The Elements in Medicine

Traditional Medical Astrology

Pages 62-94

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Humors

➢ Hippocrates' school was associated with the development of humors, or literal fluids of the body.

➢ An imbalance of fluids would produce disease.
The Humors & the Elements

➢ The astrological connection between the elements and the signs occurred in the Hellenistic era, centuries after the humoral theory was proposed.

➢ There were two different elemental assignments:
  ➢ Aristotelian
  ➢ Stoic
The Qualities

➢ Hot – generation – Fire (Aries)
➢ Dry – endurance – Earth (Taurus)
➢ Wet – corruption – Air (Gemini)
➢ Cold – destruction – Water (Cancer)

Bonatti, p38
Aristotelian “Being” Elements

- Fire (Hot)
- Air (Wet)
- Water (Cold)
- Earth (Dry)
Heat (Fire)

- Heat
- Open
- Digest
- Attenuate
- Ripen
- Subtilate
- Thin
- Soften

Saunders, p 69
Wet (Air)

➢ Moisten
➢ Putrify
➢ Corrupt
➢ Make slippery
➢ Lighten
➢ Conglutinate

Saunders, p 69

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Dry (Earth)

- Dries
- Makes barren
- Attracts and settles
- Decreases

Saunders, p 69

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Cold (Water)

➢ Cools
➢ Thickens
➢ Causes indigestion
➢ Congeals
➢ Destroys
➢ Hardens
➢ Knits together
➢ Shuts
➢ Stops
➢ Extinguishes

Saunders, p 69
Wet (Air)

- Moisten
- Putrify
- Corrupt
- Make slippery
- Lighten
-Conglutinate

Saunders, p 69
## The Humors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Complexion</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Sanguine</td>
<td>Wet, becoming Hot</td>
<td>Sweet taste, plump, buoyant, enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Choleric</td>
<td>Hot, becoming Dry</td>
<td>Bitter taste, irascible, impulsive, angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Melancholic</td>
<td>Dry, becoming Cold</td>
<td>Fresh taste, sad, serious, nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Phlegmatic</td>
<td>Cold, becoming Wet</td>
<td>Salty taste, corpulent, indolent, lethargic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2-1. The Complexions or Temperaments.*

From: *TMA, p 68*
Humors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanguine</td>
<td>Hot &amp; Wet</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Upbeat and social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleric</td>
<td>Hot &amp; Dry</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Quick to anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegmatic</td>
<td>Cold &amp; Wet</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Slow moving; couch potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholic</td>
<td>Cold &amp; Dry</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Thoughts dominate over action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2-2. The Four Traditional Temperament Types.*

From: *TMA*, p 68
Being Hot + Becoming Dry = Choleric (Fire)

Whatev' er is Hot and Dry of Nature, is choleric, generative, attractive, durative, and conservative, drying, heating, and attracting; doth harden, and cause watchfulness, because of heating and drying of the Brain and Head; they do also exhaust and draw, gather together and collect, they do also cleanse and purge, provoke to sledge, and make sweet, they do cleanse and scour the Body replenished with cold and moist Humours.

Saunders, p 70

\[\begin{align*}
\text{\(H\), \(S\), \(A\), \(F\), are hot and dry, choleric, bitter, of the nature of Fire, consuming, yet generative, durative, attractive, by reason of Heat and drought; for by reason of their heat they are generative and attractive, and by reason of drought they are durative; and by reason both of heat and drought they are consuming: for the Fire doth consume all imperfect matter and substance, that is not united in a just Temperature.}
\end{align*}\]

Saunders, p 71
Being Dry + Becoming Cold = Melancholic (Earth)

Whatsoever is Cold and Dry participateth of duration and destruction; for if the Dry exceed the Cold, then it will be durative; but if the cold Quality in the same Subject exceed the dry, then destruct, as fit Lignum aridum.

Saunders, p 70

℞, ™, ἀ, are cold and dry, of the nature of the Earth, and of ἀ, melancholick, durative, by reason of Drowth, and destructive by reason of Cold, for there is no destruction but by ἀ and ἐ; they are also astringent and durative in themselves, and destroyers of others externally; for ἀ in his own being once revived, doth give long life, and is durable, by reason of his dry Quality; but if ἐ, ἀ, and ἀ be put together, then is destruction by over much cold.

Saunders, p 71
Being Cold + Becoming Wet = Phlegmatic (Water)

Saunders, p 70

Whosoever is Cold and Moist, est indigesta materia, corrupt, & omnino defruit, non generat, neque durat, neque succit. Seque obliterat, expellit, infringit, humectat, corrompit, mortificat; creates heaviness, dulness, and lowness in all things, provokes to sleep and drowsiness, and Rots, consumes, separates and divides, is of the nature of the ∞ and ♀, ingenders moist and warty Humours and Imposthumations, and repels Humours by congelation and thickening, dispersing them in sundry places.

Saunders, p 71

Egregius has the name, digen, and increase the Blood. Λ, τ, and Λ, are cold and moist, of the nature of the Water, Feminine, Passive, like the Moon, Phlegmatic, felt in taste, ∞, ♂, ♀, corruptive by reason of their moisture, and destructive by reason of their coldness; they are more cold than moist, and are called the expulsive Signs, for they do corrupt, destroy, and expel: Quia ergo percursus in Signis suis multa admiranda possint fieri ad corporum destruccionem.
Being Wet + Becoming Hot = Sanguine (Air)

Saunders, p 70

Whatever is Hot and Moist, generates by reason of Heat, and corrupteth by reason of Moisture, and bringeth not to perfection.

Saunders, p 71

Saunders, p 71

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Hippocrates’ Theory of Disease

➢ It is extremely important to know where a disease settles, because that gives clues about how to treat it.

➢ Hippocrates gave two methods of ascertaining the location beyond the observation of pain in a particular place:

  ➢ sweat occurring on an isolated place
  ➢ a particular portion of the body being excessively hot or cold.
Hippocrates’ Theory of Disease

➢ “Those diseases are most dangerous which arise in the strongest part of the body.”

➢ He further adds that it is good if a disease moves from a weaker part to a stronger part, because then it is more easily thrown off.

➢ A weak area produces a weak or trivial disease, and a strong area produces a strong or dangerous disease.
Receptacles & Accumulation Sites

➢ Each humor has one or more receptacles, and then additional accumulation sites.

➢ When a humor can remain within these sites, then the humor acts normally.

➢ When there is an excess of humor beyond the accumulation sites, then it can become deranged.
Sanguine Sites

➢ Receptacles: heart, blood vessels, capillaries
➢ Accumulation sites: liver, spleen, pancreas, uterus
Phlegmatic Sites

➢ Receptacles: Lymphatic system
➢ Accumulation sites: stomach, respiratory system, head, sinuses, veins, spleen
Choleric Sites

- Receptacles: Gall bladder
- Accumulation sites: liver, spleen, stomach, upper gut, capillaries
Melancholic Sites

➢ Receptacles: Spleen

➢ Accumulation sites: hepatic vein, stomach, lower gut, bones, joints, connective tissue, peripheral nervous system, liver and hypochondriac area
Diet & Regimen

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Pages 95-145
Hippocrates Quotation

“For when an element is isolated and stands by itself, not only must the place which it left become diseased, but the place where it stands in a flood must, because of the excess, cause pain and distress. In fact, when more of an element flows out of the body than is necessary to get rid of the superfluidity, the emptying causes pain.”

Hippocrates, *Nature of Man* (Volume 4)
Hippocrates and Astrology

➢ The classical medical model was given by Hippocrates a century before astrology had been incorporated into Greek thought.

➢ This model incorporated four basic qualities: hot, cold, wet, and dry.

➢ If the body is balanced according to its own definition, then disease is less likely to take hold. The method of creating balance was diet and regimen, which basically translates to exercise and lifestyle considerations.
Food vs. Drugs

➢ According to Galen's work, the difference between a food and a drug was that a food did not have pronounced qualities, whereas a drug (which can included spices) does.

➢ Notice that qualities here extend to more than the four that we normally discuss, including also astringency, diuretic nature, etc.
Indigestion

➢ “Indigestion could be put down to an excess of phlegm brought on by excessive eating. In order to counteract this complaint, a hot and drying remedy would be prescribed, consisting perhaps of pepper and wine.”*

* Grant, pp 9-10.
The Hot & Dry Diet

➢ Alcohol and any liquids neat, not diluted: no mixed drinks nor wine coolers.

➢ Hot liquids, but not in large amounts. Bread and only roasted meats, few vegetables, copious quantities.

➢ Vegetables served should be broiled or braised. Foods highly seasoned, as with pepper, cayenne, basil, bay leaves, garlic, mustard, rosemary, saffron, sage, tarragon or ginger.
The Hot & Dry Diet

➢ Fruits baked, and preferably dried out.
➢ Radishes, onions, rhubarb, rice, grapes, walnuts.
➢ All foods to be served hot.
The Hot & Dry Condition can Result from...

➢ Stress
➢ Anger
➢ Emotional trauma
➢ Overwork
➢ Physical activity or exercise
➢ Insomnia
➢ Fast
➢ Hunger
Diseases of Yellow Bile

- Erysipelas, swellings, rashes
- Jaundice, hepatitis, biliousness
- Gall stones
- Acid reflux & hyperacidity
- Rheumatoid arthritis, bursitis, tendonitis
- Gingivitis
- Headaches, migraines, photophobia
The Hot & Wet Diet

➢ Copious drink, but diluted and in small quantities: a good time for hot teas and other warm drinks.

➢ Meats or vegetables boiled or stewed, or prepared in sauces.

➢ Asparagus, chestnuts, endive, figs, pasta.

➢ Baked fruits in their own juices.

➢ Gruel, oatmeal or other cooked cereals.
The Hot & Wet Condition can Result from...

➢ Meat
➢ Fowl
➢ Eggs
➢ Foods which are easy to cook
➢ Remember that blood, the hot and wet humor, is the ideal humor, just as sanguine is the ideal temperament.
➢ In some cases, blood is treated as the only true humor, and the other three are corruptions of blood.
“Blood” Diseases

➢ Fevers, mania, apoplexy, fainting, heat stroke
➢ Hemorrhage, nosebleeds, hemophilia
➢ Uremia and gout
➢ Diabetes
➢ Heart disease, angina, high blood pressure
➢ Menstrual disorders
➢ Note that “blood” diseases could be traditionally treated by “blood-letting”
The Cold & Wet Diet

➢ Copious drink, but diluted and cold, such as wine coolers or diluted fruit juice, such as flavored sparkling water.

➢ Raw fruits and vegetables, cooked beans or lentils, raw cucumber, lettuce, mint, peaches, pumpkins and other gourds, raspberries, strawberries, thyme, little grain.

➢ If you must cook something, boil it, but consider serving it cool.

➢ Smaller quantities of food.
The Cold & Wet Condition can Result from...

- Sleep
- Drinking water
- Seafood
- Moist diets
- Thick foods
“Phlegm” Diseases

➢ Stomach disorders
➢ Upper respiratory conditions, allergies
➢ Sleepiness and lethargy
➢ Lymphatic congestion
➢ Edema
➢ Leucorrhea and white vaginal discharges
The Cold & Dry Diet

➢ Alcohol and any liquids neat, not diluted: no mixed drinks nor wine coolers.

➢ Cold liquids, but not in large amounts.

➢ Bread and only roasted meats, few vegetables, small quantities.

➢ Vegetables served should be broiled or braised.

➢ Fennel, quinces, dried fruits.

➢ All foods to be served cold or at room temperature where feasible.
The Cold & Dry Condition can Result from...

- Meat
- Fowl
- Eggs
- Foods which are easy to cook
- This is the same list as hot and wet, but the conditions are different, i.e., less ideal
Diseases of Black Bile

- Constipation, irritable bowel, ulcers, obstructions
- Appetite suppression, sour stomach
- Clots, embolisms, blood congestion
- Tics, tremors, neurasthenia, neuralgia
- Arthritis & rheumatism
- Carbuncles
- Cancer
A Special Note on Black Bile

➢ According to Galen, the humor is often produced in those hot and dry: a case of blood being corrupted into the more dangerous black bile.

➢ Yellow bile can also be corrupted into black bile.
Of Wet vs. Dry, Hippocrates says:

“In disease where dryness benefits it is best for the person to eat only once a day, to consume less food and drinks than would fill, to work these off by taking walks, and to sleep as little as possible. Where moistness benefits, it is best not to fast or lack food and drink, not to be subject to exertions, and for the person to sleep as much as he wants.”

Affectations, Volume 5, p 67
For a Drying regimen...

➢ Don’t drink with the meal, but only after a delay.*

➢ Hot food in general is drying, but only if no drink is taken with the meal.

➢ Remember that when hot foods have drying qualities, they can also be constipating!

➢ Sour foods were considered to be drying and hence constipating, causing the body to contract.

➢ Sharp foods were thought to thin the body through irritation.

*Affectations, page 77, Volume 5.
Wet Foods

➢ Wet foods included those which are sweet, fat, or rich, and, while moistening, they were also considered strengthening.

➢ It should be noted that “strengthening” is not an automatic, nor an exclusive, quality of wet foods.

➢ For example, dry wines were believed to be both dry, and to promote strength.

➢ By our modern terminology, there is no doubt that sugars and other carbohydrates are wet.
The Hippocratic theories resulted in a popular emphasis on the primary characteristic of disease being blockage, obstruction, or oppilation, as it was often caused.

Much of the therapeutic process concerned restoring the body's ability to excrete or drain off superfluous or corrupted fluids.

A healthy body has complete circulation of fluids.

References


