

## What is Medicine?

This talk will focus on a hypothesis published in *What is Medicine?*, a comparative history of Chinese and European medicine, published in German in 2003, and currently prepared for publication in the USA by University of California Press (English title yet to be decided upon).

The hypothesis can be phrased in three statements:

1. Basic theories on physiology and pathology are not stimulated by clinical experience and dissection, they are accepted because of their plausibility.
  2. The image of the body/organism has its model image outside of the body/organism. Two examples from the history of medicine in China and Europe will serve to test this hypothesis: First, the emergence of ancient Chinese medicine. Second, the different notions of blood circulation in Europe as brought forward by Harvey, Descartes, and German physiologists.
- A conclusion to be drawn from a comparative analysis of Chinese and European theory building is: Medical theories reflect subconscious notions of order. The social order reflected in basic medical theories may be real or ideal. It may reflect what it is, or what people yearn for. Changes in real or hoped for order of the social organism cause changes in basic notions of the "order" and "disorder" of the human organism. If in a society groups with different notions of order coexist, they will have different notions of health and disease and of health care.