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Author of *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH




A GUIDE TO CHINESE MEDICINE

HARRIET BEINFELD, L.Ac.
and

EFREM KORNGOLD, L.Ac., O.M.D.

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CHINESE
MEDICINE

HARRIET BEINFIELD
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More praise for
Between Heaven and Earth

"A lucid introduction to the subtle, strange, and eminently useful ideas and methods of Oriental medicine . . . The authors transmit a unique understanding of the ways in which Chinese medicine enables us to know more intimately the particular nature of our humanity."

Ted Kaptchuk

Author of *The Web That Has No Weaver*

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Autor of *The Way of Herbs* and
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"An extremely thorough introduction to Chinese medicine."

New Age Journal

天
地
之
間

Heaven, Earth, and I are living together, and all things and I form an inseparable unity.

Chuang Tzu

The organic pattern in Nature was for the medieval Chinese the Li, and it was mirrored in every subordinate whole. . . . Li signified the pattern in things, the markings in jade or the fibres in muscle, like the strands in a piece of thread, or the bamboo in a basket . . . it is dynamic pattern as embodied in all living things, in human relationships and in the highest human values. . . . Li, in its most ancient meaning, is the principle of organization and pattern in all its forms.

Joseph Needham

What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me? And me to you?

Gregory Bateson

FOREWORD

FOR OVER TWENTY-THREE CENTURIES ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLES AND GIN-seng have mended what is now one-quarter of the world's population, yet it is only in the last two decades that most Americans have even heard of them. In 1971, the year before the "Bamboo Curtain" lifted, *New York Times* journalist James Reston became ill while on assignment in China. After having his appendix removed, he was treated with acupuncture for postsurgical pain. The front-page stories he sent home reported, "I've seen the past, and it works!" At that moment Chinese medicine entered mainstream American consciousness.

Efrem and I began to practice acupuncture shortly after that in 1973. Since then we've treated thousands of Americans. One was Sam, a thirty-six-year-old biochemist, who had an excruciating pain in his abdomen diagnosed by his doctor as gallstones. Although he felt skeptical about Chinese medicine, he was more frightened by the prospect of surgery. After two months of acupuncture, herbs, and dietary modification, Sam expelled scores of stones, and a sonogram confirmed that surgery was no longer necessary. Esther, a retired seventy-five-year-old nurse, had severe arthritis. After a year she was free of pain and had recovered the use of her joints and limbs. Fifteen years later she'd had no recurrence. Yet another person was Suzanne, who at age twenty-eight, after three miscarriages and two gynecological surgeries, was unable to conceive. In the eighth month of treatment, she became pregnant and later delivered a healthy daughter, now a teenager.

These people and many like them had their intellect aroused by their success with acupuncture and herbs. Having been impressed, they wanted to be informed. We began writing this book in response to their request, "Where can I read more about it?" Although other books exist on the subject, none give the uninitiated a comprehensive yet comprehensible overview. So we set out to explain our sense of what Chinese medicine is—how it thinks, how it works, what it can do.

Numerous schools of thought and various methods are found within the vast historical tradition of Chinese medicine. It has never been a monolithic institution. After all, millions of doctors over the millennia have practiced its techniques and developed its theories. It sustained itself in part by adjusting to changing conditions and will continue to develop differently in each country and era in relation to the social demands and belief systems that prevail there. In *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, Paul Unschuld comments:



The travel of ideas is different from the travel of merchandise. The latter can be handed on, from one region to the next, by different means of transportation, without itself undergoing any change. Ideas must be transmitted by the head, and, of necessity, will undergo change. Where could a foreign idea be accepted, assimilated, or transmitted without being influenced by the particular situation it meets, by the changing languages that serve as its means of transportation, and by the preconditioned patterns of thought cherished by the final receiver?

As Chinese medicine takes root in our terrain, it evolves to adapt to our environment. Does a botanist hiking along steep slopes move through the same forest as the native tribesman who once dwelled among the evergreens? Is a mountain that endures the ages the same even though climbers see variable landscapes from epoch to epoch? What the mountain means to people and how they use it changes with each traveler or caravan. Ideas, more mutable and malleable than landmasses, are even more liable to change form. The ancient Chinese had their own mythos, language, circumstances, preoccupations, and we have ours. This book represents a nexus, a point of convergence, a meeting of worlds.

As we traveled the curved footpaths around mountains of Chinese medical thought, we made choices about what to include, what to leave out, and how best to express our version of these ideas. *Between Heaven and Earth* is a product of continuous dialogue between dual authors—an unfinished conversation, the most coherent statement we can express at this time. It's not the definitive summary of Chinese medicine, the last word, but a starting point for new discourse that invites the next utterance. The "we" refers to our collaborative voice, whereas the "I" belongs to Harriet, who sometimes chooses to convey ideas through her personal narrative.

Between Heaven and Earth is a cross-cultural transmission and transplantation. In transposing Chinese ideas into our own idiom, our challenge has been to bridge gaps—between mind and body, theory and practice, therapy and self-care, practitioner and patient, ancient and modern, convention and invention, East and West. We have dug into and mined the rich ore of Chinese medicine for the purpose of creating new metal, a refined alloy. Through cultural blending, we are transmuting wisdom from early China into what has relevance for us today. Welcome to an ongoing process.

We have divided our discussion of Chinese medicine into three overlapping parts:

- Theory: the ideas—about nature, the human body, and the self—upon which the medicine is based



- Types: the psychology in Chinese medicine—how five archetypes symbolize human character, illuminating our personal tao, the way we are
- Therapy: the treatment methods of acupuncture, herbs, diet—what they are and how to use them

The first section, "Theory," introduces you to the essential principles of traditional Chinese medicine and explains the beliefs upon which this foreign medicine rests. We also examine how these beliefs differ from the assumptions we take for granted in Western medicine—the conceptual baggage we carry with us from home. After establishing the philosophical grammar, the logic and vocabulary through which Chinese medicine speaks, you can begin to acquire the fluency to converse in its language.

As we worked on the second section of the book, "Types," we played with Chinese theory, elaborating upon it to suit American conditions and needs. Our intellectual chemistry commingled with Eastern thinking, propagating reactions of its own. What came out of this was an articulation of the psychology implicit in Chinese medicine yet not explicitly developed by the Chinese.

For Americans, psychology—the study of how people think, feel, and behave—captures immense interest. In contrast, the gaze of Chinese culture is averted away from the individual and instead directed toward social groups (the family, collective, and state), so psychology in China is quite underdeveloped, and its medicine has focused primarily upon physical symptoms. But because Chinese medical theory assumes human process unfolds as a consequence of the tension and unity between interacting systems, mental phenomena are not considered to be altogether separate or distinct from physical events.

We have fused Chinese theory with outlooks from Western psychology for the purpose of transcending our cultural practice of isolating physiology from psychology so that we can begin to knit together the fracture that splits body from mind. Toward that end, we have generated a schema of types: five metaphors for the emotional, physical, and spiritual dynamics that organize us. Each of these types has idiosyncratic traits, motivations, and struggles—five styles of being in the world. You are invited to discover how your style of interpreting reality fits within these categories and discern who you are:

- The *Pioneer*, determined to make things happen
- The *Wizard*, seeking magic and excitement
- The *Peacemaker*, constantly arranging and harmonizing the world
- The *Alchemist*, who masters form and function
- The *Philosopher*, relentlessly in pursuit of truth



By identifying people's archetypes, the sources of their virtues, strengths, dilemmas, and limitations become apparent. These depictions help to counteract the discomfiting image many of us have of ourselves as a haphazard collection of disjointed events and shifting identities. Instead there is a pattern in our tapestry—woven through us and by us—we embody and manifest its design. Examining its fabric informs us about how we are predisposed to suffer and derive satisfaction in particular ways. An outcome of self-recognition can be self-acceptance, often a precursor to self-mastery. This system is a lens, a model, a paradigm through which we can understand, explain, and help ourselves and others.

Although this book is not a manual or textbook, we want to encourage you to experience as well as comprehend the potential this medicine offers. So the third section of the book, "Therapy," explains methods of treatment and the thought process used by each one. Acupuncture need not be intimidating; herbal medicine need not be mystified; and the promise of Chinese food therapy has not yet begun to dazzle our palates.

In addition to explanation, we provide practical counsel by guiding you toward the herbal remedies and foods appropriate for you. To do this, we devised a system that simplifies yet preserves the art of prescribing. Since Chinese herbs can be purchased over-the-counter, we outline a set of herbal formulas and herbal food recipes so that those of you so motivated can put your understanding into action.

As you read this book you may want to selectively navigate your passage, reading the text out of sequence, skipping to sections that most engage you. Some will be intrigued by the ideas, others by traditional Chinese diagnosis and physiology, others will search for the right herb formula, and still others will be immediately drawn to the middle of the book to identify themselves and their family within the schema of the five archetypes, returning later to the other chapters.

Many people in our culture have been nurturing a shift in consciousness as they search for alternatives to the threatening political and environmental dilemmas our civilization has created. Our overarching concern, the meta-purpose of this book, is to demonstrate that to think through the mind of Chinese medicine, to see through its eyes, is in itself a healing process.

What makes Chinese medicine distinct, even more than its needles and herbs, is its metaphysics (assumptions about reality), epistemology (ways of acquiring knowledge), and ideology (system of beliefs and values), all of which find their expression in the Taoist imperatives of preserving life and living in accord with nature. To the extent that we learn to live with nature—with our own nature, each other, and the earth—we have freedom, power, and purpose and can enjoy life. To the extent that we do not, we suffer. For us, the ethic of Chinese medicine is to assist us in this striving.

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THEORY

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Our Journey East:
Exploring Foreign Territory