

## INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF



Luo Xiwen, Ph.D.

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Huangdi Neijing (Neijing), the Canon of Medicine of the Yellow Emperor, magnum opus of traditional Chinese medicine, is a great treasure bestowed on us by our ancestors living some 2000 years ago. It is almost impossible to really discuss such a great work within such a length. But it may serve as a useful introduction to Neijing to those who are interested in the work but do not know the Chinese language. In other words, this dissertation aims at telling the readers what a book *Huangdi Neijing* is and what it is talking about. Therefore, it is entitled Introductory Study of Huangdi Neijing. After reading this Introductory Study, the reader is given an overall view of this classic. Then naturally, the reader is prepared to dig into Neijing to search for valuable ideas and useful information from this ancient work for the sake of modern people. My translation of the first 22 chapters of Suwen [ plain Questions, one of the two parts of Neijing, the other part is *Lingshu* (*Miraculous*), each consisting 81 chapters will proceed the Introductory Study to become the first (and perhaps the most important) part of Neijing. The text is translated in full from the original text accompanied by detailed notes collected from famous scholars and annotators in history and at present.

The translation is based on Gu Congde's edition photo-offset by the People's Medical Publishing House, Beijing.

Luo Xiwen, Ph. D
at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Beijing, China
2008



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## Part Cos Introduction

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3 1

Yellow Emperor: I heard that there were a kind of Spiritual Men in remote antiquity who could manipulate the Heaven and the Earth, master the Yin and Yang, breathe the Vital Essence and maintain their Spirit with their body. Such people could live as long as the Heaven and the Earth. This is a longevity resulting from practice of the Tao. In medieval times, Men of Cultivation with high morality and self cultivation to the Tao, harmonized themselves with Yin and Yang, followed the change of the four seasons, got rid of all mundane affairs, so that they could accumulate their Vital Essence and preserve their Spirit, stroll leisurely in the world and amuse themselves by observing and hearing happenings far and wide. And that was the way they preserved their health and maintained their vitality. In adoration to the Tao, they are only next to the Spiritual Men. And then there are the Sages. They live in accord with the harmony of Heaven and Earth, in obedience to the eight winds. They restrict their addictions and followed the mundane customs, always keeping their minds from anger and hatred. They had no intention to imitate others in their behavior and refrained from toils and hard labor. They contented themselves with ease and nothingness and preferred self cultivation to any accomplishment. Thus, they could maintain their body and spirit sound and full all the time. Such people could well live to their full span. And then there are the Men of Virtue. They followed the change of the Heaven and the Earth, pursued the movement of the sun and the moon, observed the stars, harmonized themselves with the Yin and Yang and regulated their behaviors according to the change of the four seasons. In this way, they followed the ancient people in their endeavor to live with the Tao and prolonged their life span to the utmost. \*

The above quotation is a passage in Chapter 1 of Suwen. The

way the Spiritual Men, the Sages, the Men of Cultivation and the Men of Virtue had lived was understood by the authors of *Neijing* as ideal life and the mundane people should all follow. There seems to be some truth in it.

\* It might be difficult to understand the original text without notes. Please refer to the notes in the translation that corresponds to the quotation in this Introductory Study.

The art of healing, one of the most important and long-lasting arts in the world, is an art cherished by all people, professional and non-professional, an art with the largest followers and amateurs, an art that none of us can do without and an art that has seen a persistent and continuous development and amelioration in the whole process of human's recorded history of several thousand years. The world medicine, or the modern medicine, is consisted of medical progresses from all countries. In the eyes of the Western people, mainstream of the world medicine lies in the development of medical tradition originated from ancient Greece and updated in Europe after the industrial revolution, and the furthering of the science relies on the technical and scientific improvement the world is achieving. This is only partially true to the past, the present and future. Oriental medicine, especially Chinese medicine, originated 5 000 years ago, has been making tremendous contributions to the health of one fourth of the world's population and is making even greater contributions to the one billion people here and will exert further contributions to the people all over the world. This is no exaggeration.

The world outside of China (and to a lesser extent Japan, Korea and some Southeast Asian countries) knows little about traditional Chinese medicine. Although international medical circles have recently begun to pay attention to traditional Chinese medicine, their

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knowledge of it is not yet adequate to understand its actual theoretical system. There are even such cases as when a Western scholar stated, "Traditional Chinese pathology is also dependent on the theory of the Yin and Yang, this led to an elaborate classification of diseases in which most of the types listed are without any scientific foundation." (Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, page 825) This kind of statement is largely due to an ignorance of traditional Chinese medicine. The reason why Napoleon so cherished the book Military Strategy and Tactics of Sunzi (Sunzi Bingfa) was that he had read it after its translation into a Western language and thus was able to appreciate the quintessence of the treatise. The same is true in the case of works of literature, philosophy, and history. But Chinese medical works have not, as a rule, been translated into Western languages systematically. As a result, many Western commentaries are based on a scanty knowledge of Chinese medicine.

Western medicine is a kind of experimental medicine based on scientific research. With the help of modern medical equipment and instrument, various indexes can be easily observed. Thus it is an easily accessible subject. Traditional Chinese medicine, however, is a science based on the conception of the organism as a whole. Its principal theoretical foundation, the Yin and Yang, the Five Elements, Viscera and Bowels, Channels and Collaterals, diagnosis and therapy, and diagnosis and treatment based on overall analysis of symptoms and signs are characterized by dialectical thinking. Over a long period of time an integrated theoretical system has resulted from the gradual accumulation of experience and has thus earned the attention of the world.

Einstein's theory is a new development to Newtonian theory which essentially means observing the world from a different angle.

The application of Einstein's theory has done no harm to Newtonian theory, but rather has further developed the science of physics. Such will also be the case with Chinese medicine and Western medicine. The worldwide study and application of traditional Chinese medicine is sure to open up a new era in the development of modern medicine.

Traditional Chinese medicine is still new to the world beyond China. As a general rule, man can not appreciate the full significance of a subject unless he understands its actual implications. According to some Western scholars, Chinese medical treatment has three points of interest: the materia medica (pharmacopia), moxibustion and acupuncture (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th edition, page 825). But they do not know, the three spheres they are interested all have their theoretical background. It is strange that if they are "without any scientific foundation", how can they be used as a powerful weapon in man's struggle against various diseases in the past thousands of years.

In recent years, the study of "outer Vital Energy" of Qi Gong, a type of traditional Chinese breathing exercises, using modern scientific means has revealed the actual existence of "Vital Energy" (Qi). This has cleared up an issue that had remained controversial during the previous thousand years. With the deepening of similar studies on the basic elements of Chinese medicine, more and more "mysterious" concepts will be verified.

Joseph Needham, in his work Science and Civilization China, said that one of the early missionaries working in China, hypothesized that the Chinese theory of the activity of Vital Energy might have spread to Europe and influenced the formation of the ether theory by Descartes. Although this is only conjectural, it is still likely that China's understanding of such sciences predates that of Europe.

It is difficult for Western learners to understand the theory of Yin-Yang and Five Elements of traditional Chinese medicine. This was also true when Newton, Galileo, Copernicus, Hegel, Marx, and Einstein introduced their theories. Fortunately, their theories have been put into practice and thus contributed to human progress. The theory of traditional Chinese medicine is sure to be accepted by the scientific world, for the several thousand year history of its application is an advantage that none of the above theories could have had.

We are happy to point out that Western scholars have, to a certain extent, realized the importance of accepting Chinese medicine as a part of the world medicine. One of them says: "Is it possible to consider ancient Chinese medicine as a real science? This is a troublesome question. To the moderns, indeed, there seems nothing scientific about it. On the contrary, it is covered with a prehistoric mystic patina, and sometimes appears to be scarcely comprehensible. Nevertheless, when one is aware of its great therapeutic efficacy, one can not deny its value." (T. Nakayama as quoted by Ilza Veith in her *Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen*, University of California Press, 1949, page 2.)

In the Forward written by Dr. Joseph Needham for my translation of Shanghan Lun (Treatise on Febrile Diseases Caused by Cold, New World Press, Beijing, 1986), it states:

"Nevertheless, one understands perfectly well that for two thousand years or more, Chinese physicians, whose clinical insights were truly profound, used these concepts as a trelliswork on which to hang their ideas about diseases. The fact that the terminology and the concepts are really mediaeval, whereas the concepts of modern-Western medicine are essentially scientific, does not mean that we cannot look forward to an oecumenical medicine of the future, which



I think will embody all the clinical insights as well as the techniques characteristic of Chinese and Japanese medicine, while remaining firmly based on modern biological science. For example, medicine could become much more organic or holistic than it is, and it could avoid active principles too powerful acting by themselves; it could use non-isolated active principles, such as those in the prescriptions which Zhang Zhongjing (Chang Chung-Ching) gave in his book. Thus there are many ways in which traditional-Chinese medicine could fuse with modern-Western medicine.

I am quite sure that we should never talk about 'western medicine' and 'Chinese medicine'—because there was also a traditional medicine in the West, the medicine of antiquity and the Middle Ages. But modern-Western medicine is based on modern science, and it came into being only after the Scientific Revolution at the time of Galileo when, as some have said, the most effective method of discovery was itself discovered. modern-Western medicine is not ethnically bound as antique Western, medieval Western, traditional Chinese, traditional Indian, or traditional Tibetan are ethnic-bound. The Scientific Revolution, the mathematization of hypotheses about Nature, combined with relentless experimentation, has made modern science absolutely international. So we never talk about Western medicine, as opposed to Chinese medicine, but rather of modern-Western medicine, as opposed to traditional-Chinese."

To facilitate our understanding, it is necessary to recall briefly to the historical development of both Western and Chinese medicines.

Western medicine is said to commence from the time of Asclepius who lived about 1 200 BC and is said to have performed many miracles of healing. In the 5th century BC, Empedocles set forth the view that the universe is composed of four elements—fire,

air, earth and water; this conception led to the doctrine of the four bodily humors: blood, phlegm, choler, or yellow bile, and melancholy, or black bile. The maintenance of health was held to depend upon the harmony of the four humors. Then the great medical work *Hippocratic Collection*, or the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, came into being in the 5th century BC. Hippocrates, father of the Western medicine, once said," Our natures are the physicians of our diseases", and that this tendency to natural cure should be fostered; he laid much stress on diet and the use of few drugs; he viewed diseases with the eye of the naturalist and studied the entire patient in his environment. Galen followed Hippocratic method and accepted the doctrine of the humors. He also laid stress on the value of anatomy, and he virtually founded experimental physiology.

In 1628, publication of William Harvey's De Motu Cordia (An Anatomical Experiment Concerning the Movement of the Heart And Blood in Animals) marked a new era of medicine and the commencement of experimental method.

If we compare the medicine from Hippocrates to Galen with the Chinese medicine at the same period, we may find many parallels. But new development in Western medicine after the 17th century has been so swift and effective that had actually brought Hippocrates-Galen medicine out of practical value. But this is not true to the Chinese medicine.

Chinese medicine, originated from the legendary clan leader Fu Xi (2953 BC) period (an Asclepius period), established its theoretical system during the late years of the Warring States period to Chin and Han dynasties (475 BC – AD 220). The theoretical system explored in the earliest-extant *Huangdi Neijing* remains the mainstay of Chinese medicine up to this day.

