

# Facing Disease Philosophy

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## Abstract

Facing the immeasurable world, people in different countries have different view on the questions of what life and death are. The methodologies of developing medicines for aging and diseases are also varied. They have different views because of different cultures. Health-Disease Line was used to describe the state of human health.

**Keywords: Disease, doctor, philosophy, efficacy, Health Disease Line.**

## Introduction and Content

Life, aging, disease and death are the four major tortures of human life, according to *Sakyamuni Buddha*. All human life needs to face them without exception. Facing the immeasurable world, people in different countries have different view on the questions of what life and death are. The methodologies of developing medicines for aging and diseases are also varied. They have different views because of different cultures.

From Confucianism point of view, "Don't know what life is, don't know what death is." (未知生,焉知死?) Facing to "life" and "death", it suggests the view of working hard and settling down with divine providence. (盡人事以聽天命) It also suggests the view of filial piety (孝) because humans are originated from parents. Benevolence, justice, rites and wisdom (仁義禮智) are the characteristics of a human different from other lives. From the Taoism point of view, they suggest "inaction" (無為), virtue and practices (德行雙修) on both the human nature and life. It believes things will reverse its course if they become extreme. (物極必反) In Tai Chi symbol (太極圖) (Figure 1), it shows the balance of yin (陰) and yang (陽). It believes unity of yin and yang is the origin of life and dissipation of yin and yang is the origin of death. The continuous maintainance of balance of yin and yang can ensure life longer and delaying death. Our life is the unity of our body and spirit. From the Buddhism point of view, the continuous recycle of life and death in transmigration between six realms (六道輪迴) is a torture of humans and people need to have continuous practice, such as meditation and giving in order to escape from the torture of continuous transmigration. From Holy Bible point of view, it believes people are guilty when they are born. So people are encouraged to love, give and make contributions in their life in order to redeem their guilty. It believes the concept of reborn. From scientific point of view, scientists try to use chemicals to deoxyribose nucleic acid (DNA) and replicate them to create life. But the problem of human "life" and "death" still cannot be solved. As the problem of "life" and "death" cannot easily be solved by human, they can only be faced with ignorance or religious believes.

"Aging" and "disease" can be better understood by scientific researches. Drugs can be developed for slowing aging and curing disease. From Huangdi Neijing (黃帝內經), inborn life-span of human is greater than 100. Health can be kept by balance of yin and yang in our body in which the inborn life-span can be acquired or extended. In western countries, one of the mechanisms of aging is related to free radical reaction and the slowing of the free radical reaction can slow aging<sup>1</sup>. Antioxidants and free radical scavengers can be applied which can slow aging.

What is disease? To define what disease is, health is needed to be defined because they are relative. According to World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity<sup>2</sup>. In Western philosophy, disease causes many possible series of symptoms. Nowadays many doctors define health as the condition of body without symptoms. Disease is defined as an abnormal condition of an organism that impairs

function and more broadly to refer to any condition that causes discomfort, dysfunction, distress, social problems, and/or death to person<sup>3</sup>. In Chinese philosophy, health is the balance of yin and yang within the human body. Imbalance of yin and yang is the cause of disease. In Indian philosophy, health is the harmonious feeling of body, mind and spirit. The inharmonious feeling is the state of disease. Therefore, health is an idealistic goal rather than a realistic proposition. It can be defined as a status of body which can be achieved by a process of continuous adjustment to the changing demands of our body and of the changing meanings we give to life so as to obtain a harmonious feeling.

As health and disease are relative and a continuous adjustment can achieve health and failure of adjustment can cause disease, health and disease can be roughly classified into five statuses by health-disease line (Figure 2). To make health realistic and practical, health is defined as statuses between idealistic health and sub-health at health-disease line (Figure 2). Some statuses, such as easily to be fatigue, cannot be detected by doctors. These statuses cannot be classified as realistic health but the conditions are different from getting disease. These uncomfortable conditions are defined as sub-health. Increase in seriousness of disease can be described in health-disease line (Figure 2) as from right to left-hand side.

As health and disease are continuous states on the health-disease line, factors that change the state of health are needed to be determined in order to know the method for prevention of the state of health from shifting to the disease side and towards the health side. As medicine is derived from the Latin *ars medicina* which means the art of healing, medicine can be defined as the method for shifting the state of health to the health side (right-hand side) on the health-disease line (Figure 2). There are many different kinds of medicine developed from different cultures. But mainly, there are three progressive roads. They are traditional western medicine (TWM), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and traditional Indian medicine (TIM).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1**      **Tai Chi symbol**

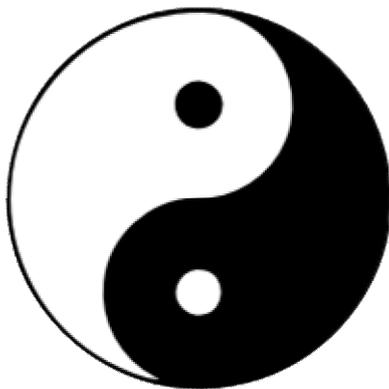
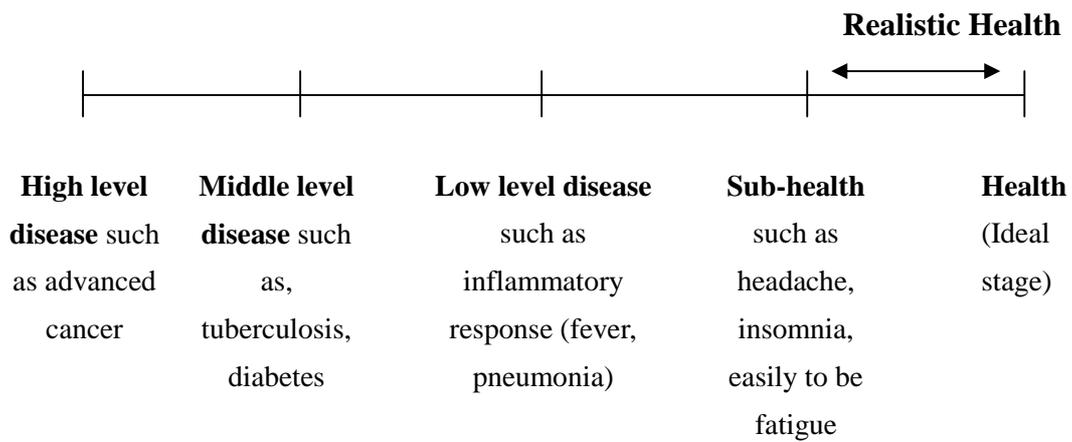


Figure 2 Health-disease line



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