkey Press. London 2004:24

⁹ Chace,Ch and Shima, Miki. *An Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. Acupuncture, Alchemy and Herbal Medicine*.

as **shan** and **e**, that what is considered good or evil in our world. In the text both good and evil point us to the skills helping us to stay alive without ignoring the fact that to nurture life we should focus on vacuity, that is to say follow the **Dao** of nature. Both the concept of *center* and *void* are precious to classical Chinese reasoning particularly in Medicine.

The *void* is the most divulged thing in the world since no activity is possible without a void, empty space. It means potentiality, availability, possibility and this idea links the first fable with the second one where **Ding** the cook explains his trade skills through the Taoist concept of void.

In several of his short stories, **Zhuang Zi** uses analogies with craftsmen and artists: the carpenter, the cook, the swimmer who does not analyze the course of action because their excellence in terms of expertise is just part of themselves. They act instinctively, spontaneously and without knowing How or Why they achieve success, metaphor of an utter free of purpose journey during which there is enjoyment but not clinging to joy, so guides us **Dao**.

“Each joint has an empty space”¹⁰ tells us **Ding**, knowing the natural structures that give form and life to organisms. This empty space is not an absence, it is dynamism of energy communications; both breaths and spirits go through it when behavior does not deviate, and that is what clears way for the edge of the cook’s knife. **Ding** dominates the void⁸ and the story suggests that this is so because he has nurtured his life through his trade, exploring the *functioning* of things more than the techniques. Is this the **zhu** of the title?

The void¹¹ **Ding** makes use of, reminds me of the reasoning of a player with the Spanish Football Team the day before playing the final match where they would win the World Championship, he said:

“Before, I used to go to the ball more often. Now, I’m more concerned about the space than about the ball” Carles Puyol. El País, 10-VII-10

Whether having read or not **Zhuang Zi**, he who knows his trade coincides in the mastery of understanding and dominating the void...

In Chinese Medicine the concept of void is essential to understand the movements of both energy and breaths, both in health and sickness. Thanks to the ungraspable void the free circulation of visible and invisible blows, an equivalent of health because its blockage leads to disease. Center and void, so precious to Taoist **Zhuang Zi**, are the foundation of the concept of health (and disease) in Chinese Medicine.

3. Second parable. **Ding** the cook.

Because of the descriptive detail of European anatomy, western science often points out the scarce anatomical precision of Chinese Medicine texts. In my opinion this is so because eastern people watch and see the body not to highlight organs, shapes, sizes,

¹⁰ Larre, C. Rochat de la Vallée, E. *Zhuangzi-La Conduite de la Vie. De Vide en Vide*. Institut Ricci. Desclée de Brouwer Paris 1995:38

¹¹ *ibid*: 55

weights but to calibrate the functioning (invisible) of those viscera, which role they play and how they do that and what relationships run between them. *Zhuangzi* makes a detailed account of the use **Ding** gives to several parts of his body during the process of dissecting the ox.

The wu ideogram things, beings, everything existing between Heaven and earth are formed by niu the radical for bovid, one among the ten thousand beings. It is cow, ox, buffalo.. If horses point us to the Heaven, ox terrestrial quadruped helps farmers and quietly rest in swamps, water holes..it belongs to Earth. Riding the ox, Lao Zi disappears through the West gate ,on it he leaves this world.

It is well known that for the Chinese the unit, base to plurality lies in Nature and everything has its equivalent in the different realms, we all look alike once variants are accepted. So I will make use of the movements **Ding** the cook describes and does to relate animal and human anatomy. Clearly, we are on Earth, in the **yin**, the materiality. So, in both bodies joints, arteries, tendons, bones, unions, interstices, hands, feet, knees, shoulders are rendered dislocating the conjunct which was alive before to offer it to the Gods in a one-to-one dance: **sang-lin** (dance of mulberry trees) and **jing-shou** (feathered head) were popular dances at the time when the author lived. Rather than an anatomical description- because the Taoist **Ding** no longer sees the ox, he knows it by intuition, he dominates (**zhu**) the animal – the story thrives on functions, movements, dynamisms: it raises, watches around carefully, moves slowly, uses his knife very slowly until the ox who does not know it is dead¹² (the ox had no time to realize it would die¹³) drops to the ground. The *sensory* perceptions correspond to the cook’s apprentice who can only see the ox but through the repetition of movements, **Ding** reaches an *unconscious* perception, he does not see the animal any longer, rather he conceives it¹⁴: a gesture constantly practiced becomes unconscious because mastery of gesture means safer and more fundamental knowledge¹⁵ have all lived/experienced the learning stages.

Ding, skilled artisan cook, interrupts his work to tell his action, he puts the knife aside (there is no possible concentration in two actions at the same time) and while describing the quartering of an ox he shows his master how to act in order to nourish life keeping, at the same time, the used tool for nineteen years. This is not the only time **Zhuang Zi** mentions number 19 in his writings. Nineteen is the sum of 10 and 9, both totality numbers, what may symbolize a long time or a complete, completed cycle, and in any case is here a metaphor for longevity – if not immortality- which is one of the objectives of nurturing the vital principle.

The cook explains that after the initial difficulty (reference to **Zhun, Yi Jing 3?**) and since he managed to master his craft, he has long lived without losses.

In essence, *Nourishing the Vital Principle* means keeping the Original Breath and making it circulate through the body. For some Taoist Schools **yangsheng** is synonym of

¹² Preciado Idoeta, I. *Zhuang Zi “Maestro Chuang TSé”*. Editorial Kairos, Barcelona 2007 : 352

¹³ Tchouang Tseu (Zhuang Zi). *Les Tablettes Intérieures*. Traducción de Jean-François Rollin. Librairie Séguier-Michel

¹⁴ Larre, C. Rochat de la Vallée, E. *Zhuangzi-La Conduite de la Vie. De Vide en Vide*. Institut Ricci. Desclée de Brouwer Paris 1995:105

¹⁵ Billeter J.F. *Cuatro Lecturas sobre Zhuang Zi*. Biblioteca de Ensayo. Siruela. Madrid. 2003

embryonic breathing exercises **tai xi**, holding the air the longest possible time so as to keep our own embryo alive, the embryo we carry in **xiadantian** our lower abdomen.¹⁶ And if the results of this respiratory technique are not reached, at least it will also be a way of protecting the vital breath.

But the **yangsheng Ding** who illustrates us about while slaughtering the ox, show us an example of someone who follows **Dao** and absorbs, without a voluntary purpose, the celestial breath, the original energy: wisdom and talent nourish spirit, life. **Zhuang Zi** proposes something less material as opposed to the multitude of physical methods, which he does not exclude since our bodies must be fit. But the spiritual practices, the nourishing of the spirit, the ecstasies, and the mystic union with **dao** will lead us to immortality or at least to longevity¹⁷.

However, we can say that other schools of similar antiquity practiced and still do, static ways of nurturing life originated by opposed positions to those of the above mentioned hedonists. **Han Fei Zi**¹⁸ (III century B.C), without recognizing any practical value, describes the cult which promotes *quietism*, **wuwei**. Politically or philosophically he might be right, but medically, the **zhang zhuang** –*upright post-* apparently static practice (everything is inner movement, energy never stops) can provide the same whole benefits as “active” exercises can do¹⁹.

Ding details all the possible obstacles he avoids and how he has managed to smoothly accomplish his task, and in the final paragraph he specifies its task when, during dissection, he must face a complicated site: with extreme caution he watches attentively focusing his sight in what he has in his hands, he works very slowly moving his knife (dao homophone of **Dao**) with the greatest subtlety until the ox drops to the ground. Standing still and satisfied he looks around while **shan dao** (thoroughly) wipes off his knife and puts it away.

In this second part of Chapter III, medicine subjects such as human anatomy and animal anatomy can be linked, as well as surgery techniques, how to carve up a body without hurting organs or other body elements. The width of the knife blade is almost non-existent, hence the importance of having the intuition of the hollow he is about to penetrate.

*“plunging that what has no thickness into that what is hollow”*²⁰
although 19 years has passed.

The gesture of taking care of our own integrity is instinctive, and thanks to the experience of repeated conscious gestures, taking care of our spirits adds to that and we reach a synergetic mastery involving a greater consciousness of one’s self (**zhu**) than of the object, in this case the ox.

¹⁶ Liu Xie. *El Corazón de la Literatura y el Cincelado de Dragones*. Versión de Relingue A. de Guante Blanco/Comares. Granada 1995 :276

¹⁷ Larre, C. Rochat de la Vallée, E. *Zhuangzi-La Conduite de la Vie. De Vide en Vide*. Institut Ricci. Desclée de Brouwer Paris 1995:13

¹⁸ Waley, Arthur. *A Study of the Tao Te Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought*. Grove Weidenfeld. New York 1958 : 43

¹⁹ Yu Yong Nian. *El Arte de Nutrir la Vida*. Discovery Publisher. Lexington, KY. 2012

²⁰ **Zhuang Zi** “Maestro Chuang Tsé”. Traducción de Preciado Idoeta, I. Editorial Kairós Barcelona 1996 :55

Let's not forget that Medicine, in China, is the science of healing, therefore those parts/pieces of *Zhuangzi III* can make us reflect on the medical activity as well. We will see that analyzing the third **Yang Sheng Zhu** story.

4. **Third Parable.** The crippled.

Watching through medical eyes, we can find analyzing material in the third fable as well, even though there are numerous authors who considered this part of the chapter as a later interpolation due to the difficulty to fit it into the treated matter. As Jean Levi²¹ points out, we can attribute a thousand different meanings to **Zhuang Zi** fables because they evoke series of images and associations which have concentric repercussions in our consciousness, like a stone thrown into a serene quiet lake.

The third fable introduces us to a crippled man: a Commander of the right who has only one foot. Poem XXXI from **Lao Zi** states that in times of peace among the well born the left hand side is the place of honor but in war times this gets reversed and the honor place is on the right hand side²². Rites of god omen circumvallation were performed watching South. In civilian life clockwise and in war times counterclockwise and that was important because it is Heaven ways to prefer the right: the Moon and the Sun travel towards the West and it is the way of the Earth to prefer the left, rivers in China flow towards the East²³.

The disability of the commander, is it congenital? Is it the Heaven's work or acquired and manmade? To describe his disability, the commander uses the character **du**: simply, lonesome, unique, only one (foot) which is homophone to **du**, the central line we mentioned at the beginning of the text. It is important to determine whether the origin of his incapacity was heavenly forced or was acquired because in this later case it would mean that he failed to keep together the elements of life: keeping a cohesive force is part of the conservation of life; he who does not know how to care of himself will not know how to assume the responsibility of his task²⁴. An incomplete body is proof of little wisdom, integrity was not preserved.

Amputation in ancient China was a common punishment for improper behavior. Of course for a Taoist, bad behavior is only so in the eyes of the world, for him there is no such thing as good or bad conduct.

But, if disability is congenital we are facing an internal deficiency that would prevent us from being virtuous due to lack of essences. Essences that design the body through the energetic dynamism of the breaths. And this essential weakness, doesn't it entail the weakness of spirit expressions which render him to be unfit for virtuosity?

Although the reason why Heaven expresses its aversion, depriving this man of his foot may sound incomprehensible, there is no fault on its side; it is just a malformation and Heaven can not be accused of imperfection or incompleteness Whatever Heaven does it is

²¹ Levi, Jean. *Propos Intempestifs sur le Tchouan-Tseu*. Éditions Allia. Paris 2007

²² Waley, Arthur. *El Camino y su Poder. El Tao Te Ching y su Lugar en el Pensamiento Chino*. Editorial Kier. Buenos Aires 1979 :140.

²³ *Ibid* : 184

²⁴ Larre, C. Rochat de la Vallée, E. *Zhuangzi-La Conduite de la Vie. De Vide en Vide*. Institut Ricci. Desclée de Brouwer Paris 1995:74

well done and if it has create a one foot being, it has made it perfect, with the *unipies* “onefooted” *perfection*.

But, if amputation comes from men, lacking that what Heaven originally granted to him, then there is fault; he did not have skills or ability in living.

Congenital malformation does not imply guilt or shame because it was Heaven decision that this occurred, but if it is acquired it is just normal that it shocks whoever is narrating the episode because something Heaven has originally granted has gone missing. He is at fault; he has not known how to cultivate his life among men.

Chinese Acupuncture describes and makes therapeutical use of a very ancestral system of vessels, basic and previous to the rest of formations whether visible or not. I am referring to **qi jing ba mai** circuit formed by eight extraordinary vessels (also called marvelous vessels due to the wonders they do) already mentioned in the first part of this work to explain the concept of *center* represented in the body – and in the text- by **dumai**.

Extraordinary vessels are part of the most primitive constitution of the being and they represent the purest stimulation of life Heaven can grant, Heaven that creates the invisible power of life, and when something invisible works for life it is just normal wonderful traits are attributed to them. According to **Li Shi Zhen**²⁵ (1518-1593) we have to proceed from the outside to the inside; the most elementary forms of the anterior Heaven **qi**, must be controlled before facing the fundamental dynamics of life. Internal growth/cultivation cannot happen in the void, a physical subtract has to exist, a physical subtract that gives form to the primordial **qi** and this form has to be regulated on a daily basis of cultivating it. Acupunctural treatments through extraordinary vessels²⁶ which frequently correct structural problems, especially those congenital ones such as right and left imbalance, limbs length difference, postural deviation, show that body structure is inseparable from the energy and its movements.

In **qi jing ba mai**, the **qi** character in its oldest mention, refers to a gibbous man, someone laterally deformed, disabled due to a physical deformity, so in the practice and by treatment with **qijingbamai** the correction of problems of static is sought to be corrected as well malformations and their consequences. I do not want to imply here that these treatments can manage to rebuild the missing foot in **Zhuang Zi** fable.

Accept what Heaven sends us and be fully contented with it: each living being has what is needed to fulfill his destiny, that’s the lesson this disabled man teaches us.

5. Fourth Parable. The pheasant.

This is a parable about a pheasant that walks to eat and drink and so nourishes his life, a pheasant which prefers its freedom to be kept in a cage. All Nature nourishes your life and for the Taoists this can only happen in freedom. We are reminded of this by the title **Dao De Jing** where **de** is what Confucians, seekers of the ideal of moral perfection,

²⁵ Hase, Ch. and Shima, Miki. *An Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. Acupuncture, Alchemy and Herbal Medicine*. Eastland Press, Seattle 2010.

²⁶ Matsumoto, K & Birch, S. *Extraordinary Vessels*. Paradigm Publications. Brookline, Massachusetts. 1986:16

call *virtue*; for Taoists this is power cultivated to obtain a perfect autonomy leading to a perfect state of health.

He Guan Zi (III century B.C) *the Pheasant feather Cap Master* can give us some clues. **He Guan Zi** embellished his hat (**guan**) with pheasant feathers (**he**) which at that time (IV century B.C) connotated more military virtues than Taoist Ascetics. It is from pheasants, recognized for their combativity, that King **Wu Ling** of **Zhao** (III century B.C.) took the design of the emblem for his elite soldiers: carry pheasant feathers on his waistline²⁷, he would wear them himself.

The pheasant from this parable nourishes his life in freedom.

Pronunciation of **zhi**, pheasant is the same as that of knowledge. The swamp pheasant flies straight without any deviation, looking for that which takes care of his physical life; he eats and drinks every precise number of steps -10 **shi** + 100 **bai** – respectively, symbolic value figures. Dietary instructions from **yang sheng** techniques. We have already mentioned that **shi** (10) represents totality, and **bai** (100) multiple of ten symbolically expresses an important conjunct of things differentiated by names, function, shape..²⁸ It is interesting to highlight that for *Shuowen*²⁹ Dictionary, in **bai** character the horizontal stroke crowning a nose, represents the blows coming out from it in the middle of the face. It would be the gesture of pointing to your own nose to self identification. For the pheasant it may mean that he nourishes himself, both his body and his spirit. We know that in China unity presides the vital functioning, everything goes together and simultaneously. The bird prefers to feed himself and fly, metaphor of the spirit that soars towards the Heaven which he could not do locked in a cage even if his food was secured. **Yang sheng** is the pheasant choice. Holistic Taoist health.

M. Granet in his book *La Pensée Chinoise* explains that *bodyspirit* is the Chinese conception of spirit reached through the enrichment of corporal organic life³⁰ by constant transformation of energy and thus **shen** spirit would be the result of the higher organization of energy.

6. Fifth Parable.

The mourning for the death of **Lao Dan**.

His friend **Qin Shi** emits three cries and departs. In China, three ritually marks testing periods or passages, from birth to death. In this case, three moans is the symbolic minimum to accompany the passage of the deceased. His life has been fulfilled, his bundle of energy has fallen apart, he identifies now with Heaven and spirits, he is not **Lao Dan** any longer, he nourished his life rightly, and he participates in universal life now. Number three in Chinese medical theories describes, among other things, the three main forms of life elaborated in the three fields of the body cinnabar: **jing** (the substances we possess), energies **qi** (activity in itself) and the spirits **shen** (resulting from the superior organization of energy) They are three potencies which constitute the body, the world and the universe.

²⁷ **Ho-Kouan-Tseu**, *Le Maître à la Crête de Faisan. Précis de Domination*. Éditions Allia.Paris 2008

²⁸ Rochat de la Vallée,E. *La Symbolique de Nombres*. Desclée de Brouwer. Paris 2006:178

²⁹ **Xu Shen**.*Shuowen Jiezi*. Versión Rochat de la Vallée,E. Institut Ricci,Paris 1981

³⁰ Billeter J.F.*Études sur Tchouang-Tseu*. Allia.Paris 2006 :208

An order of three which facilitates the emerging of anything, whatever it may be, everything; different from the Greek dualistic concept of body/spirit Western Medicine acts upon.

I include the description of a death and its corresponding mourning in a medical approach towards *Zhuangzi* because Taoists consider and accept death as a part of life process, alternating phases. We know where life comes from as much as we know where death goes to. The caring for life never stops, after death the nurturing of life does not stop because man is as vast as Heaven and as Earth in **Dao**'s manner, because if it wouldn't then it would not be, Great.

*Lao Zi XXV*³¹

*....There are four portions of greatness, and one belongs to the king.
The ways of men are conditioned by those of earth.
The way of earth, by those of heaven.
The ways of heaven by those of Tao,
and the ways of Tao by the Self-so*

CONCLUSIONS

This reading on **yangsheng** – nurturing life – from *Zhuangzi* describes inner processes to be in harmony with Nature, with the external world and the society and give us guidance to follow and solutions to achieve it: the practice of **tai ji quan, qi gong, zhan zhuang** healthy exercises, dieting and breathing exercises as well and advise on how to conduct our lives so as to lead a more pleasant and productive emotional life. Personally, knowing theoretical foundations, I find meaning in the practice – inseparable from them- of certain acupuncture techniques and of the vision of human bodymind. The world of Chinese thought allows us to interrelate technique, literature, and philosophy and thus provides quite useful concepts to the different branches of knowledge, particularly Medicine. This material keeps its multi-secular cultural heritage, therefore the analysis of ancient texts either philosophical or literary ones becomes quite fertile because, with a renewed interpretation it is possible to demonstrate the validity of those concepts that at present and sticking to Medicine, are applicable to the modern reflection on the comprehension of that of interest in our activity.

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³¹ Lao Zi. *Tao te King*. Versión de Anne-Hélène Suárez. Ediciones Siruela. Madrid 2003:79

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