Traditional Chinese Medicine as a Metaphor: Micro- and macro- level analysis of metaphors in Yellow Emperor Inner Classics (*Huang Di Nei Jin*)

Abstract

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM in short), as used in a country with the largest population in the world and as regarded as increasingly popular in many countries overseas, has very different perceptions of illnesses and diseases as compared with convectional Western medicine. One of the central tenets in TCM is its view that human bodies are an integral part of nature. While much has been said and discussed about this view in the literature, not much is known about how the human-nature unity is discursively constructed in the TCM classics which are still the backbone of theory and practice in the field. By examining Yellow Emperor's Inner Classics (*Huang Di Nei Jin*), being the oldest complete historical document and one of the most influential classics in TCM, this paper focuses on the importance of metaphors in this crucial historical document. Different types of metaphors will be analyzed and discussed. It is argued in this paper that different metaphors (including simile regarded as explicit metaphor, and metonym) play a very significant role in constructing human-nature unity principle in the document not only at a sentential level. Metaphors, combined with a writing pattern common in traditional Chinese, are also schemata that help the writers of those classics to construct the microcosm/macrocosm argument at a deeper conceptual level. A brief comparison will also be drawn as to the idea of human-nature unity as espoused in the Greek Hippocratic writings.