

Correlative Cosmology: Energetics of the First Month of Spring and Lung Function (A collection of relevant classical sources)

Collated and translated by Heiner Fruehauf

ACCORDING TO THE FIVE PHASE ELEMENT SYSTEM, THE LUNG IS CLASSIFIED AS A METAL ORGAN. Modern Chinese medicine discourse, therefore, has exclusively focused on this organ's association with the metal season of fall. In original *Neijing* cosmology, however, the five phase system is paralleled by a more complex and inclusive system of twelve functional entities that correlate the twelve months of the year with the order of the twelve channel systems that we now refer to as the "organ clock." In this system, which does not contradict but rather amend the simpler view of lung metal function, lung function is likened to the energetics of the first month of spring. By studying classical sources about the first month, therefore, we can recover valuable and clinically practical information about deeper aspects of lung physiology/pathology that are otherwise not overtly expressed in the *Neijing* itself.

Theme of heaven and earth intercouring and spawning life:

- Liji, Yueling: 6. 8是月也, 天氣下降, 地氣上騰, 天地和同 “In this month the vapors of heaven descend and those of earth ascend. Heaven and earth are in harmonious co-operation.” (Legge, 255)
- 正月二月, 天氣始方, 地氣始發 “During the first and second month, the heavenly *qi* begins to release, and the earthly *qi* begins to spring forth” (Huangdi neijing, chapter 16)
- Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sanguo liuchao wen: 乾坤交泰 “[During the first month] Qian (heaven) and Kun (earth) are intercouring.” (見《書鈔》一百五十五, 《藝文類聚》五, 《白帖》)

Theme of beginning, commencement, initiation:

- Liang Yuan Di zuanyao (梁元帝纂要): 正月曰孟陽, 孟陬, 上春, 開春, 發春, 獻春, 首春, 首歲, 獻歲, 發歲, 初歲, 肇歲, 芳歲, 華歲 “The first month is called First Yang, First Gathering, Top of Spring, Opener of Spring, Issuer of Spring, Presenter of Spring, Head of Spring, Head of the Year, Presenter of the Year, Issuer of the Year, First of the Year, Commencer of the Year, Fragrant Initiator of the Year, Blossoming Bud of the Year (see SKQS, Suishi guangji)

Theme of North-East (corner where yang qi is first born):

- 8. 7. 1正月為陬 “The first month is represented by the Fish Corner” (Erya, chapter 8). This passage from China’s oldest extant dictionary, which continues to give one-character epithets for each of the remaining months, is perhaps one of the most meaningful in terms of symbolic information on the first month from pre-Han times, yet it is also most difficult to interpret (due to the archaic nature of the characters used). It has been demonstrated that the twelve characters used in this passage are names for twelve archaic month gods that presided over the functions of each month (see Noel Barnard, “The Twelve Peripheral Figures of the Ch’u Silk Manuscript”). *Zou* means to gather, as in the accumulation of yang qi that is now taking place; it means corner, especially the north-east corner of the cosmograph where the year officially commences during the first month, when the Dipper and the Sheti stars point at it; and in some southwestern dialects it means fish, resonating with Western astrology where the asterisms Shi and Bi associated with the first month belong to pisces--fish. On the terrestrial sphere, *Zou* is the name of an ancient township in the northeast of China, at the foot of Mt. Tai in today’s Shandong Province. This is the place where Confucius was born and where his ancestors held office.

Theme of (returning) yang qi emerging/manifesting at the surface:

- 是故陽氣以正月始出於地, 生育養長於上 … 故陽氣出於東北, 入於西北, 發於孟春, 畢於孟冬, 而物莫不應是. 陽始出, 物亦始出 “The first month is the time when the yang qi first emerges from the earth, and now begins its work of nourishing and growing above ground... Thus yang qi emerges in the northeast, goes back inside in the northwest, starts in the first month of spring, and is finished in the first month of winter—and there is not a single living creature that does not respond to its lead. When the yang first emerges, all plants and animals also begin to come out.” (Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu* [Heavy Dew on the Spring and Autumn Annals], chapter 11)
- 正月陽氣凍解地氣而出也 “During the first month, the yang qi frees the earth qi from its icy shackles and causes it to emerge” (*Huangdi neijing*, chapter 49).

THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE EIGHT PAGE ARTICLE.

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