

The Nine Types of Acupuncture Needles

Metaphors and Constructive Realism

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Summary:

The topic of acupuncture needles in main textbooks used to teach acupuncture in Chinese Medicine courses in China and around the world, usually just gives us a panel of nine types of needles with their different formats and ways of using them in clinical practice.

However, very few of them discuss about the process of conceptualization and designing of these specific types of instruments. The reasoning behind the discourse and the creation of the 9 types of needles resulted in 9 different possible shapes and multiple uses in clinical practice.

This article seeks to clarify this issue and emphasizes the importance of metaphorizing as an essential methodology in the creation process of the 9 types acupuncture needles.

To reach this objective we will examine general aspects of ancient Chinese culture and some of these metaphors in the conceptualization of 9 needles which are exposed specifically in chapter 54 of Su Wen and Ling Shu chapters 1, 7 and 78.

Needles and Zhen - Different Perceptions in West and East

People in the West, including many scientists, normally associate the word “acupuncture” with a picture or image about a skillful hand inserting a very thin object in special areas of a patient's body. Even dictionaries and encyclopedias define acupuncture reinforcing this idea.

Some Definitions of Acupuncture in the West:

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The Cambridge Dictionaries Online define Acupuncture as “a treatment for pain or illness in which thin needles are positioned just under the surface of the skin at special points around the body”³

However, the term "acupuncture needle" in English, represents one specific category of objects called Zhēn (針) in Chinese. This category was originally described in details in Huangdi Neijing (HDNJ) and shows 9 possible ideas about objects (acupuncture needles) with distinct shapes and each one with specific clinical applications.

Jiu Zhen 九針 – The Nine Classical Acupuncture Needles

Jiu Zhen 九針 or Nine types of needles are described in Chapter 1 of Lingshu (灵枢经):

“The names of the nine needles indicate the particular shape by which they differ from each other: The first one is called chisel needle, and it is 1.6 cùn long. The second one is called rounded needle, and it is [also] 1.6 cùn long. The third one is called spoon needle, and it is 3.5 cùn long. The fourth one is called sharp-edged needle, and it is [again] 1.6 cùn long. The fifth one is called stiletto needle, and it is 4 cùn long and 0.25 cùn wide. The sixth one is called rounded sharp needle, and it is [also] 1.6 cùn long. The seventh is called “autumn down” needle, and it is 3.6 cùn long. The eighth one is called long needle, and it is 7 cùn long. The ninth one is called big needle, and it is 4 cùn long.”⁴

³ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/british/acupuncture> (last access on July 2015)

⁴ Wilms, S. Trans. The Nine Needles and Twelve Sources 九針十二原 – <https://sabine-wilms-6vlp.squarespace.com/s/1.pdf> (last access on December 2015)

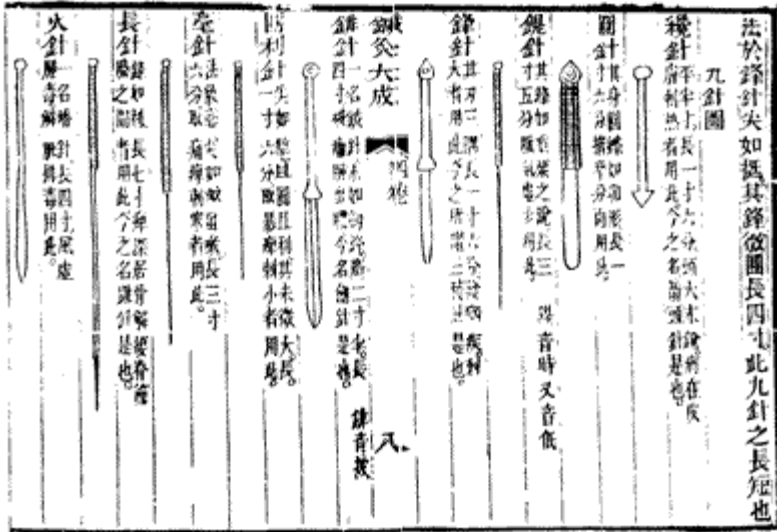


Figure 1 – The Ancient Nine Needles represented in 《針灸大成》 ZhenJiu Da Cheng (The Great Compendium of Acupuncture-Moxibustion) written by Yang Jizhou and published in 1601.

In HDNJ, the character Zhen (針) is not used in a linear or uni conceptual way but instead, we can find Zhen (針) in multiple contexts, with different fields of meanings, that is to say, the word / concept "Zhen (針)/Needle" in HDNJ frequently appears associated with other characters, creating words with different meanings that express different ideas. Zhen can sometimes describe a particular type of object (needle), refer to the acupuncture therapy as a whole, or just remind the name of some other ancient medical books. Let's see some examples:

針灸 - Zhenjiu - A term that was originated in China, known as Acumoxa Therapy in the West. But is interesting to note that in entire HDNJ this term ins mentioned only one time in Su Wen Chapter 46

針石 - ZhenShi - 'Stone Needles' appears 16 times in the entire HDNJ

九針 – Jiu Zhen - 9 (Types of) Needles. The central focus of this article, appears 31 times in the HDNJ (5 chapters of the Su Wen and 11 Lingshu) . Jiu Zhen is the most frequent word in HDNJ that is composed with the use the sinogram 針 Zhen (See table 1)

We also find in HDNJ the term *Bian Shi* 砭石. This term appears 10 times in the HDNJ and seems to reflect instruments used in bleeding techniques on points and meridians.⁵

Jiu Zhen 九针 is the most frequent term found in HDNJ (See table 1). HDNJ also quotes some literary works that have the *Zhen* character in the title (*Zhen Jin*, *Jiu Zhen*, *Xiao Zhen*, etc.).

It's interesting to note that in some classics of Confucianism and Taoism, we find passages that allude to the medicinal use of *Zhen* and the practice of a therapy using needles, but the term *Zhen Shi* 针石⁶ is used without a single mention of the term *Jiu Zhen* 九针.

For example, in *Huainanzi* 淮南子 we can read that "When the patient is laying on the bed, doctor uses stone needles, shaman uses sacrificial rice, both save his life"⁷

In another example, we can see that in both classics *Hanfeizi* 韩非子 (Yu Lao 喻老) and *Xin Xu* 新序杂事二 the term is used in association with a reference to the miracle-working doctor *Bian Que* (扁鹊): "*Bian Que* said:

"When an illness is located in the skin structures, it can be reached and thus be cured by hot bathing and hot compressing; when being in the blood vessels, it can be reached and thus be cured by needle stones."⁸ And finally one more quote on *Bian Que* in *Han Shu* 汉书 "Ancient famous doctors like He and *Bian Que* concentrated on the study of stone needles; Famous business man like *Yan* (full name *Ji Yan* 计研) and *Sang* (full name *Sang Hongyang* 桑弘羊) were looking only for good business to get rich and have unlimited wealth."⁹

5 For a comprehensive study of this topic see McCann, Henry. *Pricking the Vessels: Bloodletting Therapy in Chinese Medicine*. London: Singing Dragon, 2014.

6 For some researchers, the term *Zhen Shi* 针石 would be a compound of needles and stone lancets. For an exploration of a specific issue using stones and acupuncture see: Lo, Vivienne. "Spirit of stone: technical considerations in the treatment of the Jade Body." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65.01 (2002): 99-128.

7 "病者寢席，医之用针石，巫之用精藉，所以救 钧也”。

8 “扁鹊曰：“疾在腠理，汤熨之所及也；在肌肤，针石之所及也”。

9 “和，鹊发精于针石，研，桑心计于无垠”。

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Tabelle 1 – Number of Entries of Jiu Zhen 九針 in HDNJ Source www.ctext.org

Section and Chapter	九針
Suwen	10
異法方宜論 Yì Fǎ Fāng Yí Lùn	1
三部九候論 Sān Bù Jiǔ Hòu Lùn	1
八正神明論 Bā Zhèng Shénmíng Lùn	1
離合真邪 Lǐhé Zhēn Xié	1
鍼解 Zhēn Jiě	6
Ling Shu Jing	21
九鍼十二原 Jiǔ Zhēn Shí'èr Yuán	4
根結 Gēn Jié	1
官鍼 Guān Zhēn	1
口問 Kǒu Wèn	1
病傳 Bìng Chuán	1
外揣 Wài Chuāi	3
禁服 Jìn Fú	1
五禁 Wǔ Jìn	1
行鍼 Xíng Zhēn	1
官能 Guānnéng	2
九鍼論 Jiǔ Zhēn Lùn	5

Zhen 針 is also used as a Metaphor.

Interestingly, the word / concept Zhen seems to have been used as a metaphor when we observe some classical moxibustion techniques that are described as *Zhen*.

Lei Huo Shen Zhen 雷火神針 and *Tai Yi Shen Zhen* 太乙神針 are methods of moxibustion described in Zhen Jiu Da Chen 《針灸大成》 that have the term/word Zhen / Needle or "*Spirit of the Needle*" (神針- Shen Zhen) in their names. These methods may be understood as a metaphorical use of Zhen itself to describe a specific type of moxibustion. To some extent, the shape of moxa sticks used in these techniques resemble the acupuncture needles and the way the doctor proceeds the techniques with these sticks, which also resemble the technique of acupuncture. That being said, we can suppose that these moxa sticks and application techniques were designed and described metaphorizing the acupuncture needles and techniques.

Just by observing a therapist applying moxibustion techniques *Lei Huo Shen Zhen* 雷火神针 and *Tai Yi Shen Zhen* 太乙神针¹⁰, you will immediately realize the metaphorical connotation of needle and needling in these techniques.

So, with this example, we can see that the use of metaphors allows multiple and new layers (metaphorize something that was conceived itself by the use of metaphors), adding new levels of complexity and richness to the context of the theory and practice of Chinese medicine.

Jiu Zhen 九针 (Nine Needles) and Xiao Zhen 小针 (Small Needles):

Before we proceed to the analysis of the 9 needles, we must emphasize that in HDNJ, the term 九针 not always means 9 needles in terms of instruments or objects. As we pointed out before, there are references to a literary work called 九针 (references of the two books in Chinese), where the terms Jiu Zhen 九针 and Zhen Xiao 小针 seem to have their meanings merged.¹¹

The Philosophical Basis of The Discourse of The Nine Types of Needles

Tian Ren He Yi – The Unity of Heaven and Humankind

“*Tian Ren He Yi* bears the following connotations: Man Mirroring Universe, i.e. regarding universe as man, and man as universe; Harmony of Man and Universe, i.e. Man and Universe following the laws of the nature. *The Classic of Rites The Doctrine of Mean* states that ‘Sincerity is the way of the heaven; Sincerity is the way of man.’ That is to say, sincerity makes Man and Heaven unite. My understanding of "sincerity" is to be true to its original, to follow the way of the nature.”¹²

¹⁰ Zheng-Cai, Liu, and Ka Hua. *A Study of Daoist Acupuncture & Moxibustion*. Boulder, CO: Blue Poppy Enterprises, Inc., 1999.

¹¹ 张灿理.“黄帝内经文献研究”- Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Press: 121-122.

¹² Lan, Fengli. *Culture, Philosophy, and Chinese Medicine: Viennese Lectures*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. p.72

Qu Xiang Bi Lei: The Metaphorizing Process & the Way of Forming Metaphors in Chinese Medicine¹³

Metaphor is universal in Chinese medical language, from words to phrases, to sentences. It reflects how the basic Chinese medical concepts and theories were formed, stated, and constructed, and also how Chinese medicine has been developed. Therefore, the Chinese medicine is a metaphor system in its underlying structure. The metaphor system formed by Qu Xiang Bi Lei is the fundamental structure of Chinese medicine.¹⁴

Based on the philosophical foundation of Tian Ren He Yi, the ontological Chinese medical concepts and theories were formed, stated and constructed. Chinese medicine has been developed by the way of Metaphorizing or Qu Xiang Bi Lei (Taking Image and Analogizing).¹⁵

Tian Ren He Yi and Qu Xiang Bi Lei are present in the process of construction of all core concepts and theories in Chinese Medicine discourse, including: the theories of essential qi, yin-yang, and five phases that explain physiological functions and pathological changes of human being, and also guide the diagnosis and treatment of diseases in the clinical practice; the visceral image system that explain the functions of Zang Fu organs; the inference from the flow of Qi and Blood to expound the physiology of Yang Qi; the Jing-Luo (Vessels) theory to elaborate the amount of Yin, Yang, Qi and Blood in different meridian-vessels; the theories of etiology and pathogenesis to interpret the onset and development of diseases; and the therapeutic system to interpret the actions of acupoints and medicines, thus determining principles and methods of treatment.

From Metaphors to Real Objects: The Role of Tian Ren He Yi and Qu Xiang Bi Lei in the Design of Instruments and Tools (Qi 器/ Ju 具) in Ancient China.

Instruments and tools (Qi 器/ Ju 具) represent and incorporate several reflections and thoughts from its primary conception to purely technical issues (manu-

¹³ Lan, Fengli; Wallner, Friedrich G. Qu Xiang Bi Lei: The Metaphorizing Process and the Way of Forming Metaphors in Chinese Medicine [J]. *Journal of Dialects of Nature* (CSSCI). 2014, 36 (2): 98-104.

¹⁴ Wallner, Friedrich G., Fengli Lan and Martin J Jandl. *The Way of Thinking in Chinese Medicine: Theory, Methodology and Structure of Chinese Medicine*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. p.67

¹⁵ Lan, Fengli. *Culture, Philosophy, and Chinese Medicine: Viennese Lectures*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. p.282

facturing methods, method of use, etc).¹⁶At a methodological level, the traditional Chinese thinking pattern adopts methods that focus on the correlations and flexibilities in coordinating various conflicts among engineering practices.¹⁷

If you examine how the ancient Chinese projected the design tools and everyday items - such as pottery vessels, musical instruments, instruments used in agriculture, gardens, utensils for tea, etc. - you will be surprised to find out that in all cases, they were designed to follow the central idea of Tian Ren He Yi by using metaphorizing or Qu Xiang Bi Lei as the main methodology. This design process also applies to the acupuncture needles.

Nature, Numbers, Human Body and the 9 Needles

Nine Types of Needles ... But Why Nine? The Role of Numbers in the Philosophy of Chinese Medicine.

Xiang 象 and Shu 數 are aspects originally presented throughout the Book of Changes (Yi Jing). This work certainly has been influencing the way Chinese people think and practice medicine since the ancient China until nowadays. What would be the relationship between The Book of Changes and Chinese medicine if one deals with Xiang Shu 象數 (images and numbers) and their implicit meanings, while the other talks about health and illnesses? The answer would be that, basically, they both apply metaphors to talk about the same issue in essence: life.¹⁸

Shu 數 has actually much broader meaning than merely "Numbers". Ho Peng Yoke describes Shu quite interesting as "a third entity which was supposed to govern or explain the whole operation of nature while "Numbers" is just one of the multiple meanings of "Shu/數"¹⁹.

The numbers are everywhere in HDNJ. It is hard to find a chapter that does not have any rule or "numerological" correlation. Shu 數 seems to be at the same time a bridge and an instrument that gives power, significance to aspects of heaven-human relationship. Shu acts as amalgam with multiple and complex

¹⁶Tang, Weichen. *Qi-ju design knowledge: an historical and methodological exploration of classical Chinese texts on everyday objects*. Diss. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2013.

¹⁷Christensen, Steen Hyldgaard, et al., *Engineering, development and philosophy: American, Chinese and European perspectives*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012.

¹⁸ Lan, Fengli. *Metaphor: The Weaver of Chinese Medicine [M]*. Verlag Traugott Bautz GmbH, 2015: 112.

¹⁹ Yoke, Ho Peng. *Chinese Mathematical Astrology: Reaching out to the stars*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

functions like organizing, filling, “empowering”, connecting, and creating the dynamic of the constructions and practical ideas of the classical Chinese science.

In the entry about “Numerology” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Robinet, I. explain that “In the classical Chinese thought, numbers have a meaning that is germane to natural order. Since natural order is a manifestation of the Dao, numbers play a primary role in cosmogony and cosmology. They are said to have appeared along with images (xiang) before forms (xing) and names. Heaven, Earth, and the “ten thousand things” (wanwu) are born, move, and act through numbers that represent the movement and quiescence (dong anjing) of Yin and Yang, i.e., their rhythm and the laws governing their transformations. Numbers applied to cosmogonic and cosmological cycles, or to alchemical cycles, measure periods of evolution, maturation, and declination, as well as exhaustion marks of the end of the world. Some numbers represent also significant marking points: they ascribe qualities, provide meaning, and serve as tools to correlate different domains—e.g., cosmos and body, Earth and Heaven, temporal and spatial distribution—and make them commensurable. For instance, there are three parts in the human body (head, chest, and abdomen) and three heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars), just as there are three levels in the world (Heaven, Earth, and the space between them). In addition to it, there are five viscera (wuzang) in the body and five openings in the human face, as there are Five Agents (wuxing), five planets, and so forth.”²⁰

In *Su Wen Chapter 20 Discourse on the Three Sections and Nine Indicators 《三部九候論》* we find a very precise explanation about the number one to nine. This explanation is used to justify the category Zhen/Needles composed with nine objects:

“天地之至数，始于一，终于九焉”

“The perfect numbers of heaven and earth, they begin with one and they end with nine.”²¹

Nine is the highest of the single numbers. So the choice of 9 types of needles means to provide flexibility and maximum possibilities of choices.²²

²⁰ Pregadio, Fabrizio. *The Encyclopedia of Taoism. Vol. 1. London: Routledge, 2007 : 60.*

²¹ Ibid p.352

²² The modern research on the nine types of needles made possible the creation of new models of needles that combine more than one needle shape. A clear and very effective example of it is the research of Dr. Zhu Hanzhang 朱汉章 that has culminated in the development of the small knife needle / Zhen Dao (针刀) and what is now a specific branch within the areas of treatment by acupuncture.

Lingshu chapter 78 Discourse on Nine Types of Needles 《九针论》 uses a similar “numerological” approach to justify and correlate each number as the “ruler” of one aspect of nature and use this correlation as the basis for the reasoning and explanations about the characteristics, the expected functions, and the effects of each of the 9 types of needles:

黄帝曰：余闻九针于夫子，众多博大矣，余犹不能寤，敢问九针焉生，何因而有名？岐伯曰：九针者，天地之大数也，始于一而终于九。故曰：一以法天，二以法地，三以法人，四以法时，五以法音，六以法律，七以法星，八以法风，九以法野。

黄帝曰：以针应九之数，奈何？岐伯曰：夫圣人之起天地之数也，一而九之，故以立九野。

“Huangdi said, "I have listened to your explanation of the Nine Types of Needles. It's really profound and abstruse. But I still have not fully understood it. May I ask you how the Nine Types of Needles were established and why they have different names?"

Qibo answered, “The Nine Types of Needles [were developed according to] the law of the heaven and the earth. [The great number of the heaven and the earth] begins with one and ends with nine. [The Nine Types of Needles in fact correspond to different natural phenomena.] That is why it is said that the first [type of needle] corresponds to the heaven, the second to the earth, the third to human beings, the fourth to the seasons, the fifth to the [five] sounds, the sixth to the [six odd-numbered] pitch-pipes, the seventh to the [seven] stars, the eighth to the winds [from the eight directions] and the ninth to the nine geographical divisions. ”

Huangdi said, “Why the types of needles correspond to the number of nine?"

Qibo answered, “This number of the heaven and earth was established by the sages [in ancient times, starting] from one and ending at nine. That is why the earth is divided into nine divisions.”

This distinctive "numerology" is present in various medical theories in HDNJ.

The “Construction” of The Nine Types of Needles

The central idea of Tian Ren He Yi and the methodology of Qu Xiang Bi Lei have deeply influenced and initiated the fundamental preconceptions that support the discourse and theory about the 9 types of Needles.

The “Construction” of The Nine Needles starts Pairing Numbers and Nature, HDNJ Suwen Chapter 54 《针解》：

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“帝曰：余闻九针，上应天地四时阴阳，愿闻其方，令可传于后世以为常也。

岐伯曰：夫一天二地三人四时五音六律七星八风九野，身形亦应之，针各有所宜，故曰九针。”

[Huang] Di: “I have heard [the following:] the nine needles correspond above to heaven and earth, to the four seasons and to yin and yang. I should like to hear the methods [underlying] their [use] so that they may be transmitted to later generations to serve as rules.

Now, one [is] heaven, two [is] the earth, three [is] Man, four [are the] seasons, five [are the musical] notes, six [are the] pitch-pipe tones, seven [are the] stars, eight [are the] winds, nine [are the] fields. The body corresponds to these [numbers], too. Each one of the needles has what it is appropriate for. Hence, it is said: nine needles.”²³

This excerpt of HDNJ Su Wen chapter 54 introduces some important correlations, starting with a statement about the cosmological configuration of the universe. Within this setting, the correlation between numbers and metaphorical aspects of nature is shown.

Role of Metaphors in the Construction of the Discourse about the 9 Types of Acupuncture Needles

Tabelle 2 - The Scope of Metaphors used in The Discourse “The 9 Types of Acupuncture Needles”

Metaphors/Terms	Also Found in These Fields of Ancient Chinese Culture ²⁴
三才 The 3 “Powers” 1, 2, 3 – Heaven-Earth-Man	Confucianism, Taoism, Miscellaneous Schools, Histories, Ancient Classics (Book of Changes, Jingshi Yizhuan) and Etymology

²³ Unschuld, Paul U., and Hermann Tessenow. *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di’s Inner Classic–Basic Questions*. 2 vols. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011:121

²⁴ “Chinese Text Project.” *Chinese Text Project*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 July 2015. <<http://www.ctext.org/>>.

四时 (4 Seasons)	Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, School of the Military, Mathematics, Miscellaneous Schools, Histories, Ancient Classics (Shang Shu, Book of Changes, The Rites of Zhou, Chu Ci, Shan Hai Jing, Jiaoshi Yilin, Jingshi Yizhuan), Etymology and Chinese Medicine
五音 (5 Sounds/Pitches) and 六律 (6 Tones)	Taoism, Miscellaneous Schools, Histories, Chinese Medicine
七星 Seven Stars (Big Dipper)	Confucianism, Mathematics, Histories, Chinese Medicine
八风 Eight Winds	Confucianism, Taoism, Mathematics, Miscellaneous Schools, Histories, Etymology and Chinese Medicine
九野 Nine Fields	Taoism, Miscellaneous Schools, Histories, Ancient Classics (Shan Hai Jing) and Chinese Medicine

All these nine terms present in the creation of the idea of the Nine types of needles are metaphors formed by Qu Xiang Bi Lei following the central idea of Tian Ren He Yi. These terms showed in table 2 can be traced in many fields of Ancient Chinese Culture.

In our studies, we can use these metaphors as a primary reference and source of inspiration. Sometimes you need to evoke some of these metaphors and correlations to successfully solve problems during the diagnostic and treatment with acupuncture, or to explain and describe situations in the Chinese Medicine Realm without evoking any term of modern sciences.

The Inclusion of Ren 人 (The Human Being) in the Framework of Nine Types of Needles:

HDNJ Suwen Chapter 54 continues describing the associations of human being expressed in the character 人 with some aspects of nature, following the cosmological correspondence exposed in Chapter 20 of HDNJ Suwen. The postulation about the 9 Types of Needles advances and deepens the model of integration between heaven and Human Being, as well as tries to associate human body parts to aspects of the universe.

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“人皮应天 Man's skin corresponds to heaven.

人肉应地 Man's flesh corresponds to the earth.

人脉应人 Man's vessels correspond to Man.

人筋应时 Man's sinews correspond to the seasons.

人声应音 Man's voice correspond to the tones.

人阴阳合气应律 When yin and yang in Man merge [their] Qi, this corresponds to the tones of the pitch-pipes.

人齿面目应星 Man's teeth, face, and eyes correspond to the stars.

人出入气应风 The Qi leaving and entering Man corresponds to the winds.

人九窍三百六十五络应野 Man's nine orifices and 365 network [vessels] correspond to the fields.”

The human body mirrors the universe and its phenomena. Nine different shapes are proposed as harmonizing instruments (Zhen), each one in "resonance" with a preferential region or layer of body . The same chapter follows, now finally including the Nine Types of Needles inside this framework:

“故一针皮 Hence, the first [type of] needle [serves to pierce] the skin.

二针肉 The second [type of] needle [serves to pierce] the flesh.

三针脉 The third [type of] needle [serves to pierce] the vessels.

四针筋 The fourth [type of] needle [serves to pierce] the sinews.

五针骨 The fifth [type of] needle [serves to pierce] the bones.

六针调阴阳 The sixth [type of] needle [serves to] regulate yin and yang.

七针益精 The seventh [type of] needle [serves to] increase the essence.

八针除风 The eighth [type of] needle [serves to] eliminate wind.

九针通九窍除三百六十五节气 The ninth [type of] needle [serves to] open the nine orifices and to eliminate the Qi from the 365 joints...”

Here, HDNJ associates each one of the 9 Types of Needles to certain areas of the human body. These areas would be ideal for the use of each type of Zhen, thus ensuring and maximizing the clinical results.

In this section, it is defined the role of each of the 9 Types of Needles within the therapeutic system of acupuncture. This systematization, in turn, is insert-

ed into a much larger scheme of integration between man and universe. This integration occurs inside spaces (Mai - 脈) and in accordance with the rules of time²⁵. Chinese medicine acts restoring the human being to his own (suitable) space and time/season:

«Recent research offers a move away from writing histories of the body based on its representations towards exploring the way in which those representations were constructed. We can approach the construction of early Chinese medical bodies in many ways. Li Jianmin in his book “*The Territory between Life and Death*” (*Si Sheng Zhi Yu*), highlights a plurality of factors that come to bear in the development of the concept of Mai 脈 ‘channels’ of acupuncture. The Mai, he finds are “a field of temporal spaces” that acts as a pivot of many different worlds. They are at once analogous to the rivers of China, to astronomical movements, to rivers of blood and channels of communication, a pattern upon which human disharmony with the environments could be judged. He finds geographical variations in the interpretation of the mai as well as three different states in the development which correspond to the movement of heavenly bodies, self-cultivation and the development of the neurological body²⁶.

Something very interesting is that from the type of needle 1 to 5, the text subtly talks more about layers of the body where diseases can be lodged than the anatomical structures suggested by the term. So, this sequence from 1 to 5 can be understood as a single metaphor. This is a special feature of the Chinese medicine.

For example: After the diagnostic procedure, the doctor can state that the patient's disease is located in a superficial level and the metaphor used by him is that the disease is lodged in the Skin. This doesn't mean that the patient has necessarily a skin disease, as a Western medicine doctor would imagine.

Here, Skin is just a metaphor. If you go even deeper, you will realize that this sequence from 1 to 5 represents the 5 Phases (Wu Xing 五行) because Skin is correlated with Metal, Vessels with Fire, Tendons with Wood, Flesh with

²⁵ To understand the concept of “Time” in Chinese Ancient Culture see Libbrecht, Ulrich. “Chinese Concepts of Time: *Yi-chou* as Space-Time.” In *Time and Temporality in Intercultural Perspective*, edited by Douwe Tiemersma and H. A. F. Oosterling. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996. The first part is a critical review of Needham's piece.

Also see Loewe, Michael. “The Cycle of Cathay: Concepts of Time in Han China and Their Problems.” In *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, edited by Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher. Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995.

²⁶ Lu, Gwei-Djen, Joseph Needham, and Vivienne Lo. *Celestial lancets: a history and rationale of acupuncture and moxa*. New York: Psychology Press, 2002: xl

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Earth and Bones with Water. So, there is another very subtle metaphorical layer in the discourse about the Nine Types of Needles: The 5 Phases (Wu Xing 五行)²⁷. Coincidentally or not, the substitution of the term “Voice” to “Bones” accommodates this sequence in the framework of the 5 Phases (Wu Xing 五行). We have Yin and Yang and Wu Xing inside the 9 types of needles.

HDNJ Ling Shu Chapter 78 Discourse on Nine Types of Needles 《九针论》 states that each specific needle have a characteristic shape and has an affinity (or “resonance”) with certain parts of the human body. And it is in this chapter that is justified the use of each type of needle.

The different shapes of acupuncture needles express the result of a refined way of thinking which is grounded in a deep understanding of the relationship between the universe and the human being. Within this construction of thought (or reality), all things created by human beings must be designed and also sanctioned by the authority of the central idea of Tian Ren He Yi, as well as guided by the methodology of Qu Xiang Bi Lei.

We show one example: 《九针论》

一者，天也。天者，阳也。五藏之应天者肺，肺者，五藏六府之盖也，皮者，肺之合也，人之阳也。故为之治针，必以大其头而锐其末，令无得深入而阳气出。

Discourse on Nine Types of Needles

“One” responds to Heaven, to Yang. Among the 5 Zang organs, the lung responds [to the number 1,] to Heaven.

It is the cover/lid (盖)²⁸ of the 5 Zang and 6 Fu organs.

The skin [and body hair] correlates with the lung, the Yang of the body.

This is why the needle, designed and created to puncture and to treat, must have a big head with pointed tip to avoid deep penetration (into the dermis) in order to perverse the yang qi inside.”

HDNJ Ling Shu Chapter 1 Nine Types of Needles and Twelve Primary Acupoints 《九针十二原》 describe the shapes of each type of the nine needles and shows the correlation between their shapes and nine things selected from the

²⁷ Also translated as Five elements, Five agents, depending on the book you read. See Lan, Fengli. 《黄帝内经》中医概念英译研究.

²⁸ 盖 (pronounced as Gai in Pinyin) - A Cover, a Lid - here represent the metaphor connecting and providing linguistic correlation between Lung, Skin and the idea of cover, to envelope, to protect, to close something (our body, internal organs)...

nature. This also results from the methodology of Qu Xiang Bi Lei. Some examples:

Needle 2 – 员针 - Yuanzhen's tip is shaped like an egg.

Needle 5 铍针 - Pizhen's tip is shaped like a sword

Needle 6 员利针 - Yuanlizhen's tip is shaped like a hair, a barb of a grain of rice

Needle 7 毫针 - Haozhen's tip is shaped like the stinger of a mosquito

HDNJ Ling Shu 7 Application of Needles 《官针》 completes the practical framework of the Nine Types of Needles, explaining and justifying the use of each type of needle in different clinical scenarios .

凡刺之要，官针最妙。九针之宜，各有所为，长、短、大、小，各有所施也。不得其用，病弗能移。

The key of needling lies in [the reasonable application of] the needles. The nine [types of] needles have different usages. [They are] either long, or short, or large, or small. They are used for different purposes. Wrong use of them cannot cure diseases.

Example:

病在皮肤无常处者，取以鑱针于病所，肤白勿取。病在分肉间，取以圆针于病所。

The disease in the skin without fixed location [can be treated by inserting] sagittate needle (Chanzhen-鑱针) into the focus of the disease. [If] the skin is whitish , [the sagittate needle] cannot be used. The disease in the muscular interstices [can be treated by] pressing the affected part with round - pointed needle (Yuanzhen -圆针).

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Conclusions

“Having constructed a microworld, we are able to master a sum of phenomena. But still there is no knowledge at this point. You have just got a new ability to solve problems.” Wallner, F.²⁹

Tabelle 3 - Summary of Su Wen 54 Explanations on the Needles 《针解》³⁰

Needle	Number	Nature	Human Body
Chanzhen	1	Heaven	Skin
Yuanzhen	2	Earth	Muscles
Tizhen	3	Man	Vessels
Fengzhen	4	Seasons	Tendons
Pizhen	5	Musical Notes	Voice and Bones
Yuanzhen	6	Musical Tones	Yin, Yang
Haozhen	7	Stars	Tooth, Face and Eyes
Changzhen	8	Winds	Respiration
Dazhen	9	Fields	Joints and Orifices

The discursive construction of Nine Needles in HDNJ carries a subtle but a very clear message: It also talks about the metaphorical construction or the “cosmological assembling” of the body of a Human Being. The Daoism envisions a model of body and human being focused in "spiritual transformation". This is the ultimate goal of human life and if this demiurgic state of transformation is achieved, the practitioner, the human being will be called The Genuine (Zhen

²⁹ Kim, Uichol, Kuo-Shu Yang, and Kwang-Kuo Hwang. “Indigenous and cultural psychology” *International and Cultural Psychology*. Ed. Anthony J. Marsella. New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media, Inc.: 2006: 55.

³⁰ Adapted from Wang, Zhao and Jung Wang. *Ling Shu Acupuncture*. Wu Jing-Nuan Trans. Anaheim, CA: Ling Shu Press, 2007.

Ren 真人): “The Genuine (Zhen Ren 真人), Sages, and the Perfected (Zhi Ren 至人), who are characterized by their abilities to ignore external stimuli to draw Potency from their source in the Way, and also by their indifference to the exigencies of life and death, among other qualities. The qualities of human perfection are not cultivated through self-modification but through an inner cultivation practice, by which the adept empties the mind and the body of passions, prejudices, and thoughts until he or she realizes the unification of innate nature and the Way. These practices are referred to “Techniques of the Way” (Daoshu 道術)³¹. It is focused on this body conception that has been rationalized in all medical practices in ancient China, such as acupuncture, Qigong, dietetics³², etc.

The model proposed in HDNJ Su Wen 54 Explanations on the Needles 《针解》 correlates and integrates aspects of nature with the human body. It is very common to find the human body depicted as mountains or nature landscapes in Daoist alchemical practices³³. The most famous representation is surely the Chart of the Inner Warp (See picture XX) a classic example that gives us deep insights on the design of human body to the ancient Chinese.

Other examples can be found among other texts, such as in *Laozi bianhua jing* (Scripture of the Transformations of Laozi³⁴), and the *Kaitian jing* (Scripture of the Opening of Heaven). Laozi already exists at the beginning of the formation of the cosmos and reappears throughout human history, transforming his body each time. In other instances, the cosmos itself is seen as the body of Laozi, a theme that appears to have originated early myths concerning Pan Gu, the Chinese "cosmic man". The following text quoted in the Buddhist *Xiaodao lun* (Essays to Ridicule the Dao) describes the cosmic body of Laozi: “Laozi transformed his body. His left eye became the sun; his right eye, the moon; his head, Mount Kunlun; his beard, the planets and constellations; his bones, the dragons; his flesh, the quadrupeds; his intestine, the snakes; his stomach, the

³¹ Liu, Xiaogan, Xiaoxin He, and Yama Wong. “Daoism from Philosophy to Religion” *Dao Companion To Daoist Philosophy*. Ed. Xiaogan Liu. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2014: 356-357.

³² There are even recipes and specific diets tailored to the practitioner that is searching for longevity and immortality. There are recipes that make it clear that they were conceived for those seeking to become (or attain) *Zhen Ren*. In order to understand more about this topic, I recommend Arthur, S. *Early Daoist Dietary Practices: Examining Ways to Health and Longevity*. Lexington Books, 2013: 13.

³³ See Pregadio, Fabrizio. *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*. Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2013. 767-71.

³⁴ Kohn, Livia. *Early Chinese Mysticism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992: 44. See also Seiwert, Hubert and Ma Xisha. *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History*. Leiden [u.a.]: Brill Academic Pub, 2003: 48.

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sea; his fingers, the five peaks (wuyue); his hair, the trees and the herbs; his heart, the Flowery Canopy (huagai, i.e., Cassiopea in heaven and the lungs in the body); and his kidneys, the Real Father and the Real Mother of humanity.”³⁵

³⁵ Pregadio, Fabrizio. “Taoist Views of the Human Body.” The Golden Elixir. The Golden Elixir Press, n.d. Web. 25 July 2015.
http://www.goldenelixir.com/taoism/views_of_the_body.html

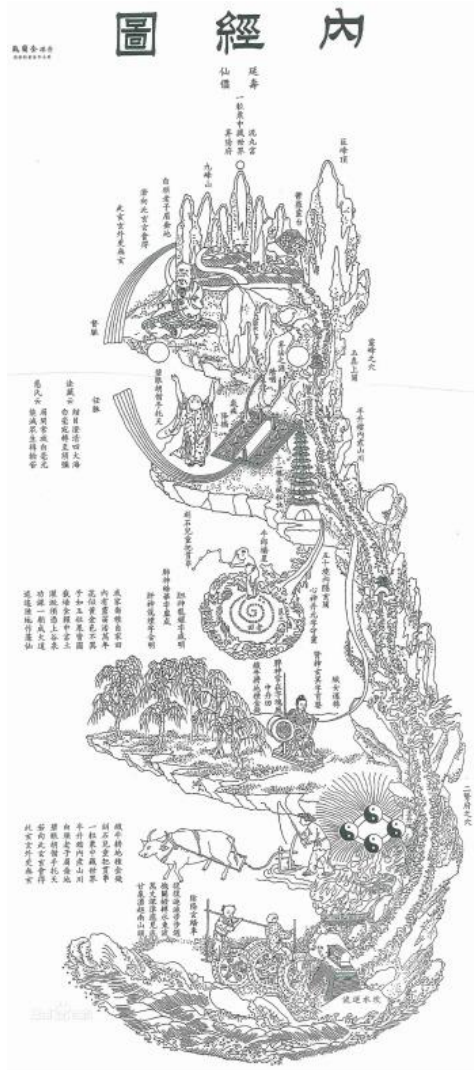


Figure 2 – The Representation of Human Body in The Neijing tu (內經圖)

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³⁶ To an introduction to the multiple meanings and metaphors inside this chart see Pregadio, Fabrizio. *Neijing tu (Chart of the Inner Warp)*. Retrieved June 11, 2015, from http://www.goldenelixir.com/jindan/neijing_tu.html

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Zhen or Needles are 9 instruments that have a critical role in harmonizing , promoting transformation and bringing health to this metaphorical body. It is important to mention that this body belong and interact in a highly complex and interconnected network of “influences” with intricate relationships between its elements. We must remember that in early China, in view of the existence of a wide range of “ghosts”, demons, and harmful spirits, all therapies were originally designed and conceived to protect the body against these destructive influences³⁷ that would potentially cause illnesses and death.

The foundations of the process of rationalization and conceptualization of Zhen/needles can be traced from many different fields of ancient classics. All the primordial elements, ideas and terms, the main ingredients used in the process of conceptualization of the 9 types of Zhen/needles, were already present in the cultural environment and can be found in ancient books of Pre-Qin and Han periods.

The central idea of Tian Ren He Yi and the methodology of Qu Xiang Bi Lei are vital in this process. However, I think there is a broader contextual influence of Qu Xiang Bi Lei, which contains other 3 "Xiang". These other “Xiang”³⁸ are aspects that keep similarities but, at the same time, they have a profound meaning in their singularities, representing the complexity and refinement of the cognition.

The internalization of phenomena, which has begun with the process of taking images, finding similarities and correlations, and building analogies, resulted in the formation of concepts and ideas used by ancient Chinese to express their way of thinking and living.

The theory of Acupuncture and the Nine Types of Needles in HDNJ is an invention³⁹ , an unprecedented landmark in the history of China. The texts collected from the Su wen and other Han-era compilations mark the beginning of the medicine in China. This theory is based on many pre-existing ideas from classical China, however it expresses and synthesizes them in a completely innovative

³⁷ See Strickmann, Michel. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Ed. Bernard Faure. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002.

³⁸ The other 3 “Xiang” are: 1- Xiàng 像- an image / a portrait / to resemble / resemblance / like / as 2- Xiāng 相 each other / one another / mutually / reciprocal / substance . This second 相 also can be pronounced as Xiàng meaning to examine / to study / to read / looks / an appearance 3- Xiǎng 想 to think / to consider / to suppose / to hope / to expect / to plan / to remember with longing / to miss / to want / would like to

³⁹ Whether or not the discourse of the Nine Types of Needles is an innovation or an invented tradition is an interesting topic to be investigated. See Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Range, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

way.⁴⁰ It is important to remember that previously to the emergence of this theory, a wide variety of therapies were already being practiced⁴¹, even legendary representative as Bianque 扁鵲⁴² alluded to the therapeutic use of so-called Zhen / Needle objects. These practices were fundamentally based in demonology and linked to the activities of a category of practitioners/healers called Wu 巫 (shamans and mediums). Confucianism diverges from this view, although we know it recognizes the existence of spirits and ghosts (gui, 鬼)⁴³. Although Wang Bing's commentary on Su Wen exhibits a certain degree of Daoistic orientation, some scholars like Unschuld identifies the Su Wen as expressing a type of "Confucianized medicine" (emphasizing regulation, harmony, and so forth) that has little connection with the Daoist tradition. "[The] authors who contributed to the corpus leaned more to Confucian or late Zhou, early Han Huang-Lao notions than to anything else... Daoist concepts are absent almost entirely from the Su wen". Unschuld also points out that in the text "values are posited by dominant social philosophies, as well as structural elements of the administration and the national economy of the newly established united empire. The texts collected in the Su wen, as heterogeneous and at times contradictory as they may be, share at least one central feature: They reflect a deliberate break with an older tradition and the genesis of an innovative style of thought that proved to be the seed of a long-lasting new tradition. Briefly, the older tradition comprised a concept of health care on the basis of the firmly established belief that human illness was caused by demons, ancestors, and "bugs";...This new tradition has "evolved from the Su wen, refusing to assign to numinous agents and bugs such role. It focuses on environmental conditions, climatic agents, and behavior as sources of diseases; on the importance of laws, structures, and mo-

⁴⁰ Unschuld, Paul U. "Origin and Tradition of the Textus Receptus of the Su wen." Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: Nature, knowledge, imagery in an ancient Chinese medical text, with an appendix, the doctrine of the five periods and six qi in the Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003: 59-75.

⁴¹ See Harper, Donald J. Trans. *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1998.

⁴² It is interesting to note that the authors of HDNJ did not mention the mythological healer Bianque 扁鵲 in the entire book.

⁴³ Analects[6-22] 樊遲問知。子曰。務民之義、敬鬼神而遠之、可謂知矣。問仁。曰。仁者先難而後獲、可謂仁矣。
[6:22] Fan Chi asked about the nature of wisdom. Confucius said, "Working to give the people justice and paying respect to the spirits, but keeping away from them, you can call wisdom."

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rale in the explanation of illness; and, on a new technique, the acupuncture, for the prevention and treatment of ailments, in addition to dietetics”⁴⁴

The Discourse of 9 Types of Acupuncture Needles and The Constructive Realism

Some general propositions, such as the theories that underpin the discourse of the nine types of needles, do not seem to make any sense when studied isolated from the context. Henderson mentions that “statements that appear to be implausible by themselves seem almost self-evident when placed in the context of a correlative schema. Partly for this reason, odd or isolated statements were sometimes virtually "proven" by building a schema around them or by inserting them into existing systems of correspondence. Thus, the substantiation of particular cosmological propositions may well have been a significant motive for the construction of correlative systems in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.”⁴⁵ The discourse of Nine Types of Needles is a construction of a microworld.

Wallner describes the process of "constructing" a microworld as a process where “artificial objects are held together by a framework which itself is invented freely... In our context, construction means that scientists are arranging information with the help of a framework. Nothing else is meant with the notion of "constructing a microworld". Constructing a microworld would imply that we are able to master a sum of phenomena. However, there is still no enough knowledge at this point. You have just gotten a new ability to solve problems” and to continue to observe that “the proposition systems are describing microworlds. Microworlds are artificial worlds. They are poor worlds in relation to the given world, i.e., its qualities are reduced, but they have a clear purpose.”⁴⁶

Wallner restricts the range of what can be known from what is constructed. He says: By using the word “construction" we are replacing the conviction that science is describing the world. Constructive Realism is fierce doubting this common conviction. ... In order to get knowledge, it is necessary to integrate something into one's linguistic frame, i.e. to translate it. If you are not able to

⁴⁴ Unschuld, Paul U. *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text, with an Appendix, the Doctrine of the Five Periods and Six Qi in the Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen*. Berkeley: U of California, 2003.

⁴⁵ Henderson, John B. *The development & Decline of Chinese Cosmology*. Taipei, Taiwan: Windstone Press, 2011.

⁴⁶ Wallner, F. (n.d.). “A New Vision of Science.” *20th WCP*. N.p., n.d. Web. Retrieved 12 June, 2015. <<http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Scie/ScieWall.htm#top>>.

translate a language of description then you don't understand it. Thus, translation is the point of proof for understanding."⁴⁷

Wallner propose an ontology where:

“Behind scientific constructions there is a world, unable to be recognized by the human mind. This world is named “wirklichkeit” (best translation: environment). Beside of environment or actualities there is our reasoning, our knowledge-constructions active. The result and the objects of our knowledge-constructions we name generally “reality”. Reality is real not just in the mind, not just in the reasoning, but in so called microworlds.

Microworlds are the results of scientific performance in natural science... If this system or microworld works, then it is a real microworld... Microworlds are characterized by a restricted number of qualities. Therefore it is easier to survey them than for instance the world vision of our culture or of our everyday world. Beside these two areas, *wirklichkeit* and reality – the sum of the microworlds – there is a third type of objective world, the so called life world. It is the world which is established also by construction, but not by arbitrary constructive doing initiated by specific groups – for instance by groups of scientists – but by constructions led by specific cultures ...

The cultural commitment decides which aspects of the environment are taken for specific constructions; it decides which aspects are neglected.... Science as a technical undertaking does not describe the world, but replaces some aspects of the world; it influences the world, it changes the world. Similarities in the actions of all humans. But the way back to a common basis of different cultures is closed.

For interpretation we have invented a special procedure: “strangification”. We take out a system of propositions from its original context and put it in another context – for instance from the context of scientific construction into the context of logical analysis. Or we take out a theory from physics into the context of sociology. Most terms of the theory and some relation become totally absurd in the new context ... Why? ... every microworld and every scientific discipline is based on a specific, highly specialized language and cultural presuppositions.

Therefore, strangification has the main result that it shows the specific conditions of a scientific language and in this way it dissolves the conditions and presuppositions of a scientific product. If you understand implicit rules of a specific language then you understand the presupposition of these products which are established in this language. Thus, philosophy of science has a new

⁴⁷ Krausz, Michael. *Limits of rightness*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Co., 2000: 69.

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job in this situation. It must look for interesting different contexts for strangification and it must organize strangification.”⁴⁸

This applies to the case of the Nine Types of Needles. Strangification has a very important value in cross-cultural studies because as stated by Watts: “Every culture is based on assumptions so taken for granted that they are barely conscious, and it is only when we study highly different cultures and languages that we become aware of them. - Alan (1975, p. 11). If culture can then be understood as a constructed reality, people’s understanding of their embodied experience will be apt to differ in different times and places. Examining metaphors across cultures can further our understanding of how we differ from other humans based on cultural constructs that shape our world-views.”⁴⁹

The construction of the Microworld of Acupuncture is based on a Metaphor.

When commenting about the concerns of Constructive Realism, Shen emphasizes that “constructive realism also assimilates Wittgenstein's position in the Philosophical investigations that for each language game corresponds a form of life (Lebensformen).’ Together these problematics give birth to a theory of two types of reality.”⁵⁰

Regarding the progress of research in Chinese Medicine, Lan observes that “According to Wittgenstein’s idea of philosophy of language, the discourses of the Chinese and Western medicine are different “language games”, showing different lifestyles and describing different “pictures” of life, and so, one cannot be interpreted or proved by the other. For example, the combination of the discourse of Western medicine with the Chinese one, will affect the cognizing way of Chinese medicine, which would be like coating or covering the transparent life world with the scientific formal language. Therefore, we should reconsider the current progress of researching, modernizing, or even westernizing Chinese medicine, as well as improve our understanding of the rationality of Chinese medicine from its own discourse, from the “picture” of the lifestyle in the life world its discourse describes. That is to say, to interpret Chinese medicine with itself. I am not against the use of modern science and technology to the study of

⁴⁸ Wallner, Friedrich G. *Systemanalyse als Wissenschaftstheorie III: Das Vorhaben einer kulturorientierten Wissenschaftstheorie in der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011: 26-28.

⁴⁹ Pritzker, Sonya. “The role of metaphor in culture, consciousness, and medicine: a preliminary inquiry into the metaphors of depression in Chinese and Western medical and common languages.” *Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine* 4.1 (2003): 11-28.

⁵⁰ Shen, Qingsong. *Philosophy of science and education: Chinese and European views*. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (1995): 108-109.

Chinese medicine, but such researches must be in accordance with the philosophy of Chinese medicine.⁵¹

No research on acupuncture should neglect these issues, because there is a risk of performing research supported only on parameters of Western science, with no reference to the Chinese science. The Western imagination about acupuncture is a reduction of 9 objects / needles to a single type (filiform, preferably the needle number 7 – *Haozhen*, “thin as a hair”). The implications of this reduction is rarely discussed (or even considered) in the Western scientific circles.

It would be interesting to further investigate if this type of reductionism and oversimplification about the category Zhen is not preventing the development of innovative approaches, or whether it impoverishes the Western vision regarding new methodologies and ways of interpreting data obtained in clinical trials while studying and understanding the category of Zhen. The constructive realism is a philosophy that has immense potential to help us to understand and solve several methodological problems which are impeding the advance of research into acupuncture in the West. This will involve sensible criticism and a deep reassessment on the current methodologies and the way Western and even Chinese researchers examine and research acupuncture.

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