



CONTEMPORARY INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE MEDICINE

IN COMPARISON WITH WESTERN MEDICINE



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Prof. Xie Zhufan
with
Xie Fang, Ph.D.



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FOREWORD

Professor Xie Zhufan, Director Emeritus of Peking University Institute of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, is a renowned internist and integrated traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine specialist in China.

A distinguished, erudite scholar and a clinician par excellence of forthright character, Professor Xie is a highly respected and close friend of mine for decades. His exemplary works on basic neuroendocrinology studies of Cold & Heat Theories of traditional Chinese medicine have been leading the field with solid progresses. Over the years, Professor Xie has headed several task forces on English standardization of traditional Chinese medicine nomenclatures sponsored by World Health Organization and State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine of China with outstanding achievements. With his extensive proficiencies in both traditional Chinese and Western medicines, Professor Xie excels in the adaptation of traditional Chinese medical science into English and has been universally recognized as the best in the field. Amongst his abundant translated works, "On the Standard Nomenclature of Traditional Chinese Medicine" has been the most representative.

An energetic octogenarian of highest professional standards, Professor Xie works ceaselessly and tirelessly to promote academic exchanges and international collaboration in medicine. This book, *Contemporary Introduction to Chinese Medicine in Comparison with Western Medicine* is one of his recent works in collaboration with Dr. Xie Fang. The aim of this work is to provide Western practitioners a systematic approach to study, comprehend and practice traditional Chinese medicine. In spite of the vast and all-encompassing nature of traditional Chinese medicine and considerable difficulty in technical adaptation to English, Professor Xie and Dr. Xie are able, on the one hand, to maintain Chinese cultural characteristics throughout the dissertation, and on the other, stand on the

Western readers' perspectives to ensure that the essence of this work is easy to read, study, comprehend and hence, to apply. This book faithfully lays out basic theories of traditional Chinese medicine, and diagnostic and therapeutic principles, with full attention on the most updated treatment of diseases commonly seen in the West, such as allergic, arthritic and gastrointestinal disorders, hypertensive, coronary heart and diabetic diseases, metabolic syndromes and tumors. Fluent in language and style, it is an extremely handy and practical tool, the best of its kind one can find nowadays.

It is indeed most rewarding, and my great pleasure, to preface this work to all.

Prof. Chen Keji, MD

**Member,
Chinese Academy of Sciences
Chairman Emeritus,
Chinese Association of Integrated Traditional and Western Medicines
Beijing, July 2009**

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Chapter I

Cultural Backgrounds of Chinese Medicine

Existence of any system of medicine is a cultural phenomenon. This is particularly true for Chinese medicine. Being established and developed on the ground of ancient Chinese culture, Chinese medicine has indeed become an essential part of Chinese culture. Needless to say, cultural factors have exerted a great impact on Chinese medicine during the entire course of its formation and development. Among all the factors, philosophy, language and scientific tradition are the most important. In order for readers to have better understandings of theories of Chinese medicine, it is necessary to discuss those cultural issues first.

Ancient Chinese Philosophy

Traditional Chinese medicine was established on the basis of ancient Chinese philosophies, particularly Confucianism and Daoism. It is generally agreed that there were three philosophical traditions in the world—Chinese, Indian and Greek (or Western), but in the Chinese language there was no such a word or its equivalence as philosophy (哲学 *zhe xue*) until the early 20th century. The rendering of the Chinese word 哲学 (*zhe xue*) first appeared around 1900 when the Western philosophical works began to be translated into Chinese. It is noteworthy that in English, the word philosopher is derived from the word philosophy, but oppositely, the Chinese word 哲学 (*zhe xue*, philosophy) comes from 哲人 (*zhe ren*), an ancient word which means those who have great knowledge and wisdom and think deeply about things. From the modern perspectives, 哲人 (*zhe ren*) are actually philosophers.

Nearly twenty-five centuries ago, brilliant ancient cultures flourished in several parts of the world. These cultures brought forth outstanding scholars and thinkers. In Greece, Thales, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle (around 400-600 B.C.) founded Greek philosophy, the foundation of Western philosophy. In India, Siddhārtha Gautama (565-486 B.C.) founded Hinduism. In China, Confucius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi and others (770-221 B.C.) founded Confucianism, Daoism, Moism, etc.

It seems to be a coincidence that all three great systems of philosophy in the world – Chinese, Indian, and Greek (or Western) emerged at approximately the same time (roughly 500 B.C.) and independently of one another. Obviously, those great thinkers were born in the same era, but establishment of a philosophy system does not happen simply because highly intelligent people like those great thinkers enjoy creating philosophy theories. There is no doubt that the ideas and systematic work were completed ingeniously, and the achievement of those great thinkers should by no means be devalued. However, what needs to be pointed out is another crucial factor for the formation of a philosophy system: social demand. If one takes a brief look at the chronological table of the ancient Greece, he or she may easily find that Thales, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle were born in an era during which Western culture was undergoing a fundamental change. In 683 B.C., hereditary kingship was abolished at Athens, in 610 B.C. the Reforms of Lycurgus at Sparta, and so on and so forth. Therefore, only when the traditions seemed to be crumbling, did the need for philosophy arise. The same occurred in China.

In Xia (from the 21st century to 16th century B.C.), Shang (from the 16th century to 11th century B.C.), and West Zhou dynasties (from the 11th century to 770 B.C.) the Chinese were governed under the slavery system. During such a period, the existing system functioned well, and there was no demand or motivation for philosophers to create new ideas either to fix it or replace it. It was not until the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), transition from slavery to feudalism, that new ideology was craved to satisfy the social change. And it was this period that cradled the Confucianists and Daoists, two of the most popular schools of Chinese philosophy that are still influencing daily life of every Chinese after 2,500 years and that have the greatest impact on Chinese medicine.

I. Confucianism

Confucianism was initiated by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) who lived in late Zhou Dynasty or by the end of Spring and Autumn Period. He was a great thinker and educationist. The kernel of his thought consists of humaneness and the golden mean. His words and deeds were chiefly recorded in *Lun Yu* (*Analects of Confucius* or *Analects* for short). The book was compiled by his disciples after his death.

During the period from Pre-Qin time to the early years of Han Dynasty (from the 7th to the early 2nd century B.C.) various schools of thought emerged and competed for domination. In the 2nd century B.C., the Emperor Wu of early Han Dynasty adopted Dong Zhongshu's suggestion to revere only Confucianism, but reject all other schools of thought. Since then Confucianism had been the major discipline of

philosophy in the subsequent dynasties in China. It became the kernel of the feudal ethical code and exerted strong influence on the traditional Chinese culture.

1. Humaneness and Medical Ethics

A major part of the core of Confucianism is humaneness, which has given tremendous impact on Chinese medical ethics. Up till now, every Chinese doctor should always keep in mind that “medicine is the art of humaneness” since he or she began to study medicine. Such highly inclusive and abstract statement has provided the fundamental guideline for ethics of Chinese medicine.

What is Confucian humaneness? The following citations from the book *Analects* will give the answer. “A humane person loves the people.” “A humane person, in wishing to establish self, establishes others; in wishing to enlighten self, enlightens others. To be capable of appraising self in order to comprehend others can be regarded as the key to humaneness.” “What you yourself do not want, do not distribute to others.” “Do not impose upon others what you do not desire yourself.”

A humane person loves people. This is an illustration to show that Confucian humaneness may be equated to Christian godliness. Here humaneness means “love the people” while, for the equivalent Christian slogans, “...God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

2. Opposition to Witchcraft

Confucius's negative attitude toward deity greatly facilitated the development of Chinese medicine by getting rid of magical and superstitious medical practices performed by wizards. In *Analects* the following passage was recorded: Ji Lu, one of Confucius' disciples, inquired how one should serve Spiritual Beings. Confucius answered, “We are as yet not capable of serving humans; how can we be able of serving Spirits?” The disciple went on, “May I inquire about death?” The master replied, “We do not as yet understand life; how can we understand death.” Chinese scholars usually maintain that justice and humaneness are the two pillars of Confucian ethics.

3. The Golden Mean and Methodology

In addition to ethics, Confucius' “golden mean” concept that is roughly equivalent to “norm” has provided a fundamental guideline for methodological studies of Chinese medicine. The golden mean is no more or no less, just at the

middle way. "As a virtue, the golden mean is most perfect". "The Mean is the supreme virtue!" "Excess is equivalent to insufficiency." In application of the concept to medicine, the various organs and various functions of the human body should be kept in a normal balance with nothing in excess and nothing in deficiency. A proper treatment should be given just to the happy mean between insufficient treatment and over-treatment.

4. Negative Impacts

Unfortunately, Confucianism also gave Chinese medicine some negative influences. "Narrating and not creating, trusting and liking the ancients" was the principle to which Confucius stuck in his academic career. He was not only a great thinker and educationist, but also a famous historian who arranged and revised *Spring and Autumn*, the first annalistic history of China. Keeping the original intact is a valuable trait of a historian; however, such a methodological principle was mistakenly applied in Chinese medicine. This may explain why, in the later generations, almost all works on medicine stubbornly followed the *Huangdi's Internal Classic* (please see note at the end of the chapter) as the guiding principle. Even if the authors had completely different opinions, they always took such measures as making annotations with their own opinions on the related citations from the *Internal Classic* so that the readers would believe that the works did not depart from the classics. In ancient China the most vicious curse at the literati was "departing from the classics and rebelling against orthodoxy."

Confucianism's disadvantageous influence on the development of medicine was sharply reflected in the field of anatomy. In the *Internal Classic* and the *Classic of Difficult Issues*, anatomical studies and results were recorded. For example, the ratio of the length between the esophagus and the intestines is 1 to 35, very close to the ratio of 1 to 37 as shown in modern anatomy. *Hou Han Shu* (*The Book of the Eastern Han Dynasty*) mentioned the operation performed by Hua Tuo (?-203), a famous surgeon in the Han Dynasty. It says:

If a man suffers from a disease somewhere in the body that cannot be treated by means of acupuncture and medication, he should be given an operation. The method is to use the oral anesthetic powder (called *mafeisan*) with rice wine, and when he gets drunk and loses consciousness, his abdomen or back is opened and something that causes trouble is taken off; if the disease is found in a place between the intestines and the stomach, he should be opened to have the sickening dregs washed away and then stitched together and smeared with

sacred pastes. The cuts will heal in four or five days and the patient will recover within a month.

What Hua Tuo did 1,700 years ago is miraculous; an abdominal operation could not have been done at that time if no adequate knowledge of anatomy had been carefully studied. However, down to the later generations, the feudal ethical code advocated by Confucianists became all the more cruel. Such filial creeds as that body, hairs and skin given by parents should not be destroyed and damaged, and many others, seriously arrested the development of anatomical studies.

II. Daoism

Among various ancient Chinese philosophical disciplines, Daoism gave more impact on the formation and development of Chinese medicine. Before discussion on Daoism, it is necessary to explain the implication of the word or character Dao (道), from which Daoism was derived.

The original meaning of the character Dao is a “way,” a path along which one can travel. The earliest Chinese dictionary compiled in 100 A.D., *Shuowen Jiezi* (*Explanation of Words and Characters*) says, “The Dao is that way along which one walks; once obtained one calls it the Way.”

The original meaning of the term was extended to refer to the norm that people or things must respect. The norm respected by the sun, moon, and stars is called the Way of Heaven; the norm governing human life is called the Way of Human. So, each school of ancient Chinese philosophers had its own Dao. Confucius had once consulted Laozi about the rite. Because of the diversified opinions, Confucius concluded “People with different Dao (ways) can never plan together.”

Laozi’s surname was Li, his given name was Er, and another name was Dan. He worked as caretaker of the imperial archives in the capital of Zhou. He spoke of the Way and the Virtue focusing on self-effacement and not seeking a name for himself. He resided in Zhou for a long period of time, and witnessing the decline of Zhou Empire, he decided to leave. He went west, and before he was allowed to go past Hangu Pass, the gate-keeping official who adored him asked him to write down his ideas. So, Laozi proceeded to write the *Dao De Jing* (*Classic of Dao and Virtue*) totaling 5,000 characters and then departed.

Methodology

Laozi's thinking was specifically designated as Daoism. This was attributed to the book *Classic of Dao and Virtue*, the sole book written by Laozi. In the book, Laozi proposed a philosophical system with Dao as the kernel. In the *Classic of Dao and Virtue*, the Dao is the underlying principle behind the creation of the myriad things. The order of the process giving rise to the myriad things began with Dao producing a kind of generative force. This force gave rise to the two forces of yin and yang. The interaction of the yin and yang led to a state of dynamic balance, from which the myriad things issued forth. The myriad things have their backs to the yin and face the yang. Through the blending of the yin and yang, a new harmony is created. Thus, he proposed that everything in the world originates from Dao, and Dao is the essence of everything. In the history of Chinese philosophy, Laozi was the first one who radically got rid of the ancient perspectives of world based on ancient religions and myths. The characteristic features of Dao are nothingness, soundlessness, and shapelessness, and Dao cannot be defined by language.

Laozi was also the first one in the history of Chinese philosophy who proposed the theory of dialectics. "When people realize what beauty is, the concept of ugliness arises as well. When people realize what goodness is, the concept of badness arises also. Being and Nothing produce each other. Easy and difficult create each other. Long and short reveal each other. High and low support each other. Sound and voice harmonize with each other. Front and back follow each other." (*Dao De Jing*: Chapter 2) He clearly states: "The opposite is the dynamic of Dao." (*Dao De Jing*: Chapter 40) In other words, a thing goes to its opposite if pushed too far. All these views are widely reflected in the theories of traditional Chinese medicine.

Zhuangzi was another founder of Daoism. He lived during the 4th century B.C., a time known as the Warring States Period in China. He conceived of Dao in the tradition of Laozi, that Dao had existed before the existence of the heaven and earth. He made more contributions to elucidation of yin-yang theory. For example, yin and yang are contrasted, as are movement and stillness: "Stillness and yin have a common virtue; movement and yang have a common stream." Yin and yang are two fundamental forms of qi that together constitute things: "Heaven and earth are the greatest of forms; yin and yang are the greatest of qi.... Yin and yang mutually shine on each other mutually cover each other, mutually melt into each other. The four seasons mutually succeed each other, mutually give life and deal death."

The philosophical concept of yin and yang provided the very basis on which the whole theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine was established. To date, the theory of yin and yang is still the quintessence of this system of traditional medicine.