

Briefly Discuss on the Philosophize of Meridian Research

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Abstract

Meridian theory is an important part of the TCM system. Since 1950s, we have already studied the essence of meridian for more than a half century, but there was no substantive progress. In this article the author point that, in order to determine the concept and scope of meridian, it's necessary to have a briefly discussion on the philosophize of meridian research, and the most important is the Meridian research in future should be multi-angle, multi-level, three-dimensional and so on.

Keywords: Essence of Meridian, Philosophize, Study of Three-Dimensional

1. Introduction

Meridian theory is an important part of the TCM system, which studies human physiological functions and pathological changes of Meridian, as well as the relationship between it and the viscera. Meridian theory has guided the diagnosis and treatment of TCM for thousand years, and it has made significant contribution to the people of the world. Meridian research, or exactly providing traditional meridian theory a modern explanation, is an unavoidable problem in the process of internationalization of TCM, while thoughts and methods of scientific research is the key to success, therefore it's necessary for us to do some philosophical thinking about meridian research..

2. Current Situation of Meridian Research

Meridian research is a big engineering, which involves excavation, inheritance, development of TCM theory and the modernization of TCM, so it's bound to face various difficulties for it to achieve substantive progress only by a small number of research institutions. Dr. Wang Guangjun [1] who works in China Academy of Chinese Medical Science pointed out that, there are two problems in meridian research, one is the educational background of researchers, at present the main researchers are non-Chinese medicine workers, the other one is that meridian research in different fields is confusion, for example TCM areas, Chinese and Western Integrative Medicine areas, Biological Sciences areas and so on, the objects and purposes in different areas are also distinct. Dr.

Wang said that the meridian research in biological field had made rapid progress at abroad.

3. Object of Meridian Research

In the book "Outline of the History of Chinese Acupuncture" [2], Professor Huang Longxiang indicated that the quintessence of meridian theory lies in revealing a fact that there are special relations between surface and internal organs of the body. The key question now is what the facts are, what "tentative explanation" to those facts in ancient Chinese meridian theory are. It is indeed problem. As we all known facts are objective. When people describe them it always mixed their subjective feelings, furthermore people of different ideological basis also has different feelings to the facts, and so there are many different genres. School of Yin and Yang, Taoist School and Legalist School are representatives of different Schools.

Therefore it's the depth, breadth, and accuracy of cognition to the "fact" of meridians which determined the object of meridian research. Definition of meridian concept and scope are very important, and it will be much appropriate for workers who expert in TCM and Chinese philosophy to accomplish this task. However, philosophers seldom participated in the present study of meridian. If we can not define the concept and scope of "fact" in meridian accurately, experts in various fields can only do meridian research freely, and then it will just like blind men touching an elephant. There won't be much achievement, if any.

4. Methods of Meridian Research

To find out the role of the meridian and its guidance to clinical physiology and pathology is also very important, after determining the concept and scope of meridian, after all, meridian can not explain all the complex phenomenon of human life. Some clinical experts had done a very good job in this respect, such as, Dr. Du Yuanhao [3] who works in the affiliated hospital of Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, after years of clinical research and statistical analysis, has put forward four kinds spectrum of disease in terms of acupuncture. Grade I, all diseases which can be cured by acupuncture, such as peripheral facial paralysis and hysteria. In the treatment acupuncture can intervene the important link of diseases; Grade II, acupuncture can act on the main symptoms and signs of diseases, but the key link of diseases is difficult to eliminate completely, or the disease pathology is complex, acupuncture only act on one of the important aspects of diseases, then combination with other treatment is necessary. For example, in the pathologic process of cerebral vascular diseases, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, high blood sugar and blood theology, dynamics and other factors are all involved. Acupuncture has a good effect in improving cerebral circulation and body functions, but the recovery of disease need intervention of many other treatments. Grade III, acupuncture can only relieve symptoms of disease partly, such as atrophic gastritis and other acute appendicitis. Grade IV, it includes diseases in which the effect of acupuncture is imprecise, or new treatment is highly effective and acupuncture rarely used, the former, such as various types of cancer, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, the latter as malaria. Because the base of acupuncture treatment is meridian theory, so the research of Dr. Du should be vested in the clinical study.

After determining “body and use” of the meridian, it seems appropriate for us to start from the “use”, that is, the physiological and pathological phenomena which can be explained by meridian theory, particularly disease suitable for acupuncture treatment, to explore the “body” of meridian, or exactly “substance of meridian”. The guiding concept of meridian research is historical materialism and dialectical materialism, and we must resolutely abandon mechanical materialism, let alone mystical and idealist. The attitude of meridian research should be open, and we also should keep pace with the times. TCM belonging to the life sciences has never refused the intervention of other sciences, from ancient astronomy to modern computer information technology have been infiltrated into TCM already.

5. Prospect of Meridian Research

Meridian research in future should be multi-angle, multi-level, three-dimensional including foundational theory, clinical observations, and animal experiments and so on. Those trying to find a new structure of the meridian will have no results. Certainly, we do not doubt that meridian has its “fundamental substance”, but Dr. Jin Fenghan tried to use a “Feng Han Xiao Ti” to clarify the material basis of the meridian is unbelievable and it just like to fish in the air. Because we have enough justification to prove the “fundamental substance” is not one kind of substance. For example stroke, pain syndrome, psychiatric symptoms, skin herpes involve nerves and blood vessels, lymph nodes and other various physical infrastructures.

We should recognize the understanding of ancients is simple, experienced and intuitionistic. Einstein [4] once pointed out that “the development of Western science is based on two great achievements that the Greek philosophers’ formal logic system (in Euclidean geometry), and the experimental system”. Chinese sages hadn’t taken this step.

Engels [5] also pointed out that, in Greece the forms of dialectical thinking are still natural simplicity. Because the Greeks have not mastered the way to analyses the nature, so they observe it as a whole. The contact of natural phenomena has not been proven in details, so the link of them is a direct and intuitive result. These analyses are also suitable for our Chinese. In the twenty-first century, we should make full use of logical analysis, positive and comprehensive study to unravel the mystery of the meridian. Meridian research not only belongs to TCM but also to the whole life sciences; not only to China but also to the whole world. So the meridian research is bound to progress with the development, and it also will benefit all the humanity.

6. References

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