

## Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Measure of Convenience

*Cost-Effective Healthcare in a Modern Society Takes a Strong Body of Knowledge and an Open Mind to the Limits of Profit Making*

*Being a fervent practitioner of both Qi Gong and Tai Ji Quan and having first hand experienced the benefits of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), through this article I analyze the peculiar barriers which prevent cooperation between Bio Medical (BM) approaches and Traditional Chinese Medicine development in the West. This article is the first of a series of articles on results of modern healthcare industry and the barriers which prevent it from becoming healthy...*

In February 2016 the Dutch Ministry of Health was confronted again with the rising cost of Western medicine for current health hazards such as cancer. The report the minister sent to the 2th chamber, among other, criticized Western pharmaceutical companies on their 'innovation' records, leading to unnecessary and extremely high prized medicines of which also many times the effectiveness leaves much to be desired. Simultaneously, a scandalous irresponsible retreat of a pharmaceutical

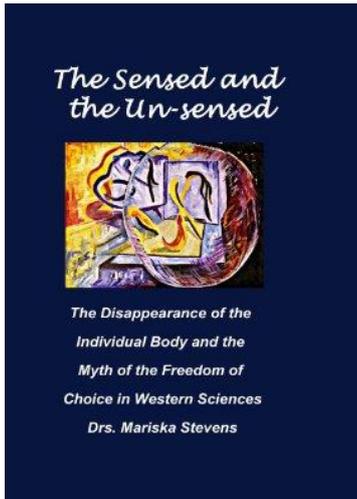
company to another country left behind thousands of patients without the medication on which they relied.

These are but incidents in a long line of problems concerning Western pharmaceutical practices. Fresh in the memory of many are the problems caused by a drug called Softenon, which was prescribed in the 90tees to pregnant women as a mood-drug and caused thousands of infants to be born without hands, arms or legs. In the beginning of 2000 another drug against depression prescribed to youngsters turned out to effect suicides and self-mutilation. Much of the research reports in the pharmaceutical industry are done by those who produce and sell the drugs and time and time again we see that part of the results are suppressed, or necessities for use are immensely overrated, part of trendy ideas and not of scientific proof. And this still does not cover the massive lack of research done on the effectiveness and workings of most drugs on the female body as preferred testing is done on males.



In between the new trends on treatment of illness and diseases, non-bio-medical (NBM) approaches are part of the field of ethno-psychology. These NBM approaches have been in existence since the 70tees and 80tees of the former centuries. Plainly ethno-psychology looks at the reception of illness and health in different cultures from a cultural anthropological perspective. In the West more holistic views of the body, not treating small parts but the entire body, have become much preferred. Though the trend has been to acknowledge the links between body and mind, concepts of sickness and health have been borrowed from other cultures to this effect. Yet they have never

been acknowledged completely in the West and are still viewed as lower knowledge on a imagined evolutionary ladder, not subjected to “real” scientific methods. And this of course, is the perfect message and marketing for dishonest and unequal competition for the status of acknowledged medical remedies. If there is some integration, like for instance with Chinese acupuncture, such integration has been made almost impossible as it is not accessible in the basic healthcare insurance or it is begrudgingly admitted, usually at high costs for the ensured person.



Now some years ago I published my research on how scientific choices in the West are anything but objective, but this research was very much opposed and my rather cowardly professors expressed that it would “saw through the foundations under the chair of science”, in those days I was still under the impression that critical research was, what science should be about, but such was expelled as post-modern nonsense. It caused me to have very little faith in Western universities and as I soon found out, were not devoid of lobbyism, friends of friends politics and all the types of discrimination following from such socio psychological mechanisms. My research aside still I see urges in society for change, especially in the field of healthcare.

### **Time, Trial and Error**

That traditional Chinese Medicine holds a practice of at least 2000 if not 3000 years is not refuted. TCM is quite obvious the system of healthcare in Chinese culture and the literature on its practices proof its long existence.

In the beginning of the former century Western medical doctors were unable to understand the practice as not so much through its ‘mystics’, but as a result that Western images of the body concerned bones, blood vessels and heartbeat, but beyond that a pulse could not reveal more. The application of pulse diagnose in ‘feeling’ the energy of the three meridians in TCM remained a complete mystery for Western doctors. Biomedical history and body imaging originated from opening up and dissecting the death body, not from sensing or feeling a living one. There was a longstanding condescendence towards folk remedies, dating back to the French revolution, when first the medical profession appeared as a class on the scene of

society. Ironically, much of its success (as well as failures) came from operating test persons from the lower classes of society. The general idea of a body as part of an environment developed into an individualized image of the body, separated from its surroundings and treatable as a machine with fixable parts and especially the development of psycho-pharma further separated the head from the body one might say...

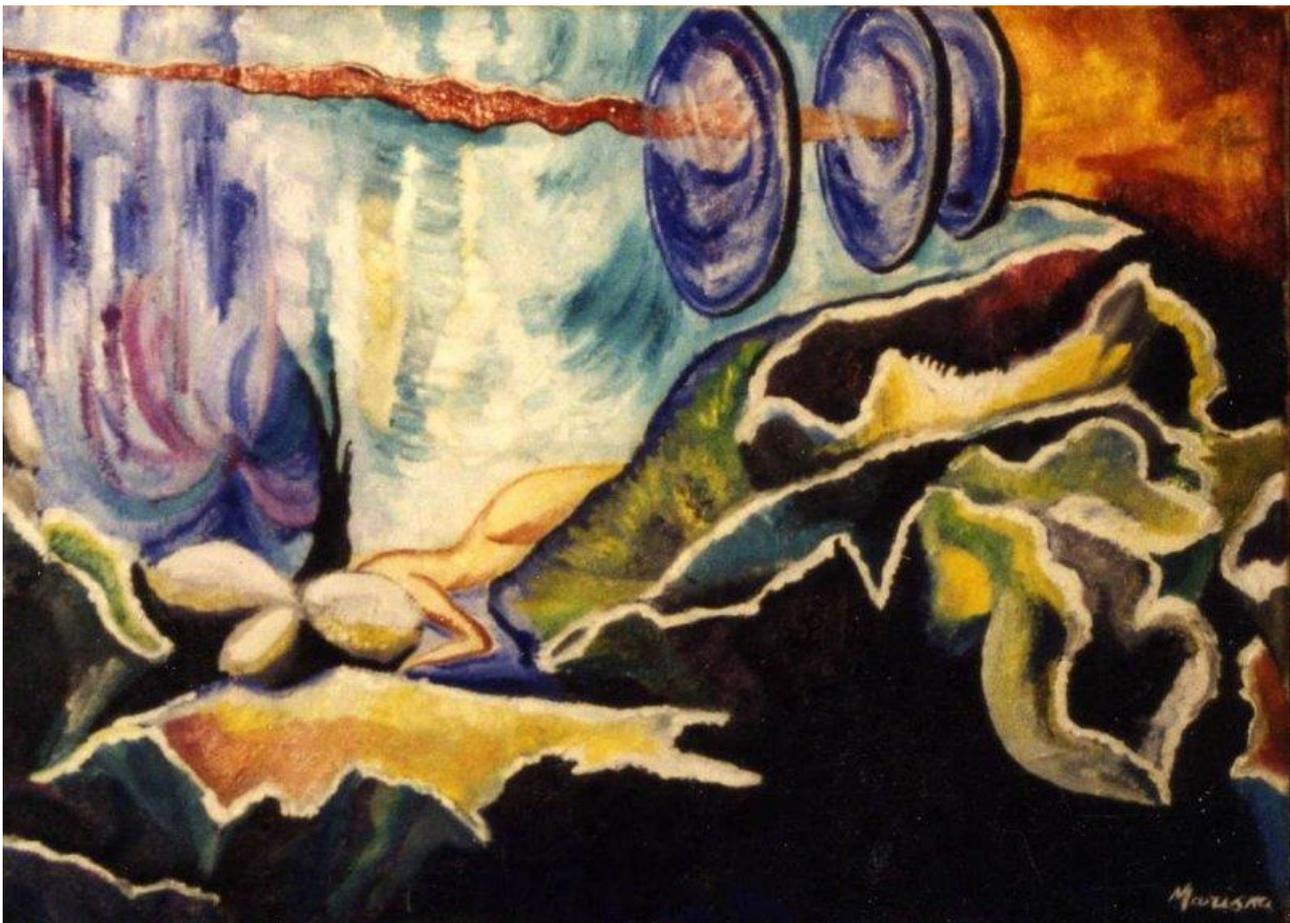
Contrary to the Western conviction, which claimed that all other cultures remained primitive compared to Western science, in China TCM never ceased to develop. The acupuncture practices from the earlier times do not compare with those from the beginning of the twentieth-st century and throughout the twentieth-st century both medicine development as well as practices continued to be tested on the basis of that all famous scientific principle of trial and error. Yet Western style "scientific" registration did not have priority, it neither did in the West to be honest, very few medicines from the early 20th century would be able to pass the test of safety nowadays. To be more honest, many of them, especially in the field of psycho-pharma still won't pass the test. And some BM medicine have come into existence even before a particular illness was ever diagnosed, it is honest to say that big pharma are big business nowadays. Nevertheless the difference between development of TCM in China and development of BM in the West have been a story of cost effectiveness (bare feet doctors and availability of healthcare for all) versus high cost successes (oddly in the West we are now able to simultaneously perform three operations. hearth, liver and lungs, without having but a clue on the workings of pain). There is still fierce opposition towards integrations of various approaches in bio-medicine and in 2013 the EU rules on the import of herbal remedies came into effect, which set-back the possibilities for integration not so much because of the standards applied in approval of TCM, but because of the costs of such approvals (almost 3 million euro's per medicine)

Meanwhile, currently China has established an innovative approach towards the development of combined efforts in the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine. China aims to intensify international cooperation in the development of Chinese medicine over the next 15 years. The Chinese central government and ministry's aim to promote these developments in transforming the modern (bio)medical model into an integrated and broader platform for Chinese medicine.

This integrated model is already in effect within China. In China now there are more than 3700 National Hospital and more than 30.000 Chinese medicine clinics working with integrated models. At present 42 universities in China offer specialization in Chinese medicine with an average staff of 55 person. In total 580.000 students as well as practitioners attend studies. There are already 16 Chinese clinical research bases organized through the Chinese Academy of Sciences in China and these focus on mayor national scientific technological projects and programs. In conclusion, Chinese Traditional Medicine (TCM) is growing into a fast modernized form of pharmaceutical cost effective production.

### **Beyond the Healthy Barriers of Scientific Enterprise**

But what then is it which keeps integration of Eastern and Western medicine which could benefit so many, could become so more cost effective and would, could, safe so many lives in the future and heal so many forms of pain for so many people?



A very large part of the answer lies in the construction of industrial approaches towards the body and its economic exploitation. We far surpassed the Hippocratic

oath in healthcare and what use to be a simple statement of “first do no harm” has become a measure of “first make prestige and money”. Healthcare is an industry which develops through multinationals, and multinationals are not states who care about citizens, they are not responsible organs of society, they are there to please their shareholders (even required by United States law to do so) and therein lies the biggest contradiction. The world of multinational profit seeking corporations is not suitable as a medical service industry.