

MFM E-Letter
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An East-West Discourse on Health and Medicine
东西对论中的医学健康概念

Wandering in nature's path,
To breathe and be free;
To expand my horizons.
With the grass and the trees,
The gliding swan
Swims in the fragrant air of roses
Such tranquillity.
In the open space of my heart
I dance with my energy
A moment for myself,
A moment to appreciate,
A moment for my health,
In timeless motion,
And motionless time.
I feel the beauty of life,
Away from the follies
Of everyday necessities,
Away from the deeds
For many to succeed.
Bathing in sunshine,
My body is mine to own,
My time,
My life,
At one with nature,
At one with myself.



As I strolled along the lakeside of Regent's Park, I walked in the direction of the swans gazing along the grassy bank. In the breeze of early summer, amidst the pure fragrance of the Rose Garden which captivated my imagination of perfection, the sense of beauty was everywhere. Naturally, I fell into the tranquillity of another world. Yet my mind was awakened by the sensation of calmness that is so far away from the busy city of London. My heart was drunk on the wine of life but my mind was alert with inspiration. In the fresh air and the mild sunshine I arrived at another horizon of positivities, nurturing my living body.

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A monk playing with a cricket, at one with nature

This is my space away from all the wears and tears of everyday dwelling. As the world is stumbling into austerity in the midst of mounting debts and national deficits, I began to wonder. I wonder how many of us are thinking of their health and the inspirational aspects of their life. The sinking Euro and the environmental crisis of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico should make us wonder whether our consumer society is the right direction for human progress. I pause to think how many of us are in tune with ourselves and are at one with nature. Is it not time for us to have a fundamental rethink about our own health, our lives and our world? Sometimes I wish I had a magic wand with which I could ameliorate the power of my language to explain the paradox of our time. The increasing danger of 'scientism' and 'technocracy' (scientism is the religion of science, and technocracy is the rule by technology) is in evidence as men are foolishly trying to transform nature through science and technology and are altering nature in their own image. The true noble scientist will not indulge in the worship of science because science is not a religion. Likewise, technology is in the service of mankind. We must not let technocrats dominate the human spirit in the name of consumerism. Technology should be subservient to human needs and not the other way around. More and more we are facing nature's comeback, as experienced by the unfortunate people living along the Mexico Gulf and the BP executives. Yet there are no signs of slowing the demand for oil by the U.S economy which is consuming 20% of the world's production in her hunger for power. Nature is now reminding us that she alone has the final say.

Talking about health and medicine in the present and future, we should begin by redefining the man within and the man without. Internally every part of our body is holistically linked in a web of relationship within ourselves and within the external world (天人合一, 天人相应). The micro energy of our body is inextricably linked with the macro energy of our cosmos. This very concept is central to the origin of Chinese medical thinking as it evolved from the ancient times. Western medicine, since the scientific revolution of the Renaissance, expresses itself in body structures and functions, hence the accumulation of knowledge on anatomy and physiology. Western scientific approach seeks to intervene into the disease process by a 'strong force' of drugs or surgery designed to have an immediate cause-and-effect impact on the body measurable by quantifiable evidence. Chinese medicine, in contrast, seeks to influence materially and energetically the patterns of disease of the body at the micro level. Such a 'subtle force' may not be quantifiable or measurable in a short period of time, although some magical results do appear after the first few sessions of treatment. But the process of healing is long term, it affects the whole body and therefore is ideally suited for chronic illnesses. In the natural world the eco system needs biodiversity, well balanced microbe species as well as a variety of plants and insects to balance the natural cycle. This is the same inside our bodies, our internal eco system needs the same balance and harmony in order to maintain good health. This well balanced 'biodiversity within' is expressed by Chinese medicine in the Zang-Fu organs relationship and the relationship between Qi, blood and body fluid as defined by the Yin and Yang within the body. In a₂

well balanced ecological environment within the body cancer cells will not mutate or develop into tumours. Sometimes this balance can be disturbed by the 'strong force' intervention of Western drugs or surgery. It is commonly known that over-usage of antibiotics causes Candida and a number of other problems. Such problems are known as side effects of drugs, some of which are clearly listed in the usage instructions. With Chinese medicine we can apply a more 'subtle force' to regulate the eco system of the human body as part of the body's natural process. The body is therefore more capable of dealing with the side effects in a natural way. All medical intervention can potentially cause harm, we can only weigh out the risk and benefit ratios of a treatment by choosing a less invasive and more natural way to cure ourselves.

In my past efforts of studying the comparative merits of Western scientific and technical medicine with the Chinese philosophical concept of health, I came to realise that the main contention lies in the contradiction between science and philosophy i.e. the differences in our theory of knowledge. While the medical profession of the two schools of thought struggle with each other, it is the patients that suffer. The 'patient', being the unwilling victim of this struggle, does not know where to turn for help. The ultimate aim of all medicine should be to cure the patient. When considering the two medical systems, we need to make this the central theme in any East-West discourse on health and medicine. We know that East-West exchange in medical knowledge dates back to over 2,000 years. 'As early as 3rd century BC, the passage of ideas from China to the West was channelled through the Parthians and later through the Arabs'. 'The Arab physician Avicenna's work the *Canon of Medicine* was translated into Latin in the 12th century and remained the standard book in Europe until the 1600s'. This book was heavily influenced by Chinese medicine in the long history of East-West exchange, a study of which was recently presented by one of my SSM medical students from King's College, University of London (Issarah Jawad, 18th June 2010).

Health and medicine therefore reflect the social system and cultural values of different civilizations. The idea and practice of medicine changed the way we live and the way we organise our society. When I learn of the birth of 'Synthia' and the invention of synthetic life, my urge is to consider its implications for the future of health and medicine. I think it is of overriding importance for the future of humankind to consider now a fundamental question. The question is 'Does the domination of science and technology in our society contribute to the continuation of enlightenment of our lives and the eventual survival of the human civilization, or should we adopt a more philosophical approach in social-cultural development?'

The world is becoming increasingly imbalanced by the recent economic crisis, continuation of terrorism and worsening environmental pollution. Fundamental change is now in the air. The shift of Yin and Yang dynamics between the East and the West is laced between cultural values and the socio-economic systems in which the two civilizations interact. Both civilizations have gone through primitive slavery societies to feudalism, and have now entered through industrialisation the modern era of science and technology in a globalised world. Financial manipulations and capital speculations have inflated the recent economic bubbles beyond the limit. And now the subsequent bursting of these bubbles has sent the developed world into a crisis of confidence which resulted in currency devaluation, deficits, unemployment and the loss of financial power. Consequently, the West is losing its influence in global leadership. This in turn alters the dynamics between East and West which will result in the shift of economic power to the East. The West is repairing its regulative system in order to recover from the current economic recessions and national deficits. While Europe is busy with the Euro, and the U.S.A is dealing with health and environmental issues after the recent fallouts, the East is reawakening in its cultural values as a result of enjoying newly gained wealth. For the past two decades or so, the comfort of₃

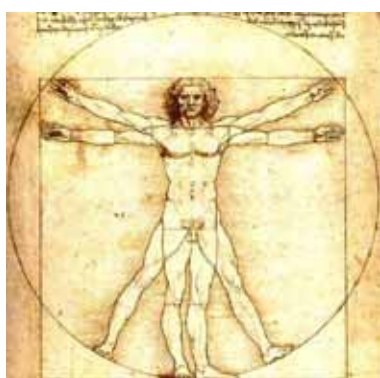
economic well-being inspired the Chinese nation to re-evaluate her traditional culture and ideas - a great deal of which were discarded during a century of revolutions. The meeting of East-West intellectual traditions is a natural progression from their economic encounters. The philosophy of health and the science of medicine became the focal points for these East-West intellectual interactions. Medicine and health affect everyone of us somehow in different stages of our lives, they also embody the values of our civilizations. As someone who has for decades been involved in the field of integrating health and medicine between East and West, I have given some thoughts on these subjects.

From time to time you hear about the pros and cons of complementary medicine, the horror stories about side effects, malpractice and accidents in medical treatment. And worse, there is much finger-pointing between Western Evidence Based medicine and holistic natural medicine which is represented by the system of Chinese Medicine. Chinese medicine has a 5,000-year history of clinical experience and a unique system of medicine which describes the holistic patterns of health. Our unquestionable faith in scientism and its constant insistence on empirical evidence (RCT) may have an opposite effect on the progress of medicine. Although we cannot explain the placebo effect in treatment, providing it is safe, the patient's ultimate aim is to get better regardless of how much empirical evidence the treatment process ends up producing. The patients themselves know when they are free from pain or whether or not their diarrhoea has stopped, let alone those who begot their baby out of Chinese medicine treatment despite the failure of IVF. Modern medicine has to be 'patient-centred' because we are all individuals. We live in a complicated environment in which we interact in complex ways with our surroundings. These interactions affect our mind and body. Our pursuit of material (economic) survival affects our psycho-emotional state and the strength of our spirit. Love, happiness, joy, sorrow, worries and anger are the many factors that can affect our physical health. Living is such a precarious profession that we all indulge in different activities, in different circumstances, which may affect our health. No one can predict disasters, accidents or protect themselves from air pollutions if the natural world is damaged by human follies or the act of God. But one thing we can do as individuals is to take ownership of our health by understanding the subtle changes in our body caused by every little action that we take such as eating a hamburger, drinking cola or taking a walk in the park instead. Some of us may take the risk of smoking a cigarette or taking a sniff of cocaine, or even poisoning ourselves with drug over-usage. Somehow we all agree - both in the East and the West - that 'prevention is better than cure'. In this case, modern medicine must arrive at a fresh understanding of the patterns of health and disease in order to derive a new system of medicine that effectively deals with our complex 21st century health problems.

According to medical research, a healthy body normally contains a number of bacteria, viruses and even cancer cells. Why do some people remain healthy and yet some others develop diseases? Some will say it is due to inheritance, DNA structures or bad luck. According to Chinese medicine, if you maintain the body's genuine Qi (loosely translated as 'vitality, energy, immune system or the optimal ecology within the body') then pathogens will not invade you and disease will not develop. What then, affects the optimal ecology of a healthy body? It is obvious both to the Western doctors and Chinese physicians that your lifestyle has a lot to do with it. According to the WHO survey of the world population, one third of the population belongs to the third category of those living a life between health and illness. Chinese physicians generally believe that most of us belong to this third category of 'sub-health state' while healthy people and people with serious diseases or illnesses are in the minority. Increasingly people are suffering from chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes that we classify as metabolic syndrome, immune-related illnesses such as HIV and cancer as well as diseases of the nervous system (ANS, CNS and PNS) which are linked to our modern ways of life and the related pressures we are facing psycho-emotionally. Social factors such as smaller families, divorces, cross-continental travels,⁴

competitive living, abundant refined food and even the decreasing habit of breast feeding amongst women affect the patterns of health and disease in the 21st century. The evolution of a new clinical system as well as an innovative healthcare philosophy is now necessary for us to survive in modernity.

What then is the ‘sub-health state’? Firstly, the definition describes those who do not have any organic physical diseases but are functionally unstable between health and illness; for instance, those who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome and are mentally tired and anxious without showing any physical evidence of illness according to hospital diagnosis. The second group includes those who feel unwell physically and emotionally and live a low quality of life with negativity. And thirdly, those who suffer from minor ailments such as pains and aches, headaches, insomnia, stress or mild depression. Those who are very vulnerable to flu and infections belong to this category. The sub-health state also describes those who are allergic to different foods and environments as well as those who get emotionally upset and angered easily, or are in a constant worry or sorrow. Even over-indulgence in love, joy or excitement can bring the person into this sub-health state by lowering their levels of energy and tolerance. Hence we arrive at the Chinese medicine concept of harmony and balance. To maintain a relatively stable state of harmony and balance, the Chinese physician will use herbal medicine, acupuncture and soft tissue therapy to regulate the physical and psycho-emotional state of the patient. With a balanced lifestyle, the Chinese physician will seek to return a patient to a relatively healthy state or reverse the decline in health holistically. In this way, Chinese medicine as a medical system is ideally positioned to integrate with Western medicine which is more interventional in approach. The sub-health state now characterises the pattern of health and disease of the modern time. Economically and politically such a trend in health patterns is a warning to the world as we approach material abundance and consumer affluence.



Leonardo-da-Vinci's Man



Classical drawing of the spleen meridian



Classical drawing of ZangFu organs

Therefore, we can summarise that in Western medicine we classify disorders in terms of a set of symptoms belonging to a particular disease or organic dysfunctions according to our knowledge of anatomy and physiology, whereas in Chinese medicine we differentiate illnesses in terms of syndromes or patterns of diseases. Western medicine takes the view that the aetiology of a disease belongs to a specific physiological system such as the digestive system or the nervous system. Chinese medicine looks at a disease's causes as imbalances or dysfunctions between the holistic relationship of organs and their interaction with functional or organic materials of the body such as Qi, blood and body fluid. The concepts of Yin and Yang balance, deficiency or excess and exogenous or endogenous causes are used to identify the body's current ‘reaction state’ and to determine the primary and secondary syndromes during a complex situation of interrelations and interactions within the body. Chinese medicine also classifies diseases according to the different Yin and Yang meridians.

Together with syndromes and disease names, there are approximately 4,000¹ different classifications which can be found in many classic medical texts such as Shang Han Lun (伤寒论) and Jin Gui Yao Lue (金匱要略). Chinese medicine believes that syndromes develop along with the progress of time and that an illness can be reversed with treatment. So a syndrome may develop into different diseases, and a disease can develop into multiple syndromes. This is why we call the Chinese medical classification as being 'non-specific' in methodology. Whereas Western medicine adopts a definitive evidence methodology in disease classifications. According to the latest information there are over 8,000² diseases now identified within Western medicine. This is a fundamental difference between the two medical systems that causes a great deal of confusion when diseases and syndromes are being discussed in clinical case studies during my teaching courses with Western medical doctors. Medical education in China also confronts this difference constantly. This will remain one of the fundamental problems in integrating Chinese medicine with Western medicine. And indeed the synergy of syndromes and diseases will be at the very heart of a new medical system that is capable of dealing with the medical complexity of our modern world.

Research in 'comparative medicine' between the Eastern and Western approaches is deepening our understanding of medicine, theoretically as well as in practical clinical terms. How can we evolve an integration that is meaningful and works organically as a result of synergy rather than a piecemeal 'try one, if it doesn't work try another' approach. In the West, when people have a serious health problem they obviously try Western medicine, drugs or surgery before turning to complementary medicine or Chinese medicine. Unfortunately Chinese medicine is used as a last resort which denies it the opportunity to help the patient sooner. At such a late stage in a patient's illness, the essence of Chinese medicine is not being used to the maximum. The clever patients in China are being looked after by the physician in their sub-health state. In ancient times, the superior physicians - as described by the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* - are those who were paid to look after the people in health. They were forced to work for nothing if they failed in their job. Only inferior doctors treated patients in ill health. If you are among those who belong to the categories of sub-health syndromes then you should immediately seek the help of a Chinese physician who has the wisdom to regulate your syndrome and put you back into a relatively healthy state.

The symptoms that are associated with the sub-health state are varied depending on individual syndromes. To give an indication on how to watch out for your own set of symptoms, I can only generalise some of the key patterns that are commonly seen. Liver syndromes tend to have a stagnating nature caused by energetic blockage as well as emotional trauma. The sufferer retains a lot of anger that explodes from time to time, or bottles up the emotions which are then expressed in outbursts and weeping. We call these people 'liverish'. They may feel a fullness in the hypochondrium, may also suffer from eye problems, insomnia, or palpitations. This group of people may further develop digestive problems. They tend to have a red tongue with a taut and rapid pulse if they have heat within their syndrome. They might have a thin white coating on their tongue and a weak taut pulse if they have a tendency of developing stress, depression and digestive problems if the spleen is also affected. Premature ageing will begin if the syndrome is not being regulated by a physician who understands the intricacies of this complex condition.

In medical education we have Problem Based Learning (PBL), but in clinical medicine we are proposing Pattern Based Thinking (PBT) when we try to diagnose a patient according to syndromes. PBL looks at relationships in disorders. We have known the relationship

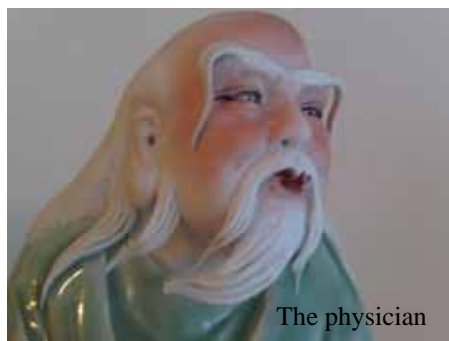
¹ This figure is generally quoted but not verified

² This figure is generally quoted but not verified

between the functioning of the lungs and the skin as well as the musculoskeletal system; whenever there is a major external injury the patient will develop breathing problems. Chinese medicine observes that the skin and the lung has an external-internal relationship. The lung meridian is in a pair with the large intestine meridian. The lung is directly affected when external pathogens are invading the body such as heat, dryness, cold and wind which cause the lung to develop Yin deficiency. Coughing, phlegm (yellow phlegm is caused by heat invasion and clear phlegm is caused by cold invasion), asthmatic breathing and shortness of breath will be the resultant symptoms, and sometimes this leads to chronic bronchitis and fever. The person with Yin deficiency of the lung and stomach tends to have indigestion, IBS and normally has a red tongue with a weak and rapid pulse.

There are many groups of syndromes. We can go into further details when the physician is studying Chinese medicine with the aim of integrating this system of medical thinking with other systems of medicine. However in this E-Letter I will go into another group of syndromes which relates to kidneys and spleen, as this group is directly related to lifestyle and anti-ageing. The kidney is responsible for storing the 'inherited essence' derived from the parents, but at the same time it also needs to be replenished by the nourishment from our daily intake of food and liquid which the Chinese call 'acquired essence'. The kidney is therefore the powerhouse that supplies the necessary Qi (energy) and essence for the functions of the whole body. The kidney is also responsible for the process of growth and sexual activities, the decline of which signify the ageing process. A premature decline of the kidney can be caused by bad lifestyle. The spleen is the organ responsible for transforming the food essence into a format that can be stored by the kidney. Hence 'kidney Qi deficiency' is directly related to the 'spleen Qi deficiency'. Symptoms like back ache (such as osteoporosis), chronic fatigue, tinnitus, dizziness, impotence and women's menstruation problems can all be caused by the deficiency of the kidney. This deficiency can be separately described as Yin or Yang, or both. Sometimes it also affects the liver and causes liver symptoms such as dryness in the eyes, irritability and involuntary muscle and tendon movements (tremors). When the heart is affected, the patients also develop insomnia. There are many types of tongue and pulse within Chinese medicine which are used to distinguish the subtleties of this complex web of syndromes.

You can now see the complicated and yet beautifully holistic patterns of identification, as used by Chinese medicine. They require years of intuitive clinical learning by the physician. You can see a comprehensive presentation of clinical patterns in Professor Deng Tie Tao's book *A Practical Diagnosis in Traditional Chinese Medicine* (AM book code. BK2966) whose work is recognised as an authority in China. We are fortunate to have this selective translation in English. To maintain relative harmony within the person, including body, mind and emotion, a deep understanding of all the holistic relationships between different parts, functions and organs of the body and the internal and external causes of disease is fundamentally important. To maintain longevity or rejuvenate our vitality, Chinese medicine has a lot up its sleeve, accumulated in the past few thousand years. I can only give you an introduction to the wisdom of the Chinese physician, but with an unfortunate warning that many who are practising in the West and indeed in the East are not up to scratch. So learn more yourself in order to discern a superior physician from a technical practitioner. Healing is different from repairing, a human being's health cannot be fixed like a car or a computer.

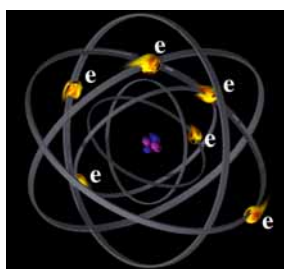


The physician

Anti-ageing is always an interesting subject for all of us in the East and West. In my many years of research I have found that the Western approach of cell biology, the physiological, structural and cosmetic intervention to be limiting when compared to

the fluidity of Chinese herbal medicine and its regulation of energy. The medical principle of promoting Jing (精) and Shen (神) in relation to promoting Qi and blood characterise Chinese medicine as a system that combines both the physical well-being as well as psycho-emotional well-being into its anti-ageing methodology. Chinese medicine recognises the relationship between the exterior appearance and interior health, and this is an important departure from the Western approach to anti-ageing. The unique relationship among Zang-Fu (脏腑) organs and their physiological link to Qi, blood and body fluid established by the meridian system as described by Chinese medicine, forms the basis of the principles for a clinical methodology in anti-ageing. Using herbal medicine, acupuncture and lifestyle medicine we can slow down the process of ageing. According to Chinese classical Materia Medica, Chinese herbs are classified in terms of nature, taste and meridian tropism besides the related pharmacological effects. Hot-natured herbs, for instance, are for warming cold syndromes whereas herbs of cold nature are for cooling hot syndromes. Their taste also affects different meridians; for example, bitter herbs affect the liver and sweet herbs affect the spleen. The principle of combining different herbs in a complex formulae is called Jun Shen Zuo Shi (君臣佐使) which is used by herbalists to tailor the herbal prescriptions for the individual patient with different syndromes. Chinese medicine is therefore a truly individualised medicine. Similarly, we select different acupuncture points on different meridians and combine them with specific disease points according to clinical experience in order to regulate the syndromes. Chinese syndrome acupuncture is therefore different from Western symptomatic medical acupuncture. When you see a Chinese physician, they will observe your tongue, pulse and vitality and will combine their analysis with your description of your current symptoms and your medical history. This process of analysis is called ‘Syndrome Differentiation’ (see Professor Deng’s book mentioned above). The logic of this process is based on the concepts of Yin and Yang synergy, balance and disharmony which belong to the methodology of thinking called ‘Dialectics’. This logical methodology is different from formal logic or mathematical logic of Western empirical sciences. The Chinese dialectical analysis is similar to the ‘Science of Logic’ proposed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and in many ways is expressed in philosophical terms similar to the scientific discoveries in Einstein’s Relativity Theory, the modern Standard Theory of physics as well as by Quantum Mechanics.

For the Chinese, the process of ageing is similar to the process of health and disease, and occurs at a micro energetic level because it is a change that is happening all the time within our body at sub-atomic particle levels. The causes of this change are both internal and external. The positive charge of protons, the negative charge of electrons and the neutral charge of neutrons at atomic level which make up the physical world are further influenced by their sub-atomic particles made of up-quarks and down-quarks. The quantum field at this minute space in which time becomes irrelevant is an inertia of enormous energy stabilised by a fine balance of positive and negative elements.



Structure of Atoms
(source: Sciencephotolibrary)



Yin and Yang -
A modern impression
(source: Sciencephotolibrary)

Chinese medicine philosophically infers that all things are changing and are created at this (atomic) level or beyond. This is summarised by the theory of Yin and Yang about the beginning of Dao (道) which came from ‘nothingness’ just like the Big Bang, which

created our universe, came out of imbalances within a pre-Big Bang 'void' or 'vacuum'. Western medicine - in its current Evidence Based mode - only investigates the human physiology at a cellular and molecular levels. The energies of particles are sensitive and yet stable but are subject to the momentum of the 'uncertainty principle' of quantum mechanics. Particles behave in a wave-like motion, which is in turn determined by a particle's momentum and position. The wave nature of matter and the high speed movement of particles in motion, make our methods of measuring or quantifying matter accurately at a given time inaccurate. This ingenious discovery by a brilliant physicist Werner Heisenberg tells us that at a certain time we cannot be certain of the position of a particular particle, nor do we know the momentum of the forces involved in its creative possibilities. The quanta of energy of a particle with a certain frequency appear in wave functions which can be measured in zero value or non-zero value. The product of the uncertainties of the two quantities will always be relativistic or greater than the fundamental Planck's Constant at quantum level. In lay person's terms, the creative energies of matter are infinite, full of uncertainty and probabilities at the sub-atomic level of particles, quarks and bosons. The human body, as it ages in health or disease, is subject to these changes within the micro energetic levels of particles. This is what we know so far with new physics and perhaps we will progress to an even deeper level of understanding of the dynamics between the fundamental elements of matter in relation to the cosmos of universes. The dimension of consciousness as exhibited in the human mind or creatures of higher intelligence should also be considered as a part of the equation of existence besides physical matters. This brings us to the unimaginable complexity of advancing our knowledge of medicine in order to understand and cure diseases.

This may sound theological, but the possibility of instability at the quantum field level as described in the Planck's Scale in which not only time is irrelevant but space is also illusional, is the very dynamic behind 'universal change' and the evolution of different forms of matter. Such changes also create new phenomena that affects our health and our ageing. Through the concept of Yin and Yang in the context of syndromes, Chinese medicine seeks to balance the macro patterns of the body in order to influence the micro energetics of the body at a particle level. Such a revelation is quite novel from an intellectual point of view. Obviously scientists will find this mystifying without further research and evidence. To get this, I am afraid we will have to wait for CERN - the Large Hadron Collider - to produce the evidence in experimental physics. Physics, unlike medicine, is now exploring the realm of science that is beyond the imagination of Evidence Based doctors. Perhaps it might give us some leads that will revolutionise medicine as we know it today.



The Large Hadron Collider – CERN – its octagon shape has an uncannily symmetrical similarity to Ba Kua (八卦) – the Chinese philosophical trigram. (Source: The Times)

In this E-Letter I have expressed my thoughts spontaneously and without paying much attention to structuring my arguments. My main concern is to communicate my passion to,

you for co-inspiration. Those who are interested in Chinese clinical anti-ageing treatments should refer to my academic paper *Clinical Development of Chinese Medicine in Health Regulation and Anti-Ageing* and for medical professionals who are interested in the integrative approach and wish to study further Chinese medicine and acupuncture should refer to my work in *The Integrative Physician's Guide to Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture*. Further studies are also given in my paper delivered at the World Congress of Chinese Medicine (Macau, 15th October 2008) *The Implications of the Scientific Theories of New Physics to the Innovative Development of Dialectical Thoughts in Chinese Medicine*.

With medicine progressing in this direction, it will be possible for us in the future to prolong our lives and to maintain well-being. There may also be a glimpse of hope for us to reverse the process of ageing through some form of rejuvenation. For now we can only believe in ourselves and look after our bodies every day, every minute in micro ways. So take charge of your body and perhaps find a superior physician that has the wisdom to guide you in the maze of health and medicine. Whether you choose Chinese medicine or Western medicine, or integrate the two systems for treatment, you should trust your instincts as well as the intuitive reactions your body is giving to the treatment. Medicine is not perfect. There are no magic mushrooms in medicine and therefore your placebo input is important. Those of us who have seen Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, a late 1950s film, will know how to treasure the 'wild strawberries' in our life and prolong the enjoyment of them as much as possible since we do not know how long we can live. Eventually the 'string of life' that God has given you will come to an end. And this end is the beginning of us being at one with nature. The past, the present and the future are linked by this moment of immediacy, the moment of tasting the 'wild strawberry'.

During many discussions with my learned colleagues I realised that the geography of East-West relations is changing rapidly; more rapidly than at any time in the past 2,000 years when civilizations were more separate by geographic barriers. My old friend Professor Claus Schnorrenberger, in his recent letter to *The Independent* newspaper, cited that 'Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) succumbs to a fundamental error which in the time honoured tradition of Western logic is known as *circulus vitiosus* or vicious circle'. When I try to explain this to my students who are experienced Western medical doctors, they are mystified. The scientific mind cannot accept contradictions, whereas contradiction is understood and accepted in Eastern philosophies. Another friend who is a theoretical physicist, Professor Herbert Pietschmann, told me emphatically in one of our conversations at the Vienna University that Einstein did not accept the contradictions that he faced during the construction of his Theory of Relativity. He was very much shaken by his own discovery. The concept of circle or cycle is essential in Buddhism as well as Taoist philosophy. The interplay of Yin and Yang is very much the principle of this dialectical thought. The logic of modern physics in the dynamics between matter and anti-matter is a good example of this dialectical logic. The discovery that an electron with a negative charge moves forward in time, whereas an anti-electron with a positive charge moves backward in time is an indication that coexistence of the opposites is within the nature of things during the process of contradictions, harmonisation and synergy. Professor Fritz G. Wallner of Vienna University, in his work on the philosophy of science, used the term 'constructed realism' when he discussed the cultural influence in evaluating Chinese medicine and Western medicine. He showed that the variation of the systems of knowledge depends on different 'cultural references'. The impacts of these 'cultural references' are filtering through different areas in economics, politics and the business world besides medicine, science and philosophy.

Analysing the East-West interactions in the past few decades of globalisation we can accept that intellectually and culturally East-West convergence is desirable. But economically there may be a case for divergence. Decoupling in East-West economic polarisation may save₁

the world from economic collapse in the recent financial crisis. Globalisation, like European harmonisation, tends to produce a standardised world of people eating the same fast food, drinking the same coffee, iPhoning and Googling with uniform habits, regulations and common values of popularism going hand in glove with consumerism. But I prefer a diverse world with the full colours of regional varieties and cultural diversities. However, in order to enhance stability in our world, convergence of certain common values or systems of knowledge between different civilizations will be beneficial or even a necessary trend. Human values and desires are contradictory, yet it is difficult for us and many scientists to accept or realise that contradiction is at the heart of all natural phenomena. Convergence and divergence are natural processes that can be described by the concept of Yin and Yang. Again we are back to 'dialectics'. Whether we are concerned with our health, our love life, our family or our work and society, our minds need to be fluid and our spirit needs to be positive. So far, there is no 'absolute structure' socially, financially or scientifically we can depend on. In the meantime we should believe in ourselves and live happily, imaginatively as free beings in our lifespan into eternity.

Mention eternity

I awe with fear;
It brings me the most acute
Sense of the presence,
It reminds me of
The boundless horizon,
In which my passion lives,
And in which the lovers pledge.

Eternity is
Like the river flows
Forever to the East;
Like the magic circle
Of water, vapour and rain.
From eternity to now,
And from now to eternity,
Time is a seamless lace.
Wobbling forwards, backwards
Upwards and downwards
Like endless waves.
Time is time,
For the mortals
Only one direction,
Only the mortals
Have the ageing faces,
Decaying
In the process of renewal,
Renewal
At the end of decay.
And we begin again
In the midst of nature's synergy,
Forces attract and repulse,
The dynamics
Of immediacy
Sparkle.
Our energy dances
Between decay and renewal;
In the horizon of eternity
Like an immortal in time,



Lao Tzu riding on his ox, disappearing into the wilderness

We try to stay a little longer,
Vibrate the energy of youth.
With grace
We will grow old.
Health
After all is a state of mind;
Eventually we will all be at one with nature.
Nothing becomes something,
And something disintegrates
Into nothing.
Life begins again... ..

Man Fong Mei
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At the AcMedic Centre
London

梅万方
亚美迪医药中心
伦敦
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THE MFM E-LETTER expresses the personal view of Professor Man Fong Mei, Chairman of the Chinese Medical Institute and Register (CMIR) and Vice Chairman of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS). He has published and delivered numerous papers in the past two decades. He is currently a professor and visiting professor at three Chinese medical universities and an active member of several medical specialty research committees. If you are interested in receiving future issues please register your interest using the link: http://www.acumedic.com/email-updates/mfm_e-letter/

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