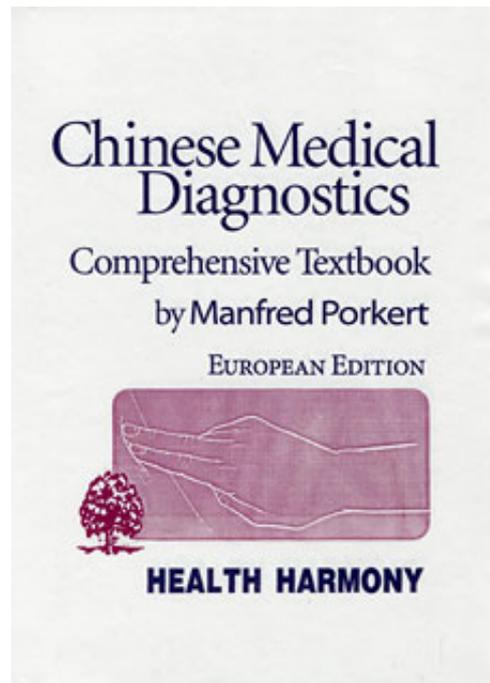


Manfred Porkert

Chinese Medical Diagnostics

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CHAPTER I: VISUAL DIAGNOSIS (INSPECTION)

Visual diagnosis serves to ascertain characteristics of shape, colour and movement of the body and its parts. Visual diagnosis is especially directed to the complexion and the tongue, and also takes notice of the shape and colour of excretions. If carried out correctly, inspection must produce positive information about:

1. the configurative force (*shen*¹) which manifests in the tonus of tissues and muscles, in the posture and gait of the body, in the sheen of the eyes and the skin, in the humidity of the mucous tissues and so on;
2. the colour (*se*²) especially as it is apparent in the complexion and the body of the tongue, as well as in the coating of the tongue; depending upon circumstances, other significant parts or areas may be examined-
3. the physical shape (*xing*³) in its entirety and in detail; finally
4. the general attitude (*tai*⁴) i.e. the comprehensive perception of the typical characteristics of physical movement and activity of an individual.

Inspection in General

1. *Inspection of the Configurative Force* (wangshen⁵)

In Chinese medicine, the term *shen* ('configurative force') designates that aspect of active energy producing and maintaining the specific existence and quality of an individual: *shen*, the configurative force, constitutes the personality.⁶ However, *shen*, configurative force, if taken as an active aspect only, by definition,⁷ cannot be directly perceived; instead its quality must be deduced indirectly from

1 神 2 色 3 形 4 態 态 5 望 神

⁶ Cf. PORKERT, *Theoretical Foundations* ... p. 127 and pp. 181 f.

⁷ Cf. what has been said above on p. 33.

the changes and manifestations in the body. Thus the strength of the configurative force is reflected in the clear and firm expression of the eyes, in the distinct articulation of speech, in the consistency and continuity of reflection, in the firmness of the flesh, in the balanced harmony of breathing, in the regularity of evacuations. If all these signs of a strong and intact configurative force are present, a generally reassuring prognosis seems justified — even if other methods of diagnosis should reveal some critical signs. Inversely, if a patient's gaze appears weak, unsteady, tired, if his body is decrepit and limp, if his breath comes accelerated, irregularly, panting or spluttering, if he cannot control his evacuations, if he moves unceasingly and without aim, if his speech is slurred and incoherent, if he is absent minded or unconscious, if his eyes are half closed and his mouth remains open, these are signs of a drastically depleted or exhausted configurative force, calling for an unfavourable prognosis even if other signs should be less critical. Thus

in the Appearance of	<i>a Sound, Intact Configurative Force Manifests in</i>	<i>an Impaired, Defective Configurative Force Manifests in</i>
Body and Complexion	Healthy complexion, firm tissue, skin neither extremely dry nor extremely moist.	Emaciation, sallow complexion; skin very dry or very moist.
the Eyes	Vivid, steady, clear gaze	Listless, tired, wavering gaze
Emotions and Sentiments	Clear, coherent thinking, distinct speech, presence of mind	Incoherent thinking, apathy, torpidity; aimless movements; extreme restiveness in bed.
Breathing	Regular	Irregular, accelerated or slowed down.

Impairment of the configurative force also prevails if only isolated and singular signs of the presence of configurative force are observed. If such isolated and singular signs of an intact configurative force are restricted to one or just a few vital manifestations such as the gaze, speech or cogitation, and when all other indications point to an impaired and defective configurative force, if the pulses are critically out of rhythm and harmony, Chinese doctors interpret this as the "last flare-up of an exhausted lantern" — in analogy to what Western medicine describes as premortal euphoria.

2. Inspection of Tints and Colours, in Particular in the Complexion (wangse¹)

The comprehensive Chinese term of *se* among its principal connotations comprises those of colour as well as of the complexion. Indeed, the colour of the face is capable of exhibiting quite subtle and diverse as well as striking modulations of vital functions and health. Consequently, its inspection frequently contributes critical symptoms to a comprehensive diagnosis.

When evaluating the changes in the appearance and tints of the complexion, the diagnostician must distinguish between a basic pigmentation due to race, climate or living habits. This basic pigmentation is termed 'dominant colour' (*zhuse*²). Of more direct diagnostic significance however, are the variable tinges very quickly reflecting any functional changes in an individual. This variable tinge in Chinese is called the 'deversant colour'³ As a rule, the dominant colour is only of slight or without any diagnostic significance. By contrast, the deversant colour, especially if viewed in the context of all other diagnostic findings, frequently furnishes major clues or at least significant confirmation of a certain diagnosis. When assessing deversant colours, the following directional correlates should be kept in mind:

Colour	Evolutive Phase	Season	Horreal Orb	Aulic orb
Green (Blue-Green)	Wood	Spring	Hepatic Orb	Felleal Orb
Red	Fire	Summer	Cardial Orb	Tenuintestinal Orb
White	Metal	Autumn	Pulmonal Orb	Crassintestinal Orb
Black	Water	Winter	Renal Orb	Vesical Orb
Yellow	Earth	All year	Lienal Orb	Stomach Orb

1 望色 2 主色

3 客色 *Kese* in Chinese, 'deversant' derived from the Latin *deversari*, 'to be a guest' as the direct complement of *dominari*, 'to be the master'.

The complexion of any healthy individual will show a typical deversance of a pink mellow lustre and a certain briskness of traits. This deversance of the healthy individual will show inflections, depending upon the seasons and the moods. These inflections may be so weak as to be almost imperceptible — and surely uncritical — or so pronounced as to strike even the unprepared and untrained observer.

With all deversances a distinction may be made between an auspicious and an inauspicious variant colour.¹ The auspicious variant of a critical deversance denotes that despite critical imbalances of functions in certain orbs, the qi "does arrive", in other words still circulates without major disruption; inversely, the inauspicious variant expresses that the qi is tied up in a major block, hence does not arrive.

In the Inner Classic, the difference between auspicious and inauspicious deversances is described thus:

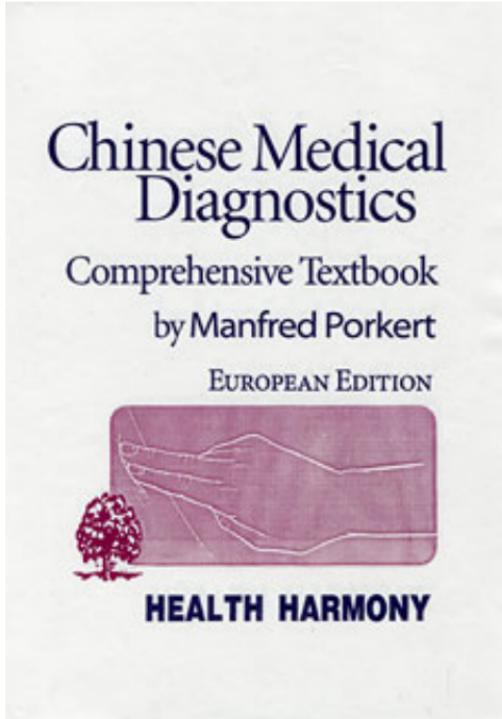
"Greenness like a mat of grass is inauspicious, greenness like the plumes of the kingfisher is auspicious; yellow the colour of a lemon is inauspicious, yellow like the belly of a crab is auspicious; red like dried up blood is inauspicious, red like the comb of a cock is auspicious; white like dry bone is inauspicious, white like pork's grease is auspicious; black like soot is inauspicious, black like the feathers of a raven is auspicious."

As a rule, any colour deversance in which the skin retains a mellow lustre and a pink sheen may be considered as reassuring and auspicious; by contrast, if the skin looks withered and faded, or if it shows harsh, undiluted tints, an inauspicious development must be inferred. A withered, flabby skin indicates that the allover harmony and balance of energies termed *qi stomachi*² is impaired by major affections to one or several orbs. In former times the Chinese had called such a lustreless, flabby complexion the complexion of early death (*yaose*³).

The information obtained from visual diagnosis of the complexion may corroborate or differ from results gathered by other diagnostic methods. In the latter event, attention should be paid to directionality expressed by the sequences of the Evolutive Phases. Among these sequences particular significance attaches to the sequences I and II (production sequence and checking sequence). If the pro-

¹ In Chinese *shanse* and *ese*. 善色 惡色 ³ 殀色

² Cf. p. 291f or the Glossary.



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