

## Integrated Chinese Medicine

### Preface

Oriental Medicine is not one homogenous entity. It has a several thousand year history and has spread over a large part of the globe, historically it developed differently in different regions and especially in Japan and Korea and more recently divergences developed between mainland China and Taiwan and Hong Kong. The basis of OM and its underpinnings is predominantly Chinese. However, in modern China there is a particular approach that is systematized and relatively standardized that is known as Traditional Chinese Medicine or TCM for short. Other approaches continue to thrive and most recently even in China there has been a reexamination of the Classics.

I firmly believe that Chinese Medicine and thought in general is one body of knowledge. There are differing styles and approaches, but they are all part of one complete system in a way. Western thought is more specialized and indeed rather suspicious of all embracing ideas. Ultimately all Chinese traditional science is based upon a remarkably consistent philosophy, numerology and cosmology. But it is not simplistic or homogenous. The Chinese followed a very different idea than the Aristotelian logic that is so strong an element in Western thought. Eastern thought is described as syncretic it allows for ideas that might appear contradictory and does not insist on reaching a synthesis. If different ideas or models work (at least in their own particular context) then they do not need to be reconciled in all ways with other ideas. This is one of the hardest challenges to anyone studying Eastern ideas. In some respects the idea of an Eastern mode of thought is an idealization. There is a challenge to think in a way that is not the usual mode that our brains tend to follow in day to day life. So it is a human challenge. But these ideas have been most clearly expressed in the East despite clear contradictions within the culture. For example, if Chinese culture completely followed these Eastern principles one would expect China to have discovered the equality of the sexes long before, but clearly it has been a patriarchal, hierarchical and even misogynist culture or at least no less so than the West.

I am not suggesting that this whole body of information was understood, practiced or even seen to be as one whole in historical times. It is said that schools of thought in ancient China were not quite like the schools of ancient Greece, but the Chinese debated and argued over the merits of one approach or another just the same.

In some ways this may be the first time in history that we have the opportunity to put it all together. I believe that putting it together may not be as difficult as some think. There is a remarkable body of structural underpinnings that have tended to make this huge range of cultures produce different, but reconcilable ideas.

The reconciliation process is not like the Western idea of a synthesis which tries to tie up the loose ends. But it is also not an ‘anything goes’ approach – there are clear principles and rules. East and West also represent diverging traditions. To some extent modern TCM is the reconciliation of these traditions up to a point and from the point of view of a previous era.

I think I should make some fair disclosures.

I originally trained to practice Five Element acupuncture with J. R. Worsley. I studied widely, especially TCM texts and indeed to practice in the USA I had to study and pass a board exam in a curriculum that was predominantly TCM based. More recently as Clinical Director of the Jung Tao School of Classical Chinese Medicine I have been exposed to other non-TCM teachings. I have not found anything yet that, however different it may appear at first sight, cannot be reconciled. But I do consider myself as primarily a Five Element practitioner. So I clearly have a viewpoint.

I see this exploration and integration of the traditions of acupuncture as a 'work in progress', and I would especially recommend for reading 'Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture', the work of John & Angela Hicks and Peter Mole founders of the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine in Reading UK.

I would also like to mention that I am not a sinologist, my study of Chinese characters is mainly with the works of Claude Larre on one side of me, and various Dictionaries and etymological works on the other (actually more on-line than actual books).

The following are a series of discussions about the various viewpoints found within Chinese Medicine. The numerology and cosmology contained therein is an overview of a more comprehensive work that I am engaged in at present. This is my own understanding of these subjects and how the apparent contradictions may be reconciled - as such I could have titled this "steps towards an integrated Chinese medicine".

This is not intended to be a comprehensive text of acupuncture theory it is very much focused on the places where divergences occur and how we may be able to move towards a more integrated whole. I see this as a work in progress and so I present here a series of essays.

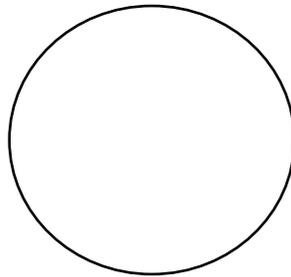
### **Dao (Tao)<sup>1</sup>**

No study of Eastern thought can start anywhere but with the Dao. The classic the Tao Te Ching is in 81 chapters as are the three main medical classics and I believe it is a prerequisite to the medical classics. The Tao Te Ching famously says, "the Dao (Tao) that can be spoken of is not the constant Dao (Tao)". However, the poet Chu-I wrote:

Those who speak know nothing  
Those who know keep silence.  
These words were spoken by Lao Tzu.  
But if we are to believe that Lao Tzu,  
Was himself one who knew,  
How comes it that he wrote a book  
Of five thousand words?

This is the same dilemma that we face in all the practical applications of Chinese cosmological principles, including Chinese medicine; having to speak of something that we consider to be beyond words. The Chinese have always been very pragmatic and seemed to have no problem with the transition from the philosophical to the practical (what used to be called natural philosophy in the West) even when recognizing that these two are ultimately different. Indeed I would suggest that sometimes this leads to marked contradictions between the pragmatic and the principles (i.e. I am suggesting that one can go beyond the syncretic into outright inconsistency).

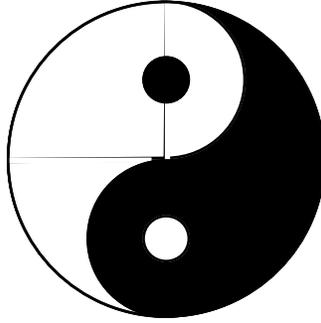
Taoism has been described as 'dualistic monism', it contains a fundamental holistic view of the universe that is an indivisible whole symbolized by the Wu Ji symbol.



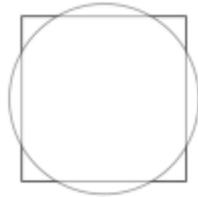
And an understanding of the universe that is based on the dualistic principles of Yin and Yang; the primary graphic representation of this is the Tai Ji or Yin/Yang symbol.

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<sup>1</sup> I generally use Pinyin but the word 'Tao' is so well known in English in the Wade Giles form, that I am including it here, and also in direct quotes.



The juxtaposition of these two viewpoints has been symbolized in esoteric thought East and West as 'squaring the circle'; the square representing the 'four square' Earth, the circle representing the unitary Heaven. Here we see the primary idea that there can be two viewpoints that cannot be completely reconciled. Or as Leonardo Do Vinci speculated only in humans.



As the Tao Te Ching says:

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.  
Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.

Integrating the different parts of Chinese medicine is thus squaring the circle. We need to acknowledge both ways of looking at the world and not reduce either one in the process. But in full disclosure of my bias because the holistic is the primary nature of reality I do lean towards the ideals rather than the pragmatic that is my bias. However; in Eastern thought we are looking for the middle way. To my mind the modern practice of Chinese medicine is asymmetric it has become too pragmatic and lost sight of the ideals; the need to pull it back to the idealistic is stronger.

This is not just philosophically I believe it can give us an actual practical model to help us. In Chinese numerology the odd numbers are Heavenly and the even numbers Earthly. Chinese science uses many models that are developments of the yin/yang principles, and because some of these are based upon odd numbers and some even, they cannot be made totally congruent. In the West we are used to assuming that we have to choose between two theories, or systems or arrive at a synthesis; just as Western scientists are at present trying to reconcile relativity and quantum theories into a 'grand unified theory'. The Chinese system allows that differing viewpoints cannot be completely reconciled, and yet both can be true. In other words to make a 'square peg fit a round hole' would only be achieved by some damage to one or other. The Chinese system of knowledge has been described as syncretic, from this viewpoint, it may not be possible to reach a 'grand unified theory'. In Chinese medicine a model based upon Two (Yin & Yang) or its extrapolated multiples, and Five (Elements/Phases) are both seen as correct, and yet cannot be

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entirely congruent. From the number two the Earthly world's complexity extends in symmetrical way: Four Emblems (Seasons), Six (paired) Channels, Eight Trigrams.

In Western esoteric tradition these two viewpoints or models have been further symbolized by the 'Lily and the Rose'. The motto below the Lily and Rose is an alchemical saying: "Igne Natura Renovatur Integra", By Fire is Nature Renewed Whole' or 'The Whole of Nature is renewed by Fire'.



In Chinese medicine we find the greatest departure is between those who follow Five Phase based systems and those who follow more Yin/Yang based systems which are unlimited but significantly are represented in the six channels. So reconciling the Five and the Six is a nice metaphor that fits Chinese medicine also.

### **Nomenclature**

Many of the first acupuncture<sup>i</sup> publications in English (some translations from French), that appeared in the 1960s, predominantly focused on a Five Phase approach; among these authors were: Dr. J Lavier, Mme Dr. M Hashimoto, D & J Lawson Wood and Dr. Wu Wei Ping. One exception to this is the writings of Felix Mann which included more TCM type material. With the opening up of China in the 70s many more Westerners were exposed to modern TCM and there was a strong tendency to dismiss some of the earlier work as bogus. However, some of this criticism also displayed a considerable ignorance of the actual source texts.

I read an article some years ago that questioned many of the ideas taught in non-TCM schools, and especially those of Worsley. Whether because of this article, or because of the general sense at the time that TCM was the 'real teachings', there came an idea, that I have heard directly spoken, that Europeans of Worsley's generation and Worsley in particular must have 'made it

up'. One argument that was advanced was that the Five Phase theory was itself a later (mediaeval) system of thought, a surprising assertion considering how deeply embedded Five Phase theory is in the Classics.

Ted Kaptchuk has a section "Criticism of Five Phase Theory" in his "The Web that has no Weaver".

Most modern Chinese critics describe Five Phases theory as a rigid metaphysical overlay on the practical and flexible observations of Chinese Medicine.

However, he does conclude:

Even so it is unfortunate that many practitioners simply consider Five Phases theory unscientific gibberish and do not try to understand it. It is actually an important secondary emblem system used to assess and discuss clinical reality.

(Kaptchuk 353-4)

It is of note of course that Ted Kaptchuk has worked closely with Five Element schools for many years now, even developing a more Five Element oriented approach to herbal medicine and so one can assume that his ideas on the Five Phase theory have undergone some modification. Since then we have also come to a much fuller understanding of the provenance of non-TCM acupuncture and we are indebted to Peter Eckman for his 1996 publication "In the Footsteps of the Yellow Emperor". He explored the story of many of the earlier Europeans, who brought acupuncture to the West, and where they learned the various parts of Traditional Acupuncture in general, and the origins of the various essential aspects of what he refers to as Leamington Acupuncture, or LA for short, in particular.

Many practitioners in England and America have had to deal with the reality of TCM as the majority, and predominating in the core curricula of its schools and national board exams. At the same time TCM oriented practitioners have had to accept that other traditions are not going to go away. There remains much tension and much bridge building to do. Many practitioners are also building the bridges within themselves and the publication of "Constitutional Five Element Acupuncture by Hicks, Hicks, and Mole is clearly the most important contribution to this process so far.

Our intent is to further explore the provenance of Classical Acupuncture (Five Element in particular) in the source material of the "Classics", and to further the process of integration. Modern TCM is the mainstream of acupuncture in the World and so these essays are necessarily more critical of TCM because it is in need of some revision from other traditions.

Some of what Worsley said about the philosophy of treatment was rhetorical. Worsley often said that one should never treat symptoms in a formulaic way. During my own clinical we had a patient who was a young man who had injured his knee playing football, the interns had done a full examination and Worsley said to do a protocol known as Bachman Knee Points, and tell him to give us a call if he needed further help. This was a jaw dropping moment for us. Clearly Worsley was not as fundamentalist about his principles as some imply. However, he saw how easily people would grasp at rules and protocols, and cease to apply the principles in an insightful individual way. I recognize how adherence to a position or principle can be polarizing but at the same time is that principle is poorly understood and easily lost one wants to try and

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affirm it strongly.

Similarly Worsley would often say that ‘anything could come from anything’; meaning that any disease or symptom could arise from any Element. On the face of it this would seem to be completely at odds with syndromic medicine. However, if we accept that syndromic medicine explains certain pathological mechanisms, but does not necessarily give us the full picture it is not impossible to square this circle. A person could have a Liver Qi Stagnation, but be a Metal CF.

It is often argued that the diagnosis is based upon the CSOE and not “types” of people, Hicks, Hicks and Mole have been criticized on this account. And yet in lecture Worsley would often refer to behaviors and such like characteristic even physical symptoms and attributes. Clearly the emphasis was on using more concrete terms as ‘fingers pointing at the moon’ His words were again said for rhetorical emphasis not to completely dismiss such speculations.

We shall see that Chinese Medicine has always included material that appears contradictory. The very name of the Nan Jing “Classic of Difficult Questions” reveals this. We shall argue that modern TCM has largely tried to simplify and avoid these difficulties and in so doing has tried to ignore many essential aspects of acupuncture, and potentially skewed the political process towards a more herbal based, and modern biomedicine based context for acupuncture.

## Terminology

Clearly J. R. Worsley used terminology that was normative at the time, meridians, channels, elements. The crucial question rather than the merits of these terms is his understanding of these terms. Many have strong feelings about some of these terms. I have to admit I often see the pros and cons and find it hard to be certain which is best; perhaps this is the downside of my tendency not to see contradiction where others do.

### Orbs, Organs and Officials

We will discuss that the term ‘organ’ somewhat fails to convey the very different idea that is conveyed in Chinese traditional teaching of a functional entity rather than a specific anatomic structure. J. R. Worsley made use of a term ‘Officials’ that is almost exclusively drawn from Chapter 8 of the Su Wen we will discuss this in detail. Manfred Porkert has coined the term ‘orb’ to convey the same idea of a clear distinction from the anatomic structure.

**Meridians v Channels.** Although ‘meridian’ was the usual term at one time, modern TCM has chosen the term ‘channel’. To some ‘meridian’ suggests a very arbitrary line and prefer ‘channel’ because of this. Channel can mean a path of least resistance with undefined boundaries, but could also convey an idea of a circumscribed structure like a blood vessel. Clearly J. R. Worsley did not see the energy pathways as physical entities. But it is also been suggested (McDonald) that Europeans have tended to make too hard a distinction between energy channels and blood vessels and that the Chinese demonstrably saw this as one system and used the terms with overlaps. Certainly the term Jing in the dictionary can refer to major blood vessels, the term Luo Mai that occurs in Chapter 10 of the Ling Shu appears to refer to blood vessels. Similarly the term Sun Luo appears to mean capillaries. Simply checking the dictionary would seem to confirm this view.

經 jīng channels / classic books / religious scriptures / books of significant value / the warp of a fabric / things running lengthwise / common or customary ways, rules, regulations, etc. / to plan / to arrange / to regulate / to rule / to manage / to deal in / to engage in / menses / human arteries, etc. / as a result / after / to pass through or by / to stand / to bear / to endure / longitude

絡 luò enmesh / to wrap around / to encompass / a net / mesh / a web / a cellulose structure in fruits, as melons / to associate / to unite / connected / a halter / ( said of blood vessels ) capillaries / to unreel silk / cotton fiber / hemp

**Element v Phase.** Element is a word that in the Western Tradition has come to mean a physical substance. Arguably even though the Four Elements “substances” were somewhat more phenomenological to the ancient Greeks they did have something of a less tangible meaning. However, the Five Elements of Chinese thought are clearly intended to be more energetic phenomenon or processes. Manfred Porkert has suggested “Evolutive Phase” and many people have adopted the more simplified “Phase”. Even though Worsley used the term Element and the established extensive use of this word would justify its continual use Phase would seem to be

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more true to Worsley's actual meaning. The jury is out at present as to whether Phase will become the more normative term. We see no particular problem with either continuing to use Element because of established convention or using the term Phase. The main point that is often misunderstood is how did Worsley understand this term and he clearly understood the more dynamic meaning.

Many people probably do not realize that there is not actually one single term in the classics. There are two main terms that are sometimes used singly and sometimes in combination. The first term *xíng* is translated as Evolutive Phase by Manfred Porkert, the second term that emphasizes the cyclical and seasonal by Circuit Phase. Maoshing Ni coins the term 'Elemental Phase' the only downside is that two word terms always want to be shortened.

行      *xíng*      to walk / to go on foot / to move / to go / to travel / to act / to do / to work / to publish / to be current / to be customary/ to prevail / able / capable / all right / O.K. / enough / baggage for travel / a road / a path / to serve / ready to ... / immediately / soon

運      *yùn*      to move / to revolve / to transport / to ship / to utilize / to make use of / one's luck or fortune / fate / a Chinese family name

**Circulation/Sex v Pericardium:** this topic goes beyond simple terminology to the actual function of this system. So this will be a topic for fuller discussion. Clearly Five Element acupuncture as taught by J. R. Worsley had a very different understanding of this organ/function than the TCM preferred term "Pericardium" implies if it is taken in its specific meaning as a physical structure of the pericardium. I find this expanded idea of this function well supported in the Classics.

### **Causative Factor v Constitutional Factor**

Worsley used the term "Causative Factor"; we agree with Hicks, Hicks and Mole that it would seem more in keeping with the concepts of Chinese Medicine to call this the "Constitutional Factor". In effect Chinese Medicine may be based upon the idea of "The Web that Has no Weaver", TCM identifies patterns as distinct from Western linear concepts, but ultimately we all have to decide where to treat, "The Main Contradiction" to use TCM terminology. However, Constitutional Factor would appear to be less suggestive of a Western type Causality.

The idea of the CF is very often misunderstood. Five Element theory appears comparatively simplistic but the diagnosis of the CF is a very individualized process and not a simple pigeon holing of signs and symptoms.

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<sup>i</sup> Although Oriental medicine includes a wide range of modalities, acupuncture clearly captured Western interest and was the main subject of most European language texts up to the 1970s.