Chinese Medicine in the 21st Century: Integral and Evolutionary Perspectives

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"If you wish to bring about real healing, you must first and foremost treat a person's heart. You must bring the heart on the right path, so that it can be filled and sustained by a universal sense of truth. You must get it to a place where it can safely abandon all doubting and worrying and obsessing in senselessly looping patterns, where it can let go of any anxiety provoking imbalances, and where it is willing to surrender all "me, me, me" and all "this is his/her fault!" Try and awaken the heart to acknowledge and regret all the wrong that one has done, to lay down all selfish attachments, and to transform one's small and self-centered world for the glorious universe wherein we are all one, and wherein there is nothing to do but praise its existence. This is the master method of the enlightened physician–healing through the heart."
—16th century Korean physician Hur Jun (Chinese: Xu Jun) in Dongyi baojian (*Precious Reflections* by an Eastern Physician)[1]

It is clear that the times in which we live, the challenges that we face, and the cultural context in which medicine is practiced differ substantially compared to when Chinese medicine (CM) was originally formulated. From a certain perspective, the type of human being that we treat in the West didn't even exist when the classic texts were written. The typical practitioner and patient in the West today may be counted among the most fortunate group of people to have ever lived in terms of material wealth, freedom, and comfort.

A developmental perspective is imperative if our medicine is to offer more than palliative care. A foundational principle of both holistic and integral medicine is the recognition that the higher potentials of the medicine are only available to practitioners whose lives are characterized by an uncommon and remarkable integrity. Integrity is at once both absolute (either one has it or one doesn't), and developmental, because one could always have more. Integrity is in evidence at any level of development when one is wholeheartedly striving to live up to those values that one professes to believe in. We demonstrate integrity when our lives are the living expression of whatever we have discovered to be true of a higher nature. Integrity must manifest across all aspects of assessable functioning and of chief importance among these aspects is the ethical line of development. Willed integrity through the disembedding of consciousness from conditioning is the foundation of all authentic healing.

Chinese medicine derives a significant part of its potency by considering the patient in the context of his environment. Historically the medicine encompassed a view potentially large enough to embrace a patient's condition in a cosmological perspective. Between the individual and the cosmos lies culture. We can look at an individual's health as the cultural expression of the relationships between organ systems or "officials." So too is human culture a collective expression of the relative health of individuals. A significant cultural distortion of the last 50 years in the West has been the excessive emphasis placed on the "uniqueness" of the individual. This is the value that has shaped the psychological perspective and its resultant culture of narcissism. To the degree that we are unconscious, culture is an expression of biological conditioning as opposed to being shaped consciously by our highest values. Treating the individual is treating culture if the practitioner's clinical perspective is large enough. Given the global world we live in today and the nature of the challenges that we face, one's medical perspective is not sufficiently large until it grows to embrace the treatment of the individual in the context of creating a cultural integrity that is synonymous with health. The first step toward such an increased perspective is taken when the practitioner implicates his or her own integrity as being foundational in the practice of medicine.

Perspective

Chinese medicine has evolved over 4000 years because of its ability to adapt and meet the challenges that have faced each successive generation. For most of the medicine's development, survival pressures were exerted by events outside of the individual. In a pre-modern agrarian culture, the weather largely determined who lived and who died. Therefore, the external syndrome patterns were of great importance in medical practice. Today, the average middle class citizen has more options and better healthcare, nutrition, housing, education, political and social freedom, and more information, than the pharaohs, emperors, or kings of old could have dreamed of. In a very real sense, these are the best of times, with more people living in favorable conditions than at any other time in history.[3]

Yet, ironically, when basic survival needs are met and we are no longer persecuted by the church or state, it seems we suffocate inside our own heads, victims of the ego's inherent limitations and our culturally conditioned relationship to our own minds. Thoughts, feelings, and sensations become our only reference point, and we go crazy in the face of the ego's fears and desires. One only has to note the amount of psychotherapy and mind- and mood-altering substances consumed by the most fortunate people who have ever lived to see how bad things are for those who should be at the leading edge of human development.

The survival challenges that face us today are unique and perilous. While it's true that every past generation may have thought the world was "coming to an end," it's also true that at this moment of history we might finally be correct. Global warming, changing weather patterns, the largest species extinction in 250,000 years, and people with tribal consciousness working to acquire nuclear and biological weapons threaten the survival of our species. We now live in a world where a nuclear accident in Japan can increase the presence of radiation in Massachusetts rainwater. These are not threats faced by an individual, a family, a town, or a nation - rather, they implicate us all. And, these threats are unique because none of them arise outside ourselves. Our survival challenges are no longer sent by "God" or some mysterious force outside of us, but are the direct result of our own values and the choices we make based on those values.

Humanity now has the power to create and destroy life, powers attributed to God by our grandparent's generation. Are our values sufficiently high and our perspective big

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enough to use our power responsibly for the good? The answer is up to us because, as human beings, the outcome of our destiny is in our own hands. From a certain perspective, and according to our best available information, we humans are the only self-determining form of matter in the universe.

In the context of a global world, and in the face of its challenges, what is the continued relevance of "one-on-one" medicine?[4] What is the significance of helping an individual feel better when the human species is threatened with extinction? We have come to associate "spirit" with pleasant sensations and emotions when, in fact, spirit is the force that motivates us to persevere in the face of the most serious, excruciating circumstances. In the face of the dysfunctional condition of having our technological prowess far outstrip our ethical development, the only compelling imperative for holistic medicine that makes sense from the biggest clinical perspective is the evolution of the individual not strictly for his or her own sake, but for the sake of the emergence of higher cultural values. The individuals who recognize and value the principles of holistic medicine, and can afford it, are in a position at the forefront of culture to meet the challenges demanded by a global world head on. And yet it is this very demographic that is stagnated by narcissism, postmodern pluralism, and is endlessly fascinated, entertained by, and trapped in a self-centric process of consuming experience in the name of "healing."

One of our primary directives must be to break this cycle of self-indulgence. We as clinicians must become relatively less concerned with the patient's internal experience and relatively more concerned with the evolution of the patient's values and integrity as evidenced by his or her behavior. I made this point in *Nourishing Destiny* when I emphasized the emergence of virtue as the highest hallmark of effective treatment in the "inner tradition." The "inner tradition" is less concerned with a patient's personal experience of treatment and is more focused on the patient's actual response to treatment as evidenced in its highest form by moral development and more wholesome choices. This premise challenges the New Age ethos of a relative morality where nothing is recognized as higher than the individual's "unique truth."

Given the fortunate position of the large majority of those who practice and utilize Chinese medicine in the West, do we even have a right to be unhappy? Considering the challenges we face, is it ethical to spend so much of our time and resources seeking comfort under the auspices of "healing" aimed at helping us overcome our past when we should be leading the way forward? I have never met a patient whose past wounds were more compelling than his future potential. It's interesting to note that when we practitioners put our attention on a patient's highest potential and encourage it as a living possibility "right now," we often encounter an enormous degree of resistance from the patient. It becomes evident rather quickly that people come to us for comfort and not to evolve or be held accountable to any higher potential. Patients often want us to help them reach a point of "feeling" like doing what they already know is the right thing to do. From a developmental perspective, actualizing "higher potential" is always the destination of the life force and any thoughts, feelings, beliefs, or behaviors in the way of that attainment must be understood to be the basis of illness itself. The only way for any practitioner to inspire such development in a patient is to emerge victorious in the face of his own resistance to positive, wholesome, integrative, change.

Chinese medicine is a science of integrity based on the restoration and maintenance of yin and yang. The word "holistic," when applied to medicine, implies that a patient moves from a relatively divided state to ever increasing states of integration and wholeness. The word "integral," as applied to the practice of medicine, signifies to me that a practitioner's own integrity is implicated in his ability to motivate a patient toward wholeness.

Our integrity as practitioners has import beyond any technical prowess or academic knowledge we may possess. After all, information is just information and possession of it means nothing regarding the integrity or level of development of the individual. It seems to me that the minimal requirement for being a healer ought to be having come to a place in one's own life where no more time is being taken to overcome one's past and all attention and effort is placed on creating a more wholesome future. Inherent in such an orientation is the recognition that nothing is in the way and that the outcome of our quest is in our hands. I'm not suggesting the attainment of any perfect "end state" of development. However, a good place to start would be the renunciation of self-indulgence, immaturity, and cynicism by those who profess to embrace holistic values.

We in Chinese medicine pride ourselves on our holistic value system, but the truth is, we tend to ignore a patient's ethical development in favor of improved physical functioning and emotional "wellbeing." Materialism and narcissism are endemic in our culture, and are central forces at the root of the problems that we face. Our willingness and ability to face these forces in our patients will reflect the degree to which we have taken them on in ourselves. Yet a patient's ethical development is considered taboo in a pluralistic culture whose greatest values are non-judgment and unconditional love, in lieu of the balance of truth, compassion, and skill it takes to motivate a patient to change for the better. We practitioners often want to be left alone to live our own lives as we see fit, and so we collude with our patients by helping the most fortunate people who have ever lived feel more comfortable and stay the same.

The preceding statements will undoubtedly hit the pluralistic nerve of some readers. After all, who is qualified to make judgments about anybody else's "ethical development"? I mean, isn't it "all an illusion" and aren't all actions equal? From a certain perspective, the elaborate diagnostic schemas that comprise Chinese Medicine establish a hierarchy of patient choices that range from egregious to excellent. As practitioners, we are judging and making discernments, constantly. Isn't it interesting that of all the observable

aspects that comprise a human being that we abdicate responsibility for assessing the ethical status of our patients? Certainly the Confucians who formulated the medicine felt no such ambivalence. For example, in the opening stanzas of the *Neijing Suwen*, Qibo observes that the health of individuals, and the culture at large, was compromised by excessive indulgence. To paraphrase, if one wants to be healthy "thou shalt follow the laws of yin and yang!" Thus Chinese medicine, the most sophisticated paradigm of holistic medicine often becomes little more than a boutique indulgence for consumers who want to feel better under the auspices of healing and the pursuit of pleasant experience. With privilege comes responsibility and if our medicine is to have integrity, we must endeavor to awaken the conscience of those who we treat. This responsibility requires embracing a developmental perspective. Health can no longer be defined as a "homeostasis" synonymous with "peace." Rather, we must embrace a vision of health that is synonymous with vertical, hierarchical, and evolutionary change. That means that in a person we deem to be "healthy," we expect that, over time, we will witness an increase in integrity, a more inclusive perspective, and an increased capacity for cognizing and responding to complexity. When biological harmony is referenced to "peace," what we tend to see is lateral change. In this case, all a person learns is always looked at from, and reinforces, the same old perspective. On the other hand, vertical change, no matter how slight, means that one's perspective on everything one already knows is recontextualized in a higher, better, and more inclusive way. Vertical change, the ascent upwards, is the direction of spirit and it is the lack of a vertical and developmental context in postmodern culture that is largely responsible for the depression, anxiety, neurosis, and hypersensitivity we see in our most fortunate patients. When spirit and ego, *shen* and stagnation, are seen as equal choices, illness is the predictable result.

Evolution has rarely, if ever, occurred in the presence of comfort. Meaningful development only occurs in the presence of the stress that precedes finding creative solutions to critical challenges. Such stress accompanies the transcendence of old self-structures and these do not go quietly in the face of the demand to evolve. In the hands of practitioners who equate health with peace, comfort, and pleasant experiences, the practice of medicine can be antievolutionary in a way that creates stagnation and ultimately contributes to the divisions that underlie illness. It strikes me as a sin that the most sophisticated paradigm of functional medicine on the planet is used to help the most fortunate individuals who have ever lived to feel better about the lives they are already living. This state of affairs is an ironic predicament for a medicine that only a generation ago seemed to hold so much promise for transforming medicine itself and the culture at large. Our medicine has the potential to be much more than a cheaper and safer alternative to treating illness (which is, of course, good in and of itself, but perhaps not great). Medicine has the potential to support evolution in a way that is imperative if we are to overcome the critical challenges we face at this moment in history.

Simply put, for too many of us the "holistic" and "integral" nature of Chinese medicine remains an intellectual abstraction. We recognize theoretically that health is a manifestation of the synergy in a delicate web of functional relationships and that an optimal state is reached when every function performs its task for the sake for the whole. But how many of us practitioners have reached a state of development where we are literally living our lives for the sake of the whole? How many of us hold the highest values of wholeness inherent in the medicine as an obtainable potential for both self, patient, and culture? It's one thing to understand systems theory, and another thing entirely to possess a level of personal integrity that is a clinical force for the good.

Our victory in the face of our own resistance toward greater integrity will give us the knowledge necessary to help others find the confidence and will to move ahead. If we practitioners are going to ask patients to change in the most significant ways, then we have to be living proof of the change that is possible.

Conclusion

Historically, Chinese medicine reflected the values of the culture in which it arose. As the culture evolved and changed, the medicine evolved from early Daoism's animistic values through Confucian and then Marxist absolutism and scientific materialism, up to the postmodern and pluralistic values of most present-day Western practitioners. While each of these value systems have inherent strengths and limitations, none of them offer solutions to the survival challenges that we now face. The awakened practitioner is the only vehicle through which an exchange between the medicine and culture can occur. Such practitioners will understand that they are responsible for their own health and development as an example to their patients and the culture at large. If we are to forge an authentic holistic and integral medicine, we have to transcend several previous value systems, including the scientific materialism prevalent in the world and in Chinese Medicine today. We must also transcend the relativistic, amoral, and pluralistic "you have your truth and I have my truth," anti-hierarchical value system that makes authentic development impossible because no attribute is recognized as being higher or better than anything else. We must recognize spirit as our highest value and drop terms like "psychospiritual" that conflate authentic spirituality with a humanistic psychological perspective that self-indulgently caters to ever-fluctuating thoughts, feelings, and emotional states. Finally, many of us will have to transcend our cynicism regarding the highest that medicine is capable of for the sake of embracing that razor's edge where practicality meets idealism. To me that means addressing the patient in front of us according to his deepest needs while holding his treatment in the highest context we are capable of embracing, that of bringing heaven to earth with the patient as the vehicle. In order to thrive, a patient needs a sane culture and he or she must be the vehicle for that emergence. The felt sense of this highest goal of treatment as an obligation for the patient begins with the practitioner living it.

How many practitioners actually believe in the foundational principles of Chinese Medicine? How many really believe that a small but significant change can initiate a radical change in the whole? How many practitioners actually feel implicated to their very core by this realization? How many of us have confidence that this principle at the core of the medicine hold as true for biological systems as it does for culture? Until one knows without a doubt that his own integrity and ongoing development are the foundation upon which the medicine rests, the core of the medicine is little more than an intellectual construct

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and ferment, with the caps tightly closed, for 2 days more. Chill and open carefully (contents may be very fizzy). Enjoy!

NOTE: To make the whey, you need a quart of organic whole milk yogurt. Place a colander over a large bowl. Line it with a tea towel or fine cheesecloth and pour in the yogurt. Cover. Let drain 8-24 hours. When it has achieved a consistency you like, pour the whey into a small jar (you'll have about a cup, enough for two batches of soda) and scrape the yogurt cheese off the towel into a container. Proceed with recipe. The yogurt cheese is great used like cream cheese—I mix it with sliced cucumbers, toasted cumin seeds and mint for a cooling summer salad.

Red Lentil Dahl

Chinese medicine classifies red lentils as having a bitter taste, which makes them particularly beneficial to the heart, the organ most important to nourish in the summertime. Dahl is one of those versatile foods that keeps well and can be eaten for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The spices provide plenty of antioxidants needed right now, during the season of maximum solar energy. While overnight soaking is not absolutely necessary, it will shorten cooking time and decrease the phytic acid in the lentils which can block mineral absorption.

6 cups water
1 cup red lentils
1 6" strip kombu seaweed
1 tablespoon olive oil or ghee
1 medium onion, diced small
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 tablespoon curry powder
2 carrots cut in ¼" thick rounds
3 celery stalks, diced small
1-2 lemons, juiced
1 knob of ginger, grated (about 3 tablespoons)
Sea salt
Chopped cilantro

Soak the lentils overnight, covered with filtered water by several inches. The next day, place them in a large soup pot, add additional water if needed to cover the lentils by 2 inches. Bring to a boil and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes, skimming off any foam that rises to the surface. Add the kombu to the pot, cover and turn the heat down low. Meanwhile, heat the oil or ghee in a skillet, and then add the onion. Sauté it for 5 minutes or so, until the onion begins to turn clear. Add the mustard seeds and curry powder, and stir occasionally until the spices give off their fragrance. Now add the carrots and celery and continue to cook a few minutes more. Next, the veggies and spices go into the soup pot. Simmer covered until the lentils are soft and creamy, 10-30 minutes more. Squeeze the ginger and lemon juice into the pot, and add sea salt to taste. Serve garnished, if you like, with cilantro. This soup is amenable to the addition of almost any seasonal vegetable. Late in the summer I'll add the kernels of a couple ears of corn with the carrots and celery and finish it with a big handful of arugula.

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that we apply to the imagined "other" we call "patient."

The highest understanding of this medicine is practically demonstrated in the quality of one's relationships with others. Hence we must strive toward a higher, more evolutionarily mature expression for the profession as a whole, in a way that can elevate our patients and the culture at large. The petty competition for "authority" among practitioners, authors, and teachers whose interests and expertise differ is an immature expression of development in a profession that professes to be about wholeness. Any of us who treats patients or teaches students, has authority a priori, and we hold an awesome responsibility to realize the highest values of the medicine within ourselves so that we stand as examples of what is possible. We all need each other.

What role can Chinese medicine play in helping humanity confront the profound dilemmas we are facing today? How can medicine serve as a vehicle for cultural change and evolution? What are the higher implications of our medicine and how can our lives be a living reflection of these implications? The answer to all these questions dawns when the practitioner sets his or her intention, above all else, on ever higher levels of willed integrity, for the sake of the whole. Will is the foundation and the emergence of spirit is the fruit. The emergence and evolution of spirit is the highest goal of medicine if it is to do more than heal the body and comfort the mind, which, at this point in history, is simply not enough.

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1. For my past work on this topic please see: Jarrett, LS: 1985, 1999 pp. 435 453, and 2005, pp. 709-770. Also see the dialogs between spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen and philosopher Ken Wilber in the last ten years in the magazines What Is Enlightenment? and EnlightenNext Magazine.

2. Translated by Heiner Fruehauf: Hammer, L: The Patient-Practitioner Relationship in Acupuncture, Theime 2008.

3. In this regard I'll suggest readers view Hans Rosling's, "200 Countries, 200 Years, 4 Minutes" which visually depicts cultural evolution in an impressive and startling way. The video may be seen at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbkSRLYSojo.

4. This discussion points to some interesting and, as yet, untapped potentials in "community" acupuncture.