

Thomas Ots

Psychosomatics East – West

Traditional Chinese Medicine is based on phenomenological experience. The ancient doctors were quite good in exploring man's lived symptoms. This becomes obvious when we look at the theory of five phases (five elements). The relation between emotions and organs as described in Chinese medicine is reflected in many Western languages. We might say, that psychosomatic thought is at the heart of Chinese medicine. It is wrong to say that Chinese thought does not know the difference between psyche and soma, but they are understood as deeply interrelated. There was no genuine word for psychosomatics in Chinese – it wasn't necessary – so this term had to be translated from the West. It is called 心身学 (xin shen yi xue = heart body medicine).

A doctor of Chinese medicine is able to make a psychosomatic diagnosis based on the bodily symptoms of the sick person – because he asks for all the symptoms the patient suffers from, and because the cluster of symptoms is specific for a certain emotional change: not one symptom is specific for a psychosomatic disorder, it is syndrome. Thus, from a Chinese point of view we should talk of **emotio-somatics**.

However, every medical tradition has its „blind spots“. Western medicine lacks the understanding of emotio-specific symptoms, Chinese medicine lacks psychotherapeutic approaches. Thus, our aim should be an integrative medicine, taking the best parts of different medical traditions and put them together, such way achieving a holistic medicine.

Corner stones of the seminar:

1. Understanding the interrelation between bodily symptoms and emotional changes
2. What is stress?
3. What is happening in the Limbic system?
4. Which methods can we use to treat psychosomatic disorders? acupuncture, psychotherapy, breathing methods like qigong, taijiquan. Relaxation or catharsis?
5. Special disorders: anxiety, depression, burnout, chronic fatigue, addiction

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Curriculum Vitae

Graduated from Free University of Berlin Medical School in 1972. Medical speciality: gynecology and obstetrics.

From 1978 -1980 and 1984/1985 education in acupuncture, Chinese herbs and Tuina at the Colleges of TCM in Beijing and Nanjing.

1988/89 invitation by Prof. Arthur Kleinman as „research fellow“ at Harvard Medical School, Department Global Health and Social Medicine.

1987 till 1991 study of medical anthropology at the University of Hamburg.

Topic of medical thesis: The combination of Chinese and Western medicine.

Topic of anthropological thesis: The rise and fall of the cathartic qigong movement in

China in the 1980s.

1992 till 1995 professor of social medicine and anthropology at Görlitz College of Social Work.

1995-1997 professor of health promotion and health education at the University of Flensburg.

Then change of residence to Graz, Austria, opening of a clinic for Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture and Psychosomatics.

Since 1998 Editor-in-Chief of „Deutsche Zeitschrift für Akupunktur“ (DZA; German Journal of Acupuncture and Related Techniques), Lecturer of German and Austrian acupuncture societies.

2006 founding member and president of „NADA-Akupunktur Austria.“

Since 2013 Chairperson for Complementary Medicine of the Austrian Medical Association.