

Acupuncture is beginning to assume in the West a development never before achieved. It is therefore important that acupuncturists disclose their knowledge for the indispensable information of the doctor and the patient. It is also indispensable that acupuncture establishes itself as an independent therapeutic discipline.

For many Westerners, acupuncture represents a kind of occult science, given its Chinese origin. Since the news about this science came through traders and missionaries, the known acupuncture was an incomplete method and it is no wonder that mistrust and even a certain aversion towards this mysterious medical science based on needles was born. Western scientists saw in the healings only simple consequences of empirical notions on which the Chinese, "*the superstitious people par excellence*", had built mixed theories. The reality is completely different and the mistrust and hostility derive exclusively from an insufficient knowledge of the oriental mentality. While Eastern peoples have accepted Western science with its possibilities of use, the West remains prejudiced because of certain ethnic prejudices. In reality, acupuncture is based on a complicated theory of the universe, and about all the elements that form it, including therefore also Man, as a component of cosmic harmony. The science of this harmony and balance is called "energetic" because it is based on the opposition, mutual action and uninterrupted integration of two opposing forces, Yin and Yang, two different forms of the same basic energy. Both forces are found in man, in this organic image of the universe, with its own balance but in union with the harmony of the macrocosm. Consequently, every disease is considered as a disturbance of the internal balance of man or of his relationship with the universe. The body is an inseparable whole, whose elements exert actions on each other, forming a complex and delicate balance. This balance, which always represents a harmony between Yin and Yang, is maintained through a continuous circulation of energy throughout the body.

Acupuncture acts on this circulation of energy, according to precise rules, on the basis of which needles are inserted into certain meridian points.

Acupuncture cannot be separated from Chinese medicine, the science of human energetics. Together with moxibustion (thermogenotherapy), massage therapy and dietetics, acupuncture represents one of the possibilities of use of this medical science. The above mentioned healing methods aim to maintain and restore the energy balance of the organism according to the rules of Taoism. This is a broad medical science with its own physiology, pathology, pathophysiology, semeiology, diagnostics and therapy. We are far from the simple reflexotherapy that developed in Europe with acupuncture due to the lack of knowledge of Chinese medicine. This reflexotherapy reduces acupuncture to a simple collection of symptomatic prescriptions and avoids any treatment of the causes; this is completely wrong because true Chinese medicine tends to counteract especially the mechanisms of pathogenesis and to eliminate energy dystasia.

In the case of an infectious disease, the penetration of a pathogenic agent is considered secondary; the real cause of the disease precedes this process since it is a lack of energy on the part of man, a lack that makes it possible to attack the organism. This is explained by a Chinese proverb: "*Killing an intruder does not mean closing the door*"; the needles of acupuncture try to close it.

The purpose of Chinese medicine is not only to cure, but also to preserve human health in the development of the world, the seasons, the climate, the environment and the weather. In fact, during the winter one should already take care of the diseases of the spring. "*The true doctor treats the sick before the disease*" (Nei King). In China, the doctor regularly visited his patients and was only respected if they were always healthy. However, we are far from such a goal, since a complete knowledge of Chinese pathology would be indispensable and we should be able to count on particular social conditions.

With its symbolism, Chinese medicine provides the West with a different interpretation of life and man, and with that, new therapeutic possibilities. This does not mean that Oriental medicine should be practiced in contrast to Western medicine. On the one hand, it is essential to eliminate all Western prejudices in order to understand the

logic of Chinese tradition; on the other hand, however, an acupuncturist must also know Western medicine, whose possibilities of analysis and synthesis will allow real progress in the art of healing people. The Chinese tradition teaches us to respect the organic unity of man and his relationship with the world around him, freeing the West from its own materialistic conceptions. Western medicine offers to Chinese symbolism - without destroying it - a material basis for an effective and simpler therapy.

Neither medical science should exclude the other: it would be a sign of a limited mentality contrary to progress. This is reaffirmed by the following sentence by the Chinese surgeon and limb transplant specialist Tchang Tchou Wei: "*We do not disregard any of the prescriptions and rules of traditional medicine and seek a synthesis between this medical science, so valuable from the cultural point of view and the modern science*".

dr. Nguyen Van Nghi



Born in 1909 in Hanoi, Nguyen Van Nghi studied in Vietnam, China and France. After receiving his doctorate in medicine at the University of Montpellier, he began medical practice in 1940, combining Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine.

From 1954 he devoted himself mainly to acupuncture on the basis of classical texts: Huangdi Neijing (Suwen, Lingshu) and Nan Jing. He died on December 17, 1999 in Marseille, France.

Dr. Nguyen Van Nghi insisted that Western medicine and TCM are not two distinct medicines , but just one medicine.