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# THE “YIN” AND “YANG” ANCIENT CHINESE PHILOSOPHY AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO BODY TREATMENT

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*Abstract:* The birth of the theory of yin and yang is the result of a long process of reflecting and generalizing the practice of the Chinese people in ancient times. The original meaning of the theory of yin and yang was only an expression of the contrast between light and darkness. Its development has become a theory to explain the laws of nature, society and thought. In this article we will focus on clarifying the relationship of yin and yang theory on the human body through the relationships of the above, below, left and right, inside and outside, diagonal in the body position. To have a solid basis for this determination, we have conducted an evaluation at a health clinic from June 2005 to September 2022 with 2,402 people. The determination of the yin-yang relationship on the human body is conducted and recorded in a scientific and objective manner.

*Keywords:* dialectical relationship, yin and yang theory, human body.

## Introduction

The origin of the theory of yin and yang has many different explanations (Chen, 2002, 2008; Lee, 2000). In order to understand the theory of yin and yang, we must first return to the historical conditions in which it was born. Yin was originally used to refer to darkness and yang was used to refer to light, later yin and yang were considered two principles used to indicate the relationship of all things in the universe. “*The yang represents masculinity, activity, heat, brightness, dryness, hardness, etc., and the yin femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, wetness, tenderness, etc.*” (Fung, 1948, p. 138). The Chinese in ancient times explained all things and phenomena from the natural world, society and

thought by the theory of yin and yang. They believe that in the universe, there are two sides, yin and yang, which transform each other to create the world. Yin and yang exist in all things and phenomena, so it must be balanced. Because “*When the Sun has reached the meridian height, it begins to decline; when the Moon has become full, it begins to wane*” (Xinyan, 2013). “*According to the remaining documents, the theory of yin and yang appeared the earliest in the scriptures*” (Vo, 2020). The theory of yin and yang was mentioned in an earthquake in 780 BC. “*When the Yang is concealed and cannot come forth, and when the Yin is repressed and cannot issue forth, then there are earthquakes*” (Xu, 2002, p. 26). The I Ching was originally a book on divination based on a philosophical point of view.

They took two overlapping yin and yang strokes, changed their positions to become four statues, then into eight trigrams, giving birth to sixty hexagrams. There are no things in that heaven that do not include two elements yin and yang, these two factors coexist in each thing and phenomenon, it fights with each other, covers each other. *“The duality (dialectical) thinking in the ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang that every universal phenomenon is a dynamic unity consisting of paradoxes”* (Fang, 2012) The operation of the four seasons of the year is also due to the rise and fall of yin and yang. There is, and everything must obey its order. *“Opening and closing are the way of heaven and earth. Opening and closing change and move yinyang, just as the four seasons open and close to transform the myriad things”* (Wang, 2013). Yin Yang is an ancient Chinese philosophy and a holistic, dynamic, and dialectical world view (Li, 2008). The change of positions of the stars, the alternating illumination of the sun and the moon is due to the change of yin and yang (Chen, 2002). Phenomenon of; cold is yin, hot is yang: moist is yin, dry is yang: night is yin, day is yang (Lee et al., 2008, p. 88). The four seasons change, things and phenomena also change, so people must rely on that law to operate society (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Chen, 2008; Fang, 2003; Fletcher & Fang, 2006; Li, 2011).

The theory of yin and yang is considered the worldview of ancient Chinese philosophers (Chen, 2002; Li, 1998, 2008; Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Cooper, 1990). The theory of yin and yang is also used by traditional oriental medicine to explain the relationship between the parts of the human body. They argue that *“a human is a miniature of universe”* (Bhadra, 2019) in that there is a close relationship between them. The parts of the human body develop and change because of the transformation of the law of yin and yang. The process of absorption and the process of elimination are not separate, this helps people develop. When there is the development, there will be changes in quantity. Only when people develop can they master themselves and master society. Although each part of the body has a relationship with each other, but between them, they have their own characteristics. Humans exist in constant motion. The movement that develops when it reaches its climax will return to its original state. All things in the universe exist

in a circle of a certain cycle, the long or short cycle of things is determined by the yin and yang balance of things. However, there is not a single thing that lasts forever without returning to its original state because *“things in the universe change and become renew, and these changes all follow a constant order”* (Fung, 1952). The human body, when reaching the peak of development, begins to weaken, the body is hot and cold depending on the season. There is nothing in every part of the body that has prosperity without failure, born without loss. Each human being evolves, transforms, develops and after it reaches the climax, it will return to the original.

Since its inception until now, the theory of yin and yang is one of the important theories that have a great influence on Chinese society. Not long after its birth, the theory has affirmed its position in society, which proves that it is a complete and logical theory that not only explains the origin and formation of the universe but also contributes to the explanation of the phenomena in social life. As a theory that has had a great influence in the East and has transcended all time, the theory of yin and yang has transcended the scope of philosophy and made its mark on many different fields, including the field of medicine. In this article, we will clarify the reflection on the human body using the yin and yang theory in ancient Chinese philosophy to answer questions such as: What is the relationship on the human body; What does the explanation of the relationship on the human body by the theory of yin and yang mean to society?

## Research Methods

The article studies the history of Chinese thought of a theory, so we choose the approach according to the basic methodological principles of the science of history of philosophy.

In order to perform well the research objectives and tasks, the article must implement the rigor of history, that is, the research is comprehensive, multidimensional, historical - specifically, considering the dialectical thought in the research. The theory of yin and yang shows the yin-yang relationship on the human body. Born initially as serving religious rituals it gradually penetrated into many different fields including medicine. The theory of yin and yang has not

only proved vital, but also influenced many countries around the world to this day.

When studying the theory of yin and yang, we approach research issues from a philosophical perspective, putting philosophy in relationship with medicine to analyze and explain its dialectical content.

In order to achieve the above objectives and content, the article is based on the worldview and methodology of philosophy, and uses specific methods as follows:

*Historical - logical method:* The article uses historical method to understand the conditions for forming the theory of yin and yang as well as to consider and evaluate the theory in each specific field. Based on the historical method to study the events and scientific issues that the article has achieved. On the basis of historical data, from which to draw the regularity of the movement and development of the theory.

*Method of literature study:* We will be faithful to the text of the works to learn and research scientific issues. At the same time, learn the text's origin, compare the text to analyze and clarify the content of dialectical thought in the theory of yin and yang.

*Methods of collecting information and documents:* We collect documents such as books, newspapers, magazines in Vietnam and other countries about dialectical thought in the theory of yin and yang.

*Methods of analysis and synthesis:* The article uses this method to analyze the dialectic of the theory and explain it on the human body in order to open up its application in disease diagnosis and treatment.

## Content of the Article The Relationship of Yin and Yang Theory

The theory of yin and yang holds that all things have life and all go through the process of birth, development and transformation. The existence of things must obey the unchanging law of “birth and death”. Human is a small universe, so its operation also complies with the laws of the macrocosm. In order to survive, people must always move, and metabolize air, food, and water and depending on the four seasons to live. Therefore, the origin of life and the process of movement and change is yin and yang, so yin and

yang is considered the first form of matter to form other types of matter. The process of transformation and interaction of yin and yang has created the four seasons, this change has affected human life. The changing process of the four seasons forces the human body to adapt according to the law, if it goes against the law, it will be hurt. Like the universe, the human body is also affected by the law of yin and yang. Thanks to the transformation of yin and yang, there is movement, change and development. Thinkers in ancient China explained that, when the universe was first formed, everything was still chaotic, yin and yang were very mixed and in constant motion. Over time, the negative qi gradually settles below, and the yang gradually rises to the top. When yin and yang are stable, the seasons of the year begin to appear and new life is formed. Chinese thinkers also emphasize that yin and yang is the nucleus of life, and people and living things have life because those two qi harmonize and complement each other. The human body is strong or weak, has long or short existence is determined by the harmony between yin and yang. The changes of yin and yang, as far as they occur in man, if one puts them in numbers, they can be quantified too (Unschuld, P. & Tesenow, H. 2011. p. 129).

The theory of yin and yang is expressed in human life, yang is responsible for transforming the essence in the body, biochemically into invisible gases of active function. Yin is the combination of matter in nature to synthesize it into a form. These two processes have a dialectical relationship with each other, if yin is too strong, it will lead to yang's decline and vice versa. In order for the body to develop, it is necessary to balance these two states, which are the basic characteristics of any living organism. The human body is influenced by many natural and social factors. Each effect on the body has a different response such as response to weather, pupil response to light, vomiting response, excretion response, etc. And any body follows a yin and yang law, that is, when life appears, there must be a metabolic process, this development to the peak will lead to decline and finally return to its original state. And heredity is a condition that helps people maintain their own characteristics. This is a condition for successive generations to exist, if parents are physically and mentally impaired, their children will grow up. This genera-

tion is born and gradually grows up, the other generation will decrease and gradually disappear. This is the inevitable law of mankind.

From the point of view of the ancient Chinese, the “god” of yang has an important position. God is born from the quintessence of heaven and earth, due to the process of human formation, “god” is also the first formed. God is understood in a broad sense including thinking, consciousness, emotion, perception, etc., if god is lacking, then life will end. Blood is an extremely important material to maintain life for the body. For the supply of nutrients to the body, nothing is as important as blood. Blood, along with semen, is considered the three treasures of the body because semen is the beginning. New fluid is the common name for all types of fluids in the body. Any substance that is clear but less is called Tan. Any substance that is cloudy and abundant is called fluid. Outer center of fluid can relax muscles and flesh, inside it refreshes the viscera, outflow of organs makes it easier for eyes, ears, mouth, and nose to function smoothly, penetrates into the bone marrow to nourish the brain and generate medulla. These three factors will help people develop sex, if they fail, they will weaken their health and endanger their lives. The ancient Chinese thinkers believed that qi belongs to the yang, and Chuang Tzu (2008) once said that People are born because of the accumulation of qi. When the qi gathers, it gives birth, when the qi disperses, it dies. So everything is one, what people think is good is called miracle, what is not good is called rotten. In fact, rotten things can turn into miracles, and miracles can also turn into rotten things. Qi is the element that forms the universe and humans are no exception. In “Huangdi Neijing” (The Su Wen of the Huangdi Neijing (Inner classic of the yellow emperor), n.d.) (in Vietnamese Hoàng đế nộ kinh), it is said that qi is the basic material that makes up the body and uses the movement and changes of qi to explain all kinds of living phenomena of the body. Because of qi, the pulse is healthy, because of qi, they are sick. Thus, the change of qi is directly related to the prosperity and decline and short life of each person. The meridians have the effect of operating qi and blood, nourishing yin and yang, softening tendons and bones, and smoothing joints. The meridians were discovered as a result of the long struggle with disease and the accumulation of

knowledge over many generations. In the course of illness, the human body is always in pain, to minimize that pain, people have shared the pain by massaging the body, heating the patient's body on fire in winter to relieve the cold, and taking ice under the springs or rivers to put on patients to reduce heat, to make them cool in the summer. Thus, the original purpose of massaging, heating, and cooling is to reduce the patient's pain. In that process, people discovered that every time they squeeze, heat, and bend in some places on the body, the disease gradually decreases and completely heals. Those experiences were tested many times and drawn through many locations on the body for many diseases from which the theory of meridians was formed. The meridian is a system that runs throughout the body, it is the system that communicates all organs in the body with each other. In which the straight (main) lines are called meridians, the horizontal (secondary) lines are called coherence, and the intersections are called acupoints.

Ancient Chinese thinkers used *meridian theory* to study physiological functions, pathological processes, and the yin-yang relationship between human organs. The ancient Chinese thinkers discovered that the meridian consists of 12 main meridians, 8 meridians, and 12 distinct meridians, and the coherent meridians include 15 distinct, colossal, and ecstatic. When qi and blood operate continuously and circulate non-stop, the parts of the body have enough nutrients to develop. Since the meridian is the transport and distribution organ of nutrients for the whole body, it is the key to human health and longevity. However, the transport of meridians depends on the points on the body. The acupuncture point is where the chi and qi of the viscera come and exit, the location to apply acupuncture and medical procedures. The effect of the acupoint is to transform energy (qi) and is also the place of entry of disease. Therefore, acupoints are the place to diagnose and treat diseases. Ancient Chinese thinkers divided acupoints into three categories: meridians, non-meridians, and pain points. On the basis of research, analysis and classification of the features, uses and characteristics of acupressure points, ancient Chinese physicians discovered many acupoints with similar therapeutic effects. Acupressure points are distributed in certain locations and have effects on specific organs. Like acupressure points in the Thu Thai Yin Pho me-



meridian, they all have the effect of treating diseases in the lungs, bronchi and pharynx. At the same time, when acupuncture at these points will appear a feeling of numbness, gradually running along a certain path. Ancient Chinese thinkers observed acupoints and discovered that there was a linear relationship between them, so they called it the meridian system. Thus ancient Chinese thinkers put forth “the view that heaven is yang, earth is yin; the sun is yang, the moon is yin; day is yang, night is yin; All that is dynamic, shapeless, outward, upward, warm, bright, strong, is yang. The things that are still, shaped, inward, downward, cool, dim, and degraded are all yin” (Vo, 2020). Ancient Chinese thinkers relied on to the phenomena in nature to explain the phenomena in the body and at the same time explain the causes leading to human diseases.

### The Relationship of Yin and Yang Theory on the Human Body

*The relationship “up” and “down” of yin and yang.* This is the relationship “up” (yang), and “down” (yin), in the process of applying the theory of yin and yang to the body, on this relationship the human body is divided into two parts, the first part consists of parts from “the waist up” is called (yang) and the second “from bottom from the waist down” is called (yin). Based on this rule, we proceeded to list the corresponding body parts in the form of top and bottom as follows: On the tips of the fingers, under the tips of the toes; On the back of the hand, under the instep; on the palms, under the soles of the feet; On the back of the hand, under the back of the foot; On the heel of the hand, under the heel of the foot; Above the joints of the hands, below the joints of the feet; On the wrist, under the ankle; On the forearm, under the shin; On the arm, under the thigh; Above the shoulders, under the buttocks; On the armpit, under the hip. . . . So each part at the top always has a corresponding part at the bottom;

*The relationship of left and right of yin and yang.* Based on this relationship, the human body is divided into two, taking the bridge of the nose and navel as the boundary and placing the left side as (yang) and the right side as (yin). On that basis, we list a number of corresponding parts between the left (positive) and the right (nega-

tive) as follows: Left first half, right first half; Left ear, right ear; Neck left, neck right; Left shoulder, right shoulder; Left shoulder blade, right shoulder blade; Chest on the left, chest on the right; Left arm, right arm; Elbow left, elbow right; Left wrist, right wrist; Left hand ankle, right hand ankle; Left palm, right palm; The back of the left hand, the back of the right hand; Fingers on the left, fingers on the right; Fingers on the left, fingertips on the right; Left rib, right rib; Back left side, back right side; Belt on the left side, belt on the right side; Left thigh, right thigh; Left knee joint, right knee joint; Left shin, right shin; Left ankle, right ankle; Back of left foot, back of right foot; Left foot sole, right foot sole; Left toe joints, right toe joints; Left toes, right toes. . . ;

*The relationship of “before” and “after” of yin and yang.* Based on this relationship, the human body becomes the front (yin), the back (yang), the center of the ear and the ankle to divide the boundary, the person standing upright, the arms straight, the palms directed at each other. On this division, the parts before and after are reflective and equal;

*The relationship of “inside” and “outside” of yin and yang.* Based on this relationship, the internal parts of the body are called (yin), and those expressed on the outside are called (yang). According to the concept of yin and yang theory, in each human hand and foot, in each of its positions, there is usually a point corresponding to the five organs in the body. When the five viscera are in pain, there will be pain points in the palms of the hands or feet, so we can detect the acupoints in those locations to cure the disease.

*“Cross-negative” relationship of yin and yang.* According to this relationship, the human body has a cross-relationship if the right hand is yang, the left foot is yin, the left hand is yang, then the right foot is yin. This cross-relation includes cross-relation before, cross-relation after, and cross-relation before-after.

*Relationships in yin there is yang, in yang there is yin.* According to this relationship, each division of the body contains both yin and yang, in yin contains yang and in yang contains yin. When the physical appearance moves and emerges, this is yang. Because the yang exists in the yin, this is called yang in the yin (Unschuld & Tessenow, 2011, p. 128).

## How to Determine the Yin and Yang Relationships on the Human Body

To determine the yin-yang relationship on the human body, we conducted a test on a total of 2,402 people from 2005 to September 2022, including 41 people from countries such as Russia, Italy, France and Australia, the rest are Vietnamese. The determination of the yin-yang relationship on the human body is done with 60% being correct the first time, 35% the second time and 0.5% the third time. This method was tested at house number 08 Co Bac street, Phuoc Tien ward, Nha Trang city, Vietnam. Asking is a method with people who are in pain to determine yin and yang. This is a measure when determining yin and yang in the form of a person going to identify and asking the identified person about symptoms. This method requires the respondents to know the eating situation and living environment of the respondents. "Setting up" is a form of dividing the human body into three parts including head, arms and legs, each part divided into three queens: heaven, earth, and human. Based on acupuncture points, odd numbers represent yang, even numbers are negative, and people are in the middle of heaven and earth.

The determination of yin and yang on the human body must depend on the time, depend on each person. If East and South belong to yang, when yang qi is abundant, it goes from top to bottom. People live in different high and low areas, so the determination of the yin and yang relationship is also different. In order to properly determine the law of yin and yang on the human body, we must first master the above relationships and implement it in the form of "use cold to determine cold points, use hot to determine hot spots". If you have a cold, you must use fire to warm it, if you have a sprain, use ice to hold it. When treating, you should use heat to determine if the point is hotter than normal, then it is acupuncture or use ice to determine the relationship. The correct identification of the yin-yang relationship allows the oriental medicine to prescribe the right treatment.

### Conclusion

The theory of yin and yang was formed in ancient times in China, it was first mentioned in

Zhou Yi and later developed by thinkers in famous works of philosophical schools. This is considered one of the theories that were formed with the original purpose of explaining the world. Thinkers in China during this period viewed yin and yang as two opposites of all things. The opposition and unity of yin and yang is the source of all development and transformation. The theory of yin and yang is considered the foundation for all theories in China and is applied in medicine, especially oriental medicine, including traditional Vietnamese medicine. Thinkers have said that everything, including the human body, is composed of two parts, yin and yang, in yin there is yin, in yang there is yang, in yin is yang, in yang is in yin. When yang qi has biochemistry, then yin qi will constantly grow, which is the arising aspect of things. Yin and yang always rely on each other, both rely on each other to coexist, yang must have yin to have a source of nourishment. For the human body, "yang qi" represents the source of motivation, life energy, it is necessary to rely on the basis of matter for "yin" to be expressed. Yin and yang not only support the root but also eliminate it. These are two opposites that control each other to maintain balance in an object or phenomenon. These two sides exist parallel to each other, relying on each other, but if one side is too prosperous, the other side will decline and vice versa. This relationship is used to explain the evolution of disease, yin wins yang disease, yang damage affects yin, but if yin and yang harmonize, the body will be healthy.

The theory of yin and yang is widely applied in medicine, especially in oriental medicine. The first medical work that was successfully applied was the work "Emperor Noi Kinh". This is the first work to be recorded into a book in the treasure of Chinese Medicine and is also the evidence of famous physicians applying the theory of yin and yang to explain the origin of diseases, the methods of cure and the way to cure diseases to prevent disease. Thus, the theory of yin and yang was not only applied in medicine in ancient China, but also deeply influenced later famous physicians. With the inheritance of famous medical doctors in the past in the interpretation and treatment of diseases based on the theory of yin and yang.

On the basis of systematically studying the theory of yin and yang, we have drawn and ap-



plied this theory on the human body and made the following division: on “yang” under “yin”, after “yang” before “yin”, left “yang” right “yin”, in addition to “yang” in “yin”, in yang there is “yang” and in yin there is “yin”. This division is the basis for oriental medicine practitioners to conduct treatment according to the law.

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