

Acupuncture and the Heart-Mind Split

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Abstract

The Oriental medical concept of a Heart-mind split has no obvious counterpart in Western medicine. Patients with such a split are often labelled as anxious or depressed, and treated pharmacologically. The author contends that the omission occurs because the split is a fundamental feature of collective consciousness, and an expression of both medicine and scientific rationalism. He goes on to say that conventional treatment regimens may inadvertently exacerbate the split while in contrast, acupuncture's holistic philosophy can offer a way to successful re-integration.

Key Words – acupuncture, Heart-mind split, existential split, mind-body split, depression, anxiety.

Introduction

*The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing:
 We know this in countless ways.*

Blaise Pascal (1623-62)¹

I discussed the primary energetic splits in Western consciousness in a previous article in *Medical Acupuncture*.² To summarize, they have been classified as (1) Existential (primary dualism), (2) Life-Death (secondary dualism) (3) Mind-Body (tertiary dualism), and (4) Persona-Shadow (quaternary dualism).³ This article will explore one specific split – the Heart-Mind split – that has particular relevance to acupuncture, because energetically the Heart is said to carry the 'Shen' or spirit. In terms of the primary splits, the Heart-mind schism relates most closely to the tertiary dualism, in which the ego dissociates from the body, disregards the Heart, and continues as if it were an autonomous entity. The process of reawakening the Shen, and of reintegrating the Heart and mind, is a task uniquely suited to the practice of acupuncture.

In his book *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, Carl Jung discusses how he acquired an insight into Western Man's denial of the Heart when he recounts a conversation he had in 1932 with the Native American Chief Ochwiay Biano (meaning "Mountain Lake") of the Tao Pueblos Indians of New Mexico.⁴ The chief was quite candid in his perception of the white man's Heart-Mind split:

"See....how cruel the whites look. Their lips are thin, their noses sharp, their faces furrowed and distorted by folds. Their eyes have a staring expression; they are always seeking something. What are they seeking? The whites always want

something; they are always uneasy and restless. We do not know what they want. We do not understand them. We think they are mad.”

When Jung asks why he thinks they are all mad. Mountain Lake replies. “They say they think with their heads.”

Jung answers, “Why of course,” says Jung, “What do you think with?”
The Chief, indicating his heart, said, “We think here.”

Jung’s experience speaks directly to an imbalance in the psyche of Western man, which might be called the Heart-Mind split. In that short but remarkable encounter, Jung had a flash of insight, a realization that the split has fallen so far into the unconscious that even he was taken by surprise when someone pointed it out.

Definitions of mind/Mind, and heart/Heart

The English language is peculiarly bereft of terms to describe various inner states. Thus, in an attempt to avoid inevitable confusion, I will differentiate between ‘mind’ with a lowercase ‘m’, ‘Mind’ with a capital ‘M’, heart with a lowercase ‘h’ and Heart with a capital ‘H’. In defining these terms, I ask for acceptance of these definitions for the purposes of this article.

The term, ‘mind’ refers to the ego-mind, the thinking personal mind located in the head and separated from the body by a Mind-Body split; ‘Mind’ refers to a larger subjective embrace that transcends the Mind-Body split. This differentiation is useful because it allows us to envision personal mind as it now exists in the collective, separated from the body, and a more integrated Mind as it might be experienced without such a split. The word ‘heart’ is a reference to the physical heart, while ‘Heart’ refers to the metaphysical or energetic Heart. The term ‘Heart-Mind’ is used in reference to an integrated Heart-Mind, and roughly corresponds to the Oriental term ‘Xin’.

The term Xin is particularly confusing. This integrated concept has been translated variously as Heart, Mind and/or Heart-Mind, any one of which is misleading. The difficulty lies in there being no English word that accurately translates the concept of Xin, given that the Heart-Mind split is structured in the language itself. I use the word Xin and the concepts Heart Yin and Heart Yang in a similar way to that suggested by Leon Hammer.⁵

- 1) Xin and Heart-Mind will be used interchangeably.
- 2) The Heart of Heart-Mind will be used interchangeably with Heart Yin.
- 3) The Mind of Heart-Mind will be used interchangeably with Heart Yang.
- 4) The ‘mind’ with a lowercase ‘m’ will be used interchangeably with ego-mind.
- 5) The ‘head’ will be assumed to be the location of ego-mind.

The Electromagnetic Field and the Heart-mind split

The energetic primacy of the Heart centre (Heart Yin) is a core assumption of many traditional medical systems. Western science is perhaps now confirming the validity of this belief.

Experiments using the SQUID magnetometer (Super-conducting Quantum Interference Device, which measures electromagnetic fields around the human body) have shown that the heart generates the largest electromagnetic field of any body organ, several thousand times more powerful than that of the brain (The heart's field measures some 50,000 femtoteslas compared to the brain's rather feeble 10 femtoteslas).⁶ Hence the heart might correctly be regarded as the prime informational field generator in the body. Nevertheless, Western civilization continues to operate with the locus of energetic control shifted away from the Heart toward the head.

The difficulty lies in that the brain is not suited to the task of being the energetic centre. The mind ably reasons and makes daily decisions, but it does not organize the larger inclinations of life because it does not have the field-generating capacity. Indeed, if the brain attempts to assume this function, it eventually exhausts itself and stops functioning. The consequent energetic depletion may well be the background of degenerative brain conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. In the meantime, an underused Heart tends to get congested when its vibrational function is ignored, which conceivably might lead to coronary artery disease. Interestingly, both of these conditions are common in modern Western culture.

The SQUID's confirmation of the Heart's energetic primacy may be a scientific validation of something people have intuitively known for centuries: that following one's Heart (energetically) leads to a more genuine life-experience than following the dictates of the head.

Origin of the Heart-Mind Split

The Heart-mind split took a firm philosophical root in Western collective consciousness when René Descartes made his famous statement 'I think, therefore I am.' Those words are a concrete expression of Western man's conviction that reason is somehow superior to feelings and intuition. Today, the rational mind continues to assert its superiority, dismissing the non-rational because it fails to obey the dictates of logic and reason and thus, is irrational. This circular argument permits the rational to define the world by its own rules; hence, the essence of denial. Such self-serving thinking is typical of the Heart-Mind split. Reason defines itself as being the pinnacle and then, dismisses other modes of perception as not being useful simply because they are unreasonable. Of course the Heart can be unreasonable. Its domain is 'truth', not reason, and sometimes the truth is not reasonable.

Attributes of the Mind

The Mind (Heart Yang) lives in linear time, constructs a world of past and future, and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Hammer refers to Heart Yang (Mind) as Logos or 'the word'. Similarly, Western medicine has been characterised by reductionism, linearity, and causality.⁷ The Mind tends to be rational and detached and as a result, is energetically cool. Because it always looks to the past or the future, it is characteristically absent from the present. Such absence is a recognisable feature of people who live in their heads, e.g., the archetypal absent-minded professor. It could be said that the key assumption of Mind is the existence of linear time (Table 1).

Table 1. – Attributes of the Mind	
Linearity	past, present and future
Cause and Effect	an effect implies a prior cause

Reductionism	the whole is equal to the sum of the parts
Determinism	the universe is mechanistic
Problem-oriented	actively seeks out problems
Rational	looks for reasons
Absence	projects into past and/or future
Coolness	tends toward detachment

Attributes of the Heart

In contrast to the linearity of Mind, the characteristic of a Heart-centred awareness (Heart Yin) is one in which attention is focused completely in the present, a state that Hammer suggests is the source of divine or creative inspiration. In this state, past and future merge into the eternal now. The Heart cannot exist outside of the now because unlike the mind, it does not imagine a past and a future. It can only acknowledge the truth of what is in the moment. Thus, the Heart (Heart Yin) reflects what is, while Mind (Heart Yang) reflects what is not (or what was and what might be). The key assumption of the Heart is that the present is the only reality.

Non-Linearity	acausal interconnectedness
Acausality	there is no <i>specific</i> cause for any phenomenon
Holism	everything is interrelated
	the whole is more than the sum of the parts
Indeterminism	the universe cannot be fully understood mechanistically
Problem free	problem and solution are the same
Non-rational	truth is quite often unreasonable
Presence	the present is all there is
Warmth	compassion

With awareness focused in the present, the Heart (Heart Yin) is capable of being present with either pain or pleasure, without feeling the need to influence them. Its commitment to a transcendent intention remains constant in the presence of all experience, whether pleasurable or not. Knowing that pain is not an enemy to be vanquished, the Heart takes on the attributes of aware compassion. In his book “*Joy’s Way*”, Dr. Brugh-Joy delves deeply into the nature of Heart Centred awareness, describing four fundamental attributes as being innate harmony, aware compassion, healing presence, and unconditional love.⁸

The Differentiation of Heart and Mind

Prior to the Existential split, Heart (Heart Yin) and Mind (Heart Yang) exist in a state of undifferentiated wholeness, a state of Yin-Yang fusion (Xin). With the dawning of self-awareness, Mind and Heart differentiate as Yang arises out of Yin (*Figure. 1*). Mind (Heart Yang) then becomes Yang with respect to the Heart (Heart Yin) which, although comparatively Yin, remains simultaneously whole and unchanged in itself. Furthermore, the Mind, being energetically cool in nature contains some Yin, while the Heart, being energetically warm (compassionate) in nature, contains some Yang. Thus, the Heart-Mind unity exactly reflects the Yin-Yang symbol. A differentiation of these two principles is not a problem, so long as they remain aware and connected.

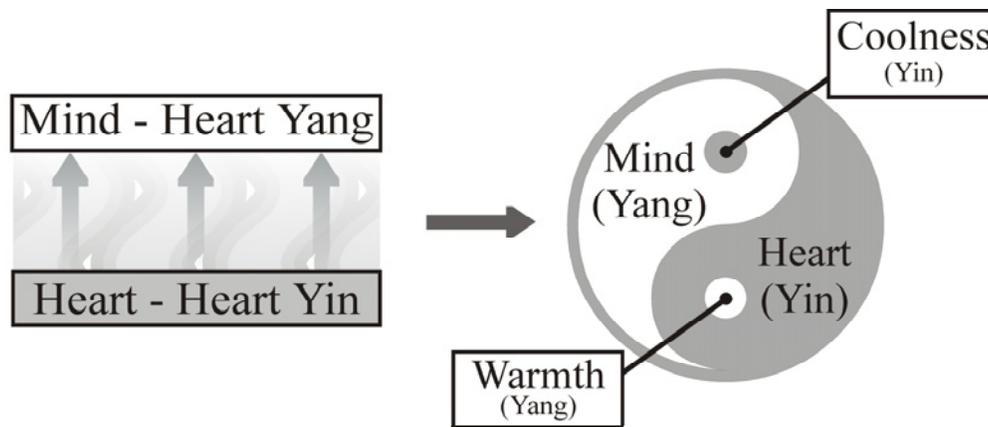


Figure. 1 Mind (Heart Yang) arising from Heart (Heart Yin)

Complex Systems

One way to understand the relationship between the Heart (Heart Yin) and Mind (Heart Yang) is to consider the analogy of a Rubik's cube. In the cube, as in any complex multifactorial system, every component is related to every other component. Move one component and you move them all. The cause and effect principle reflected through the Mind permits a view of one component of the cube and its relationship to another component, but such a focus inevitably misses other whole-system effects which then become labeled as side effects. On the other hand, Heart (Heart Yin) can be understood as the organizational principle that maintains the cube's configuration. Such a principle is both immanent in and transcendent to the cube, and reflects the fact that the whole system is more than the sum of its mechanistic parts.

Modern physics is grappling with whole-system effects and espousing a scientific language for it. For example, the principle of Relational Holism acknowledges the overall effect of instantaneous non-linear interconnections between system components.⁹ And modern medicine is slowly coming to grips with the notion that human beings are Complex Adaptive Systems.¹⁰ A Heart-centered awareness can 'intuit' such interconnections without necessarily being fully cognizant of each and every one of them.

The Mind-Body split - Mind reduces to Ego-mind

Unless Mind remains firmly connected to a core vibrational rhythm generated by the Heart (Heart Yin), the assumption of linear time tends to give rise to the duality of desire and aversion. Desire might be defined as the memory of past pleasure projected into the future while aversion might be understood as the future-projected memory of past pain. Inevitably, the ego develops strategies of pain avoidance, the first being a rapid retreat into an imaginary mental centre located somewhere in the head. From this position, safely encapsulated in its cerebral locus, the ego looks out at a menacing world and tries to discover how to stay safe. Part of this strategy involves a deep suspicion of the body because it is the most immediate source of pain. With this retreat into the mental realm, Mind is reduced to mind, and the Mind-Body split is established. After this retreat, every little ache, pain, pimple or blemish is regarded as a catastrophic or life-threatening pathology.

The ego's retreat and contraction to ego-mind leads to a dissociation between the mind and body. In the process the Heart (Heart Yin) gets forgotten, and the mind starts to believe it is the centre of the soul.

The Present Moment – All and Nothing

A graphic depiction of the Heart-Mind relationship can assist in understanding why the ego-mind, disconnected as it is from Heart (Heart Yin) could be so frightened of the present (*Figure2*). On the Mind's x-axis of linear time, the present, being a point of no size, becomes literally squeezed out of existence. Furthermore, the cause and effect principle implies that if a problem such as a disease began in the past, its solution must lie somewhere in the future. Unfortunately, such a view unconsciously defers healing to some inaccessible future date, resulting in a continuously present experience of illness.

However, the contrary view is equally valid. From the viewpoint of Heart (Heart Yin), past and future exist as a point of no dimension on the y-axis of the present moment. Hence, problem and solution (x-axis) exist simultaneously in the eternal now. This profound insight provides the key to discovering the experience of healing.

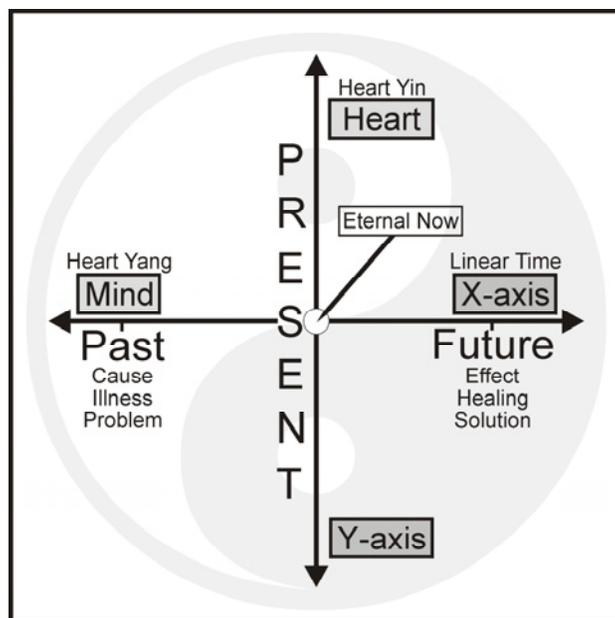


Figure 2. Heart and Mind Relationship

Oriental Medicine and the Heart-Mind split

In Oriental medicine, the Heart (Heart Yin) is likened to the Emperor of the kingdom who resides in the imperial palace and functions as the spiritual figurehead of the country. In the poetic language of Oriental metaphor, this statement might be understood to imply that the Heart is the prime energetic field-generator.

To further the analogy, in the ideal situation, the emperor does not actually do very much other than to comport himself regally while performing the various rituals and functions pertinent to

the head-of-state. This is the state of 'wu-wei' or effortless mastery in which nothing is done, but everything in the Body-Mind-Spirit functions harmoniously. It is a problem free state of optimal health. When all is well in the kingdom, the people are happy and contented, the country functions without friction or turbulence, and there are no enemies. The spirit of the country is in fine shape. In a reflection of this kingdom analogy, the Heart is said to hold the spirit or Shen of the individual.

When Heart and Mind dissociate, sooner or later the mind wrests control away from the Heart and takes over the job of 'head-of-state'. In the early stages of this dissociation there is usually no clue that anything is out of balance. But without access to the Heart's intuition, mind has no option but to operate using its powers of reason. It may do this quite successfully for a while, but feelings and intuitive hunches become increasingly ignored as the mind moves further away from Heart. Eventually, all calls of distress from the body are viewed with suspicion, pathologized, and treated antagonistically.

Such a process leads inevitable to anxiety and depression, or as Oriental medicine defines it, 'Deficient Heart Spirit'. In Western culture, anxiety and depression are common diagnoses, but since they are usually treated mechanistically, the loss of the Heart spirit is rarely appreciated. While anti-depressant drugs can change brain biochemistry and help people's day-to-day functioning, a drug dependency is often created while the pre-existing split remains, and may become even more entrenched.

Officials

The Heart (Heart Yin) function involves the integrated function of the Yin organs, specifically the Heart, Liver, and Kidneys, which rule the Taoist treasures of the Shen, Qi, and Jing.¹¹ The Heart stores the Shen, the Liver regulates the flow of Qi, and the Kidneys store the Jing-Essence. In contrast, the mind is mediated by the Yang organs of the Small Intestine (which sorts), the Gall Bladder (which decides), and the Bladder (which acts).

Meanwhile, the integrity of the Heart (Heart Yin) is preserved through the Pericardium and Triple Energizer energies, which form layers of defense against insults directed at the Heart (Heart Yin). The Pericardium is responsible for regulating the flow of energy to and from the Heart centre, especially with regard to intimate and inter-personal relationships. Meanwhile, the Triple Energizer looks after homeostasis, social interactions, and inter-compartmental integration.

Yang Organ Malfunction

When Mind reduces to mind, the functions of the Small Intestine, Gall Bladder, and Bladder become compromised in the following ways: first, the Small Intestine begins to incorrectly sort experience and distort messages coming from the body, e.g. anxiety and pain are framed as bad instead of being understood as useful information emanating from the body's energy field. In reality, anxiety is merely raw unfocused energy, and pain is simply energy that is stagnant or not moving for some reason. Neither of these states should in any way be regarded as bad, although they may well be unpleasant to experience.

Secondly, the Gall Bladder makes poor decisions with regard to energy management, either aggressively attacking the symptoms, or containing and then retreating from them by dissociation, instead of more flexibly softening and letting the energy move. Such decisions lead inevitably to Qi and Blood stagnation, or depending on the degree of self-directed aggression, may actually materialise as an autoimmune disease.¹²

The Bladder – using the ‘will’– institutes fear-based self-destructive actions – such as inappropriate acting-out behaviours, drug ingestion, or even surgical procedures, in order to eradicate unwanted symptoms instead of redirecting the will internally to facilitate Body-Mind-Spirit integration.

Distinguishing Mind and Heart

It’s important for the practitioner to help patients reawaken their Heart Spirit by making them aware of the difference between their mind and Heart (Heart Yin). The purpose is not to further a pathological dissociation but rather, to help the ego-mind become aware of its dissociated state; the ego cannot reintegrate with something it does not know it has lost. According to Jarrett, if a patient is justifying a course of action, one can be sure he/she is acting from the head.¹² The Heart feels what it feels and that is the immediate truth, the Heart’s truth. It needs no reasons to feel the way it feels. The mind, on the other hand, seeks reasons and bases its decisions on strategies which seek fulfillment of habitual or addictive desires. Jarrett points out that mind-based decisions may be immediately satisfying, but often have disastrous long-term consequences. In contrast, Heart-based decisions may lead to increased pain in the short term while being in the best long-term interests of the individual.

The Practitioner’s Heart (Heart Yin)

A crucial factor supporting patients in this quest is the condition of the practitioner’s own Heart (Heart Yin). Because Heart centering is more about ‘being’ than ‘action’ (which is Mind), how a practitioner ‘is’ in the treatment room is actually more important than what he or she specifically does. This is a reversal of the prevailing scientific attitude, based as it is in the split, which tolerates compassion only if it is grounded in procedural competency.¹³ When Heart and Mind are integrated, Heart Yin becomes the primary energetic director so it’s the practitioner’s presence that becomes the vehicle for the patient’s transformation rather than the specific acupuncture protocol or choice of points. Such Heart centred awareness does not come naturally to most Westerners and must be intentionally cultivated through introspective techniques.

Modern electromagnetic field research is actually confirming the view, long held empirically by experienced practitioners, that Heart centering is vital to activating the healing response. It turns out that the Heart-centred state is associated with a coupling or entrainment of a variety of biological rhythms including respiration, heart, autonomies, the patient’s biological rhythms, and even environmental rhythms (Schumann resonance).¹⁴ Such energetic coupling between physician and patient can provide sufficient rapport for the patient to effortlessly enter the same Heart-centred awareness that the physician has previously cultivated in himself or herself.

Tension bands and Constitutional Typology (CT)

The specific manner of Heart protection and location of tension bands may be predicated on the underlying constitutional type.² For example, Yang constitutional types, Wood and Fire, will often have a tension band in the upper chest and/or neck area which, if symptomatic, may present as headaches or neck and shoulder pain. Such patients have great difficulty feeling the vulnerability demanded by their original energy, which would otherwise plunge them into a bottomless pit of sadness and/or rage. The more Yin constitutional types, Water and Metal, may have more tension in the diaphragm and pelvis, and separate the Heart by suppressing the movement of Kundalini, which otherwise would rise unhindered upward from the pelvis to open the Heart. The Earth constitutional types, being energetically at the centre, often maximize their tension in the diaphragm but may have significant tension in the other bands as well.

Acupuncture treatment

During a course of acupuncture treatments, it eventually becomes clear that a patient is approaching his/her Heart centre (Heart Yin). At such times, needles can be judiciously used to facilitate the process (see below).

Intention and Context

Intention and context are of primary import in the acupuncture ritual.¹⁵ The sooner patients can reverse their habitual tendency of pain avoidance, and instigate a ‘moving toward’ intention, the quicker a Heart opening will occur. The practitioner can assist by providing a safe context in which to allow deep feelings to emerge. Most people will move toward healing if they feel safe enough, but unfortunately such an atmosphere can be difficult to provide in a busy medical office.

Signs of ‘Moving Toward’

When a patient approaches his/her Heart centre, there is often a subtle energetic shift in the room. The more the practitioner is ‘present’ (in his/her own Heart centre), the more this shift becomes evident, and with experience, the clues that a shift is occurring can become almost palpable. They include a ‘deepening’ of emotional affect, chest or epigastric discomfort, and/or an exacerbation of symptoms. Once through this potentially formidable barrier, a deep sense of calmness and peace often arises, together with the emergence of understanding or insight. Frequently, the shift will follow an episode of agonizing pain to which the patient has intentionally surrendered. The first time this occurs it marks such a huge departure from the habitual strategy of pain avoidance that it is obvious the patient is having a new kind of experience. Patients will often reveal later that their mind completely ‘stopped’. (The practitioner should resist the temptation to ask patients what they are feeling or thinking while they are in this state, since the question itself may well terminate the state.)

Reframing

A repeated reframing of body experience can go a long way to integrating the Heart-Mind, and mind-body splits. Often, it is best to go directly to the primary malfunctioning Small Intestine. After all, decisions (Gall Bladder) and action (Bladder) reflect the information those officials receive, and if the information is distorted, their functioning will be compromised. Thus, it is paramount to repeatedly reframe patients' negativity and alienation so that they begin to incorporate a more integrated worldview that includes their Heart's truth. Such reframing can allow the Small Intestine to recover and begin functioning properly as a harmonizing mediator between Mind and Heart.

For example, the feeling of anxiety can be reframed as good rather than bad. Pain can be reframed as a teacher rather than an enemy to be eradicated. The body can be reframed as a repository of energetic wisdom rather than a machine that keeps going wrong. Mental justifications can be exposed for being what they are: simple rationalizations rather than deep core truths.

Specific points

The following points work best if they are used at the right moment, i.e., when the practitioner senses that a Heart opening is imminent and can be effectively incorporated into a larger circuit design. The design might include a standard $N \rightarrow N+1$ circuit, constitutional treatment, Extra meridians, or triangle trigram balancing.

The cardinal Heart spirit points are on the Kidney meridian as it passes over the front of the chest (Table 3). They are K23, K24, and K25. Jarrett notes that these points represent the trigram for Fire, with KI 23 and 25 representing the Yang of the Heart spirit (Shen) and KI 24 the Yin of the Heart spirit (Ling).¹⁶ On the conception Vessel points are CV14 and 17, the Mu points of the Heart and Pericardium, respectively. However, the optimal points to use are the ones with maximal tenderness to palpation.

KI23	Shenfeng	Spirit Seal
KI24	Lingxu	Spirit Burial Ground
KI25	Shencang	Spirit Storehouse
CV14	Chuchueh	Great deficiency
CV17	Shanchung	Within the Breast

On the back the equivalent points on the Governing Vessel include GV10, and GV11 (Table 4). On the inner Bladder line BL14, BL15, BL16; on the outer Bladder line BL43(38), BL44(39), and BL45(40).

			Level
GV11	Shendao	Spirit Path	T5
GV10	Lingtai	Spiritual Tower	T6
BL14	JueYin Shu	Pericardium Shu point	T4
BL15	Xin Shu	Heart-mind Shu point	T5
BL16	Du Shu	Governing Shu point	T6
BL43(38)	Gao Huang Shu	Vital's Hollow	T4
BL44(39)	Shen Tang	Spirit Hall	T5
BL45(40)	Yi Xi	Surprise	T6

Opening across the Chest

Placing needles across the chest can encourage energy flow through the area: KI21 or 22 → KI27, SP16 → SP20 or LU1, and ST11 or ST12 → ST 21. Although a subtle practitioner will choose to enliven the most appropriate circuit, I occasionally use several cross-chest circuits together successfully. In this context, another very useful approach is to open the exit-entry blocks across the chest. LV14 → LU1, SP21 → HT1, and KI22 → P1.

KI21	You Men	Dark Gate
KI22	Bu Lang	Corridor Walk
KI27	Shu Fu	Shu Mansion
ST11	Qi She	Qi abode
ST12	Que Pen	Empty Basin
ST21	Liang Men	Beam Gate
LV14	Qi Men	Cycle Gate
SP16	FuDi	Abdominal Lament
LU1	Zhong Fu	Central Treasury
SP21	Da Bao	Great Encirclement
HT1	Ji Quan	Utmost Source
PC1	Tian Chu	Celestial Pool

Inner and Outer Gates

Points that can be useful are PC6 and TE5 because they reflect and regulate an appropriate flow of Qi to and from the Heart through the energies of the Pericardium and Triple Energizer. They can be particularly effective in the context of a JueYin or ShaoYang constitutional type, and can be combined with the Extra Meridian opening and coupled points to open the Chong Mo and the Dai Mo.

Windows to the Sky Points

These points, mostly located in and around the neck area, can be used adjunctively in the context of integrating the mind-body split, which is intimately related to the Heart-mind split. For example, BL10 in the context of a Tai Yang Water constitutional type will help integrate mind and body in the context of a Tai Yang constitutional type. Window to the sky points can be found in most acupuncture texts (Table 6).

PC6	Neiguan	Inner Gate
SP4	Gongsun	Grandfather's Grandson
TE5	Waiguan	Outer Gate
GB41	Zulingxi	Near tears on the foot
BL10	Tianzhu	Heavenly Pillar
KI12	Du He	Great Manifestation
SI19	TingGong	Listening Palace
HT7	Shen Men	Spirit Gate

Kidney Cerebral Circulation

The Kidney Cerebral circuit, described as beginning at KI27 and focusing at SI19, can be used to integrate Heart Yin and Yang by connecting the Heart Spirit points of KI23,24,25 through to the Listening Palace (SI19). This pathway also has a focusing point at BL10, one of the Window to the Sky points on the descending Tai Yang.¹⁷ Jarrett notes that SI19 facilitates the ‘the ability to hear one’s Heart and the Hearts of others without deviation.’¹⁷ Thus, the deeper significance of SI19 is not so much that it treats the physical hearing mechanism, but rather that it encourages a patient to hear his/her Heart’s truth. SI19 can also be combined with points on the Heart Shao Yin, such as HT1 or HT7.

Case Report

A 45-year-old woman developed an upper extremity condition in which both arms were increasingly weak and useless. She had numbness and parasthesias in her hands and fingers, which were increasingly stiff and rigid. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the neck showed minor disc bulging at several levels, but nothing suggesting the need for surgery. The progressive nature of the patient’s condition robbed her of her artistic talents. She was depressed, but conventional treatment with anti-depressants achieved little. The true location of her distress was suggested during our first meeting when she described a sensation of a ‘black hole’ in the centre of her chest.

Typical of chronic illness, this was a multifactorial situation, one energetic factor overlapping the next. The most obvious: first, she was likely a Shao Yin Water type, a constitution that has great difficulty mobilizing original energy, which tends to get contained in the root chakra and pelvis; second, she had a tight diaphragm, perhaps due to a loss of personal power that was based on the need to please; third, her Pericardium defense system was full-blown in order to prevent her feeling the pain of her father’s premature death (which had occurred many years previously), leading to a tension in upper chest and shoulders; fourth, a mind-body split prevented her from trusting the symptoms coming from her body. As a result, the patient had tension bands in the pelvis, diaphragm and shoulders, and neck, a mind-body split of major significance and a Heart-mind split as well.

Acupuncture treatments involved moxa/needles on ShaoYin – TaiYang N → N+1 circuits plus local needles to tension bands located in the pelvis (KI12), diaphragm (KI21,22), and neck (KI27 and BL10). Movement into the Heart and Pericardium was facilitated with K22 → P1 and HT1. PC6 and TE5 were also used to balance and open the Pericardium.

During early sessions, the patient experienced extreme grief and terror. Gradually, her shoulders started to loosen and shake, and her arms and hands vibrated. Eventually, her hands started to warm. Later sessions, with help from the Chong Mo (SP4 and PC6), prompted the movement of Kundalini, which added fuel to the fire of her Heart centre opening. After each session there was often palpable heat from the area of the chest where she previously had described ‘a black hole’. At every opportunity, I reframed her feelings and thoughts as they arose, emphasizing the

positive nature of her grief and rage, and underlining the fact that the route to recovery lay in going *through* the feelings, rather than *around* them.

The patient's shoulder and arm symptoms subsided, depression was much improved, hands were warm, and her creative potential began to return. Although the energetic structure maintaining her Heart-Mind split was largely resolved, recovery of the Heart spirit can take some time to stabilize. Implementing a more Heart-centred life path so that her Heart and Mind can remain integrated, and resisting the temptation to regress into the former ego-based habit patterns, remained a challenge. An on-going meditative discipline can be helpful in this quest.

Conclusion

The despair that frequently accompanies chronic illness is often a pointer to the loss of Heart Spirit, a loss that conventional medicine generally fails to recognise or treat – in large measure because it is itself grounded in a collective Heart-Mind split. In contrast, acupuncture is uniquely placed to help people reintegrate the Body-Mind-Spirit, and to rediscover a Heart centre their ego does not realize was ever lost. However, to help patients integrate Heart and Mind demands something more from the practitioner, who must embody the principles of Heart-Mind integration in his/her very being as part of the therapeutic ritual. Such a shift can present a challenge for conventionally trained physician-acupuncturists to understand and practice.

Nevertheless, attention to the condition of the Heart centre (Heart Yin) is an essential part of psychospiritual acupuncture practice. If the Heart-Mind split is ignored, illness is bound to recur simply because the ego-mind is fond of creating problems to bolster its imaginary sense of existence. In contrast, the rediscovery and integration of Heart (Heart Yin) demands an ego-transcendence that demolishes the problem-oriented view through a radical personal transformation.

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