Wu Xing (5 phases)

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An Ancient Chinese philosopher and metaphysician, Lao Zi (老子) found that the unlimited universe is limitless, endless, infinity, infinite. This is called Wu Ji (無極). Wu Ji created Tai Ji (太極), a magnificent “Sun”. Tai Ji created Er Yi (二儀), Huan & Rose (1999). Who can ride the Dragon, p.204: “Wu Ji, infinity, infinite, limitlessness; a term from Daoist metaphysics referring to the state or condition of existence prior to the differentiation of yin and yang”, “The grand ultimate; extreme limit; referring to the essential reduction of all matter, energy, space, and time to their irreducible components, yin and yang”.

Er Yi created Si Xiang (四象), Four Seasons; Si Xiang created Ba Qua (八卦). According to Daoism, due to the four different exchanging seasons in a year, there are Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Morning, Noon, afternoon, Night and Ba Qua reflects eight positions, such as, Li Qua (離卦) = South; K’an Qua (坎卦) = North; Chen Qua (震卦) = East; Tui Qua (兌卦) = West; Sun Qua (巽卦) = Southeast; Chien Qua (乾) = Northwest; K’un Qua (坤卦) = Southwest; Gen Qua (艮卦) = Northeast. Ba Qua is divided into Xian Tian Ba Qua (先天八卦) and Hou Tian Ba Qua (後天八卦) as shown below:

![Ba Qua Diagrams](image)

Among the Ba Qua, there are Yang and Yin Qua. Three continuous non-broken lines represents Yang (male, oldest man in the house, very yang) and Three broken-line represents Yin (female, oldest woman in the house, very yin). Following Diagrams reflects eight position of the Universe.

![Ba Qua Position](image)
Within the Yin and Yang, there are 5 elements (Wu Xing), ancient Chinese philosophers and metaphysicians called these 5 elements as Wu Xing in the Wu Ji (unlimited Universe). The Wu Xing in the Universe represents material, immaterial, growth, generation, nourishment, insulation, Sheng (生) and Ke (剋). Kaptchuk, *Chinese Medicine* (2000). p.437 says: “the Five Phases is an attempt to classify phenomena in terms of five quintessential processes, represented by the emblems

Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water”. Each element, Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water represents different materials from which there are Ying and Yang inside of each phase as follows:

**Wood 木：**
Yin Wood (乙木) represents human’s liver 肝； Yang Wood (甲木) represents human’s Gall Bladder 膽

**Fire 火：**
Yin Fire (丁火) represents human’s Heart 心； Yang Fire (丙火) represents human’s Small intestine 小腸/triple warmer 三焦

**Earth 土：**
Yin Earth (己土) represent human’s Spleen 脾；Yang Earth (戊土) represents human’s Stomach 胃

**Metal 金：**
Yin Metal (辛金) represents human’s Lung 肺；Yang Metal (庚金) represents human’s large intestine 大腸

**Water 水：**
Yin Water (癸水) represents human’s Kidney 腎；Yang Water (壬) represents human’s Bladder 膀胱

Besides the analysis of human’s organs from the Wu Xing, it can also be extended to our environment in the Universe as below:

**Wood 木：**
Represents east, expansion, numbers of 2 and 3, spring, growing, dispersion, ambition, occupation, green color, discipline, principle, paper, anger, tradition, mindfulness, obligation, sour, wind, hair, liver, gall bladder, hand, head, vein, eldest son, herbs, left side, muscle, eldest daughter, nail, sour, vision, emotion, neck, eye, eyebrow, technique, arithmetic, rectangular, etc.
Fire 火

Represents south, Li Qua, upper, growth, pupil, heart, small intestine, second daughter, middle finger, tongue, blood, blood vessel, tongue hot, patience, glasses, timing, summer, red, lighting, explosion, bitter, joy, laughing, petrol, herb, spirit, kitchen, number of 9, cosmetics, punctuality, triangle-shape, sun, etc.

Earth 土:

Represents center, Kan Qua, yellow, late summer, reaping, stomach, spleen, skin, lips, all kinds of meat, muscle, mouth, dampness, stability, mediation, obligation, reality, leader, emperor, stability, numbers of 2,5,8, singing, sweet, porcelain, jade, tomb, station, hills, farm, warehouse, conservation, politics, etc.

Metal 金

Represents west, Tui Qua, number of 6 and 7, white, autumn, evening, hardness, dryness, harvest, nose, skin, chest, lung, cheek bone, large intestine, upper jiao, respiration, hearing, music, sadness, grief, art, energy, poison, attack, square shape, character, etc.

Water 水

Represents north, K’an Qua, number of 1, very yin, black, night, grey, winter, salty, cold, second son, ears, bones, kidney, bladder, teeth, marrow, urination, brain, vertebral cord, waist, hip, lower part, fear, rain, river, groaning, storage, memory, sexuality, imagination, gambling, social activity, traffic, movement, etc.

The theory of Wu Xing reflects two extremities of Yin and Yang in the Universe. It generates from ancient Chinese philosophy, the opposites of back is front, sun and moon, hot and cold, weak and strong, up and down, thin and thick, large and small, etc. Zhang & Wu, the Basic Knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine (1991).p.20 says: “Yin-Yang is a concept originating from ancient Chinese philosophy. Its original meaning is quite simple; it indicates the front and back of the sun. Later, this concept is expanded and Yin and Yang represent the two contradictions in everything”.

Though Yin and Yang of Wu Xing are two extremities, they are dependant on each other. If Yin is too strong, Yang is affected, and vice-versa. Yin and Yang should be harmonized. Maciocia. (2000). The Foundations of Chinese Medicine. p.11 says: Yin and Yang are opposite but are also mutually dependent on each other. Yin and Yang cannot exist in isolation, and this is very apparent when considering the body’s physiology”.

The Cycle of Sheng 生 (nourishing) and Ke 剋 (invading) of the Wu Xing reflects the harmony of the Universe:
Wood nourishes Fire; Fire nourishes Earth; Earth nourishes Metal; Metal nourishes Water; Water nourishes Wood. If these five phases are harmony, life is abundant and meaningful.

Wood invades Earth; Earth invades Water; Water invades Fire; Fire invades Metal; Mental invades Wood. If these five phases are imbalanced, diseases arise.

In the reality of human life, we are all experiencing the transformation of the Wu Xing, which reflects the phenomenon in the macrocosm. The ancient Chinese philosophy, Wu Xing has been widely adapting to Chinese Medicine for the past few thousand years. The Yin and Yang are the two contradictions in the Universe. Yin and Yang are relating to everything in the Universe. Yin and Yang within Wu Xing, and the five five elements, wood, fire, earth, metal and water are all playing an important role in our human life. Life will be in harmony and abundant, if Yin and Yang of Wu Xing are balanced. However, if it is imbalanced, life will be meaningless.

References


