

The Unification of Nature and Human: From Cognition to Practice

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Abstract

Traditional Chinese civilization has had a long history of understanding the relationship between nature and human. The Chinese Ming dynasty physician Zhang Jingyue brought the cognition of "the unity of nature and human" into play by reconstructing Chinese medical theory and clinical practice thus achieving an important transition from cognition to practice. Based on the three main aspects of (i) holistic cognition and clinical application, (ii) yin-yang cognition and clinical application, and (iii) five elements-related cognition and clinical application, we further explore Zhang Jingyue's thoughts and applications from the cognition of "the unity of nature and human" to the practice of "the unity of knowledge and action" to provide reference and inspiration for the development of present-day medicine and even the progress of human civilization.

Keywords: Zhang Jingyue, Unity of nature and human, Holistic view, Yin-yang, five elements

1. Introduction

Historically, two key periods in the development of Chinese medical theory coincided with the flourishing of philosophical thinking. The first was the period from the Qin Dynasty to the Han Dynasty when the theoretical system of Chinese medicine was basically formed. The second was from the period of the Song Dynasty to Ming dynasty when the theoretical system of Chinese medicine was reshaped and perfected by the incorporation of philosophical ideas such as science and methodology. The first period that focused on cognitive exploration, mainly on the interpretation of medical theory, laid a solid foundation for the theoretical system of Chinese medicine. The second period shifted its focus from cognition to practice, and from medical theory to clinical practice. The Chinese Ming dynasty physician Zhang Jingyue, made the crucial turn from the cognition of "the unity of nature and human" to the practice of "the unity of knowledge and action".

2. "The Unity of Nature and Human" Caters to the Needs of the Transformation of Modern Civilization

Through the evolution periods from primitive civilization, agricultural civilization, industrial civilization to information civilization, the Chinese have survived and reproduced by adapting to nature and understanding the relationship between nature and human beings. Throughout the history of human development, the transformation of civilizations has had profound changes in all aspects of society, politics, and economics. In traditional Chinese culture, human beings and nature are viewed from a holistic perspective with human beings as an organic part of the natural whole. This perspective resulted in a cultural value system that espouses of the unity of nature and human. This cultural value system has had a profound impact on all aspects of scientific progress, humanistic development, and medical care.

"The unity of nature and human" is a result of a cognitive approach of the Chinese sages to explore human and nature. The understanding of the unity of nature and human has continuously changed over different historical periods. "Nature and man" originated from the Tao. However, during the evolution of the universe, with the gradual accentuation of human subject consciousness, the relationship between nature and man evolved from the initial unity to separation, which triggered a re-cognition of the unity of nature and man. The unity of nature and man has been studied as an idea that has bound and strengthened human thought and behavior. Although to a certain extent there has been progress in thought, a complete transformation from practice is yet to be achieved.

Cognition and practice have received sustained attention in traditional Chinese philosophy (Wang Wenjuan,2012). "Cognition" is awareness, while action is purposeful practice. The phrase "to unite cognition and practice, to stop at the

highest level of goodness" originated from the Ming Dynasty thinker Wang Shouren. Cognition and practice are one. When there is awareness and strategy, we must put it into action until we achieve perfection. The traditional anthropocentric view of science and technology has contributed to the current serious ecological crisis and environmental problems (Zhou Guowen, 2019). Since nature has an objective influence on human beings, activities that are not in accordance with the laws of nature result in an environment that is not conducive to human survival and civilization. This has led to a rethinking and exploration of the unity of nature and man. Our current thinking now focuses on how to move from cognition to practice, and to realize the further development of civilization under the pattern of the unity of nature and man.

3. "Harmony between Human and Nature" from Cognition to Practice

In routine clinical practice and theoretical construction, Zhang Jingyue used the "unity of nature and man" to interpret life medicine, elaborate the relationship between nature and man by previous sages, and reconstruct the TCM theory and clinical practice to form a more systematic theoretical and practical system. By moving from cognition to practice, liberating the unity of nature and man from the ideological paradigm and transforming it into a practical approach, the Chinese Ming dynasty physician Zhang Jingyue achieved an important feat in moving from cognition to practice.

Based on a holistic view, Zhang Jingyue explained the human life pattern from the cosmic generation pattern, and specifically revealed the law of human life and nature moving together. The theory of yin-yang was fully applied to the analysis of human physiological and pathological states. It comprehensively discussed the laws of human yin-yang changes, and it proposed clinical diagnoses of diseases, diseases' causes and mechanisms, treatment methods and prescriptions to guide clinical treatment. Zhang Jingyue further deepened the doctrine of the five elements, specifying the relationship of the five elements as applied to the physiology and pathology of the five human organs, pushing the doctrine of the five elements from philosophical thinking to clinical application.

In summary, Zhang Jingyue made an important breakthrough and transition from cognition of the unity of nature and man to practice. The practical application of "cognition and practice" is wholly reflected in his classic works. Based on an analysis of the specific contents of his works, we summarized the three main aspects of the holistic view, yin-yang, and the five elements.

4. Applications in Practice

4.1 Holistic View

Zhang Jingyue specifically revealed the consistent laws of human life activities and the universe and nature, and his purpose was not only to investigate the origin of the universe, but to also study the origin of life and subsequently explore the laws of life movement. He pointed out that "nature and man are one". The human life is like the universe, and the human body is a small universe. Man is a product of nature. Man and nature are identical in origin and movement. When changes in nature occur, the human body changes to meet the natural changes, and the human body can also affect the natural changes. Therefore, "nature" and "man" are in a unified overall pattern, with the same root and origin, and with the same change and movement.

Natural changes in the normal physiological state and human disease synchronization are interrelated. If the wind, cold, heat, humidity, dryness, and fire are normal, the body can adapt to them and no disease will occur; if the six gases are not normal and there is an abnormal climate and the body can not adapt to them and thus disease is likely to occur. In other words, if the five modes of transportation and the six qi are too much or too little, and the body's qi changes accordingly and the disease mechanism that occurs is different.

4.2 Yin and Yang

Zhang Jingyue proposed the "One Principle of Nature and Man", which holds that both nature and man are inseparable from the theory of yin-yang. The assertion that "Yin and Yang are divided into two" was put forward in the classics, which analyzed that the universe was formed by one qi of Taiji, which was divided into two qi of Yin and Yang, and the movement of Yin and Yang evolved endlessly to form all natural things. Zhang Jingyue fully applied yin-yang to medical theory and practice, and comprehensively discussed the physiological functions of the human body, pathological changes and clinical treatment. Moreover, he advocates grasping the laws of human life movement, following the principles of yin-yang, dynamically examining the changes of disease mechanisms and grasping the timing of treatment.

By using yin and yang as the general outline to analyze all things, such as the human body, animals, and plants, and even all things in heaven and earth, form a systematic whole based on the changes of yin and yang, thus facilitating guidance for practical application. In the process of clinical diagnosis, Zhang Jingyue is good at applying the theory of Yin and Yang as the basis for diagnosis and treatment. For Yin and Yang, Yin belongs to the body and Yang to the function, thus constituting the whole. Based on the theory of yin-yang, he establishes the clinical treatment method, focusing on supplementing the

body, assisting/facilitating the function, and advocating the mutual transformation of yin and yang. For example, in the treatment of Yin deficiency, if reinforcing Yin and helping Yang, Yin and Yang will produce each other, the effect is significant. If we only help its function but not its body, it will "kill yang and hide yin" and damage the five organs. The clinical practice pays much attention to the warming of Yang Qi, and believes that in the course of human life, the internal organs change endlessly because of Yang Qi, and after death, the body is as cold as ice, and perception is lost, the form exists but the Qi is gone, so it is suggested that "Yang's deficiency" should be supplemented.

4.3 Five Elements Related

Zhang Jingyue pushed the application of the Five Elements theory from philosophical thinking to a peak of practical application, and put forward many new insights about the physiology and pathology of the five organs, which played an important role in the improvement of the theory of Chinese medicine. When discussing the relationship between the five elements, he emphasized that the five elements are mutually beneficial. He also mentioned that there are five elements within each line, thus forming the 25 elements, forming the wonderful use of the five elements to hide each other. Zhang Jinyue's discussion deepens the interconnection between the five elements. Zhang applies the five elements to explain the relationship between the internal organs of the human body and applies the theory of "five elements in mutual storage" to the understanding of human life. He emphasized that the five organs of the human body are divided into five elements. Based on the principle of correlation of the five elements, each of the five human organs contains Qi from the other organs and is closely related to any of the other organs. This means that the function of each of the five human organs permeates the other four organs and regulates the function of the other four organs related to itself.

Based on the correlation between of the five elements and the five organs, we should not only consider the disease of an organ, but also pay attention to the interaction between the organs in order to fully grasp the disease and achieve optimal results in the diagnosis of clinical diseases. By examining the external signs of the five internal organs of the human body, we can measure the state of the internal organs and grasp the functions of the five organs as a whole in order to prescribe medicine. Jing Yue believes that the functions of the five internal organs are closely interrelated; based on the physiopathological correlation of the five internal organs, one internal organ is inevitably affected by the law of the five elements and the other internal organs. Therefore, in the state of thane organism's disease, the five internal organs are in different states and it is necessary to take into account the five internal organs (viscera) in the overall treatment and treat them as a whole in order to restore the normal function of life. .

5. Discussion

Chinese medicine, as a cosmic life science of "the unity of nature and man", penetrates into the law of human life movement from the law of cosmic movement, and discovers the real movement shared by man and the universe. The laws and methods discovered are applied to the clinical practice of Chinese medicine. The Way of Heaven and Earth reveals the general laws of everything in the world, and the Way of Human Life reveals the laws of human life. The Way of Nature and Humanity were originally united, and to promote the progress of human civilization and to facilitate its application, the ideological perception and concept of the unity of Nature and Humanity was proposed. Although this unity played a certain role in advocating the idea, it was still difficult to exploit its original value because it had not yet reached the practice of cognition. The outstanding contribution of Zhang Jingyue to the history of Chinese medicine and the history of ancient civilization lies in pushing the unity of nature and man from cognition to practice, bringing into full play the original value in the process of knowledge and practice, and realizing the reconstruction and perfection of the theoretical and clinical diagnosis and treatment system of Chinese medicine, which still has practical guidance significance today.

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