

**Foundations of
Chinese Medicine :
East meets West:**

Reading Assignment:
The Web that has no Weaver
Chapter 1 , Ted Kaptchuk

Common Misconceptions: Xenophobia

- Acupuncture Treatment successes either due to some type Placebo or Chance Effect
- Theoretical Underpinnings of Acupuncture involves Magical Thinking unlike Western Science and Medicine that embodies the truth

Common Misconceptions: Blind Faith

- Alternative view considers the Western Medical perspective as more primitive, being just about drugs and surgery, lacking the subtlety and Wisdom of Chinese Medicine
- Puts the system of Chinese Medicine on a pedestal; the Truth of the system is almost a matter of religious faith

Mystification of Chinese Medicine

- Xenophobic and Blind Faith View both miss the essential core of what Chinese Medicine is:
 - One Critically undervalues system
 - One Mystifies the system
- Both are barriers to understanding

What is Chinese Medicine

- A coherent and independent system of thought based on over two thousand years of critical thought and careful, empirical observation
- Many of the greatest minds of the culture involved in the theoretical construction and formulations
- Based on a philosophy and logic that is totally foreign to our Western world view

Core Differences

- View of the Human Body Completely Different
 - Chinese Medicine does not have the concept of the Nervous System
 - No concept of Micro-organisms as a cause of disease
 - Radically different concept of the Endocrine System
 - Western Medicine does not accept that environmental phenomenon such as “cold” or “wind” can cause disease

Beyond Language

- Beyond semantic differences between systems there are profound differences in what is valued as important for analysis and investigation both by the theoreticians and the practitioners at the bedside
- One system values the microscope as the ideal instrument of observation with the goal to isolate the other values the five senses of the experienced clinician with the goal to integrate

Western Biomedicine

- Goal to isolate disease agent or underlying cause and either control symptoms or ideally destroy or remove cause
- Goal in patient interaction is to filter out the noise created by the multitude of patient complaints and narrowly focus on those symptoms, exam findings, and test results that support defining an isolatable cause
 - Patient characterized as “crazy” or having “non-organic” disease when this process is unsuccessful

Chinese Medicine

- Goal is to find a unifying pattern that defines the state of imbalance in the organism as a whole , both internally, and as that person relates to their environment
- Goal in patient interactions is to synthesize all the patient complaints, emotions, patterns of interactions with other people, dietary habits, and exam findings into an overall, integrated pattern of disharmony

Example: GERD

- Western Biomedical Filter
 - 3 patients come in with symptoms of reflux
 - Testing with Endoscopy and Biopsy confirms diagnosis
 - Diagnosis: Peptic Ulcer Disease 2nd to H. Pylori
 - Both patients placed on course of antibiotics, antacid

Chinese Medicine Filter

- Patient 1
 - Tender over stomach with palpation, better with cold compresses
 - Patient with reddish complexion, deep voice, broad shoulder with a strong constitution. Assertive to the point of aggressive. Tends towards constipation with dark yellow urine and greasy yellow coating on tongue. Pulse full with wiry quality.
- Diagnosis: Damp Heat Affecting the Spleen

Chinese Medical Filter

- Patient 2
 - Thin patient with ashen complexion and ruddy cheeks. Prone to insomnia and constipation. Nervous and fidgety, unable to maintain stable relationships. Tongue is dry and slightly red, no coating with a thin fast pulse.
- Diagnosis: Deficient Yin affecting the Stomach

Chinese Medical Filter

- Patient 3
 - Patient has sour taste in mouth with frequent belching. Also prone to frequent headaches. Pain is sharp and tends to worsen when patient is upset, which happens frequently. Patient frustrated in her life and feels “stuck”. Tongue normal but pulse is wiry.
- Diagnosis: Disharmony of Liver invading Spleen

Key Differences in Conceptual Framework

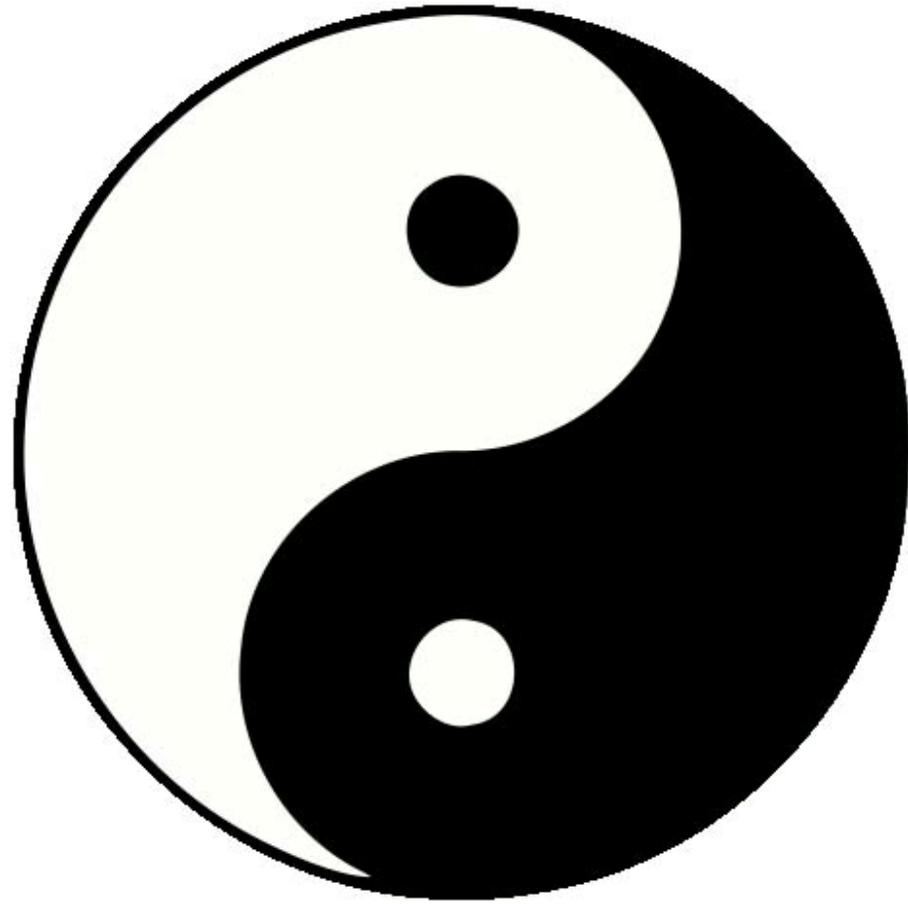
- Western Biomedical Filter
 - Reductionist
 - Goal is to Filter out “noise” so symptoms such as headaches, emotional profiles and palpatory findings are ignored
 - Focus is to eliminate the person from the analysis and reduce patient to a diagnostic category – Peptic Ulcer Disease – which leads to a uniform treatment
 - WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH THIS THAT WE ALL SEE IN OUR OWN CLINICAL PRACTICES?

Key Differences in Conceptual Framework

- Chinese Medicine Filter
 - Wholistic
 - Goal is to weave a unifying story that can account for the totality of all the patients symptoms, physical findings and behaviors into an integrated pattern
 - Focus is to develop an understanding of the factors both internal and external that help identify the pattern of disharmony that encompasses the whole person and their life
 - WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THIS MODEL OF CARE?

Fundamental Basis of Conceptual Frameworks

- Western Biomedicine is fundamentally based on a Newtonian view of the world
 - If we could understand all the interactions between the various billiard balls that make up a human (hormones, cytokines, neuropeptides etc) we would comprehend all there is to know about human disease
- Chinese Medicine is fundamentally based on a relativistic view of the world
 - Yin Yang Theory of Opposites



Ying Yang Theory

- The theory of polar opposites
 - Underlies all interactions in the universe
 - No entity can exist in isolation of a relationship to everything else
 - As you analyze the fundamental properties of an object, thought, or organism, as much as you think you know that it is one thing, eventually you will always find that the opposite is contained within

Yang Qualities

- Dynamic
- Motion
- Moving up
- Heat
- Light
- Increase

Yin Qualities

- Inactivity
- Stillness
- Moving down
- Cold
- Darkness
- Decrease

Yin Yang not Absolute

- Within Yin is Yang
 - An ice cube is cold but within the surface is warmer, more Yang, than the core, more Yin
 - When suffering the Chills, which is Yin, the body will shiver which is Yang
- Within Yang is Yin
 - The fire is Yang, but within a fire a red flame is cooler, more Yin, than a blue flame, more Yang
 - A fever is a Yang illness, but the loss of weight, inactivity and weakness that comes with fever is Yin

Yin and Yang Create Each Other

- Mutually interdependent and inseparable
 - Something cannot be tall without there being something that is short to compare it to
 - No hot without cold
 - No front without a back

NO ABSOLUTES

- Taoist in concept (See writings of Lao Tzu)

Yin and Yang Control Each Other

- Given the inexorable link between Yin and Yang, one cannot change one without inducing change in the other
 - If Yang is in Excess, Yin must be in deficiency
 - Excess heat in the body like Hot Flashes (Yang) is created by Yin Deficiency (insufficient Yin to cool Yang)
- Ideal – Yin and Yang in perfect balance

Yin and Yang Transform Into Each Other

- In order for growth or change to occur, Yin and Yang cannot be statically in balance
- Perpetual cycle of growth and diminution
 - Yang is in ascendancy in the morning initiating activity
 - Yin is in ascendancy in the evening initiating sleep
 - Periods of extreme activity always need to be followed by periods of inactivity to restore balance
- Disruption of this cycling process is the fundamental cause of all illness in Chinese Medicine and if not corrected, Yin will separate from Yang and death will ensue

Implications of Chinese Relativism

- No concept of linear causation
 - H. Pylori as causative agent in PUD
- No beginning or end to a process
 - All processes are cyclical
- Impossible to understand the function of an organ without understanding its relationship to all other organs
- Mind-Body Dualism is alien to conceptual framework
- The inside cannot be in isolation from the outside
- The health of a person cannot be defined in isolation to that persons interaction with the Universe