

Wellbeing Natural Medicine

Wellbeing Natural Medicine Practice
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INTRODUCTION

Ibn Sina begins The Canon with a definition of the science of medicine: Medicine (tibb) is the science by which we learn the various states of the human body in health and when not in health, and the means by which health is likely to be lost, and when lost, is likely to be restored. In other words, medicine is the art whereby health is conserved and the art whereby it is restored after being lost.

Ibn Sina insists that the human body cannot be restored to health unless the causes of both health and disease are determined. In categorising the causes, he states that a complete knowledge may be, and should be obtained of the causes and antecedents of a disease, provided, of course, such causes exist. Sometimes these causes are obvious to the senses but at other times they may defy direct observation. In such circumstances, causes and antecedents have to be carefully inferred from the signs and symptoms of the disease. Hence, a description of the signs and symptoms of disease is also necessary.

There are four causes: material, efficient, formal and final:

THE MATERIAL CAUSES

The material cause (maddi) is the physical body which is subject to health and disease. This may be immediate and involve the organs of the body together with their vital energies, or remote as involving the humors, or remoter than these, by involving the elements which are the basis for both structure and change (or dynamicity). Things which thus provide the foundation of health and disease, get so thoroughly altered and integrated that from an initial diversity there emerges a holistic unity with a specific structure and a specific type of temperament.

The material cause then, is the physical body, as viewed from the traditional perspective. It consists of the organs, the vital energy (thymos), the humors and the elements.

THE ELEMENTS

The primary constituents of the human body are "the elements." They are the basic building blocks for the science of medicine. The four elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water - are the simplest building blocks of all that is material, including our bodies. Each of these has two qualities: Earth is dry and cold; Water, cold and moist; Air, hot and moist; and Fire is hot and dry. The elements also have special relationships to each other: Earth is contrary to Air and Water to Fire. Union between the elements is possible because Water serves as a link between Earth and Air and Air as a link between Water and Fire.

THE CANON OF MEDICINE

THE HUMORS

The humors are the vital essences of the body. These humors affect the function of the body and are themselves influenced by physical functions.

Food and drink are transformed into innate heat through the digestive process. The humors arise in the second stage of digestion in the liver. This process produces four humors which sustain and nourish the body and move through the channels or meridians: sanguineous (blood), serous (phlegm), bilious (choler, yellow bile) and atrabilious (melancholy, black bile); which correspond respectively to Air (hot and moist), Water (cold and moist), Fire (hot and dry) and Earth (cold and dry). The humors are subject to variation in quantity and to variation in degree of purity. Illness results when there is either a quantitative or qualitative change of a humor. In a "normal" state, the humors are assimilated by the organs and completely integrated into the tissues. In an "abnormal" state, which is due to improper digestion, the material is unsuitable for assimilation and must therefore be eliminated by the body. Surpluses may be eliminated by exercise, bathing, coitus, purges and laxatives.

THE TEMPERAMENTS.

The natural predominance of a given humor in the human body provides specific characteristics of physique and behaviour.

Those dominated by the sanguinious humor are cheerful, courageous, kind and ingenious. Their blood, if of good quality, gives them a keen wit.

As a person accumulates fat, the amount of Phlegm present relative to blood, increases. Domination of the phlegm humor is present in people who are generally lazy, given to pleasure, and who are sleepy, idle, dull witted, heavy and slow. They love rich foods and drink.

Those with a predominance of the bilious humor are easily provoked, given to treachery and vehement in action; fierce when attacking, but inconstant in maintaining the assault; inclined to envy, pride, extravagance and vindictiveness. If there is corruption of the bilious humor, they tend to be subject to abnormal desires and terrible nightmares.

Those dominated by the atrabilious humor are difficult, obstinate, suspicious, sorrowful and given to terrifying impulses. The natural predominance of a given humor in the human body provides specific characteristics of physique and behaviour.