

## **The healer (fire) and the exorcist (water): The dynamic of tonifying vs. cathartic-based treatments.**

In a previous article I have spoken about the nature of allopathic treatment (not modern allopathic-medicine but here this is the original use of the word) versus homeopathic. Allopathic means to treat opposites: for example cold treats heat, and homeopathic treats like with like, i.e. heat with more heat. Both these principles are part of all forms of ancient medicine. The main problems of the body are always weakness in one root area, the weakest link in the chain, so to speak. This therefore means that tonifying or allopathic principle is what we could call the “foundational principle” of ancient medicine. It means that if a body is cold, i.e. it is deficient in warmth, you warm, if it is too hot you cool it as it is deficient in cooling quality.

The other method is catharsis. Catharsis is the clearing or getting rid of local excesses out of the body. It is always a secondary treatment in terms of functional importance to allopathic principle, but catharsis or homeopathy are also very important for clearing those symptoms which are ALWAYS inflammatory as a basis. Catharsis is therefore of limited use to those who have inflammation or what we would call a fullness-aspect to the condition.

As a general rule we can say that the processes of tonification or allopathic medicine are those that bring energy to a cooled body and generally that catharsis is used for an over-heated body, *as well as* being tonified with coolant.

Catharsis has many forms, such as inducing vomiting, purging through bowels, bleeding therapy and many other no longer understood practices. If we go back before yinyang theory into the prehistoric past one of the practices of catharsis was called “Trepanning” and involved making a hole in the top of the skull! This is perhaps one of the first pre-historic surgical treatments. While it remains somewhat of a mystery, it is believed to have been used to release “evil spirits” in ancient terminology. This concurs with the practice of “scalping” of the dead of warfare for the native American Indian tribes, who would see this as a service of releasing the “evil” of the dead that drove them to combat. Interestingly the hole at the top of the head is often made above the region called the neo-cortex which is where the formation of the idea of “I am” or “self” is likely to arise and as such is the centre of the “human condition”. It is interesting that pre-historic medicine knew that this region held a “demonic” quality. In more modern terms this is simply the quality of dualism or the sense of a separate “me”.

Catharsis therefore has always had links to the idea of a devil or demon taking up residence inside a human body and causing havoc in terms of illness. Interestingly on his trips into Vietnam in the 1950s the acupuncturist J.R Worsely found practitioners who treated using the very ancient forms of acupuncture that had not be altered since before the Han Dynasty (200BC). These are possibly the most ancient prescriptive treatments of acupuncture still in existence and are about spirit possession. The ideology is not of the universal-energetics of non-dual yinyang which later succeeded these treatments, but instead there is a spiritualism and the idea of being possessed by an evil spirit is very real.

In modern terms “possession” can manifest as a preoccupation with an idea or thought or situation that happened to you, which keeps the body in a state of detachment and stasis. Essentially possession means obsession in many ways, where a particular thought process is based around the central point of “I”. Seven specific acupuncture points are used to treat what is described by Worsely as “external dragons”, meaning a situation that has arisen from the exterior, or in the acute phase something like a sudden shock such as a car-crash with which one is pre-occupied. Secondly there are what are known as “Internal Dragons”, which arise from a chronic emotional turmoil. Both are foundationally associated with the idea that this happened to a central “me”.

The “Seven Dragons” treatments today seem strange, especially from the language that occurred after the Han Dynasty which was the language of yinyang. No longer did people think of things in terms of “spiritual possession” but they simply thought in terms of universal/Non-dual energy, heat and cold, or of the body in terms of blocked or unblocked flows of energy. Today the idea of “possession” seems absurd, yet constantly we are stuck with the ultimate possession, the idea that “I am” an absolute thing and “I am separate from you” which is the constant base addiction or possession - the terminology is in fact irrelevant.

In the ancient world this kind of treatment is essentially an exorcism. Exorcism is very much a part of the pre-historic medical world but from the roots of shamanism through to modern day surgical procedures *all of these* are expressions of cathartic processes of medicine which are the removal or the release of tension and stagnation from the body, a build-up of energy is allowed or is forcibly removed. Surgery is essentially the most aggressive form of catharsis there is and it is in constant use in modern practice.

What this shows is that there are two forms of therapy; the tonifying healer that is represented by the quality of fire, and the cathartic exorcist that is characterized by the nature of water. Fire is warming (yang) yet it is female in nature, water is cooling (yin) yet it is male in nature from the ancient Chinese perspective. (For those interested, please note that water refers to the triagram: Kan, and fire to the triagram: Li). This mix of qualities represents the two aspects of treatment: the healer is the intimate-connection, the exorcist is detached and cool.

In today’s world, especially in the West, most dis-ease is not due to coolness caused by climatic conditions overtaking the body, although this can sometimes happen. Most commonly the biggest killers are forms of obsessive-possessive compulsive behaviour which in the ancient world would have been called possession. Most of the treatments offered by Western medicine for this inevitably end up in surgical intervention which is modern day exorcism or cathartic treatment. Even the medieval religious exorcisms whereby the devil was commanded to be released from the body by a priest, has its roots in a far older Shamanism relating to the point at which a person lets go and allows the tension and expression to utterly expel and express from the body. When this occurs there is literally a purging of the body’s tension.

If we don't use the terms exorcism or possession and look at it in terms of yinyang clarity we are simply looking at a situation of tension when we use cathartic forms of treatment. It is important to be able to differentiate cathartic treatment from tonifying treatment and to realize that once catharsis is over this is still not the end of the pattern until the body has been strengthened and tonified in the correct way. Catharsis can be an intervention that is too much for the body, there needs to be a build-up to use it. When the root weakness of the body is connected to, **this is the place that the energy of “self” is drawing from**, and as such strengthening or pointing out this area to the instinctual sense of the body re-acquaints the person with the natural state that in reality has never left them. The root treatment remains always with the yin-fire, and the cold and cutting nature of the masculine catharsis leaves the body weakened. “Demons” are only vanquished by harshness when the situation is acute and physical, the rest of the time catharsis is unnecessary and “possession” is simply dissolved away in the crucible of intimate connected healing, much like mother-baby interaction.

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