Yin Yang & Wu Xing in relating to TCM

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Summary

The essay is to explore the phenomenon of the universe. Yin and Yang are considered the origin of everything. There is Yang inside of Yin and vice versa. Both are mutually affected and survive dependently upon each other. The ancient Chinese philosophers, psychologists and metaphysicians believe that the universe is limitless, infinity. Humans are all living and being influenced by these two components of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are mutual opposites, such as, sun and moon, hot and cold, day and night, expansion and contraction, upper and downward, left and right, front and back, and so on. Five elements (Wu Xing 五行), wood, fire, earth, metal and water are derived from these two components. The five elements are also the major foundation of Chinese Medicine (TCM). Whenever these elements experience imbalance, diseases will arise. Chinese Practitioners diagnosis patients by judging if their five elements are balanced or not.

The Ancient Chinese believe that nature is the gradation of power. The earth is dependent upon heaven even though the universe is considered as a whole. It is a general truth that when the field is scorched, people wait for rain or water, when winter comes, sun and heat are expected to melt the frozen earth. Heaven is considered more powerful and this makes heaven the supreme deity, who remains as the ruler of the world. This is the primitive concept of Tao (Veith 1992, p. 12).

The theory of “the Heaven and the Earth” is not only deeply rooted in ancient Chinese philosophers, psychologists and metaphysicians, but also the Chinese people themselves. Yin and Yang are the two major component parts of universe (Veith 1992). Though the concept of Yin and Yang is extremely simple, it is quite profound. Both Yin and Yang are the most important influences the Chinese Medicine (TCM). All physiology, pathology and treatment are reduced to the Yin and Yang (Maciocia 2000, p.1).

Ying and Yang are mutually opposed. They belong to the transformation of natural movement, attitude and materials. The theory of Ying and Yang, in fact, belongs to a whole, which is divided into two elements. They can be a material mutually opposed, like heaven and earth, upper and lower, left and right, movement and quietness, lightness and darkness. Yin and Yang are opposites, yet they are dependent, living and transforming each other (Wang 2001, 22-23).

In the dynasties of Qin 廷 Han 漢, The principle of Yin and Yang is the basis of the entire universe. The accumulation of Yang becomes heaven, whereas the accumulation of Yin becomes earth 積陽為天，積陰為地. Yang qi is light and ascends as heaven; Yin qi is dull and descends as earth. Yin and Yang are left and right, water and fire. They are the source of power and belonging in the origin of everything in creation (Yeung, p. 142; Veith 1992, p. 15).
Yeung supports the theory of Yin and Yang stating: Yin and Yang belong to Heaven and Earth, principles of all material, transformation of parents, the origin of Sheng and Sha 生殺 and the region of “Shen Ming 神明”; in the universe, including humans, all matters from birth to death, prosperity to poverty 衰亡, are all under the supervision and controlled by Yin and Yang. This natural power cannot be opposed. Humans are part of nature and the origin of the human is Yin and Yang, therefore, treatment of disease needs to treat its “ben”, root 治病必求其本. (Yeung, p. 146-147).

The extremity of coldness becomes hot and the extremity of hotness becomes cold. This is also the principle of transformation of Yin and Yang. Han qi 寒氣 (cold qi) is dull and descends and Re qi 熱氣 (hot qi) is clean and ascends (Yeung, No Date, p. 148-149).

Yin and Yang are mutual opposites, belonging to two extremities and cannot exist without one another. The ancient Taoists never define Yin and Yang, but illustrate their mutual opposition, such as front and back, tall and short, black and white, male and female and night and day. Without the existences of the Yin and Yang, all these things cannot be defined. Yin and yang are always trying to overcome each other. Therefore if Ying is increasing, Yang will be decreasing and vice versa (Webster 1999, p.3- 4; Maciocia 2000, p.11). Zhang & Wu (1991, P. 20) also emphasize: “Yin-Yang is a concept originating from ancient Chinese philosophy. Its original meaning is quite simple; it indicates the front and back of the sun. Later, this concept is expanded and Yin and Yang represent the two contradictions in everything”.

In the universe, everything can be divided into either Yin or Yang. The Yin and Yang Circle (as shown below) is the symbol of Taoism, which represents the completion of the universe. Within the circle, black with a white dot belongs to Yin and white with black dot is Yang. The black dot of Yin and the white dot of Yang locate one in each other and indicate that there is always a small portion of Yin or Yang inside of Ying or Yang (Webster 1999, p. 9).

![Yin Yang symbol](image)

The Yin and Yang represent two opposites that can hardly survive without the other. Yang is aggressive, dominant and positive, while the Yin is passive, nourishing and nurturing. Yin and Yang continually strive for balance. Yin and Yang seek for balance and harmony. Imbalance of Yin and Yang reflects health problems. Thousands of years ago, TCM divide humans into two major categories of Yin (cool) and Yang (hot) (Webster 1999, p. 10-11).

Yin and Yang underpin Chinese philosophy and the existence of its dualism is constantly apparent in the universe. Yin and Yang are inherent in the nature of things. There is always Yin inside of Yang and Yang inside of Yin. These two forces always
implicate the one in the other and never bring simple negation of the other (Poulsen 1983, p. 10-11).

There are various and numerous interpretations of Yin and Yang. Literal translation of these two components is in results the meaning of “the shady side of a hill for Yin” and “the sunny side of a hill” for Yang (Veith 1992, p. 13).

Yang reflects motion, life and represents the sun, heaven, day, fire, heat, dryness, light, happiness etc., and Yin reflects stillness, death and represents the moon, earth, night, water, cold, dampness, darkness and sadness; Yang tends to expand, to flow upward and outward; Yin tends to contract and to flow downwards; Yang stands for positive and Yin stands for the negative side; Yang is a “good” principle and Ying is a “bad” one (Veith 1992, p. 14).

Yin and Yang are the origin of everything and the origin of Taoism. An Ancient Chinese philosopher and metaphysician, Lao Zi (老子) found that the unlimited universe is limitless, endless, infinity, infinite. This is called Wu Ji (無極). Wu Ji creates Tai Ji (太極), a magnificent “Sun”. Tai Ji creates Er Yi (二儀), Huan & Rose (1999 p.204): “Wu Ji, infinity, infinite, limitlessness; a term from Daoist metaphysics referring to the state or condition of existence prior to the differentiation of yin and yang”, and “The grand ultimate; extreme limit; referring to the essential reduction of all matter, energy, space, and time to their irreducible components, yin and yang”.

Er Yi creates Si Xiang (四象) and Si Xiang creates Ba Qua (八卦) from which we experience different types of climates of the four seasons representing Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Morning, Noon, afternoon, Night and Eight different positions. Each of the eight positions or trigrams is further divided into 3 different regions forming an important Feng Shui aspect of twenty four Shans (二十四山).

Ba Qua reflects eight positions, such as, Li Qua (離卦) = South belonging to fire; K’an Qua (坎卦) = North belonging to water; Chen Qua (震卦) = East belonging to wood; Tui Qua (兌卦) = West belonging to metal; Sun Qua (巽卦) = Southeast belonging to wood; Chien Qua (乾) = Northwest belonging to metal; K’un Qua (艮卦) = Southwest belonging to earth; Gen Qua (艮卦) = Northeast belonging to earth. There are Xian Tian Ba Qua (先天八卦) and Hou Tian Ba Qua (後天八卦):
In Taoism, the two components of Yin and Yang are further classified into five elements (Wu Xing 五行). The theory of the five elements is no doubt of Chinese origin and its existence in ancient times proved by many old documents. These five elements are water, fire, metal, wood and earth (Veith, p.18-19) and they are referring to the zang/fu of kidneys, heart/pericardium, lung/large intestine, liver/gall bladder and stomach/spleen accordingly. These theories are in fact the concepts of Feng Shui recalled from ancient times: thousands of years ago in Chinese philosophy, psychology and metaphysic.

Yin & Yang and Wu Xing emphasize the harmony of Qi flow. Qi also houses our spirit and mind. When Qi is in disharmony, we cannot think, plan or work properly and we lose our direction. Kaptchuk, Chinese Medicine (2000), p.58 says: “Spirit is the translation for the Chinese word “Shen”, Spirit is the fundamental texture that is unique to human life. In the same way that Essence (Jing) distinguishes organic life from inorganic material, Spirit separates human life from animal life”.

Among the Ba Qua, there are Yang and Yin Qua. Three continuous non-broken lines represents Yang (male, oldest man in the house, very yang) and Three broken-line represents Yin (female, oldest woman in the house, very yin) (Maciocia 2000, p.2; Webster 1992, p. 57-69;  Wang 2003, p.10-21). The following Diagrams reflect the eight positions of the Universe.
Within the Yin and Yang, there are 5 elements (Wu Xing), ancient Chinese psychologists, philosophers, metaphysicians and practitioners believed that everything was made up and ruled by the five elements (Wu Xing) in the Wu Ji (unlimited Universe). The Wu Xing in the Universe represents material, immaterial, growth, generation, nourishment, insulation, Sheng (生) and Ke (剋). Kaptchuk, (2000, p.437) says: “the Five Phases is an attempt to classify phenomena in terms of five quintessential processes, represented by the emblems of wood, fire, earth, metal and water”. In relating to TCM, it is obviously that each element, wood, fire, earth, metal and water represents different materials, zang and fu and there are Ying and Yang inside of each element. These elements are in fact the foundation of Chinese Medicine. (Webster 1999, p. 13；Maciocia 2000, p. 17；Wang 2001, p. 38；Veith 1999, p. 19-21；Liu 1980, p. 31-39 Wang 2003, p. 7–12):

**Wood 木**:

Yin Wood (乙木) represents the human’s liver 肝；Yang Wood (甲木) represents the human’s Gall Bladder 胆

Wood represents the east, Chen qua 震卦, expansion, numbers of 3 and 4 (Sun qua 兑卦), spring, growing, dispersion, ambition, occupation, green color, discipline, principle, paper, anger, tradition, mindfulness, obligation, sour, wind, hair, liver, gall bladder, hand, head, vein, nerve, tendons, eldest son, herbs, left side, muscle, eldest daughter, nail, sour, vision, emotion, neck, eyebrow, technique, arithmetic, rectangular, and so on. Chen qua 震卦 also represents thunder and Sun qua 兑卦 also represents wind. Therefore, there is always strong wind and thunder in the season of Spring.

**Fire 火**:

Yin Fire (丁火) represents the human’s Heart 心；Yang Fire (丙火) represents the human’s Small intestine 小肠/triple warmer 三焦

Fire represents the south, Li qua 震卦, upper, growth, pupil, heart, small intestine, middle daughter, middle finger, tongue, blood, blood vessel, blood circulation, tongue, hot, patience, glasses, timing, summer, red, lighting, explosion, bitter, joy, laughing, petrol, herbs, spirit, kitchen, number of 9, cosmetics, punctuality, triangle-shape, sun, and so on.

**Earth 土**:

Yin Earth (己土) represent the human’s Spleen 脾；Yang Earth (戊土) represents the human’s Stomach 胃

Earth represents the center, yellow, late summer, reaping, stomach, spleen, skin, lips, all kinds of meat, muscle, mouth, digestive system, dampness, stability, mediation, obligation, reality, leader, emperor, stability, numbers of 2 (K’un qua 坤卦 mature


female, mother), 5 (center, no qua), 8 (Gen qua 艮卦 youngest son), singing, sweet, porcelain, jade, tomb, station, hills, farm, warehouse, conservation, politics, and so on.

**Metal 金:**

Yin Metal (辛金) represents the human’s Lung 肺; Yang Metal (庚金) represents the human’s large intestine 大腸

Metal represents the west, number of 6 (Chien qua 乾卦 mature male, father) and 7 (Tui qua 兑卦 youngest daughter), white, autumn, evening, hardness, dryness, harvest, nose, skin, chest, lung, breathing, cheek bone, large intestine, upper jiao, respiration, hearing, music, sadness, grief, art, energy, poison, attack, square shape, character, and so on.

**Water 水:**

Yin Water (癸水) represents the human’s kidney 肾, uterus 子宮, vaginal orifice 陰道, labia minora 陰唇; Yang Water (壬) represents human’s Bladder 膀胱, glan penis,陽具, testis 睾丸.

Water represents the north, K’an Qua 坎卦, number of 1, very yin, black, night, grey, winter, salty, cold, middle son, ears, bones, kidney, bladder, teeth, marrow, urination, brain, vertebral cord, waist, hip, lower part, fear, rain, river, groaning, storage, memory, sexuality, imagination, gambling, social activity, traffic, movement, and so on.

The Cycle of Sheng 生 (nourishing) and Ke 劈 (invading) of the Wu Xing reflects the harmony of the Universe:

Wood nourishes fire, fire nourishes earth; earth nourishes metal; metal nourishes water; water nourishes wood. If these five phases are harmony, life is abundant and meaningful. However, if wood excessively invades the earth; earth excessively invades the water; water excessively invades the fire; fire excessively invades the metal; metal excessively invades the wood causing the five phases being imbalanced, diseases arise. Yin & Yang and Wu Xing are indeed the major theories and foundation of the Chinese Medicine and Chinese Psychology since ancient Chinese thousands of years.

Without these elements, TCM can hardly be established. Meanwhile the five elements of Wu Xing are also related not only to TCM, but also to the Chinese psychological view, for example, wood refers to anger and shouting; fire refers to joy and laughting; earth refers to pensiveness and singing; metal refers to sadness and crying; water refers to fear and groaning. During diagnosis, Chinese practitioners can judge a patient’s emotional suffering from the affection or damages of certain elements (Maciocia 2000, p. 15-30; Wang 2001, p. 38-59; Veith 1972, p. 18-21; Liu 1980, p. 121-154; Wang 2003; Webster 1999, p. 13–20 Tsui 1900, p. 1-35).
In the reality of human life, we experience the transformation of the Wu Xing, which reflects the phenomenon of the macrocosm. Wu Xing has been widely adapting to Chinese Medicine for the past few thousand years. The Yin and Yang are the two contradictions in the Universe. Ba Qua indicates the different eight positions and persons in the universe. Yin and Yang are related to everything in the Universe. Yin and Yang are within Wu Xing, and the five elements, wood, fire, earth, metal and water are all playing an important role in our human life and in TCM. Life will be in harmony and abundant, if the Yin and Yang of Wu Xing are balanced. However, if this is not balanced, life will be meaningless.

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