

**Oppositeness and complementariness: Perceptions of the Body  
according to Traditional Chinese Medicine patients and professionals  
from the Teaching Health Center of Butantã.**

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The present research was supported by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior and searched to understand how health professionals and patients of the Teaching Health Center of Butantã (CSEB), in São Paulo, perceive the body in the contact with Traditional Chinese Medicine. This investigation was developed with an ethnographic approach in the clinic of acupuncture of the CSEB, from September 2008 to April 2009.

This study has been approved by the Ethical Comite of the Federal University of São Paulo and all along the period I've been in all activities related with acupuncture and of other types of therapeutic of the Traditional Chinese Medicine. Are they: Group of Studies in Traditional Chinese Medicine, Group of *Tai-Chi Pai Lin*, Group of *Lian Gong*, Meditation, Meetings and Chinese Phytotherapy Course. Additionally in this period had been made eleven depth interviews (four with professionals of health and seven with patients of the activities leagues to the Traditional Chinese Medicine) guided for an itinerary, endorsing to the apprehension of the way as people perceived its bodies.

To understand how people perceived the body starting from the contact with the Traditional Chinese Medicine, we have to consider first of all that it is a question of a kinky way of therapy of the society and Chinese culture. Therefore, it's built for millenniums for a collectivity geographically, socially and culturally distant of ours. Being the Traditional Chinese Medicine part of the Taoist cosmology, a cosmology different from the biomedical cosmology counselors of the actions in the Brazilian Health system, is significant that we pass, although briefly, on its philosophic bases, in order to presenting foundations necessary to understand the body within that cosmology.

The revelation of the philosophy's bases of the Taoism is attributed the Lao - Tsé (LAO ZI), author of the book *Tao Te Ching* or "Book of the Supreme Reason", compiled, probably for round of 300 b.c. The Taoism conceives the Universe such as a one compound structured for the *Qi* (Force or Vital Energy), an energetic beginning that promotes the dynamism and the activity of the organic matter and of the living being, animal or vegetable. It is demonstrate in two opposed and complementary aspects: the aspect *Yang*, that represents the energy that produces heat, the expansion, the ascension, the rise of the activities; and the aspect *Yin* that represents the energy that produces the cold, the reticence, the reduction, the repose, the darkness and the decrease of the activities (Yamamura, 2006).

Two different theories, however complementary, base the Traditional Chinese Medicine. One of them is the theory of the *Yin/Yang*, and another is theory of the Five Elements (Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood), both of the theories, the *Yin/Yang*, and the Five Elements possess specific and functional relations qualities in between (Luz, 1993).

The Traditional Chinese Medicine is set up as a medical rationality different from the Biomedicine. The category created by Madel Luz (1992) postulates that a complex therapeutic system is a medical rationality when it includes: a cosmology; a morphology; a vital dynamic (or Physiology); a medical doctrine; a system of diagnosis and a therapeutics. As the Acupuncture is part of the rationality of the Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is believed that in the contact with this therapeutics can be apprehended new ways of thinking the body, the health and the illness. In addition, envelops from the diagnosis to the processing, interventions directly in the human body and a cosmology, in accordance with Queiroz (2006) "vitalistic", that is, based in the idea of that the energy organizes the matter, for this reason it comes to be interesting subject matter for the investigation of the embodiment.

The contemporary literature of the Human Sciences is returning the body a central topic. Miguel Vale de Almeida (1996) considers that the body is a privileged field of disputes around new personal identities and of the preservation of historic identities, of cultural hybrid ascension or of the local contextualization of overall tendencies. Terence Turner (1995), remarks that the body filled in the vacuous housemaid for the emptiness of the social content,

cultural and politician of the theorization of the human condition in postmodernist age. The embodiment has, in fact, importance such as a category that unify the human existence, thus the social appropriation of the body would be the prototype of all the person's social production.

Still in the beginning of the twentieth century, Marcel Mauss (1950) was the pioneer when working systematically the concept of body. Already in 1926, emphasized the existing relationship between physiological and social phenomena, highlighting the importance of that relationship for the interpretation of the relationships between individual and group. In its famous text about the techniques of the body, the author defends the crucial value for the sciences of the man of a study of bodily techniques, defined as ways whereby every society imposes to the individual a rigorously certain use of its body. This is, for intermediate of the education, of needs and of bodily activities, the society prints its brand in the people. Thus, every conduct usually apprehended and transmitted is based in certain nervous and muscular synergies that constitute solidarity systems with a real sociological context.

To share “with” and not “by the” interlocutor was the option of this work. Be the classical anthropology of Malinowski that it maintains a privileged gaze for the investigator, or with Geertz, in its interpretative strategy, in theirs seeks of a dense description, the Anthropology ends for being always the disciplined attempt of prioritizing conceptions, theories, cosmologies of “the Another one”.

The experience in field pointed out for a heterogeneous group (at the age, gender, territorial religion and origin) of people in touch with the applied Acupuncture in the Teaching Health Center of the Butantã, and for several ways of thinking and using the body. Interlocutors presented changes in the corporeal sensations (relief, relaxation, mobility), attributed to sessions of Acupuncture.

The majority of the stories reveals that the contact with the Traditional Chinese Medicine was given because of personal as uncomfortable experiences, pain and suffering stressing on its bodies, searching the Acupuncture and the practices of the *Tai Chi Pai Lin*, of the *Lian Gong* and of the Meditation such as a therapeutic resource and, subsequently, seeking its foundations. Had been identified several ways of thinking the health and the illness and of using the body, sustained for two opposed dimensions, however complementary: the healthy body and the not-healthy body, crossed by three

application forms of how to perceive the body: Notions of Body, Reactions and Techniques of the Body.

Notions of body identified had been divided in three principal topics: Body as one integrate totality; Body such as a biological organism; Body as a condensed energy. A healthy body was perceived as: the Harmony of the Entirety; the Organism working correctly; Balance of the energetic functions. And such as a body not-healthy: Functional deficiency in one of the parts; Physical disability or morphological; Imbalance (energetic, functional or mental).

Reactions had been gathered in reactions of a healthy body: Joy; Relief, Freedom; Mobility; Interaction. And reactions of a body not-healthy: Pain and suffering; Immobility; Communication Difficulty or Impossibility.

The Techniques of the Body had been organized in Techniques of a healthy body: Care with the Health of the Body; Care with the Bodily Semblance; Social Usage techniques of the Body; Teaching and Learning Techniques. And in Bodily Techniques of a body not-healthy: Social use ill of the Body; Problems in the Teaching and in the Learning.

Clearly, the dimensions healthy and not-healthy, maintained the relationship of professionals and patients with its bodies, be for via of the intellect, for the practice or for the sensation. Indicating the strong ascendancy of categories of the normal and pathological, despite relatively variable, in the life of the institution studied.

Starting from that experience with the Traditional Chinese Medicine, people knew a conception of body that considers the energetic and invisible dimension such as a predecessor of the organic matter, different from the in force biomedical conception. They tell also that, with that, changed some of its daily and ways habits of using the related body the Meditation, to exercises and the Diet. Provided guidelines also by conceptions of body prior to the processing, revealed meanings enough different for the experience of each one. For example, the body was defined as a sanctuary, a structure, something dynamic, the vehicle of the soul, among others.

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