

The Chinese Medical Model In the West-A Journey in Paradox

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The object of this presentation is to challenge the listener (victim) to seriously consider the implications and potential paradoxical misfortunes contingent to merging medical models in the real world of human power politics which the profound longing in the human soul for harmony and unity might obscure.

Models are blueprints of reality. They must never be confused with the real thing. Models of medicine, science, social interaction and cosmology are an expression of the needs of a culture and of individuals for a workable organization of experience and phenomena within the limits of their awareness.

Human beings with rare exceptions are not blessed (and perhaps cursed) with the sight that illuminates all of reality at once. We have had visited upon us from the beginning a dread of uncertainty which no faith has totally mitigated. Throughout the ages the structure provided by Models, whatever their limitations, has assuaged this atavistic fear of the unknown and allowed us to function as if we know. Of course we do not know. A Model is never more than a sliver of the totality of existence.

This workability within a given social context limits the model to an accurate grasp of only one area of reality. Each model that has evolved through the course of history is true to its limited purview of the truth. Each has its distinct and separate value. Beyond that value we must most importantly never lose sight that Models are only metaphors for the truth and must never be confused as the truth. Dogmatic faith in a Model must be limited to its usefulness, not to its essence.

It would be ideal if we could blend one with the other to afford humankind with a broader integrated concept of existence than we have heretofore enjoyed with one narrower choice. This is not, however, the history of such models of reality. They rarely exist side by side for long, as they did during the Roman Empire and, to some extent, during the Golden Age of Spain under the Moors in the Twelfth Century when Christian, Hebrew, and Moslem views of the world nurtured each other.

The Roman Catholic Church under Constantine searched out and destroyed the symbols of all other models of reality within its domain in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries as it did again at the end of the Fifteenth Century in the newly-unified Spain under Ferdinand and Isabel. The subsequent fall of the Roman Empire following the earlier purge, and the rape of the New World by Spain under the later genocide may begin to convey the danger of the privileged prevalence of one model in the world.

Models tend to be mutually exclusive. While the Catholic Church successfully eliminated all other models of reality within its hold, its own model was violently displaced as the central one by an unexpected fallout from another of its own onslaughts (60,000 Jews killed in one day along the Rhine by departing German crusaders, the poorer and hungrier of whom cannibalized Jews everywhere along the route to the Holy Land).

These crusades are a significant illustration of the relevance and ubiquity of paradox in human affairs. The goal was the wresting of the Holy Land from the Moslems and the strengthening of the authority of the Catholic Church and the Feudal System of which it was an

integral partner. The result was the exact opposite, despite the occupation of this area by European Christians until the Ottoman Empire.

Unexpected and unsolicited by the Church were cross-cultural inoculations into Europe of Arabic - Hebrew - Persian science and, especially, mathematics. Mathematics removed man and his "senses", which Descartes described as "confused thoughts" from the observation of phenomena.

The process of fragmentation of experience begun by mathematics spread to the entire arena of human involvement with the inner self as well as with the outside world. The clock changed our entire being in the world, fragmenting what was once a global, lunar, solar consciousness of life to a frantic ticking away of our existence. Our minds were alienated from our bodies, and the ticking mechanical clock evolved into an endless proliferation of ticking mechanical tools, to which we have been chained slaves ever since.

The ovum of this model was fertilized in the ancient heritage of the Judeo-Christian experience of God as the Creator of the world and man, rather than God as another expression of the same force that created man. Alienation was sparked in the deep, dark past and came to fruition through its apparent adversary, science. Paradox upon paradox.

With this mathematical exactness of universal laws promulgated by Copernicus and Kepler in the Fifteenth Century, scientific observation and experiment became more attractive to men, who had relied on the grace of God for their power and who sensed the possibilities of having that power in their own hands. Descartes and Bacon laid the philosophical foundation for a world which was the dominion of man alone, a predictable mechanical arena to be explored, conquered, and exploited outside the realm of God. The material world was for man. For God there was left the mind and the soul neither of which could be readily mined for a quick profit.

The interpretation of the injunction by God for man to hold "dominion" over all of the living creatures and the earth was distorted. The New World Translation states "and let them have in subjection," The Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition) states "and let them have dominion over," and the New International Version of the Holy Bible states, "fill the earth and subdue it" and "rule over it."

"God bestows unique dignity on man. He made everything else but man 'after its kind'; that is, according to the destiny He envisaged for it. He made man in His own image. Man is patterned on God. He was made to represent God-- in created human form. That is why man has dominion, or rule (Genesis 1:26). He is meant to be to the world what God is to the whole created universe.

This special privilege appears in various ways in Genesis 1 and 2: Man has authority to name the animals; he is able to express rationally the worship of the whole creation; he is the one to whom God speaks His special instructions; he is the one whom God appoints as 'caretaker' of the garden He plants in Eden."i

Who among us, even the most liberated and evolved, is free of the machine that is forever and ceaselessly driving us mindlessly throughout life in spite of our efforts, through prayer, meditation, drugs, and alcohol, to stop long enough to catch our breathe.

Change which evolved in sleepy, creeping fashion since our inception has accelerated astronomically, so that a few days of our age is equal to thousands of years of the past. The Chinese "round" model is one in which knowledge has been slowly accumulated and synthesized throughout the centuries, not driven by the clock -- in contradiction to the square model whose sharp edge requires a "rapid breakthrough by 'knowledge of particulars' in which general theory seems a waste of time and dramatic quick intervention and result prevails."ii

What are we saying? We are talking about models. The model of reality that preceded this scientific revolution was as "round" as the one I have described above is square. Its edges were as soft as the edges of the one above are hard -- where facts are facts, neat and separate from each other and thereby susceptible to logic, reason, and a linear order. Cause is followed by effect.

The "round" model is one in which relationship prevails, in which an analogue rather than digital association exists between phenomena. In the Chinese model all of reality, macrocosm and microcosm, is a differentiation of a single force, the Qi. All is therefore simultaneously and continuously connected -- around and across a circle -- constantly interacting and impinging upon each other, according to laws which govern the polarities, rhythms and attractions that govern a living universe of Qi.

Since what exists is as much, or even more, alike as it is different, separateness is only a heuristic illusion. God him/herself is as much an expression of this unity as man, not only the same likeness but the same substance. The polarities are not absolute, the opposites are complementary and interdependent, the more one knows about one thing the more one knows about all. Correspondence and paradox are reasonable. Logic is not to be confused with truth.

Translated into the medical variation of this model, we have a system in which healer and healed are one, mind, body, and spirit are a unity, sickness is only a variation of health, and a signal of the personal violation of a person's own nature primarily by themselves. (Man, as I have said elsewhere, is the only animal that has the freedom, the self-determination to defy his own nature.)

However far we go in delineation of one from the other in the details of this most complex and precise medicine, we never stray far from the connections. Alienation is not an issue.

Though Oriental medicine at different times in its history has described thousands of disease states, the diagnostic process ends with the integral individual person. The illness is not separated from the person as a unit of disease. The illness is the person who has disease signs and symptoms. The polarities of Yin and Yang are diffused in varying combinations which is that person who defines and is defined by a unique combination of constitution and experience. The "healer" identifies the disharmony, prescribes to undo the damage, then points the way to prevention of future disharmony. The "healed" is responsible for his/her own harmony, while the unifying energy of healer and healed intermingle in ineffable exchanges to move in that direction.

Alienation is the Greek word for insanity. A model of reality which encourages separation, delineation, is intolerant of paradox, defines logic as truth, reduces and analyzes rather than integrates and synthesizes, encourages alienation. When the perception of truth depends on the obsession with objectivity in which the observer and the observed are rigidly separated, we have a condition which engenders alienation.

The person who presents himself to this model is reduced to a series of units which are statistically organized by machines into diseases. Little energy is expended to bring the person and his/her life together with this "disease" unit. Alienation of the signal from the signaler is inevitable in this context.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that humanistic psychology, whose world work is the healing of the alienation of insanity, would find the model I have just described a distinctly uncomfortable fit? And is it any wonder that psychology, which is so preoccupied with the devastation wreaked by this pervasive alienation, inside and out, might find the former model,

the Oriental, more comfortable and more productive in terms of mutual goals and strategies in the service of unity?

A healing psychology is, by definition, one that serves to overcome alienation. This implies the need for a model which is itself an expression of, and strives for, unity and dynamic harmony; one where the healer searches beneath the signal for the person rather than a disjointed "disease"; one in which the healer is in touch with and trusts his informed intuition within the context of a need for "verification" and available knowledge; one in which the healer is a teacher who is ceaselessly learning to be healed by the recipients of his healing; one in which the healer's being and energy is available to the healed to face and live through the worst; one in which precise knowledge and technology do not obviate the spirit; one where correspondances between physical and mental are clearly an integral manifestation of the model susceptible to a rational system of intervention; one in which harmony and not struggle is the *modus vivendi*.

Psychology is clearly not at home in the Western model of reality and medicine. It is, on the other hand, in need of a partnership with a medical model which supports its basic tenets. The Oriental model makes available a workable somato-psychic framework and potentially answers all of the needs summarized above.

I say potentially, because Chinese medicine in the land of its origin is greatly alienated from the roots which have made it possible for it to be a congenial partner to Western psychology. Students of the evolution of Chinese medicine in Mainland China state that "social change has begun to move medical education toward a synthesis of traditional and modern medicine, in which all that remains of the former are elements of technique that the latter can eventually absorb, and occupy the field alone. ... Because biomedical facts are being introduced into the structure without being integrated, the understanding of the body and its disorders that underlies Chinese medicine is becoming incoherent, to the point that the survival of this traditional art is threatened." iii

What at first seemed like a great blessing for Chinese medicine when Mao embraced the traditional medicine of China into the bosom of a still inchoate Western biomedical medicine has proved to be its downfall. In China the weakening of traditional concepts is leading to its elimination as a separate medicine, while in the West where Chinese medicine is being held at arm's length by the Western establishment, paradoxically the holding to traditional concepts is making the ancient medicine stronger.

This paper is, if nothing else, a study in paradox, a statement of the ubiquity of the "round" model of reality.

While Western psychology requires a congruous medical model in which to flourish and be complete, so the Chinese medical model has needed a psychology in which to complete itself. This model, which I have found to be so compatible and useful to Western psychology, will benefit in kind from the interchange made possible in the West since this model has been deliberately cut off from its psychological and spiritual roots for centuries in China. Ted Kaptchuk is a pioneer in uncovering the hidden storehouse of rich psychological material in ancient manuscripts.iv

Models, like all institutions, have powerful vested interests which are resistant to change. They are however dynamic creatures which cannot resist the universal law (Ch'i Hua) which dictates that while all things stay the same, they are always changing. One is always working with the tension between the old and familiar and the new in any model. A model must grow and expand into new unexplored and unaccounted for phenomena or wither away. The "round" one evolved slowly as an accretion of workable information tested by time throughout the

centuries and restated periodically in a broader and deeper fashion by gifted men in each age. My own teacher, Dr. Shen, has advanced in his lifetime the art of diagnosis, especially of the pulse, beyond that of his own teachers. Each person, drawing from his own history, can add to this wisdom.

While it is true that Yin and Yang are the apparent limits of Chinese medicine, the reality is that within these parameters of this internally-consistent model, new observations have easy access. By its very nature as an art, it is open to the creative expression of all of its practitioners in a way that is readily available in the West to only a select, highly competitive group of research scientists. Here, creativity requires vast sums of money presently in short supply. The average practitioner of Western medicine has little room to allow his imagination to roam, explore, and give birth to something new.

For the practitioner of Chinese medicine the only limit is the person him/herself. Yin and Yang, contrary to some assertions, can be stretched infinitely because it is a circular, not a linear relationship. The circle can become as large as the universe. Following Unshuldvi, we see the development of Chinese medicine from ancestor worship to correspondence, depending on the cultural mindset of the time.

Anyone who wishes to use the Chinese model to explore new fields is justified historically and by the need of the model to survive. Requena, Moussant, myself, the hundreds of Japanese schools, Korean and Vietnamese variations and others, are in existence because there is and has been a need to use the model to meet the variations in culture, climate, and geography. Even within the ancient Chinese tradition, technique varied according to region. "The people of the East live near the ocean and eat much fish and salt.....injure the blood.....cause a dark complexion.....which must be treated with acupuncture by means of a needle of flint. The people of the West.....Their internal diseases must be cured with (poison) medicine. The people of the Northare exposed to cold winds and frost andmust be treated with moxa. The people of the south.....should be treated with acupuncture by means of the nine fine needles. The people who inhabit the center.....treatment...consists of massage, breathing exercises and exercises of the extremities."vii

While the Western model may seem more open to change, due to the striving for perfection wrought by the Judeo-Christian image of a perfect God forever separate from an ever-reaching, imperfect manviii, I find that this endless endeavor enervates our creative energy, effectuates guilt and begets a neurosis that I did not find in China. Instead, this aspiration has become distorted into a reaching for power, not for love, for command and not for creation. "Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life." (Sandra Carey)

Chinese medicine has been the terrain over which I have made my own journey into the unknown. My path has been "to explore the energy concepts of Chinese medicine as they pertain to both the most mundane and the most esoteric aspects of the psychology of men. ... Chinese medicine has been the fulfillment of a search for a congenial system of healing that embodies the inseparability of body and mind, spirit and matter, nature and man, philosophy and reality. ... It is a masterpiece of harmony, intricacy and movement which never ceases to engage me, fascinate me, and intrigue me. It surrounds me like nature, or a great work of art. I am consumed and renewed at one time." ix

Chinese medicine has given me, a Western practitioner, the creative opportunity to investigate and "to present the mental, emotional, and spiritual roles of the Five Elements and Organ System Energies as positive natural functions in the service of the survival and fulfillment

of being. ... The negative emotions that are customarily associated with these Organ System Energies are artifacts of a distortion of the natural function and not the function itself. They are restitutive, not basic attributes."x Restitution, often interpreted as "resistance" is the attempt by an individual to stay "intact" while maintaining the life-sustaining "contact" we all require, especially the young, for survival. Chinese medicine gave me, over the past twenty years, a general practice of medicine in which I could enter the spectrum of the process of disease all the way from Health to Death. I have helped people die in concert with themselves, I have treated serious illness unresponsive to Western medicine, and I have prevented illness through the extraordinary capacity for this model to intervene early in the process of disease before the onset of symptoms.

I recall losing the friendship of an old friend who came to be treated for a bad back many years ago. I found his Heart Energy to be compromised. This information led him immediately to a cardiologist, despite my entreaties to the contrary, who told him that his heart was fine. For this reason, he became angry with me. Approximately seven years later, he had a five-way balloon bypass to expand his coronary arteries. Had he been available at the time to receive herbs, acupuncture and nutritional/lifestyle counseling for this condition, the process could possibly have been reversed.

This medical model has made it possible for me to bring together in one conceptual formulation physical as well as mental factors in the development of illness. One man who had a sudden and prolonged loss of energy was found to have a diminished circulation of Qi. This was due to shock from many physical traumas and from an emotional drain of his Heart Energies stemming from an inner contest between profound repression and its undoing during psychotherapy which began around the beginning of his symptoms. The Chinese say that you cannot make a sound with one ball(metal). One etiology alone would not have created symptoms. Treating both the physical and the mental sources of circulatory stagnation were required. One alone would not yield success.

This model has made it possible for me to relate to the entire process of peoples' lives on many levels simultaneously; to open closed circuit feedback loops to new experience, in which I can comfortably play a meaningful role; to enhance their awareness so that they can hear and read their own signals; to collaborate with people using their illness as a learning experience; to restore physiology in a gentle, profound fashion; to validate the reality of those whose complaints and discomfort could not be verified as disease with biomedical techniques but whose energy disharmony was delineated with systematic Chinese diagnostic tools. Most importantly, this model has allowed me the freedom to relate to others with all of my sense and my entire being.

To answer, therefore, the question which I have been called upon to address, ironically, the West, due to its rejection of all medical models other than its own, has, perforce, kept Chinese medicine more true to all of its roots, (eight principles or five phases) than in China, where Western biomedicine has engulfed Chinese medicine as a series of useful techniques and is dismantling and discarding the richness of its conceptual matrix.

The Western model, as it gradually catches up with advances in sub-atomic science, continues to dominate that aspect of reality which monitors and treats people where the disease process is gross pathology requiring a heroic medicine. Here it is unsurpassed.

Switching metaphors for a moment, the Chinese diagnostic treasure I believe reads signs of sub-molecular changes at the earliest stages in the process which takes us from life to death. It is the model which, most importantly, unites all phases of human experience, mind, body, soul,

with one precisely measurable phenomenon, Qi, of which all else is only a dynamically related segment. It is the model whose segment of reality, at its best, could be the one which is most lacking in the Western model.

Weakened conceptually with the loss of its traditional perceptual tools to western diagnostics in its land of origin, the Chinese Medical Model is being enigmatically preserved and developed in the West. It could become the medical model of the Aquarian Age. Paradox upon Paradox.

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