

Kyo and Jitsu

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When I asked Yoshi Ikeda (a Japanese acupuncturist) about the topic of *kyo* and *jitsu*, he answered that in Japanese acupuncture these were commonly used terms that simply meant good or bad defense forces. Now I do not believe that with this answer *kyo* and *jitsu* are exhaustively described. However, the fact impressed me that for Yoshi Ikeda the thing was simple and clear.

We Europeans, on the other hand, have difficulties understanding *kyo* and *jitsu*. I suspect that we would understand this pair of opposites very easily, though, if we were Japanese, or at least from the Far East. But to us it seems strange, some of us might think it's the same as with many forms of eastern wisdom: one must strive for it life-long, and suddenly illumination will hit us...

Since I assume that my own development regarding this topic is not completely untypical, I would like to outline it shortly here. Naturally, it did not happen so clearly and straight-lined, as I represent it in the following paragraphs, but all my misadventures, however, would surely bore the readers and would make the understanding more difficult.

Emptiness and Abundance

I learned at the beginning of my association with Shiatsu that *kyo* and *jitsu* mean emptiness and abundance. Since I had not learned to see energetic patterns (and, as a doctor of western medicine, I probably wouldn't have believed in it), I understood *physical* emptiness and abundance.

After I had practiced Shiatsu in this "physical" way, I began to become dissatisfied. I recognized that I did not actually know what I was doing. I was missing the direct connection to what took place beyond the physical contact.

I had understood in the meantime, that (for example, in Hara diagnosis) *kyo* doesn't simply mean soft and *jitsu* doesn't simply mean hard.

As an alternative, I began to ask myself, when I touched a diagnostic zone, "does strength & vitality occur behind this surface, or is it missing?" I got amazingly differentiated answers. For the first time, I found an entrance to Hara diagnosis; for the first time, it started making sense to me. I understood: *jitsu* may stand for strength and vitality, *kyo* for lacking strength. I began to sense what *energetic* emptiness and abundance meant, and how they could express themselves.

Movements

Then I discovered strange reactions to touch in classes that I taught. It took some time (until I had sufficient experience) to put these very different perceptions in order. I "saw" the strangest phenomena... like violent outbreaks, painful sinking in, strength-less fluttering, and calm and strong rejecting. Obviously, these were *energetic* phenomena, which were activated through touch, and were mirroring the energetic condition of the respective meridians and/or the respective body parts.

(At first, I was very proud of my new ability to "see," until I discovered that most students in our conclusion classes are likewise capable of this. Since then, the perception of energetic reactions to touch has become an important instrument of my instruction.)

I began to understand that energetic emptiness and abundance are not everything. They rather seem to be the *result* of energetic activity. This *energetic activity* became the crucial criterion for me: movements triggered by touch that are relatively weak, relatively slow, inward going, dark, and so forth, I recognized as expression of lacking aliveness, as *kyo*. Light, pointed, rapid, tension-loaded, "loud," strong, outward-going movements I classified as *jitsu*. The movements were to be observed everywhere: in the Hara zones, in the meridians, in body regions... I found the clearest and most

usable information in the *direction* of the movement. Is it going inward or outward?

The allocation became difficult, if I found reactions that could be interpreted simultaneously as *kyo* and as *jitsu*. For example, when a reaction seemed thin and weak, but at the same time rapid and fierce (without much strength). Surprised, I observed that physical and even energetic emptiness didn't necessarily mean energetic under-activity (the same applied occasionally in reverse to energetic abundance). Even in comparatively empty and exhausted body regions or meridian energies (more frequently e.g. in the lumbar region (kidney energy) or in connection with the pericardium (heart-constrictor) energy), I discovered, every now and then, a high, sometimes nearly desperate, tension and activity.

I knew the term "*jitsu* in the *kyo*." Here, however, it became clear to me that it is not about a condition, but an alive *activity* of different qualities.

There are infinite different forms of *kyo* and *jitsu*

Finally, my impressions became too multifaceted to press them all into the context of *kyo* and *jitsu*. I began to make up my own words in my treatment reports for the qualities that I perceived. So, an energetic activity (e.g. of a meridian or a hara zone) may appear tired or strong, tense or relaxed, fast or slow, moving upward or downward, happy or sad etc. in the way it expresses itself to the touch. I started to understand that there must be at least as many different types of *kyo* and *jitsu* as there are humans on earth.

The great advantage of this procedure was that the observed qualities meant something to me; I had a completely personal connection to them and didn't have to fit myself into a Japanese "*kyo/ jitsu*" system, which still would have seemed strange to me. Beyond that, in treatments, I could now deal with the perceived energies in a much more specific way. I had a much larger arsenal of therapeutic possibilities available. Instead of only sedating or stimulating in every case, I could now encourage, strengthen, calm down, bring into motion, absorb, activate or even provoke. I was

allowed to (and had to) consider and also experiment in each situation... completely free from theoretical systems, and with whichever approach and whatever techniques I could best achieve the respective goal.

(Only later I learned that in Shiatsu I do not actively have to alter the quality of an energetic field at all. All that is needed is to get in contact with it, feel it, and touch it. Then it will gain the freedom to change – if that is the right thing to do.)

Resonance body

Kyo and *jitsu* are still important to me, because they permit complicated patterns to be reduced to a common denominator, and because I also teach them as a Shiatsu teacher. Now, however, I have found my completely personal interpretation. Now a days, I often see a *kyo* or a *jitsu* quality through the energetic expression of a body region or a meridian before I touch it. I simply imagine how this place would react if I *would* touch it. The answers are quite clear and impressive, and give important guidance as to how to touch effectively.

The perception of *kyo* and *jitsu* become all the more easy, the less tense I am, and - especially in the Hara - the more my body allows the qualities reaching me to pass through me, like a freely vibrating resonance body. Like all other "energetic" phenomena, they extract themselves from conscious perception (thus becoming difficult or impossible to perceive), if strain and tightness prevail.

The research of what *kyo* and *jitsu* really mean can be an exciting adventure, and also a training on becoming wide, open, and free.

Wilfried Rappenecker 1994 translation Z.B. & J.S.