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HOW TO RESEARCH TCM

ABSTRACT

The following lecture focuses on the question: What are the preconditions for a TCM adequate research? – It emphasizes on the relation of TCM and the Western sciences while it is being guided by a certain view of philosophy of science that takes care of the cultural differences and their different ways of thinking. So the aim of the lecture is to consider those differences between TCM and Occidental sciences and not to blend them.

To answer the question about the necessary preconsiderations for a TCM adequate research on the one hand and to fulfil the aim of taking care of the cultural and scientific differences on the other hand the lecture is taking four steps: *First* it is to state some results of the research on the structure of Western science to develop a brief understanding of it. As a *second* step it is to focus on the differences between the Occidental and the Chinese way of thinking and to name a number of concrete differences. *Third* the lecture presents a methodology that should enable the scientists to do a better and adequate research on TCM while considering the named differences between the two cultures respectively the special shape of their sciences. To complement this discussion about researching TCM it is to name some principal mistakes and some advices as a *fourth* step to improve the scientific work.

To give you a clearer idea about those four steps: The first two steps refer to the idea of the incompatibility and the important cultural differences between Western science and TCM. With those two chapters it is to clarify the framework and the fundament of doing a research on TCM. To give an impression about the Occidental way of thinking the lecture names a number of results of the research on the structure of Western Science. It is to understand as *one* (one under several) construction of our reference to the world being dependent from its culture. The way of its thinking differs from the way of Chinese science in a number of aspects as the concept of experience, the aspect of generality, the idea of the relation of body and soul, the concept of nature and the shape of the idea of holism.

While the first two steps focus on the framework of a research on TCM the second two steps refer to the way of doing this. The aim of this research is to be effective, to take care of the different cultural nature of this science and to do a TCM adequate research. To fulfil this objective the lecture presents and explains a certain and necessary methodology as well as it gives some hints of what to do and of what to exclude while doing the research. One main advice to do a better research on TCM is to focus on the original text of TCM in a special way. This does not mean that the original texts should be translated literally. Instead it is to become aware of the fundament and the presuppositions of those texts. To get those important presuppositions the lecture presents the so called methodology of “Strangification”. It is based on the idea that science or in a special respect single disciplines are to consider as a system of propositions that build up on certain presuppositions and that are just true under the condition of those special presuppositions. Therefore the aim of the methodology is to express those necessary presuppositions by mixing a certain system of propositions with a *different* context in order to get aware of what has to be presupposed for a proposition to become true. – So this methodology shall be used to get to know the fundament of TCM, to understand TCM better and to have an awareness of the typical way of thinking.

To complete this discussion about doing research on TCM there shall be a number of mistakes named that can be made in this case as well as some advices of what to do to get a better research.

# WESTERN MEDICINE AND TCM: METHODS OF COOPERATION

Fritz Wallner

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## Abstract

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The following lecture focuses on the question: What are the preconditions for a TCM adequate research? – It emphasizes on the relation of TCM and the Western sciences while it is being guided by a certain view of philosophy of science that takes care of the cultural differences and their different ways of thinking. So the aim of the lecture is to consider those differences between TCM and Occidental sciences and not to blend them.

To answer the question about the necessary preconsiderations for a TCM adequate research on the one hand and to fulfill the aim of taking care of the cultural and scientific differences on the other hand the lecture is taking four steps: First it is to state some results of the research on the structure of Western science to develop a brief understanding of it. As a second step it is to focus on the differences between the Occidental and the Chinese way of thinking and to name a number of concrete differences. Third the lecture presents a methodology that should enable the scientists to do a better and adequate research on TCM while considering the named differences between the two cultures respectively the special shape of their sciences. To complement this discussion about researching TCM it is to name some principal mistakes and some advices as a fourth step to improve the scientific work.

To give you a clearer idea about those four steps: The first two steps refer to the idea of the incompatibility and the important cultural differences between Western science and TCM. With those two chapters it is to clarify the framework and the fundament of doing a research on TCM. To give an impression about the Occidental way of thinking the lecture names a number of results of the research on the structure of Western Science. It is to understand as one (one under several) construction of our reference to the world being dependent from its culture. The way of its thinking differs from the way of Chinese science in a number of aspects as the concept of experience, the aspect of generality, the idea of the relation of body and mind, the concept of nature and the shape of the idea of holism.

While the first two steps focus on the framework of a research on TCM the second two steps refer to the way of doing this. The aim of this research is to be effective, to take care of the different cultural nature of this science and to do a TCM adequate research. To fulfill this objective the lecture presents and explains a certain and necessary methodology as well as it gives some hints of what to do and of what to exclude while doing the research. One main advice to do a better research on TCM is to focus on the original text of TCM in a special way. This does not mean that the original texts should be translated literally. Instead it is to become aware of the fundament and the presuppositions of those texts. To get those important presuppositions the lecture presents the so called methodology of “Strangification”. It is based on the idea that science or in a special respect single disciplines are to consider as a system of propositions that build up on certain presuppositions and that are just true under the condition of those special presuppositions. Therefore the aim of the methodology is to express those necessary presuppositions by mixing a certain system of propositions with a different context in order to get aware of what has to be presupposed for a proposition to become true. – So this methodology shall be used to get to know the fundament of TCM, to understand TCM better and to have an awareness of the typical way of its thinking. To complete this discussion about doing research on TCM there shall be a number of mistakes named that can be made in this case as well as some advices of what to do to get a better research.

## **1. Introduction: Leading Topic and question of this discussion**

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This lecture focuses on the following question: “What do we have to do if we want to do a TCM-adequate research?” – To explain this question: This lecture deals with two important elements: *first* with the research on TCM and *second* with some concepts of philosophy of science. It is the aim to reflect researching TCM while considering certain ideas coming from the field of philosophy of science.

So you can understand the question respectively the lecture as preconsiderations for a TCM-adequate research. To fulfill this we have to refer to the relation of TCM and Western Science – and their incompatibility. That means that you always should keep in mind that these are two different systems that are incompatible; two systems that cannot be compared directly. Therefore you have to consider the special way of the system and the special thinking of TCM.

To discuss this named question and this topic there shall be four chapters:

- 1) First we have to ask the following question from inside the European science: „What is really European Science?” – European because it started intellectually in Europe. I know it is now all over the world.
- 2) Insights into the differences between Chinese and European Culture especially under the aspect of TCM
- 3) Development of a specific methodology for TCM research and
- 4) Principal mistakes in researching on TCM and some advices what you should observe if you research TCM.

## **2. The relation of Western Science and TCM and the special way of their thinking**

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### **2.1. Basic Moments of European Science**

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You must know the common convictions about science are mostly wrong since the last 50 years research in Philosophy and History of Science has shown that science is totally going in another way than the majority of some scientists believe. Science is not in correspondence with the nature but science is a job which is constructing models which are somehow in a specific way directly connected with nature. “Directly” because when we make an experience we should know that every experience is guided by theoretical convictions which usually we do not discuss. For example if you want to be a scientist in a specific discipline you must observe immediately

by some principals which are out of discussion. As soon as you discuss these principles you will get problems with your colleagues.

The main point of the result in the last 50 years research on structure of Western Science is that science is a manifoldness of constructions of our reference to the world. We have many different constructions of this reference to the world. Some of them are compatible. Some of them are incompatible.

Therefore there is one thing you should consider: There is a manifoldness for understanding the world given by science, not just one way and not just one solution – as the Western science usually believes. But there it is guided by its own culture. Science means that it can change at any time. Science means that there is no final result to be expected. This is a main point in understanding science. According to the Western understanding of science there is no end of the run of science.

In the last 15 years we have seen the other aspect which was so hard to understand for European scientists, especially for European Philosophers of Science that Science is dependent from culture. That means that science is guided by cultural convictions. Therefore it is fair to contend that we have a Western Science or European Science. This is a term I use in difference to a Chinese Science, in difference to Sciences or scientific attempts of other cultures. It is fair because in this case we contend that there is not only one way to make a structure of the world and that there are different ways to form those structures of the world in an intellectual manner.

The relation of the Western Science is a relation of clarification. We have cultural convictions and scientific inventions clarifying these convictions or making them exacter. Therefore Western Science always has this two points, the one point is to govern nature – which is different to Chinese Science. The other point is to understand nature. But only a few scientists are able to connect these two points: Understanding and governing.

The majority of the scientists today believe that if we can govern something, we already have scientific results. But this is wrong. Just governing Phenomena means one aspect of science. We also must make this governing understandable and this is a hard job. Look for instance to Quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics is in the one aspect fully developed. We can govern many Phenomena. There are questions opened but many questions are already answered. But in a big part of Quantum theory the other point of understanding is not fulfilled. Science in the European sense therefore is always in difference to nature. Science is not natural in this way. Science is a way of transforming nature. This is also a big important difference to the Chinese way.

## **2.2. Differences between Chinese and European Culture – in respect to TCM**

The second chapter focuses on insights into the differences between Chinese and European Culture especially under the aspect of TCM: This is a wide field and you will hear only a few points now which are important to understand if you want to research TCM. – The first aspect to mention is the concept of **experience**. The Chinese way is a different way to the Western one. You can say that Chinese science has a big experience – no doubt – but this is not the same as the experience of the way of Western science. But it is not to decide which type of experience is the better one. These are two different ways to experience the world.

The Western way of experience is the following: you must take out the subject, you must totally go back from nature and take out all what is human related. You must make the nature totally objective, this means you must reduce your subjectivity to zero. Clearly this is impossible but it was always the intention of all scientists in the Western world that subjectivity must be taken out. Otherwise your result has no scientific value, is not scientific. In the Chinese way experience is not guided by this way that subjectivity is to be taken out. This totally goes in the other direction, the subjectivity is taken in. You are always referring to the master who offers these experiences. Therefore the master himself is not only an authority. His position presupposes that from the beginning there is an ethical intention in scientific experience.

Therefore if you speak about evidence based science, be careful: For Chinese science this has a different meaning than for the Western science.

A second different point is the **question of generality**, generality in scientific work: You know in the Western science generality has a high value. The more general a theory is the more specific the worth. And therefore because the Western world, the Western languages have this concept of the universals, of the most general concepts which are covering all. In Chinese language the way is another one what means that the way of generalizing is usually not done. Let's say they go the sideway. The wood is a sum of trees, is not a specific concept for instance.

If you study Chinese science, you always have to be aware that universality has no big importance for them. Very important are – I introduce this term – “intermobiles” because what they are doing is not based on abstraction to the more general terms in context, they are going a sideway and connect other aspects with the first one. This is a different way of making experience: to connect other qualities and other objects with an object to understand this object better. This is different.

In the Western way you must take out some qualities from the object to get a scientific result. Therefore the scientific result in the Western world always is reducing qualities. Therefore it is always a big decision which qualities are important and which qualities are not important.

The main point of Chinese understanding of the World is the **relation between body and mind**. So many Philosophers since Plato are thinking about this question of how the relation of body and mind can be thought in an adequate and in a true way. And as you know as medical doctors this is very important for the medicine, for medical doing, what is the relation between body and mind. But this is a typical Western question. I do not want to comment the body-mind-problem here because what is discussed in this problem does not observe enough the cultural presuppositions of our thinking.

In the Chinese way you don't have the body-mind-problem. If they speak about mental problems, they do it by words connected with the body. In the beginning there is no difference like in the Western world and this causes a lot of consequences for science. Therefore psychology for instance is a new science for China because it is a typical Western science. To make the soul to an object is very untypical to Chinese science. But China today is not the old China, is not the China of the TCM – always be aware about this point.

Just a small other point – small but important: The **concept of nature**. Even today and even among people who are not religious or something like this you can find the following implicit conviction in the back of the head: that the world has a beginning and that the world is something which is constructed, which has rules and so on. This was the basis of Western Science from the beginning. This is a basis coming from Plato and Aristoteles and is connected with the Christian thinking. Therefore it is so strong over all the hundreds of years and therefore is guiding a lot of science in the Western world.

Take a look for instance to cosmology: They ask about the beginning of the world. You can consider this question a pseudo-problem. It is a typical culturally induced problem which is no question for instance for Chinese thinking.

A very important problem is the **problem of holism**. Everybody says the difference between the Western thinking and the Chinese thinking is holistic. This does not tell anything and it is wrong. There is also a holistic thinking in the Western world but different from the holism in the Chinese world. Holism in the Western world is a holism which is starting by the subject, by specific things and connecting them with the other things. The holism of the Western world is a holism of summary. The holism of the Chinese world is a holism of Strangification. But you have to be careful what this mean. It is not so easy to explain. It is different to the Western holism.

At the end of this chapter you shall get a hint about the theoretical fundament of this approach to those two sciences and the comparison of their special way of thinking: This comparison of the two different sciences of the Western medicine and TCM is based on two specific concepts coming from the field of philosophy of science: *first* on a certain idea of science, *second* on a certain ontology that makes a fundamental distinction in the concept of reality. Those two basic moments – the idea of science and the named ontology – lead us to essential concepts of *Constructive Realism*. It is a modern position of philosophy of science we developed and that considers science in respect and its dependence to cultural conditions. But this shall just be a hint.

### **2.3. Development of a specific methodology for TCM research**

For the third chapter, the chapter about the „development of a specific methodology for TCM research” I will start with a famous example. It is about a big research program in Germany about the efficiency of acupuncture: We have 3 groups. The first one underwent the treatment of Western Medicine; the second group the treatment of real acupuncture while the third group was treated by pseudo-acupuncture. Just the doctor takes the needle but he sticks it into wrong spots.

And what was the result? – First the Western treatment was worse than the Chinese treatment in this field in all cases. There is no big difference in the efficiency about the real acupuncture and the pseudo-acupuncture. We could now deduce from this: The theory of acupuncture is totally nonsense or what ever you are doing is better than Western medicine. But what is the methodological mistake behind? The mistake is the concept of the placebo. The concept of the placebo is a concept which presupposes the Western division between body and mind. But this presupposition does not work in the Chinese way.

But we want to make effective research. What should we do? The first advice is clearly a trivial one: Go back to the original text! This is a similar way important for contemporary Chinese researchers or medical doctors as well as for the Westerners. This is not a question of translating the text. It is the question of understanding this text in a context which was adequate to the original context.

But now we can not constitute the Chinese world 2000 years ago. What shall we do in this situation? First rule is we must not translate literally because the word in the new context, even the Chinese word, has another context than the same word in the old text. Therefore translation must not help, translation must come later.

What we have to do in this situation is one thing: At first we have to take a look to the context of the concepts. It is the context of medical advices. And we must try to reconstruct these medical advices. Then we have a type of network for our first primary understanding. But this is not enough.

There is another important aspect: You have to use a specific methodology. If you research on the understanding of the original text of TCM, you should use this methodology if you would like to have a result which is adequate. It is a methodology we invented in Vienna.

This methodology is coming from hermeneutics. Hermeneutic is just a way of interpreting, of understanding etc. The methodology that shall be explained here has the name „Strangification” in English. This is an artificial word. „Strangification” is a translation of the German word „Verfremdung“.

The strategy of “Strangification” is led by the following principle: Take a concept or a medical advice out of its context and put it into another context. The more different this other context is the better for the use of this methodology. Strangification is based on the concept that science or disciplines are systems of propositions that are based on certain presupposition. Those presuppositions have the meaning that they depict the condition for the truth of a proposition. That means that every proposition or every medical advice is just true under certain conditions and means also that we cannot say that a scientific sentence is true under all conditions. So if we want to find out the true content of a proposition, a concept or an advice we have to consider its presupposition. And

here you can find the aim of this methodology: It is to show and to raise the conditions or the presuppositions that are necessary for the truth of a proposition, a concept, a term or – as it is discussed here – a medical advice. But how can we manage that? Strangification goes the following way to get to know those presuppositions: We take the system of propositions, the terms or advices out of their original context and put it in a totally different context – and as said, the more different it is the better for the research. The consequence of this procedure is that some aspects of the original advice or concepts are getting absurd because they are missing certain presuppositions that are needed for the truth of the advice and that are not given in the different context. And at this point you can see what presupposition you have to have to get a true sentence. So this absurdness is the point where you have to emphasize your research. – To summarize that: By using this method of Strangification, by changing the contexts of the terms, advices, etc. you can become aware of the implicit presuppositions they are needed to be true.

„Strangification” is an indirect method; it is a method of mirroring. If you go into a chamber with many mirrors, you get different views. And if you get different views, you get an understanding which takes you away from the one point of view, from the one view which you have on the beginning.

Or you could say „Strangification” is a way of restructuring. We cannot restructure the old text in the direct way because we don’t know how they were thinking. We must restructure them in an indirect way. But we must reframe them by mirroring from different aspects.

As it was explained before you have to consider that the use of this methodology to improve the understanding of the original texts of TCM is just one way of using “Strangification”. It can help you to get aware of the necessary presuppositions for your concept and terms and can help you to understand your own discipline and your own science better. But you can use this methodology not only just inside your own discipline or science but as a second way between different disciplines or sciences, like between TCM and Western medicine.

I give you one example from Kaptchuk: It is about the diseases of the stomach. In the Western world we have the diseases of the stomach which are leading to surgery and so on. In the Chinese medicine diseases of the stomach have five or more situations or situated functions of the body. It is a different way of understanding. It has five different solutions just for the one solution of the Western world. Therefore if you take the methodology of Strangification for this problem of the diseases of the stomach you can learn what is the presupposed meaning of the original text in the context of medical thinking.

I recommend you to do this with other concepts. A further example is the example of blood pressure. Blood pressure is very important for Western medicine. Take it in the context of the Chinese medicine and have a look what will happen. Or take the five elements.

#### **2.4. Principal mistakes and advices for researching TCM**

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Principal mistakes in researching TCM:

- 1) Looking for similarities
- 2) Trying to give TCM-propositions a scientific legitimation
- 3) Taking out TCM-advices of its context
- 4) Using terms which are loaded by Western concepts

And at the end some advices. What should you observe if you research TCM?

- 1) First replace theory by network. If you research on TCM do not ask first for theory, ask for the network!
- 2) Look at the differences and not at the similarities. Do not generalize!
- 3) Look for examples instead of explanations!

- 4) Try to reduce your position to an observer!

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