SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

Number 293 October, 2019

The "Tumor-Rash Axiom" and Beyond:

Discursive Excrescences in Early and Medieval China

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SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

FOUNDED 1986

Editor-in-Chief
VICTOR H. MAIR

Associate Editors
PAULA ROBERTS MARK SWOFFORD

ISSN
2157-9679 (print) 2157-9687 (online)

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The "Tumor-Rash Axiom" and Beyond:
Discursive Excrescences in Early and Medieval China

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> "Seditions and insurrections are, unhappily, maladies as inseparable from the body politic as tumors and eruptions from the natural body"
>
> — Alexander Hamilton,
>
> *Federalist Papers* (No. 28), 1787

In a memorandum to Eastern Han emperor Lingdi 靈帝 (r. 167–189) in 177 objecting to a campaign against the Xianbei 鮮卑, scholar-statesman Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192) argued: "calamities of the periphery can be considered an itchy rash of the hands and feet; but a crisis in the Central Realm (*Zhongguo* 中国) is a malignant growth (*biaoju* 瘭疽) on the bosom or back."[1] This axiom of Confucian statecraft stood the test of time. In his commentary at the end of the chapter on the Western barbarians in *Old Tang History* (*Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書), compiler Liu Xu 劉昫 cited Cai Yong, then remarked that for the Tang, too, "in the end the Rong 戎 (Western barbarians) were merely an itchy rash of the hands and feet, while the successive uprisings of Huang [Chao] and Zhu [Wen] during the reigns of Xizong and

1 Li Xián 李賢 and Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書 [Later Han History; hereafter *HHS*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 90. 2992. One recalls Wu Zixu's remonstrance to King Fuchai of Wu in the late Warring States era — he warns the king that he should turn his attention to the state of Yue, a "disease of the heart and bosom" (*fuxin zhibing* 腹心之病), rather than focus on Qi. When the heedless king fails to listen, Wu falls to Yue. See Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995; hereafter *SJ*), 66.2179.

Zhaozong at the end of the Tang were a cancer of the bosom." "Truly," the tenth-century annalist concludes, "the axiom of itchy hands and tumescent backs has proven accurate" (手疥背疽，誠為確論 *shoujie beiju, cheng wei que lun*).[2]

Set almost eight centuries apart, these are but two of many examples in which tumors served as rhetorical vehicles to offer commentary on the compromised health of the body politic. Sometimes, as in these examples, tumors and other excrescences served as metaphors for pockets of troublemakers who threatened to cripple or damage the state. Cliques of corrupt officials, for instance, were called "ulcerated pus bags" (*ju nang* 疽囊). Using an array of sources — from the early philosophical works of Mencius 孟子 and Hanfeizi 韓非子 to state histories to Buddhist sources to the medical treatises of Sun Simiao's 孫思邈 (581–682) — this essay examines rhetorical representations of tumors and excrescences in the context of physio-political discourse. Frequently appearing in pejorative rhetorical contexts in the discourse of the body politic, these growths were deployed as metaphors for eunuchs, flatterers, treacherous officials, and — from the perspective of the dominant Confucian centrist narrative, at least — other groups that compromised the healthy function of the state.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BODY POLITIC IN EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHINA

The notion of the body politic is deeply ingrained in Chinese political thought. Contemporary historian and scholar of Confucian ethics Huang Chun-chieh argues that in ancient China the body politic was neither abstract nor theoretical; rather, "the state was taken epistemologically as an extension of the human body, which is integral and organic in itself." As bodily self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) is the "basis to the management of state and the world," Huang maintains that, "it is not far-fetched to say that the Chinese body is a political one, while politics in the Chinese tradition is a sort of body politics." In essence, the political body is patterned after the human body; the human body is the "dominant

2 Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997; hereafter *JTS*), 195.5216.

functional model" or political organization. Political harmony, then, can be understood in terms of balanced and healthy "bodily organic interdependence."[3]

Formalized correspondences developed between the body of the emperor and the body politic (the same Chinese word *zhi* 治 refers to healing and governance), and between bodily flow of *qi* 氣 and principles of statecraft.[4] Similarly, as Angela Zito observes, *zhu* 主 can indicate both the emperor, or, in medicine, "the central point of the internal energy spheres that make up the body." Therefore, Zito argues that the emperor — serving as the "dense center of "centering" in the so-called Middle Kingdom" — was effectively the nexus of a "radiating" body politic that extended from the sovereign, the *zhu*, out to "every family's home through the father."[5]

Roel Sterckx contends that analogies between the physical body and the body politic, and concomitant correspondences between medicine and government, were well established by late Warring States era (481–221 BC) and became increasingly widespread with the ascendance of correlative thought.[6] As the unified empire coalesced, parallel developments took place in the field of medicine, where a "sophisticated system of physiology and pathology" emerged. Paul Unschuld contends that the "association of natural laws and moral-normative concepts" prompted early physicians to develop a "medicine of systematic correspondence" that drew upon earlier magical beliefs on the unity of nature, homeopathic and demonic medicine, and pre-existing notions of *yin-yang* dualism and the Five Phases. As a result, "sociopolitical conceptions of Confucianism" were transferred to the medical sphere.[7]

Further elucidating the "systemic correspondence" between the workings of the body natural and the body politic, Unschuld explains:

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3 Huang Chun-chieh, "The 'Body Politic' in Ancient China," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 8.2 (2007): 33–36.

4 David Palmer, *Qigong Fever* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 10.

5 Angela Zito, "Silk and Skin: Significant Boundaries," in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 121.

6 Roel Sterckx, "Sages, Cooks, and Flavors in Warring States and Han China," *Monumenta Serica* 54 (2006): 28.

7 Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 66–68. Unschuld argues that early medical thought "consciously or subconsciously" utilized the "newly structured social and economic environment" to form a "physiological and pathological basis for the medicine of systematic correspondence" (80).

> structural changes that accompanied the unification of China were sufficiently innovative to supply intellectuals of the time with the concept of an integrated complex system, the individual parts of which can only function as long as the remaining parts are not disturbed. The well-being of the system as a whole depended on the exchange of resources among its individual parts.
>
> The symbolic value of the newly structured social and economic environment may have been significant enough to be transferred, consciously or subconsciously, by thinkers concerned with health and illness to an understanding of structure and function of the human organism; hence the physiological and pathological basis of systematic correspondence accurately reflected these structural innovations.[8]

In this "systemic correspondence," a shared kinetic logic governed the circulation of vital fluids in the body and the movement of information and resources throughout the state. Proper movement of blood and *qi* helped maintain good health in the body; a well-functioning bureaucracy and a good infrastructure that aided the fluid movement of commerce and communications helped the state maintain harmony and order. The "storage facilities" or "depots" (*zang* 臟) and "grain collection centers" or "palaces" (*fu* 府) central to a state's economic well-being corresponded with the stomach and digestive system. Organs were linked by transport channels (*jing* 經) and conduits (*luo* 絡). When these passageways were disrupted or obstructed, the harmonious flow of goods and resources was interrupted, whether due to human machination or natural disaster, and the body-state sustained damage.[9] The development of these "systematic correspondences" marked the genesis of the Chinese body politic.

Michael Nylan argues that in early Confucian theory both body and state were fluid, expandable

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8 Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 79–81. Unschuld articulates this idea in similar fashion in the conclusion to this chapter on "The Medicine of Systematic Correspondence":

> The structure of the human organism and the functions assigned to its individual elements reflect a complex social organism founded on the wide-scale movement of goods both internally and to and from the outside. They further reflect the bureaucratic apparatus of a state in which a wide variety of tasks have been delegated to a responsible ruler and his many civil servants. (99–100)

9 Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 81–83.

entities centered on the (literal or figurative) heart/mind (*xin* 心): "in the body, the center was defined as the heart/mind, locus of the proper motivations for social interaction; in the body politic, as the ruler or, in the absence of a good or wise ruler, the sage."[10] Closely linked with the Confucian emphasis on fluidity and permeability, Nylan contends, "Chinese medical theory was centrally preoccupied with the "regular circulation of blood and qi," which served as the "primary definition [and indicator] of physical and moral health."[11] Clearly, internal blockage or coagulation of the flow of *qi* and blood can upset the health of the entire organism; impediments and bottlenecks in the state's channels and circuits, whether stalling commerce or interrupting the salubrious flow of virtue, can damage the efficient bureaucratic functions of the larger realm.

Early texts are rife with examples that illustrate the related notion of the body politic in which the roles of the ruler and his court officials, the apparatus of state, corresponds with parts and functions of the human body. The *Spring and Autumn Annals of the Master Lü* 呂氏春秋 — attributed to Qin minister Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (291–235 BC) — encapsulates this physio-political correspondence between healthy circulation within the body and the proper centrifugal flow of a ruler's virtue:

> When the ruler's virtue does not flow freely, and the wishes of his people do not reach him, there is stasis in the state. When stasis lasts for a long time, a hundred pathologies arise in concert, and a myriad catastrophes swarm in.... The reason that the sage-kings valued heroic retainers and faithful ministers is that they dared to speak directly, breaking through such stases.[12]

In the Qin chancellor's conception, the ruler's moral potency, his virtue (*de* 德), operates according to the same kinetic principles as *qi*: if the vital fluid virtue of the heart-ruler does not radiate outward,

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10 Michael Nylan, "Boundaries of the Body and Body Politic in Early Confucian Thought," in *Confucian Political Ethics*, ed. Daniel Bell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 88.

11 Nylan, "Boundaries of the Body," 91.

12 *Lü shi chun qiu* 12/10a-b. Translation drawn from Geoffrey Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into ancient Greek and Chinese science* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 191, and Nylan, "Boundaries of the Body," 91.

moving through the conduits and channels of the body-state, the health of the organism, of the entire body politic, will be compromised. Geoffrey Lloyd sees this passage as one of the earliest examples of what he terms systematic "macrocosm-microcosm analogies."[13] The macrocosm, of course, is the state; the microcosm is the body. From this early articulation of the body politic it is readily apparent that static or obstructed *qi* poses a grave danger to the soundness and health of the body-state.

Another passage from the *Spring and Autumn Annals of the Master Lü* — a conversation between the King of Chu and Master Zhan — further illuminates the connection between the physical body and the body politic:

> The root of governing state lies in governing one's body/self (*shen* 身); when the body/self is governed, one can govern the household; when the household is governed, one can govern the state; when the state is governed, one can govern the world.[14]

Regulation and administration of the body is a precondition for governing the state, both in terms of the maintenance of the ruler's vital energy and health and the upkeep of his discipline and self-control.

In the "Rulers and Ministers" (*junchen* 君臣) fascicle of the *Guanzi* 管子, a text reputedly drawn from the wisdom of Qi minister Guan Zhong 管仲 in the early Spring and Autumn era but compiled in the Western Han, "one body" (*yi ti* 一體) is a metaphor for the body politic: "The early kings were of one body with the people. Since they were one with the people then they were able to defend the state with the state and protect the people with the people."[15] In the second part of this same fascicle, the analogy of ruler (*jun* 君) to the heart (*xin* 心) is explicitly articulated: "just as the ruler occupies the capital of

13 Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities*, 190–91.

14 *Lü shi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, chapter 17. Translation from Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 4.

15 *Guanzi* 30, translation slightly modified from Zhang Dainian, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Edwin Ryden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 267. Noting that it originated with Warring States era logician (Mingjia 名家) Hui Shi 惠施 ("heaven and earth are one body") and was soon deployed by Zhuangzi, Zhang classifies the deeply-entrenched political and cosmological notion of "one body" (*yiti* 一體) as "the whole" as a coordinating relational concept, along with harmony (*he*, *taihe* 和, 太和) and unity (*heyi* 合一). For further discussion on Guanzi and the body politic, also see Mark Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 6 and 36–37.

the state, so the heart resides in the center of the body."[16] In addition, Guanzi's "Rulers and Ministers" clearly delineates correlative roles for specific body parts:

> Just as the four limbs and six passages are the core of the body, the four offices and the five ministers form the corps of the state. It is systemic failure if the four limbs don't function and the six passages fail to serve as conduits. The state plunges into chaos if the four offices are not upright and the five ministers fail to administer.[17]

The healthy function of the four limbs, the arms and legs, and the six passages — eyes and ears, nose and mouth — was essential to the vitality of the state-organism. Under early physicians, men with a far more nuanced sense of the body, these physio-political correspondences evolved.

These correspondences between the human body and the body politic, between the organs of the body and the organs of state, are perhaps most explicitly articulated in the "Discourse on the Secret Scripture of the Spiritual Tower and Orchid Chambers" (*Linglan midian lun* 靈蘭秘典論)[18] contained in the "Basic Questions" (*suwen* 素文) section of the late Warring States or Western Han repository of medical knowledge, the *Esoteric Classic of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經)[19]:

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16 "Rulers and Ministers, part II" (*jun chen xia* 君臣下), *Guanzi*, 31, https://ctext.org/guanzi/jun-chen-ii, accessed 23 March 2019.

17 "Rulers and Ministers, part II," *Guanzi* 31.

18 Y. K. Kong, in *Huangdi neijing: A Synopsis with Commentaries* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), 123–24, explains that the *linglan* in the title is a compound of *lingtai* 靈臺, the spirit terrace associated with King Wen of Zhou, and *lanshi* 蘭室, the orchid chamber which served as "the depository of national archives of constitutional importance."

19 The origins and precise timing of the *Huangdi neijing suwen* are unclear. While other scholars suggest an earlier origin — see Ilza Veith, "Examination of the Age and Authorship of the *Nei Ching*," part of her Introduction to *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4–9, Nathan Sivin, in "Science and Medicine in Imperial China — The State of the Field," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47.1 (1988), 73, notes that the text was "probably written in the 1st century BC."

> The Yellow Emperor asked: "I should very much like to hear about the relative importance of the twelve depots and their mutual relationships."
>
> Qi Bo explained: "That is truly an informed question. Let me answer it immediately. The heart is the ruler. Spirit and enlightenment have their origins here. The lung is the minister; the order of life's rhythm has its origin here. The liver is the general; planning and deliberation have their origin here. The gall is the official [whose duty it is to maintain the golden] mean and what is proper; decisions and judgments have their origin here. The heart-enclosing network is the emissary; good fortune and happiness have their origin here. The spleen and stomach are the officials in charge of storing provisions; the distribution of food has its origins here. The small intestine is the official charged with collecting surpluses; the reformation of all things has its origin here. The kidneys are officials for employment and forced labor; technical skills and expertise have their origins here. The triple burner is the official in charge of the transportation conduits; water channels have their origins here. The urinary bladder is the provincial magistrate and stores body fluids; once the influences [of the latter are exhausted through] transformation, they may leave [the bladder].
>
> If the ruler is enlightened, peace reigns for his subjects.... If, however, the ruler is not enlightened, the twelve officials are endangered; streets shall be closed and traffic interrupted. Form shall suffer great harm."[20]

Qi Bo, a mythological figure himself, reputedly served as both physician and minister to the legendary Yellow Emperor. The series of physio-political congruencies in this passage provide a more comprehensive vision of the correspondences between vital organs for the body and the pivotal

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20 *Huangdi neijing suwen* 8, trans. from Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 100. Another translation can be found in Maosheng Ni, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine* (Boston and London: Shambhala Books, 1995), 34–35. The passage is also referenced in Elisabeth Hsu's "The Biological and the Cultural," 93. In *The Construction of Space in Early China*, Mark Lewis notes that this example from the *Huangdi neijing* "is unusual...in insisting that the heart/mind is the ruler." Other "organ lists" in this text, he observes, tend to be more egalitarian (38–39).

bureaucratic roles in government. In this integrated and holistic system, if any of the "officials," the parts, are endangered or damaged, the whole being, the body-state, is compromised. Lloyd observes that both this medical text and Lü Buwei's aforementioned political treatise "emphasize the importance, medically, politically, and cosmically, of everything being in its place and fulfilling its given function. The image in both texts is one of free flow and coordination. Being static…has to be avoided at all costs."[21] Lloyd concludes that both for the bureaucratic offices that composed the state and the organs and limbs that made up the body, the shared Chinese ideal was one of "free-flow, interaction, and intercommunication."[22]

Though it naturally lacks the medical and physiological nuance of the *Huangdi neijing*, a similar vision of the body politic is articulated in the "Discourse on Heaven" (*Tianlun* 天 論) section of the *Xunzi* 荀子. In this text from the final century of Warring States era, the hard-edged Confucian thinker explains: "The ears, eyes, mouth and nose each have a sensory function, but these functions are not interchangeable. These are called the 'Heavenly faculties.' The heart dwells in the vacant center and thereby governs the five faculties: it is called the 'Heavenly ruler.'"[23] A similar conception appears in a snippet of an early Western Han text unearthed at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in modern-day Changsha, which reads: "Ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and feet: all six are the servants of the mind-heart. When the mind-heart says yes, none dare dissent."[24] In these two instances, both reflecting a Legalist bent, not only is the mind-heart the governor, it is a feared master who controls the other limbs and organs. The limbs and organs, in turn, act on its commands and obey. In these visions of the body politic, the ruler is the

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21 Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities*, 193. He notes that the "power of the suggestions Qi Bo has to make about health owes a great deal to their being cast in the mode of advice about ruling," while "the political advice in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* also owes something to its parade of learning about the body" (194).

22 Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities*, 206.

23 Xunzi, "Discourse on Heaven," Robert Eno trans., see http://www.iub.edu/~g380/2.9-Xunzi-2010.pdf, accessed 19 March 2019. Also see Edward Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the Tian Lun* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 95.

24 Huang, "The 'Body Politic' in Ancient China," 37, c.f. *Mawangdui Jing* No. 22, "Treatise on the Five Phases" (*Wuxing bian* 五行篇). Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, has remarked upon this text as an example of an alternative vision of the body politic in which tensions exist between the mind-heart of the ruler and the various sensory organs as ministers (3 and 36–39).

center, the master, the heart and mind, while subordinate ministers, each with different respective roles to assist in the proper function of the whole, serve as limbs and sensory organs.

Xunzi's Confucian contemporary Mencius, in dispensing advice to King Xuan of Qi, espoused a characteristically gentler view of the body politic, emphasizing the cooperative codependency between ruler and subjects.

> If a ruler treats subjects as his hands and feet, subjects then regard the ruler as their bosom and heart. If the ruler treats subjects as hounds and horses, then subjects will treat the ruler as a stranger. If a ruler treats his subjects like mud and weeds, then subjects view the ruler as a robber and an adversary.[25]

This passage shows that not all of these bodies function in an identical fashion. Huang Chi-chieh observes that while the operation of Xunzi's body politic is autocratic, that of Mencius' is "inter-subjective."[26] Similarly, Jack Chen remarks that in the "sovereign-subject interdependency" reflected in this passage from Mencius reinforces the sense that "if the sovereign does not treat his subjects with respect, then the organic totality of the body politic is not obtained."[27]

A passage in the "Black Robes" (*Ziyi* 緇衣) chapter of the *Record of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記), a text dating from the Western Han but with earlier roots, also makes manifest this bodily interdependence:

> To the people, the ruler is the heart; to the ruler, the people are the body. When the heart is settled, the body is tranquil. When the heart is filled with reverence, then the countenance is respectful. When the heart is fond of something, the body invariably follows. When the ruler is fond of something, the people will inevitably desire it. The

25 *Mencius*, slightly modified from the D. C. Lau trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 128, Book IV.B.3.

26 Huang, "The 'Body Politic' in Ancient China," 38–39.

27 Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 52–53.

> heart is made complete by the body, but the heart is wounded when the body is injured. The ruler exists because of the people; he can also meet his demise due to the people.[28]

This passage emphasizes mutuality: The heart-ruler shares a single larger body with the people and necessarily recognizes that his very existence is dependent on the maintenance of the health of the greater whole. Also in the *Book of Rites*, the "Greater Learning" (*Daxue* 大學) essay explains the paramount importance of self-regulation for the guiding heart/mind at the center of the body politic:

> In ancient times, those who wished to make bright virtue brilliant in the world first ordered their states. Those who wished to order their states first aligned their households. Those who wished to align their households first refined their persons. Those who wished to refine their persons first balanced their minds.[29]

In this conception, as the nerve center, the heart-mind of the body politic, the ruler bears great responsibility; the order of the realm hinges on his ability to regulate and harmonize from the inside out. Mark Lewis observes that in early China, "specifically human forms of space — body/self, household/family, cities/capitals, regions/customs, world/cosmos — were the products of conscious and continuous human endeavor."[30] He examines these five spheres beginning with ego/self and radiating outward in ever greater circles, encompassing family, then capital cities, then larger regions, and finally the larger realm or world. In this spatial conception, the ruler is the central pivot of a series of graduated circles; he is both the microcosm of and the heart/mind of the larger macrocosmic body politic.

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28 Kong Yingda 孔頴達, "Ziyi" 緇衣, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 [Orthodox Commentary of the Record of Rites], Li Xueqin 李學勤 ed., Vol. 6 in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2000), chapter 55, 1514. As the text of the "Ziyi" was discovered among the Guodian manuscripts (roughly 300 B.C.), this may be one of the oldest sections of *Record of Rites*.

29 *Liji zhengyi*, chapter 60, 1592. Translation from Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 3.

30 Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 307.

The notion of the ruler as organic part of the physical body of state is found in early histories as well. In the Western Han commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, appears the passage, “The ruler of a state is of one body with his state (*yiti* 一體). As the feudal lords succeed each other, they, as rulers of the state are of one body.” This example represents a curious wrinkle on the conception of the body politic. Literally, both ruler and the state belong to one and the same body. Transcending time, the body of a ruler is the body of the state: the commentary goes on to explain that scars of shame inflicted upon an ancestor in the past are still graven in the flesh of the current ruler.[31] In the late Eastern Han, in an appeal to the ruler, minister Chen Fan 陳番 (d. 168) described the ruler as the eminent head and the minister as the arms and legs of the same organism (*tongti* 同體).[32]

The long-established notion of the body politic remained an important political concept in medieval China. In the opening chapter of Tang Taizong’s valedictory treatise on kingship, *Plan for an Emperor* (*Di Fan* 帝範), a late-life meditation written in the throes of illness and passed on to his son, the sovereign writes that the body of the ruler (*junti* 君體) should be “like the great holy peaks, lofty, towering and unmovable…. Like sun and moon, constant in brilliance and illuminating all alike.”[33] For Taizong, such was the redoubtable image of a robust and hearty body politic. Though in Taizong’s vision in *Plan for an Emperor* the body of the ruler was more than just the heart, he still needed ministers to make the larger organism function properly. As Denis Twitchett frames it, “the sovereign and his ministers constituted a single and inseparable body.”[34]

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31 *The Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, trans. Harry Miller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), chapter 6, p. 51. This is part of the commentary for the fourth year of the reign of Duke Zhuang of Qi (690 B.C.), where the commentator justifies Qi’s vengeful extermination of the Marquis of Ji.

32 *HHS* 66.2166.

33 Denis Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor: T’ang T’ai-ts’ung’s Vision of his Role,” *Asia Major*, 3rd series 9.1/2 (1996): 57.

34 Denis Twitchett, “*Chen gui* and Other Works,” *Asia Major* 16.1 (2003), 72. Denis Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor,” 57–58, contains a translation of the first fascicle of the text, titled “Body of a Sovereign.”

In his rhetoric and poetry, while drawing on past conceptions of body and state and ancient ideas of virtuous rulership grounded upon self-denial, Taizong presented a novel twist on the body politic. Jack Chen argues that:

> Taizong's concern with the imperial body emerges from a broader question of the relationship between the public institution of the sovereign and his private self.... [w]hat concerns Taizong is the relationship between the *body natural*, or the private person of the ruler, and the *body politic*, or the symbolic body of the state represented by the ruler.[35]

Bodily restraint, abstention, and austerity — exemplified in the Tang emperor's dramatic declaration when holding a fistful of locusts that better the pestilential arthropods devour his innards than harm another blade of grass of the common people — led to the nurture and health of the body politic.[36] Following a legacy of self-denial that can be traced back to the sage-kings of remote antiquity, Taizong's notion of the body politic contains a "zero sum" logic — anything that feeds the ruler's appetites deprives the common people, the collective body politic, of nourishment.

Female emperor Wu Zhao 武曌 (r. 690–705), with the assistance of her extra-bureaucratic Scholars of the Northern Gate (*Beimen xueshi* 北門學士) created *Regulations for Ministers* (*Chengui* 臣規), an eclectic blend of martial traditions, Daoist principles, Confucian texts, and Legalist snippets combined into an elaborate justification of imperial power. The opening fascicle, "The Same Organism" (*tongti* 同體), articulates a familiar vision of the body politic in which the ruler is the secretive heart-mind, silent in the center, while the ministers function as the body, arms, and legs.[37] Whereas a father

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35 Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty*, 77.

36 Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 [Comprehensive Mirror for the Advancement of Governance; hereafter *ZZTJ*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 192.6053–54. Chen (*The Poetics of Sovereignty*, 73–76) comments on this celebrated episode. He also notes that stemming back to earliest texts, desires and appetites that begin in the ruler's body "result in larger economic hardships for his subjects and injury to public morality" (282).

37 Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 125–26; Twitchett, *Chen gui*," 72–73, provides an outline of this fascicle. Rothschild, "Rhetoric, Ritual, and Support

and son are two separate beings, ruler and minister are part of the same body, the same organism. The text begins: "The relationship between ministers and ruler is like that of the four limbs bearing the eminent head, like the ears and eyes serving as the emissaries of the heart-mind."[38] The same fascicle instructs: "Without waiting for orders, the minister acts diligently, because ruler and minister are a single organism. The minister does not seek permission but acts, because their heart-minds are joined as one."[39] Wu Zhao sought to encourage initiative, presupposing that the initiative taken by the minister accorded perfectly with the ruler's intentions. Following this logic, just as one part of the body would not betray another, so the actions of a minister naturally would be geared toward the betterment and benefit of the body politic. Otherwise, the minister is a canker, a disease that must be excised for the body to function healthily.

Mark Lewis contends that by the Han, as "a new form of polity" emerged, a unified empire, the body politic became increasingly important as "a model for structuring space through controlling substance…, the model of the body as state in parallel to the bureaucratic division of labor, where each bodily part is assigned a distinctive task."[40] While this section is far from a comprehensive review of the body politic in early and medieval China, these wide-ranging examples illustrate that it served as a vital and enduring discursive construction moving fluidly between medical treatises, state histories, and manuals on proper governance. In an ideal polity, the political organism, the body politic, runs smoothly and efficiently. This is, of course, a desired objective in statecraft. But what if the state-organism is unhealthy, afflicted with disease, in specific with tumors? While a wider exploration of the countless diseases that might afflict the physio-political body (and the metaphors and rhetorical circumstances in which these maladies and illnesses were deployed) is beyond the purview of this essay, the

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Constituencies in the Political Authority of Wu Zhao, Woman Emperor of China" (Brown University, Dept. of History, Ph.D. diss., 2003), 152–61, contains a translation of this fascicle.

38 *Chen gui* 臣軌 [Regulations for Ministers], compiled by Wu Zetian, in *Zhongjing ji qita wuzhong* 忠經及其他五種, *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 0893 (Taibei: Shangwu, 1936), 1. In a loose Western parallel, in 1603, King James I of England proclaimed, "I am the husband, and the whole land is my lawful wife; I am the head and it [the country, the whole land] is my body." Cited from Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, 1957), 223.

39 *Chen gui*, 6.

40 Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 37.

subsequent section narrowly examines the meaning of tumors (broadly understood here to include carbuncles, abscesses, and other excrescences) within the discursive framework of the body politic.

Tumors in the Body Ecologic

Just as a widely accepted set of correspondences developed between the physical body of man and the political corpus of state in early and medieval China, a similar series of consonant parallels emerged between the human (*ren* 人) and natural (*tian* 天) realms. To better apprehend the physio-political correspondence between the excrescences that afflict the human body and the metaphorical malignant growths that damage the health of the body-politic in historical and political narratives, it may be useful to first examine how such tumescent masses were understood to impact the terrestrial body, the earth upon which the body politic rested.

In the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸), Eastern Zhou (771–481 BC) sage Confucius remarked that perspicacious sage kings of antiquity grasped "the transformative and regenerative processes of Heaven and Earth," and thus patterned their governance upon the movements of the cosmos and the seasonal rhythm of nature.[41] Han Confucian thinker Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) systematized this organic vision of human governance into the eco-political concept of the "mutual responsiveness between Nature (Heaven) and Man" (*tianren ganying* 天人感應). Joseph Needham reasonably observed that in early China human laws and statecraft, poetically and metaphorically derived from larger elemental and cosmic processes, "mirror[ed] certain desirable qualities seen in non-human nature."[42] Environmental historian Mark Elvin coined the term "moral meteorology" to describe this eco-political correspondence, this notion that changes in the earth, weather, and climate often were understood to reflect and project the conduct of the ruler, whether virtuous or improper.[43]

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41 Confucius, trans. by Andrew Plaks, *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung* [The Highest Order of Cultivation and On the Practice of the Mean] (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 53, entry 32.

42 Joseph Needham, "Human Laws and Laws of Nature in China and the West (II): Chinese Civilization and the Laws of Nature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12.2 (1951): 201.

43 Mark Elvin, "Who Was Responsible for the Weather? Moral Meteorology in Late Imperial China," *Osiris*, 2nd series 13 (1998): 213–14. Elvin traces the conceptual origins of "moral meteorology" back to the "Great Plan" (Hongfan 洪範) chapter in the *Book of History* (Shangshu 尚書), one of the earliest canonical works. In *Retreat of the Elephants* (Stanford, CA:

Celebrated seventh-century master physician Sun Simiao 孫思邈, explaining to poet-official Lu Zhaolin 盧照鄰 the guiding principles of medicine in the early Tang, articulated an evolved understanding linking the human body not to the political, but to the natural realm:

> I have heard that if one is skilled at talking about Heaven, one must substantiate it in the human realm; if one is skilled at talking about humans, one must also root it in Heaven. In Heaven, there are four seasons and five phases; winter cold and summer heat alternate with each other. When this cyclical revolution is harmonious, it forms rain; when it is angry, wind; when it congeals, frost and snow; when it stretches out, rainbows. These are the constancies of Heaven and Earth. Humans have four limbs and five internal organs. They alternate between being awake and sleeping. In exhaling and inhaling, spitting out and sucking in, essence and *qi* leave and come. In their flow, they constitute provision and defense, they manifest as facial color, and they erupt as sound. These are the constancies of humanity. *Yang* employs the form, *yin* employs the essence. This is where Heaven and humanity are identical. When [the constancies] are lost, if [*qi* and essence] steam upward, they cause heat; if they are blocked, cold; **when knotted up, they become tumors and excrescences; when recessed, abscesses** 結而為瘤贅, 陷而為癰疽; if they scatter wildly, panting and dyspnea; and if they are exhausted, scorching and withering. Their symptoms arise on the face, and their transformations move around in the body. When one extends this analogy to apply it to Heaven and Earth, it is also likewise. Thus, the waxing and waning of the Five Planets, the irregular motions of the constellations, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the flight of shooting stars, these are Heaven and Earth's symptoms of danger. Unseasonable winter cold and summer heat are the ascent or blockage [of *qi* and essence] in Heaven and Earth. **Upright boulders and upthrust earth are the tumors and excrescences of Heaven and Earth** 石立土踴,天地之瘤贅也. **Collapsing mountains and caved-in ground are the**

Stanford University Press, 2004), Elvin elaborates and further develops "moral meteorology" — this notion that "the Chinese understanding of the environment interacted with orthodox morality, and … favorable or unfavorable weather was seen as a message of Heaven's approval or disapproval" ("Introductory Remarks," p. xx).

> **abscesses and carbuncles of Heaven and Earth.** 山崩土陷，天地癰疽. Scattered winds and violent rains are the panting and dyspnea of Heaven and Earth. Dried-up streams and parched marshes are the scorching and withering of Heaven and Earth. An excellent physician guides [*qi*] with medicines and [lancing] stones and rescues with needles and prescriptions. A sage[ly ruler] harmonizes [*qi*] to perfect his power and uses this as support in order to manage the affairs of humanity. Thus, the human body has illnesses that can be cured, and Heaven and Earth have calamities that can be dispersed.[44]

Building on the earlier physio-political vision articulated in the *Huangdi neijing*, Sun Simiao's vision of what might be termed, following cultural anthropologist Elisabeth Hsu, the "body ecologic,"[45] features a series of correspondences between the earth and the human body. For the Tang doctor, in the course of illness, the human body suffered afflictions equivalent to seismic distress, to the erupting growths that pock and gaping crevasses that score the terrestrial crust. When the flows of one's male *yang* and female *yin* essences are obstructed or out of kilter, disease and illness ensue; when the flow of these terrestrial ethers is constricted or becomes disharmonious, mountains crumble and marshes wither. The growths and abscesses highlighted in Sun Simiao's discourse caused great terrestrial stress, disrupting normal terrestrial rhythms, and inflicting great damage upon the "body ecologic." Not

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44 Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History] (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997; hereafter *JTS*), 191.5095–96. Slightly modified translation from Sabine Wilms, https://www.happygoatproductions.com/sun-simiao-biography/, accessed 10 Dec. 2016. The boldface in the passage is added by the author of this essay to highlight explicit references to "tumors" (*liu* 瘤) and "excrescences" (*ao* 敖). Part of this passage appears in a Buddhist source roughly contemporary to Sun Simiao in the early Tang, a section of Daoshi's 道世 (d. 683) anthology *Pearl Forest of the Dharma Garden* (*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林) titled a "Physicians and Medicine" (*yiyao bu* 醫藥部), *Taisho Tripitaka* 53.2122, ch. 95.

45 Elisabeth Hsu, "The Biological in the Cultural: The Five Agents and the Body Ecologic in Chinese Medicine," in *Holistic Anthropology: Emergence and Convergence*, ed. David Parker and Stanley Ulijaszek (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 91–93. Seeking the biological in the cultural, Hsu's extended notion of an organic "body ecologic" effectively treats heaven, earth, and man as an organism existing in and shared in a social, political, and natural space.

surprisingly, in the parallel discourse of the body politic, tumors, abscesses, and other excrescences wrought similar havoc.

Boils, Tumors, and other Excrescences in the Body Politic

Almost as soon as the physio-political discourse developed in the late Warring States era, tumors and other excrescences began to appear in rhetorical constructions of the body politic.[46] In the *Mencius*, disciple Wan Zhang 萬章 asked, "There are those who say that Yong Ju 癰疽 hosted Confucius and the eunuch Ji Huan lodged him in Qi. Is that true?"[47] The name of Yong Ju, a sycophantic favorite of Duke Ling of Wei, is written in the text as "ulcerated tumor."[48] In response, Mencius emphatically denied that Confucius would ever keep such odious company while in Wei. In *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) and other sources Yong Ju's name is written differently: 雍渠.[49] Though it seems paranomasia of a fairly low order, Mencius' less-than-subtle change of name to the ugly homophone "ulcerous tumor" serves to make manifest the vast moral lacuna separating the unprincipled sycophant Yong Ju (who shared a carriage with Duke Ling of Wei and his pulchritudinous if disreputable consort Nanzi) from high-minded Confucius, who, in accord with his unerring sense of high-minded propriety, followed in a separate carriage, and subsequently left Wei in disgust.[50]

This episode provides a tacit rather than an explicit insight into the Confucian understanding of the nature of the "body politic": when a sycophant, fawning and currying favor, gains the ear and

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46 Just as the preceding sub-section of this paper was not a comprehensive survey of the body politic, this section is not a comprehensive exploration of tumors in the body politic. Rather, it is intended as a preliminary representative cross-section of historical, medical, and philosophical sources examining the discursive utilizations and depictions of tumors in the rhetoric of the body politic.

47 Modified from the D. C. Lau translation of Mencius, 147, Book V.A.8, and Robert Eno, http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Mengzi.pdf, accessed 30 March 2019.

48 Robert Eno remarks on the homophone. See http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Mengzi.pdf

49 *SJ* 47.1920–21.

50 In *Analects* 15.1, Duke Ling of Wei inquired about the marshalling of troops. Unwilling to speak of warfare, Confucius promptly leaves Wei. This incident involving the carriages marks a further occurrence that left an unpleasant impression upon Confucius, hastening his departure. See Confucius, *Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin, 1979), 133.

confidence of a ruler, his glib and honeyed words block the flow of well-intentioned remonstrance from principled ministers just as a tumor might impede the proper flow of *qi* or circulation of blood to the heart. Information cannot be communicated through proper channels. Thus, the malignant tumor/sycophant impairs the healthy function of the body/state.

In the principles of Legalist statecraft set forth in the *Han Feizi* (third cent. BC), boils (*ju* 疽) figure prominently. Arguing that, "He who can lance a boil (*tan ju* 彈疽) of another must be able to endure the same pain himself,"[51] Han Fei intimates that to secure order and safety in a state, the ruler may need to make difficult — unpopular and painful — decisions.

Not surprisingly, Daoist thinkers offer a different perspective of lanced boils. Confucius, appearing in the "Great and Venerable Teacher" (*Dazongshi* 大宗師), one of the inner chapters in the *Zhuangzi*, as a befuddled foil, explains, with due humility, to disciple Zigong what sort of remarkable men Zhuangzi and his fellow Daoists are:

> Such men roam beyond the outer bounds; I, Qiu, remain within the bounds.... These men are companions of the Creator, and they roam amidst the undifferentiated *qi* of heaven and earth. They regard life as nothing more than an extraneous growth (*fuzhui* 附贅) or bothersome boil (*xianyou* 縣疣) and death but the removal of the boil (*jueyou* 決疣) or the draining of a purulent carbuncle (*kuiyong* 潰癰).[52]

Pacing the void, Zhuangzi soars beyond the body politic into the realm of the body metaphysic, a realm where life and death are piffling matters, and tumors are but trifling lumps whose presence or absence is of little concern.

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51 Han Feizi 34, "Outer Sayings," (Wai chushuo 外儲說); http://www2.iath.virginia.edu:8080/exist/cocoon/xwomen/texts/hanfei/d2.34/1/0/bilingual. Accessed 14 April 2019.

52 Translation modified from Burton Watson trans., *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 83. Watson renders the final phrase, "They look upon life as a swelling tumor, a protruding wen, and death as the draining of a sore or bursting of a boil."

Physio-political tumors also appear in Huang-Lao Daoist texts. The second of the *The Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* from the Mawangdui texts features a putative conversation between advisor Yan Ran and the Yellow Emperor:

Yan Ran: "Now the time of the world being in great strife is arrived: can you take care not to engage in strife?"

Huangdi: "How does one not engage in strife?"

Yan Ran: "Anger is a matter of blood and *qi*; strife is the outer skin and fat; if anger is not vented, it gathers to form a tumor (*yongju* 癰疽); later, if one must remove all four, how can one's brittle bones engage in strife?"[53]

This text dates from the latter half of the Warring States era, around the time that systematic correspondences are developing between the human body in medicine and the larger realm in political discourse.[54] Thus, particularly given that the conversation begins with Yellow Emperor's query about the best means to avoid conflict in the discord-ridden world rather than as an inquiry into his own personal well-being, Yan Ran's response may be considered an articulation of principles that apply to the tensions of the wider realm rather than instructions to aid the legendary sovereign in stress management. A coalescence of choleric blood and disturbed *qi*, tumors result from anger is that is swallowed and not vented. They are a malignancy to be avoided. Yan Ran intimates that it would be best for the Yellow Emperor to divest himself of all four — blood, *qi*, fat, and skin — for "how can one's brittle bones engage in strife?" Later, the mythic ruler follows his advice, retreating into prolonged reclusion to symbolically

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53 *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經), text of the second classic from Mawangdui 馬王堆 manuscript. Modified from Robert Eno trans. http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Legalism.pdf. Eno remarks that this passage manifests "the influence of pre-Qin "*qi* philosophies and hygiene cults."

54 For dating of these Mawangdui texts, see Feng Cao, *Daoism in Early China: Huang-Lao Thought in Light of Excavated Texts* (Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 32.

divest himself of blood and *qi*, of anger and strife, only to have Yan Ran recall his "brittle bones" into service, reminding him that, after all, "those who do not engage in strife accomplish nothing."[55]

Clearly, in early China, in dealing with tumors and other diseases, the treatment and prognoses of early and medieval China physicians had implications not just for treatment of the physical body, but for the body politic. In a recent article on traditional medicine and cancer, citing early texts like the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經) and the *Classic of Medical Difficulties* (*Nanjing* 難經), a group of Chinese oncologists observed that even in ancient China scholars and physicians recognized that "cancer etiology involved exopathogens, environment, emotional maladjustment, and improper diet."[56] The language that these physicians employed reflected a nuanced understanding of the wide range of different causal elements behind tumors.

In early medical texts like the *Huangdi neijing*, excrescences invariably were caused by blockages, obstructions, or other failings within the proper flow of *qi* through the conduits and channels of the body. One fascicle, "On Carbuncles and Furuncles" (*yongju pian* 癰疽篇), records nineteen categories of these growths, mostly skin diseases and lesions, providing location, features, prognosis, and sometimes treatment. While recognizing that these terms have a wider range of definition, Y. K. Kong translates *yong* 癰 as "carbuncle" (a collection of boils under the skin) and ju 疽 as "furuncle" (a boil, an inflamed follicle).[57] While all nineteen listed carbuncles and furuncles are superficial, elsewhere the *Huangdi neijing* mentions an ulcer of the gastric body (*weiwanyong* 胃脘癰).[58] This chapter also explains the origins of these growths: "When cold evil (*hanxie* 寒邪) *qi* resides in the conduits, blood flow becomes stagnant. Stagnant blood will cause obstructions, sequestering the defensive *qi*,

55 *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor*, second classic, Eno translation.

56 Jie Liu, Shuo Wang, Ying Zhang, Huiting Fan, and Hongsheng Lin, "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Cancer: History, Present Situation, and Development," *Thoracic Cancer* 6 (2015): 561.

57 Lingshu 靈樞 chapter 81, *Huangdi neijing: A Synopsis with Commentaries*, annotated and trans. Y. C. Kong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), 424–43.

58 *Huangdi neijing*, Chapter 46, part of Basic Questions (suwen 素問). Y. K. Kong mentions this reference in his commentary on the *Huangdi neijing*, speculating that given the description of the condition it might be caused by Helicobacter pylori bacteria (431).

preventing it from circulating; boils ensue."[59] This causes fever, which brings about ulceration, then suppuration, then necrosis, which, if not treated, can influence blood circulation and spread to the five organs, leading to their failure and ultimately death. Elsewhere, the text warns that when furuncles and carbuncles develop on the neck, the back, the thigh, the calf, or any of five pivotal acu-points, death is inevitable.[60]

These accounts of tumors, boils, and carbuncles appear in the same text that utilizes conversations between Qi Bo and serves to manifest the correspondences between vital organs in the body and pivotal bureaucratic roles in the state. Thus, these excrescences can be understood not only as malignant swellings that block the circulation of *qi* and harm the body, but in the same metaphorical sense that Mencius used to direct criticism at that figurative "ulcerated tumor," the sycophantic Yong Ju.

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Availing themselves of the expressive and culturally resonant language of physio-political correspondences, generals, statesmen, and historians in early and medieval China, found in tumors, boils, and purulent swellings a convenient metaphor with which to brand familiar enemies — eunuchs, sycophants, barbarians, and rebels.

Eastern Han general Duan Jiong employed the rhetoric of the body politic to urge military action against the Xiongnu and the Qiang. After a series of campaigns against these peoples, whom the general deemed "wild-hearted sons of wolves" who "only understood the threat of white steel pressed against their necks," Duan Jiong petitioned Emperor Huan in 168 AD, arguing that, "For more than two thousand *li* from Yunzhong and Wuyuan west as far as Hanyang, the Xiongnu and the various Qiang have taken over territory. This is a hidden ulcerated tumor (*yongju* 癰疽) festering on our side and waiting to burst; if not eradicated, soon it will grow larger."[61] The general called for further campaigns to

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59 *Huangdi neijing*, Kong trans., chapter 81, 433.

60 *Huangdi neijing*, Kong trans., chapter 21, 446.

61 HHS *65.2148. Also see Rafe de Crespigny annotation and translation,* Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling: Being the Chronicle for the Later Han, Years 157 to 189 AD as Recorded in Chapters 54 to 59 of Sima Guang's Zizhi tongjian (*Internet Edition, 2018*), *179–80, https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/42048/174/802264.pdf* (*Accessed 24 March 2019*).

expel the Xiongnu and Qiang from these contested borderlands. His petition likens permitting a non-Chinese military threat to exist along the frontier of the body politic, of the empire, to failing to excise a diseased growth on one's side. It is worthy of note that from the general's perspective the non-Han peoples of the northern and western borderlands are an "ulcerated tumor," a legitimate threat to the bodily health of state, far more than the "skin rash" that Cai Yong had considered them.

In the waning years of the Eastern Han, Han Lingdi 漢靈帝 (r. 167–189) appointed Liu Yan 劉焉 (d. 194) as Regional Inspector of Yizhou (in Shu, Sichuan basin), giving him orders to deal with troublesome local strongmen:

> Former inspectors Liu Jun 劉雋 and Xi Jian 郤儉 are cruel and avaricious, unbridled in their excesses, widely expropriating holdings. The masses despair, their laments echo in the wilderlands. When you arrive, take them into custody and lawfully implement punishment to display to myriad peoples [the just authority of the state]. Do not allow this order to leak. If this ulcerated tumor (*yongju* 癰疽) bursts, thorny (*geng* 梗) problems will emerge for the state."[62]

Geng can indicate thorn, but it can also mean an impediment (as in *geng dao* 梗道 = obstruct road), a wall of thorns. The tumor (*yongju* 癰疽) in this instance is a pair of corrupt local officials and their adherents. They represent a diseased abscess that must be contained and excised before it bursts and does further damage.

After Lingdi's death in 189, Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192), issued a statement declaring his intent to wrest power from Zhang Rang and the Ten Eunuchs who dominated the court under Dowager He in the decadent Eastern Han. His language employs an ulcer as a political metaphor: "although rupturing an ulcer (*yong* 癰) is painful, it's better than letting it consume one from within."[63] In the Confucian

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62 Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 [Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 31.865.

63 *HHS* 72.2322. Also see Rafe de Crespigny, *Fire over Luoyang: A History of the Eastern Han Dynasty, 23–220 AD* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 455. Dong Zhuo lived up to his promise and ruptured the ulcer, exterminating the clique of eunuchs, though he did not stop there. He poisoned dowager empress He and later killed boy-emperor Shao, Lingdi's son and successor. In short,

understanding of the body politic, eunuchs, insinuating themselves into the emperor's confidence and living within the Forbidden City, allowed into the innermost chambers, the private inner quarters, metaphorically were a festering internal disease — inhibiting the healthy flow of information between the heart in the center and the other organs and limbs of the bureaucratic body-state — draining life from the body politic.

In the Liang 梁朝 (502–557), Prince of Shaoling 邵陵 Xiao Lun 蕭綸 (d. 551) sought to dissuade brother Xiao Yi from heading south to deal with a troublesome official rather than confront a pair of more imminent threats to the body politic: "The matter of Hou Jing 侯景 is like a carbuncle (*yong* 癰) within; the Western Qin on the outside is like a tumor (*liu* 瘤)."[64] Xiao Lun's fears, couched in the metaphorical language of the body politic, were well-founded. Shortly thereafter, rebel general Hou Jing (the carbuncle) ransacked the capital Jiankang (present-day Nanjing), taking long-ruling emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) captive, massacring officials, and dominating the court for the final years of the dying Liang, as chaotic southern China devolved into a protracted civil war.[65] Xiao Lun's fretful mention of the "Western Qin" 西秦 is not a reference to the short-lived Xianbei-ruled Western Qin (385–431) that had fallen more than a century earlier; rather, it seemingly indicates the Western Wei 西魏 (534–557), a regional northern state ruled by the Toba Turks, the successor state to the Northern (Toba) Wei 北魏 (386–534). This Western Wei was centered in Guanzhong 關中, the heartland of the Wei River Valley that served as the capital for many dynasties and the territory of the state of Qin during the Warring States era — hence, Xiao Lun's use of "Western Qin." At the juncture at which Xiao Lun appealed to his brother, the Western Wei had massed an army to send southward against the Liang. Eventually, when the Western Wei (the tumor) invaded, Xiao Lun was killed. Though his brother, Xiao Yi, succeeded their father as emperor, and moved the capital to a new city, the tumor of "Western Qin" continued to grow: Western Wei troops took his new capital, leading to the demise of the Liang "body

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more butcher than physician, he further wounded the hemorrhaging body politic.

64 Yao Cha 姚察, *Liang shu* 梁書 [History of the Liang Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 29.434. Hou Jing posed an immediate danger as his rebellion targeted the capital, Jiankang.

65 For brief accounts of Hou Jing, see Mark Lewis, *China Between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009), 72; Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 9–10 and 43–45.

politic." Both, the bulging carbuncle in the immediate vicinity of the capital (rebel Hou Jing) and the encroaching swelling growing on the borders (the army of non-Chinese Toba Turks from the Western Wei), contributed significantly to the "death" of the body-state.[66]

Not surprisingly, in the turbulent late Tang when the body-state was decrepit and weak, vulnerable to disease, rhetoric was rife with metaphorical tumors. Late Tang poet-official Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852), stationed along the Yangzi during emperor Wuzong's reign in the mid-840s, lamented that in these decadent time pirates and bandits teemed and ran riot, causing the people great distress while self-serving generals did nothing to hinder them. These scourges, the chagrined officer complained, would become a dire problem for future generations, "the root of tumors (*ju* 疽) that will afflict the flanks and backs of our future sons and grandsons."[67]

At the end of a chapter in the *Old Tang History* set at this same juncture, containing biographies of Tang loyalists who were undermined by court eunuchs, the critical summation cites a pair of parallel admonitive precedents: "The Han eradicated the coalition of cliques; the Wei destroyed the 'pus-filled abscess.'" The "pus-filled abscess" (*ju nang* 疽囊) is a reference to a clique of corrupt officials in the Cao Wei 曹魏 dynasty (220–266) — Cao Shuang's powerful eunuch supporters He Yan, Deng Yang, and Ding Mi — who were eradicated in 249.[68] In the didactic moral-physiological narrative of Confucian historians, eunuchs, like corrupt officials and rebels, were a disease, a chronic problem capable of flaring up at junctures at which the body-state was vulnerable.

Less than four decades later, as the rebellion of Huang Chao 黃巢 left the beleaguered Tang state teetering, the adherents of official-turned-rebel Qian Neng 阡能 grew ever more numerous, in the words of the *Comprehensive Mirror* "gradually infiltrating and encroaching" (*jinyin* 侵淫) on the borders of Shuzhou 蜀州, modern-day Chengdu. In his Yuan-era commentary, Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1287)

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66 For a brief English language biography of Xiao Lun, see David Knechtges, "Xiao Lun," *Ancient and Early Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide*, vols. 3 and 4 (Leiden: Brill), 1500–01.

67 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 [New Tang History] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 210.5922. For a more detailed sense of Du Mu's complaint, see D. A. Peterson, "Court and Province in the mid- and late T'ang," in *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China, ed. Denis C. Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 555.

68 *JTS* 176.4576. Part of the succinct critical summation (zan 贊) at the end of the chapter.

explains that "gradually infiltrating and encroaching" is a metaphor (*yu* 喻) for "an ulcerated tumor (*yongju* 癰疽) gradually encroaching to insidiously erode [the body]."[69] Despite the plethora of other even more dire maladies afflicting the body-state of the Tang, this tumor was successfully excised: the Qian Neng rebellion was pacified in late 882.[70]

This macrocosmic physiological vision of the body-state could be applied on a lesser scale to the corporate body of a large family. In his "family instructions" (*jiaxun* 家訓), late Tang scholar-official Liu Pi 柳玭 (d. 895) cautioned his kinsmen: "These five errors [being inured to luxury, failure to heed the ancient path of Confucian principle, listening to flatterers, not heeding remonstrance, and allowing eunuchs to wield power] are worse than lymphatic swellings or ulcers (*cuo ju* 痤疽). Lymphatic swellings and ulcers can be cured with a stone acupuncture needle (*bianshi* 砭石); these five errors cannot be remedied by any shaman or physician.[71] Dishing out a salubrious dose of Confucian advice, Liu Pi urged his posterity to mindfully swallow the bitter medicine of remonstrance rather than blindly supping on the honey-sweet nectar of sycophancy. In this instance, while similar physio-political principles apply, Liu Pi is addressing the corporate family, rather than the larger body politic.

Ministers, statesmen, generals, and historians in early and medieval China were not medical experts and did not employ terms with the same precision as early physicians. They did not necessarily make distinctions between tumors, carbuncles (a severe abscess on the neck), furuncles (an inflamed swelling of the skin), and other growths. Nonetheless, for rhetorical effect, they consistently deployed these excrescences in memorials, speech, and annals to convey a sense that these inflammations, these malignant swellings, compromised the health of the body politic.

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69 *ZZTJ* 255.8278. For a description of the Qian Neng uprising in Sichuan, see Robert Somers, "The End of the T'ang," in Twitchett and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China, 749–50. Somers notes that this uprising was the result of harsh and corrupt Tang officials (750).

70 Somers, "The End of the T'ang," 750.

71 *JTS* 165.4309. Liu Pi (d. 894) is best known for *Instructions for the Liu Clan* (*Liushi xuxun* 柳氏叙訓), a text on clan law and family rules. For more on Liu Pi and this text, see Chen Shangjun 陳尚君, "Tang Liu Pi 'Liu shi xuxun' yanjiu" 唐柳玭"柳氏叙訓"研究 [A Study of Liu Pi's *Liushi xuxun* in the Tang Dynasty], *Guowen xuebao* 國文學報 [Bulletin of Chinese Studies] 51 (2012): 147–78.

CONCLUSIONS

By the late Tang, the metaphorical and rhetorical body politic had more than a millennium of history. Maturing conceptions of an organic body politic were readily incorporated into the didactic Confucian meta-narrative. Statesmen and historians styled themselves as physicians of the body state, arbiters of wellness, of proper and healthy function of the body politic who were capable of making prognoses and offering prescriptions for its maladies. Just as doctors in early and medieval China sought remedies for obstructions to facilitate healthy *qi* flow in the physical body, these physicians of the body politic sought to remove impediments like bandits, sycophants, and eunuchs that impeded the normal flow (inward or outward) of information along proper transport channels (*jing*) and conduits (*luo*). Rhetorical references to tumors growing on or in the "body politic" were categorically negative; time and again, in malignant metaphorical excrescences are obstruct the *qi* in the body politic, impeding the healthy circulation of virtue.

Cai Yong's aforementioned claim in the late second century that "calamities of the periphery can be considered an itchy rash of the hands and feet; but a crisis in the Central Realm can be termed a malignant growth on the bosom or back" became an axiom of Confucian statecraft. In Liu Xu's critical summation (*zan* 贊) at the end of the chapter on the Western barbarians (*Rong* 戎), the Five Dynasties era historian reaffirmed the principle and bequeathed it to posterity, asserting, "The meaning of the tumor-rash axiom is one that can be followed for a hundred generations."[72] In this narrative, when close to the core or the heart of the state, proximate to the ruler and the capital, these troublesome growths — generally a metaphor for venal officials, scheming eunuchs, or devious sycophants — posed grave peril; on the other hand, such malignancies on the periphery might be considered mere irritations, posing less of a threat to the well-being of the larger body politic. This Confucian principle of statecraft might be termed "cherishing the core and paying scarce attention to the periphery" (*zhongnei qingwai* 重內輕外), a concomitant and parallel construction to "exalting the civil and disparaging the military" (*zhongwen qingwu* 重文輕武).

Curiously, however, the rhetorical logic of the body politic in several of the examples cited above

72 *JTS* 195.5216. One might argue that Liu Xu's claim represents an inaccurate diagnosis and a short, selective memory. After all, what of the An Lushan Rebellion or the mid-dynasty sackings of Chang'an at the hands of Uygyrs and Tibetans?

does not conform to the long-held "tumor-rash axiom" of statecraft. Indeed, for general Duan Jiong in the Eastern Han, the Xiongnu on the northern border posed a legitimate menace, a "tumor" rather than a superficial irritation. In the mid-sixth century, Xiao Lun warned that the "tumor" Western Wei (Qin), a rival neighbor, imperiled the weakened body-state of the Liang. Sure enough, the encroachment of this tumor from the northwest damaged the body politic beyond repair.

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