



*Appendix 9*

*On Spirits, Ghosts, and Children*

## ***On Spirits, Ghosts, and Children***

When I first encountered the concept of “*Gui*” or “ghost” in Chinese medicine, the explanation provided referred to the spirits of deceased persons that enter human bodies, causing illness and disrupting normal bodily functions, particularly on the psychological and emotional level. My first reaction was one of great hesitation, bordering on a sense of disgust with the linkage between medicine and superstition. It was as if Chinese medicine, which until that point I had regarded as a wondrous approach to healing, had suddenly been corrupted, intermingled with ideas that I regarded as unfounded, to say the least.

But just like many skeptical readers who were undoubtedly attracted to the title of this article yet read on, I too was intrigued by the concept and began investigating it hesitantly, with the small steps of a young child who is simultaneously attracted and repelled from the same thing. At every opportunity, with every trace of information on the subject, I started exploring the subject in order to better understand it. At the same time, in a step which I then regarded as unrelated, I began to make use of the acupuncture points designated to expel *gui* and observed that they were extremely effective in the clinic. This, of course, only heightened my curiosity and desire to better understand the connections between the world of ancient medicine, the more recently developed world of Chinese medicine, and the modern concepts that, at the end of the day, constitute our language and the language of our patients.

On the one hand, the subject of ghosts seemed ridiculous to me. On the other hand, the acupuncture points worked extremely

well, in accordance with what the Chinese in ancient times classified as *gui*. So, what exactly is this phenomenon that the Chinese refer to *gui*? What explanation can satisfy our sensibilities and at the same time bridge the gap between a belief in spirits and ghosts on the one hand and modern conceptions of life on the other.

In almost all cultures, shamanism – the belief in ghosts and spirits—is relegated to the sidelines, but sidelines that are typically relatively wide. The average person in China today believes in spirits, and the same was true of many non-modern cultures.

Better understanding of the significance of *gui* in Chinese culture requires us to journey back to ancient China, with its dominant “tradition of the ancestors.” The Chinese social order assigns deceased ancestors a dignified role of importance in preserving harmony and balance with the afterlife. Many villages in ancient China were based on familial and blood relations. As in other instances of large family clans that inhabit entire villages, both the elderly and the dead were treated with much respect and honor. Deceased ancestors were important because they preserved balance within the village on the heavenly level. In honor of deceased ancestors, daily plates of rice were prepared, incense was burned, and their welfare was prayed for. The ritual ceremonies were meticulous, and one mistake or neglected element was cause for divine punishment on the part of the deceased ancestors – or so believed the living. Whenever something went wrong—such as a natural disaster, a drought, a flood, or the illness of a family member or a villager—the initial explanation was that the divine energies were out of order and disturbing the ancestors, who, in turn, expressed their anger by punishing living family members. When illnesses were

emotional and psychological in nature, it was believed that a restless *gui* had entered the body and was disrupting its sense of rationality. Treatment of a person whose body had been entered by a *gui* involved its expulsion through a variety of rituals. Acupuncture also has tools to achieve this purpose. When Confucius organized the social hierarchy of China, the tradition of the ancestors became structurally entrenched in Chinese culture.

The philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism were developed in China during the same period. Confucianism focused on social order, and took into account the deceased and their dignity. Taoism represented man's relationship with nature, providing the basis for the emergence of the theory of the *yin* and the *yang* and the philosophy of Chinese medicine. To a certain extent, the engagement with *gui* and healing shifted from shamanism, via Taoism, to the philosophy and practice of Chinese medicine. This brings us to where we are today – attempting to understand how a treatment meant to expel *gui* can work wonders in children's clinics.

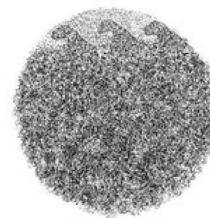
As diagnosed in Chinese medicine clinics, a *gui* manifests itself in three ways. The first is the presentation of the *gui*, or the symptom. The second is the body's mode of expression and the manner in which the *gui* radiates, from the face and the eyes in particular. The third way to diagnose a *gui* is pulse diagnosis.

A *gui*'s behavioral manifestation is typically characterized by symptoms that are either difficult to control or uncontrollable, such as eye ticks, involuntary body movements, involuntary throat clearing and other vocal noises, the experience of nightmares and fears while sleeping or awake, obsessions of various kinds, and other phenomena

reflecting psychological or emotional imbalance and, in most cases, a degree of lack of control.

The *shen*'s radiation from the body, the face, and the eyes is extremely clear for someone with experience but difficult to identify without guidance. In the eyes, we observe panic, fear, madness, or confusion, reflecting the person's overall condition. When a patient's body has been penetrated by a *gui*, their face emanates more than just a clear diagnosis – it also reflects a double image of sorts, something evasive that is there one moment and gone the next.

Pulse, the third manifestation of *gui*, is of critical importance because it allows us to feel the *gui* in a clear manner. The pulse of a person with a *gui* differs from all other kinds of pulses. Whereas in a normal pulse we feel the pulsation moving up and down, the pulse of someone with a *gui* feels as if it is moving from side-to-side, like waves moving in the diastolic direction from the pulse toward the thumb. The feeling is one of wind or a wave moving widthwise.



After years of experience treating “Emotional Wind,” a more delicate term for *gui*, the mystery renned: what was the connection between the *gui* of the past and the “Emotional Wind” of the present? They both responded to the same treatment, but in ancient times they were believed to be ghosts of the dead. How, then, can we explain the “Emotional Wind” of today?

*Gui* refers to a condition characterized by movement, instability, and unpredictability. Such behavior is typical of children who have undergone difficult, traumatic experiences that threw them off center, stripped them of their sense of grounding, and disrupted their normal emotional inner workings. We must always remember that children are sensitive and fetuses even more so, and that their ability to feel exceeds their ability to understand. Consider, for example, a pregnant woman who suddenly loses her footing and slips, landing on her stomach. Frightened that the fetus was injured by the fall, she panics for a moment until she feels a return of the fetus's normal movements. Relieved that no damage was done and that everything is fine, she gets up, dusts herself off, and continues on her way. Like its mother, the fetus also underwent a traumatic experience. However, the fetus is unable to understand that everything is fine, as at this stage of its life it has almost no cognitive abilities. For this reason, it continues to experience the trauma.

The phenomenon can be compared to a dog that was abused by children as a puppy, and who, despite his long life with a loving family, continues to tremble with fear every time a hand is extended to pet him. In fetuses and young children too, trauma can be deeply ingrained. Incapable of resolving it, the trauma becomes part of their character. From this perspective, we can identify a connection between the Chinese definition of *gui* on the one hand and the instability caused by trauma on the other. In both cases an external force throws the person off center, rendering him incapable of contending with the trauma and enabling it to become part of him.

It is of course inappropriate to use the term *gui* in the presence of patients, as it immediately raises eyebrows. For this reason, the term "Emotional Wind" had been found to be more suitable. The challenge is how to describe the condition to the patient and the patient's parents in a manner that enables them to confirm whether their overall feeling is consistent with the diagnosis. Do they identify with the description?

### ***Description 1***

You are floating five centimeters above the ground, like a helium-filled balloon. Because you are not connected to the ground, you are shaken by even the lightest emotional breeze. You are being constantly moved around by the wind and are unable to find a place of emotional stability.

### ***Description 2***

An Emotional Wind is a condition in which the body expends energy in an inefficient and unfocused manner. It can be compared to a person who does not know how to swim well and therefore uses much energy making little progress with powerful yet ineffective arm movements, bobbing his head wildly from side to side and breathing in a shallow and rapid manner. Despite his best efforts, he makes almost no progress, increasing his frustration, fear, and sense of panic.

### ***Description 3***

When a top is spinning quickly, it is stable and hardly moves from its spot. The moment it is touched and thrown off center by an external force, it begins to rotate around its center in increasingly widening circles and quickly loses energy and falls.

Based on my intensive (but not research-based) experience, there appears to be a clear correlation (approximately 80%) between people suffering from “Emotional Wind” and people with experiences of past trauma. The connection between the past trauma and the present condition as manifested in the patient is what facilitates the beginning of recovery. The process of understanding and accepting the condition as described by the practitioner typically calms the patient or his or her parents, and helps them stop panicking. After all, if there is a cause for the condition, there must also be a solution. Being in a state of uncertainty greatly weakens the body, and the return of certainty brings with it the ability to contend with even the most challenging situations. Uncertainty prevents the body from contending with challenging situations, and for this reason may be regarded as a weakening factor.

### ***Common Causes of Emotional Wind and Cases from the Clinic***

***In the Fetal Stage:*** Anxiety in the mother, an automobile accident or “almost-accident,” university exams, an argument with a spouse, an unwanted pregnancy, concern for the health of the fetus due to problematic test results, stress at work, and economic pressures.

***During Birth:*** A significant drop in heart-rate, having the umbilical cord wrapped around the neck, being stuck in the birth canal, birth using obstetrical forceps, birth using a vacuum extractor, and the ingestion of amniotic fluid. There is no strong correlation between Caesarean sections and symptoms of trauma, although the procedure appears to be no less traumatic than the above-listed examples.

***At a Young Age:*** Inter-parental tensions, divorce, the illness of a family member (from the immediate or extended family), the social difficulties of a sibling, financial problems in the family, a fall or accident, home break-in, hospitalization, and serious medical procedures.

In my estimation, approximately 70% of the patients treated in my clinic over the years have displayed at least one manifestation of an Emotional Wind. As noted, treating Emotional Wind using designated acupuncture points yields effective results in the clinic. To a great extent, the treatment prescribed for Emotional Wind is treatment on a deep emotional level, which in some cases proves to be the root of the problem. Achieving emotional balance also helps resolve physical symptoms – its branches. In children, healing the root of the problem also immediately resolves its physical symptoms. Unlike in adults, symptoms in children have not yet become deeply ingrained and do not require separate treatment.