

Constitutional Type and the Internal Tradition of Chinese Medicine Part I: The Ontogeny of Life
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Abstract: The author examines the concepts of Daoist numerology and cosmology as they serve as the foundation for the human journey from conception to death. Seven stages of human spiritual and psychic development, as outlined by Daoist philosopher Liu I-Ming, are discussed in terms of Chinese physiology. Illness is described as a consequence of the loss of original nature which occurs with the gaining of self consciousness. Health is defined as full self expression which is based on the natural spontaneity of dao. This article sets the foundation for understanding the concept of constitutional type as it occurs within the Five-element tradition. Constitutional type as it relates clinically to health and the fulfillment of destiny will be discussed in Part II.

THE CONCEPT of constitutional type (CT) is one of the distinguishing features that defines Chinese medicine's complementarity to that of Western medicine.(1) Inherent in the idea of CT are both the very deepest traditions of Chinese philosophical and spiritual thought as well as the world view of the more modern holographic para- digm.(2) It is my intention in this article to trace the origins of the concept of constitutional type and discuss its relevance to Chinese medicine as a modern science of body-mind-spirit.

This article will appear in two parts in consecutive issues of this journal. Following the introduction, Part I of this article is divided into two sections: The first section covers the ontogeny of dao as it is present in Chinese numerology and cosmology. This serves as the foundation for understanding the human journey through life as it involves the granting, loss, and return of original nature.

The second section of Part I focuses on the ontogeny of human life from conception to death. This is discussed in terms of Chinese physiology and centers on translations of a work by Daoist scholar Liu I-Ming.(3)

Part II of this article will discuss the concept of constitutional type as it is present in the Five-element system. I will show how CT provides both a framework for assessing the quality of destiny of a human being and guiding him back toward the full self expression which is synonymous with health.

Introduction

Man receives the decree of heaven (ming), and therefore is loftier (than other) creatures.
Dong Chong-shu(4)

Heaven, in conferring destiny upon humans, has cast man as mediator between heaven and earth, making him one of the three primal powers in the universe. While heaven may will a unique nature for each of us, it is not certain that each individual will be true to this nature and manifest his destiny. Just as the dao loses its original nature of unity to give

birth to the "ten thousand things," so too, do humans fall from their original nature as they gain self-consciousness. It is the concept of constitutional type that provides practitioners of the inner traditions of Chinese medicine with a window, deep into the patient's being, which may help illuminate both the nature of his destiny, and that which blocks its expression.

I. COSMOLOGY What is looked at but not seen,

Is named the extremely dim.

What is listened to but not heard,

Is named the extremely faint.

What is grabbed but not caught,

Is named the extremely small.

These three things cannot be comprehended,

Thus they blend [hun] into one.

---Dao De Jing(5)

The life of man must ultimately follow the ontogeny of dao. For it is the implicit nature of dao that forms the foundation of man's journey from birth to death. The entire theoretical framework which serves as the foundation for the inner traditions of healing in Chinese medicine is found in the numerology which is present in the Dao De Jing (DDJ), Zhuang Zi, and other early Daoist texts. Here, I will review this numerology as it relates to the "formation" of the universe, and serves as the basis for the later discussion of man's gain, loss, and return of original nature.

Notes: 1) The concept of constitutional type (CT) presented in this paper represents the author's present thoughts on the subject arrived at through the study of several traditions of Chinese medicine and with several teachers. These include Five-element acupuncture as taught by the Traditional Acupuncture Institute, Columbia, Maryland, traditional herbal medicine as taught by Ted Kaptchuk, and Chinese medicine as taught by Leon Hammer. Also influencing my thoughts are the concepts of modern holographic theory, the study of neurobiology, embryology, and behavior genetics, and clinical experience in Chinese medicine. Further, this work represents the synthesis of a lineage of thought as it is presented throughout various traditions of Chinese philosophy, religion, medicine, and spiritual alchemy.

2) For a discussion of the holographic paradigm and its relationship to acupuncture and CT. See: Jarrett, LS (I).

3) The works which serve as the basis for this discussion are Liu's commentary on a Sung dynasty alchemical text, Jin Dan Si Bai Zi Jie (Four Hundred Characters Explaining the Golden Elixir) by Zhang Bo-Duan, and Liu's text, Symbolic Language: Breaking Open Doubt. The latter text comprises the translated work in this article. In these texts Liu explains the hidden symbolism of Chinese alchemical writing. He enumerates seven stages each of losing original nature, returning to it, and becoming a sage. Written in the early 1800s, Liu's work is of deep significance in understanding the spiritual and

psychological aspects of Chinese physiology and the inner tradition of healing in Chinese medicine. These two works have been translated into English by Cleary, T in his book, *The Inner Teachings of Daoism*.

4) Fung Yu-Lan, p. 30

5) *Dao De Jing (DDJ)*, ch. 14, Chen, EM (ed), 1989.