

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:

The Asian Student, a publication distributed through various institutions of higher learning in this country and abroad, often contains interesting and little known facts. In the issue of April 4, 1970, there is a note to the effect that Chinese and American scientists are soon to begin a joint research project to see if traditional Chinese herbs used as medicines can cure cancer. The research will be sponsored by the Nationalist China's National Science Council (Formosa), and the United States National Science Foundation. This constitutes another example of a distinct trend toward re-evaluation of healing methods practiced by ancient peoples and their modern descendants.

Chinese medicine is a most interesting and mystifying art. It is based upon principles said to have been discovered 2838 B.C. by the semi-legendary Emperor Shen Nung. The entire system is Cabalistical, involving arbitrary concepts of unknown antiquity, which have been arranged in orderly fashion, strongly influenced by the I Ching. Everything depends upon the preservation of a perfect equilibrium of the Yin and Yang principles. Yin symbolizes the earth, is associated with the moon, quietude, the feminine nature and the process of absorption. Yang is associated with heaven, the sun, the masculine potential, activity and radiation. One of the ancient symbols of Yang was the dragon, and of Yin the tiger. In Chinese art these creatures are often closely associated and in a sense they represent the "wildness" of natural forces, which must be tamed and rendered compatible by the enlightened physician.

Every part of the human body is composed of a combination of Yin and Yang, or negative and positive polarities, and the general tendency is for these polarities to become antagonistic. When this occurs, health is endangered.

The Chinese have a delightful practice which modern sufferers would like to see revived by the A.M.A. A physician was paid a retainer to protect the health of a Chinese family. He was only paid when patients were well. If they became sick he no longer collected any fee until he was able to restore their health.

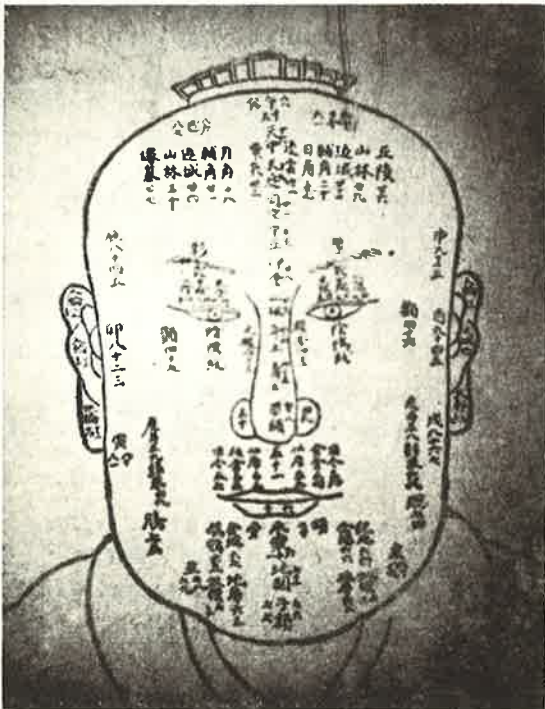
It follows, therefore, that a large part of Chinese medicine was preventive therapy. The old writings clearly indicate that it is easier to protect normalcy than to restore it after sickness has damaged the body and its functions. Philosophy was

the best form of preventive therapy, and the best form of philosophy was the wisdom of Confucius and Mencius. The Superior Man lived according to the rules set down by his Father, Imperial Heaven. Those who obeyed heaven would enjoy bodily equilibrium, but all disobedience was a kind of unbalance, which in time would destroy bodily functions.

In Chinese medicine there were five elements - fire, metal, wood, earth and water. These were associated with the active principles in nature, and from the harmonic operations and interactions of these elements, there came forth five pleasant atmospheric conditions, five wholesome kinds of grain for food, five planets to govern the middle distances, five metals for protection, adornment and medicinal purposes, five colors for the beautification of nature and man, and five tastes by which flavors, textures and finally esthetic appreciations developed.

In the body of man there were five principal organs related to the elements. They were the heart (fire), the liver (wood), the stomach (earth), the lungs (metal), and the kidneys (water). Actually, these five were all regarded as controlled by the emotions, and wherever destructive attitudes developed, it was certain that the balance of Yin and Yang would be disturbed. This justified the Confucian belief that health was a matter of propriety. Those who observed the proprieties as these were set down in the ancient writings, would naturally be rewarded by the blessings resulting from proper conduct. The Superior Man - because he lived moderately in all things - enjoyed physical health. Because he was honorable in all his transactions, he had neither worries or anxieties. Being sincere with his own family and with his friends, being just and honorable with his weights and measures, honoring heaven, and obeying the Emperor, he was at peace with life and suited to the poetic and graphic arts. Such persons were most likely to stay well, and if by accident or disaster health was disturbed, their constitutions provided the means for rapid recovery. A physician might counsel a patient, but if he found his

prospective client to be an ignorant, intemperate and dissolute person, the doctor might wisely decline to minister to his health. When the sick discovered that a physician was reluctant to treat them unless they were convinced that they would cooperate with their own recovery, there was greater incentive to live wisely and honorably.



Diagnosis was often by means of the pulse, and in this field Chinese physicians have never been excelled and seldom equalled. Even blindfolded, and without any knowledge of the patient's history, these doctors can diagnose nearly three hundred different ailments from the pulse alone. They also study the eye of the patient and the structure of creases and hidden lines around the eyes. This method is frequently used to determine the sex of an unborn child during the first few months of pregnancy. The proportions of the features of the face, the shape of the nose, the size of the ear, the color of

the skin, and the forms and numbers of blemishes upon the face, are highly informative. The weight of the body is also considered, and the Chinese prefer that persons be slightly overweight rather than underweight. They usually depict Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taoist Immortals and old Sages, as portly.

While European alchemists were searching for the universal medicine, their Chinese confreres were busily engaged in their search for the elixir of life. In both East and West the transmutation of metals was the chemist's dream. There are many reports of success. One Chinese alchemist, who had accomplished the Magnum Opus, ascended to heaven, but on the way dropped the vial containing the balance of the precious fluid. It fell to the ground and was licked up by his dogs and pecked at by his poultry. Immediately they all became immortal with him and ascended to the Celestial Region.

As modern physicians continue their quest for the medicine of immortality, they have taken an interest in the mysterious and fantastic concoctions of the Far East. Sophisticated Westerners insist that Chinese medicine was largely superstition. But if this is true, superstitions have kept men alive to a ripe old age. Mental attitudes had something to do with the cures. The Chinese had great faith in their physicians and believed that the medical arts were given to them by the Yellow Emperor abiding in the Celestial Region. Perhaps if our faith was equally sincere, and as well justified, we would need less medication and depend more upon the mystical wisdom of the ancients. In Communist China today the old and the new schools of medicine function side by side, and even work together in the same hospital. Rumors have it that the ancient methods are fully as effective as the new ones. Acupuncture is now being studied in many countries, especially Russia and France. It would be better than a fair exchange, so far as we are concerned, if we could help Asiatic countries to advance industrially and they would give us in exchange simple but effective remedies for such diseases as cancer, diabetes, arthritis and the common cold. Chinese medicine has stood the test of centuries, and the physician with a little anatomy and less physiology has done wonders with his greater insight in philosophy, his veneration for religion and his native skill in psychoanalyzing the emotional disturbances of his patients.

Things here continue to move along. We are grateful for several kindly and thoughtful donations of books for our Reference Library. Confused persons are making serious use of our facilities, in search for better concepts with which to direct their lives. We recently had several Tibetan visitors, who were surprised to see our extensive reference collection. The quiet procedure by which we have built the cultural structure of our Society has enabled us to meet the new challenge of a changing world in an inspiring and practical way. With your continuing help we will be ready to do our part in the challenge of the future.

Always most sincerely yours,



SPECIAL NOTICE
FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional works in future issues. Be sure to read this page carefully:

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