

1. Introduction into Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

- 1.1. Yin and Yang - the first concept in TCM is the unity among all the systems that make up a human. The second is that there are polarities in all things - this is represented by the words *yin* and *yang* and the familiar symbol. Everything in creation is a result of the interplay of the two elements, yin and yang. Yang is the light, active, 'creative, positive element. Yin is the dark, passive, receptive, negative element. It is stated in the Chinese text "*The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*" that in order to treat and cure diseases one must search into their origins.
- 1.2. Through their interactions and functions, yin and yang, the negative and positive principles in nature, are the cause of diseases which befall those who are in rebellion against the laws of nature - or who do not conform to them. Everyone is made up of both yin and yang elements. Yin exists within yang. Yang exists within yin. The solid organs are considered to be yin. The hollow organs are considered to be yang. Just as there is a north pole and a south pole on a magnet, there are yin and yang polarities within the body.
- 1.3. The life systems are energized by this flow of energy. Oriental thought recognizes two essences in the body - *ie*, generated by the gross elements of food, which flows within the blood stream, and *qi*, the primary or universal energy which is the origin of all things and of life itself. The channels along which this *qi* energy flows in the body are called meridians.

2. A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM)

- 2.1. The Chinese concept of health is very simple and does not measure health as is customarily done in the West. Health is not a composite of quantifiable entities such as chemical levels in the blood and urine. In the West health is analyzable, independent of illness, using such techniques as blood pressure readings or blood cholesterol levels.
- 2.2. Health for the Chinese, however, is a theoretical state in which none of the body signs are abnormal and the body is balanced. For example, "The lungs in harmony, administer respiration".
- 2.3. The detailed precision of TCM lies in its perception of disharmony, in its ability to recognize in signs and symptoms a pattern that becomes the basis for treatment. This theory of health is an attempt to make sense out of the practice of treating illness. For instance in the process of finding a treatment for the symptom of edema (excessive accumulation of fluid in the tissues), the Chinese formulated their theory of "harmonious movement of fluids in the body". They did not study healthy people first, they moved from perceiving and treating a disharmony to the understanding of harmony.
- 2.4. The tendency of Chinese thought is to seek out dynamic functional activity rather than look for fixed somatic structures that perform the activities. Because of this, the Chinese have no system of anatomy comparable to that of the West. Thus for example the organ known as the liver is for TCM, very different from the Western liver. The TCM liver is first defined by the functions associated with it; the Western liver by its physical structure and the western medical functions. This divergence of conceptual approach

makes it possible for Chinese Medicine to identify organs not recognized in the West - such as the Triple Burner - and for it to not recognize organs and glands clearly identified by Western medicine such as the pancreas and the adrenal glands.

- 2.5. TCM is internally consistent - it is an organization of all observable manifestations of the body into an integrated set of functions and relationships. Understanding of these functions and relationships enables the practitioner to identify and treat a disharmony in them.
- 2.6. When presented outside the context of Chinese civilization, or of practical diagnosis and therapeutics, these ideas are fragmented and without great significance. The "truth" of these ideas lies in the way the physician can use them to treat people with complaints. They are valuable because they comprise a medical paradigm that makes possible the substantive discussion of "what is going on," thereby allowing the physician to diagnose patterns of disharmony. Through diagnosis and treatment the ideas are pragmatically tested and examined for validity, consistency, and truth.