

Preliminary Study on Traditional Chinese Medicine Zhi Theory

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Abstract: *The theory of Zhi in traditional Chinese medicine covers a wide range of content levels. The ancient people's understanding of Zhi has a cross disciplinary understanding between philosophical and medical fields. If Zhi is only related to the theory of visceral manifestation and emotional theory in traditional Chinese medicine, it is difficult to fully explain its specific meaning. Since the Huangdi Neijing, the state of Zhi can be used as an evaluation criterion to diagnose a person's health and the degree of illness. Throughout history, medical practitioners have attached great importance to the diagnosis and health preservation of Zhi. Modern scholars have also explored it from multiple perspectives, but there is still a lack of clear understanding of the definition of Zhi. It is necessary to further explore, organize and summarize the research on Zhi in modern times.*

Keywords: Basic theories of traditional Chinese medicine, Zhi, Emotions, consciousness.

1. The Literal Meaning of Zhi

The earliest written form of Zhi is bronze script, with the heart as the radical and the walk as the voice part. From the perspective of character form, the meaning of the word should be interpreted as "the direction of the heart" [1]. Through the interpretation of historical records, it is found that the concept of Zhi has derived multiple extended meanings, among which the meanings related to consciousness and emotions mainly include: consciousness, emotion, memory, cognition, will, and aspiration. The extended meaning of Zhi reflects the functional and subjective intentionality, which is closely related to human psychology, emotions, and spiritual consciousness and thinking activities [2].

2. Philosophical Connotation of Zhi

Zhi is a very important philosophical category in ancient times. Since the Book of Changes, there have been many descriptions of "Zhi", and the Book of Changes is the origin of Chinese culture. Hu Jiexiang's explanation of the meaning of Zhi can be mainly divided into two categories [3]. One refers to the things that people expect and crave, as "the Tongren Gua" says: Only gentlemen can understand what the people of the world expect and crave; the second refers to a worldview that reflects personal values and life goals, as "the Kun Gua" says: Gentlemen will do their best to achieve their lifelong aspirations [4]. During the Hundred Schools of Thought, Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, and Dong Zhongshu also talked about Zhi. The ancients were very concerned about a person's aspirations, and later scholars also mentioned methods to maintain aspirations. Zhu Yongxin believes that ancient Chinese scholars had many understandings of Zhi, mainly believing that Zhi is a manifestation of a directed mind, a purpose openly advocated, and a thinking activity with transferability, persistence, invariance, and self-consciousness [5].

3. The Medical Theory of Zhi

"The Yellow Emperors Internal Classic" is deeply influenced by classical philosophy, using relevant concepts, principles,

and thinking methods from ancient Chinese philosophical thought to explain the phenomena of human life [6]. As a foundational masterpiece of traditional Chinese medicine theory, "The Yellow Emperors Internal Classic" extensively mentions the concept of Zhi and provides a comprehensive explanation of the theory of Zhi in traditional Chinese medicine. Since the Huangdi Neijing, Zhi, as one of the five types of consciousness activities in traditional Chinese medicine, believes that Zhi is related to the visceral manifestation of kidney, and the state of Zhi can be an evaluation criterion for diagnosing a person's health and the degree of illness. There are many discussions about Zhi in "the Yellow Emperors Internal Classic", such as the discussion that Zhi is memory. The "The Miraculous Pivot · Ben shen" states: "The result of storing meaning is called Zhi, and the result of accumulating and changing it is called Si" [7]. Or the discussion that Zhi is emotion, for example, "Methods The Plain Questions · Yin Yang Ying Xiang Da Lun" states: "The liver emotion is anger, the heart is joy in Zhi, the spleen is thinking in Zhi, the lungs are worry in Zhi, and the kidneys are fear in Zhi" [8]. Famous traditional Chinese medicine practitioners throughout history have inherited the theory of the Yellow Emperors Internal Classic and discussed the etiology and pathogenesis of Zhi. For example, Liu Wansu proposed the famous argument that "all five Zhi excesses are extremely hot" [9]. Zhu Danxi wrote in his book "Jufang Fahui": "Each of the five organs has its own fire, and when the five Zhi stimulate it, its fire rises with it. Zhang Jiebin first proposed the concept of "Qingzhi" in the Ming Dynasty, which has been used ever since [10]. Nowadays, the traditional Chinese medicine theories of consciousness and emotions have been formed with "Shenzhi (spiritual activities)" and "Qingzhi (emotional activities)" as the core.

3.1 Qingzhi (Emotional activities) Theory Based on the "Five Zhi"

In traditional Chinese medicine theory, the Five Zhi are a general term for the five emotions and psychological states of joy, anger, anxiety, sadness, and fear. They are emotional expressions of the five organs, generated from the essence and qi stored in the five organs, corresponding to the heart, liver,

lungs, spleen, and kidneys. The Five Zhi focus on the important functional activities of the emotional responses of the five organs to external stimuli, and are "physiological regulators" that have the function of regulating the physiological state of the body [11]. The "Neijing" also believes that the Five Zhi have the function of harmonizing the Qi activity, and considers that the Five Zhi are the specific manifestation of structure and function in the process of Qi-activity function of visceral manifestation. Visceral manifestation, including structure and phenomena. Structure refers to the specific organs of the Qi in the Five Zang Organs Qi-activity System during the Qi-activity process, such as organs, viscera, and bodies, which can be obtained through dissection; Phenomena refer to various functions manifested externally during the Qi-activity process. As a normal function of the Five Zang Organs, the "Five Zhi" are naturally included internally. Therefore, the Five Zhi are a functional phenomenon of visceral manifestation phenomena, and the Qi-activity effect of the Five Zang Organs is the root cause of emotions [12].

Abnormalities in the Five Zang Organs can lead to abnormal mental or emotional activities in their minds. Wang Dayang et al. [13] proposed that the Seven Emotions and Five Zhi are often mentioned together, and medical practitioners throughout history have attempted to divide the connotations of the Seven Emotions and Five Zhi, but opinions are diverse and confusing. The widely accepted view is that the Seven Emotions refer to a person's emotions, emotional reactions, and cognitive activities, while the Five Zhi represent a person's lower and higher cognitive activities, and there is a difference between the two [14].

3.2 Consciousness Theory based on ShenZhi

The meaning of Zhi in The Yellow Emperors Internal Classic is not entirely consistent, and the definition of the connotation of consciousness can be divided into broad and narrow senses. The broad sense of Zhi generally refers to human spiritual activities, while the narrow sense of Zhi can be divided into two types: one refers to thinking with clear goals or motivational consciousness. Those who persist and persevere people are commonly referred to as those with Zhi(aspirations)in daily life.

The second is 'Zhi' can be interpreted as memory. According to the Miraculous Pivot: The Benshen" [7], "Yi (impressions) are stored as Zhi (memories)." Zhang Xiyan et al. [15] believe that the Zhi (memories) is a long-term memory deeply processed and transformed from the instantaneous memory formed by Yi (impressions).

There are a total of 10 instances in the "Neijing" that refer to the combination of Zhi and Yi, which is used to refer to human spiritual activities, especially the subjective and rational state of consciousness. As stated in the "The Miraculous Pivot" [8], "When the spiritual will grows, connects with the bone marrow, it will assist in the generation of the body and the five organs." "The Miraculous Pivot" [7] states, "Mental fatigue will lead to mental breakdown and difficulty in concentration. Qiu Jiahui [2] believes that it is the subjective initiative of human spiritual activity - volition, which has the ability to regulate the body's adaptation to natural changes.

3.3 Diagnostic Criteria for Traditional Chinese Medicine Zhi

Zhiyi can control the spirit, regulate qi, and a person's mental state directly affects their quality of life and the trend of disease development. The book "Methods The Plain Questions · Wu Zang Bie Lun" [8] explicitly states that "as long as it is treating a disease, careful observation is necessary, including careful examination of the patient's pulse, observation of the patient's ZhiYi (consciousness) and the degree of disease progression." It explicitly states that observing the patient's "ZhiYi(mental) state" is the standard for evaluating the diagnosis of the disease. The theory has been applied to this day and is reflected in the section on observing the spirit in the "Diagnostic Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine" [16] textbook. In the Yellow Emperors Internal Classic, there are also diagnostic symptoms for abnormal consciousness, such as: "Methods The Plain Questions · Tang Ye Lao Li Lun" [8]: "If the spirit is not uplifted and the consciousness is not clear, the condition will not heal quickly". As stated in "Methods The Plain Questions · Ping Re Bing Lun", "speaking raving is a state of losing consciousness".

Yan Zhaojun [17] believes that the most suitable diagnostic method for physical diseases may not necessarily be suitable for mental and behavioral disorders, while the theory of differentiation of Zhiyi symptoms and signs may be one of the possible choices for the appropriate diagnostic system for mental and behavioral disorders such as hyperactivity, tics, epilepsy, mania, anxiety, depression, loneliness, autism, aggression, self harm, addiction, dependence, compulsion, fear, hysteria, excretory disorders, eating disorders, sleep disorders, etc.

3.4 Primary Drug Treatment Methods Formed under the Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Yan Zhaojun [18] believes that the "Shennong Bencao Jing" contains primary herb therapy for consciousness activities; The Southern and Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang Dynasties expanded the scope of medicinal treatment and brought it to clinical practice; The Song Dynasty established the guiding theory for medicinal use of the spirit and soul of the will; Since the Jin and Ming Dynasty, the initially formed theory of medicinal treatment has gradually been lost.

The "Shennong Bencao Jing" [16] is the oldest known pharmacological work in China, named after the ancient legend of Shennong's tasting of hundreds of herbs and the creation of medicine therapy. In the history of the development of Chinese medicine, it has had a great influence on traditional Chinese medicine. It pioneered the classification system of top, middle, and lower grade drugs, and believed that "the top grade drugs can nourish life, middle grade drugs can cultivate oneself, and lower grade drugs can attack diseases" [19]. It was also proposed that "if you want to treat a disease, you must first identify the cause of the disease and the pathology of the disease. If the patient's five organs and six viscera are not damaged, blood flow is normal, mental and willpower are stable, and they will recover quickly after taking medication. If the disease has already formed, taking medication can be considered as a general cure. If the last

treatment opportunity is passed, even if medication is taken, it is difficult to ensure longevity. And record in the book 21 traditional Chinese medicines that regulate the Zhi.

4. Summary

The Zhi of a person is the ability to control their physical and mental activities, consciously regulate their desires through the Zhi, control their physical and mental activities such as initiating, stopping, or changing them, and truthfully reflect internal and external environmental stimuli and objective things in the brain. All internal consciousness, thinking, and spiritual activities, as well as external cold and warm feelings and emotions such as joy and anger, are the result of the regulation and adaptation of the Zhi.

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