



Five Element Theory and Clinical Implications

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Early Chinese Philosophy

- Early Thought regarding the fundamental nature of the universe in Book of Rites and I Ching
 - Ying Yang Theory
 - Theory of Opposites
 - I Ching
 - Interaction of Man between Heaven (yang) and Earth (yin)
 - 5 elements or phases – Seeking essential nature of all things
 - Connects to concept of cross roads
 - There is the 1, which becomes 2 (yin yang), and then the 2 becomes 3, the 3 becomes 4, and then the 4 becomes 5 (a cross with the earth in the center)
 - First mentioned in Su Wen (200 BC) as applies to human health and then developed in Ling Shu
 - Nan Ching then further organized concepts
 - Connection to Greek Philosophy of the essential elements that make up all things

12 Earthly Branches, 10 Celestial Stems and 9 Stars

- 12 branches describe the energies on earth
- 10 stems the energies of Heaven
- 9 Stars relate to the sequence of the primary trigrams of the I Ching that predict and describe all human activities

Application to Human Health

- 10 stems relates to the yin and yang aspects of the 5 elements
- 12 branches relate to the 12 Main meridians
- 9 Stars relate to the Jing and the 8 Extra Ordinary Vessels

Qian Trigram - Heaven

- The Qian Trigram represents the interactions of the Heavens or Cosmos and Earth with Man in the middle
- Man's interaction with the Heavens is through breath
- Man's interaction with the Earth is through food and drink



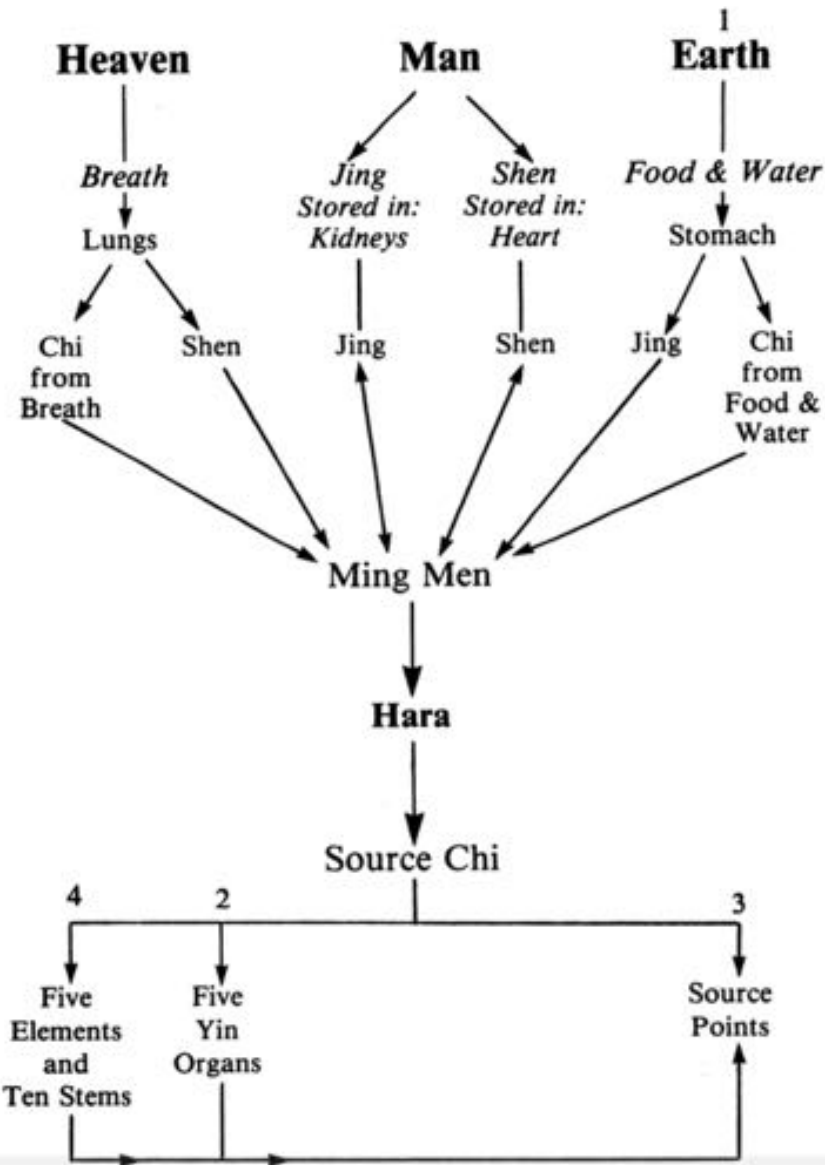
Jing and Shen

- Jing is the Essential Qi of the person
 - Creates form in the body
- I Ching: Jing creates the form (substance)
- Shen is the protective nature of the person
 - Gives activity to form in the body
 - Mind or spirit
- I Ching: Ying-Yang cannot be measured, it is called Shen

5 Elements or Phases

- Provide the physiological matrix to regulate and govern the interactions between environmental factors and the interaction of Jing and Shen to maintain health





The 8 Trigrams and 5 Elements

- The 8 winds in Heaven relate to the ancient philosophical concepts discussed in the I Ching and 8 Trigrams.
- The Su Wen distills these historic concepts into a new understanding of the body and the 5 yin organs with a system based on the 5 elements

Yellow Emperor asks "There are 8 winds in Heaven and only 5 in the body, how is this?"

Chi Po answers

...The east direction creates wind, wind creates Wood, Wood...creates the Liver...The south direction creates heat, heat creates Fire, Fire....creates the Heart...The west direction creates dryness, dryness creates Metal, Metal....creates the Lungs...The north direction creates cold, cold creates Water, Water...creates the Kidneys...The center creates dampness, dampness creates Earth, Earth....creates the Spleen

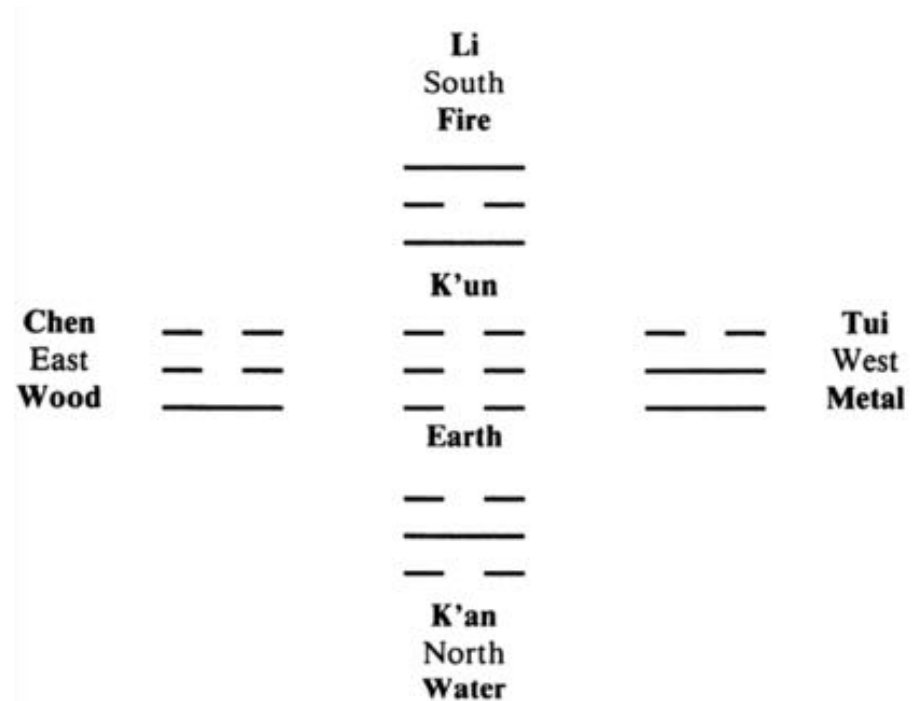
Su Wen

Missing Trigrams in Correspondences to 5 elements

- Missing trigrams

- Heaven - Qian 
- Gentleness - Xun 
- Stillness - Mountain 

- Missing 3 trigrams still need to be incorporated into energetic system



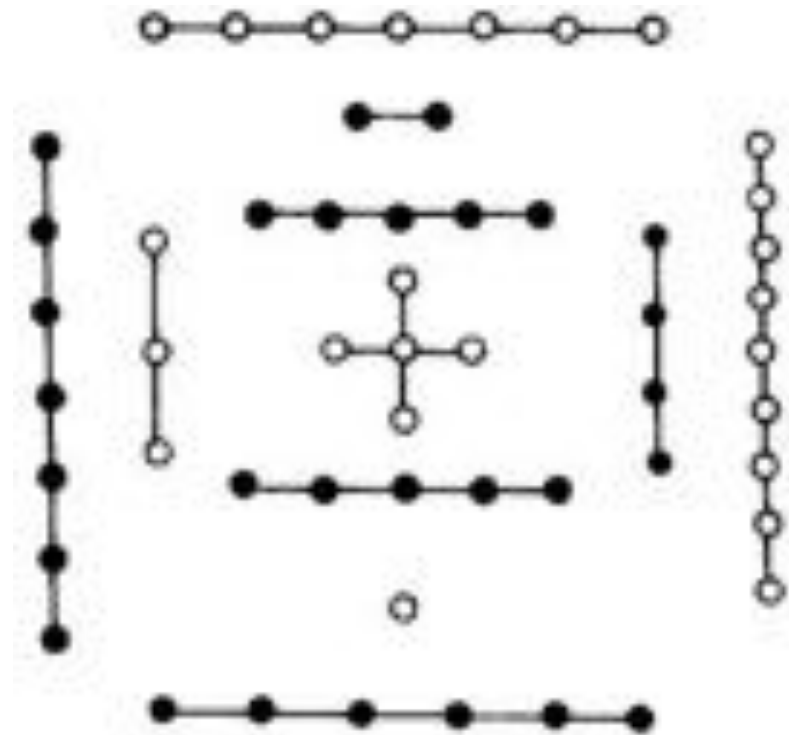
Qi of Heaven intersects in Humans with 5 phases

- Qi of heaven brought into body with Breath (Heaven or Qian Trigram), Gentleness (Wind or Xun Trigram) and Stillness (Mountain or Gen Trigram)
- Meditative State

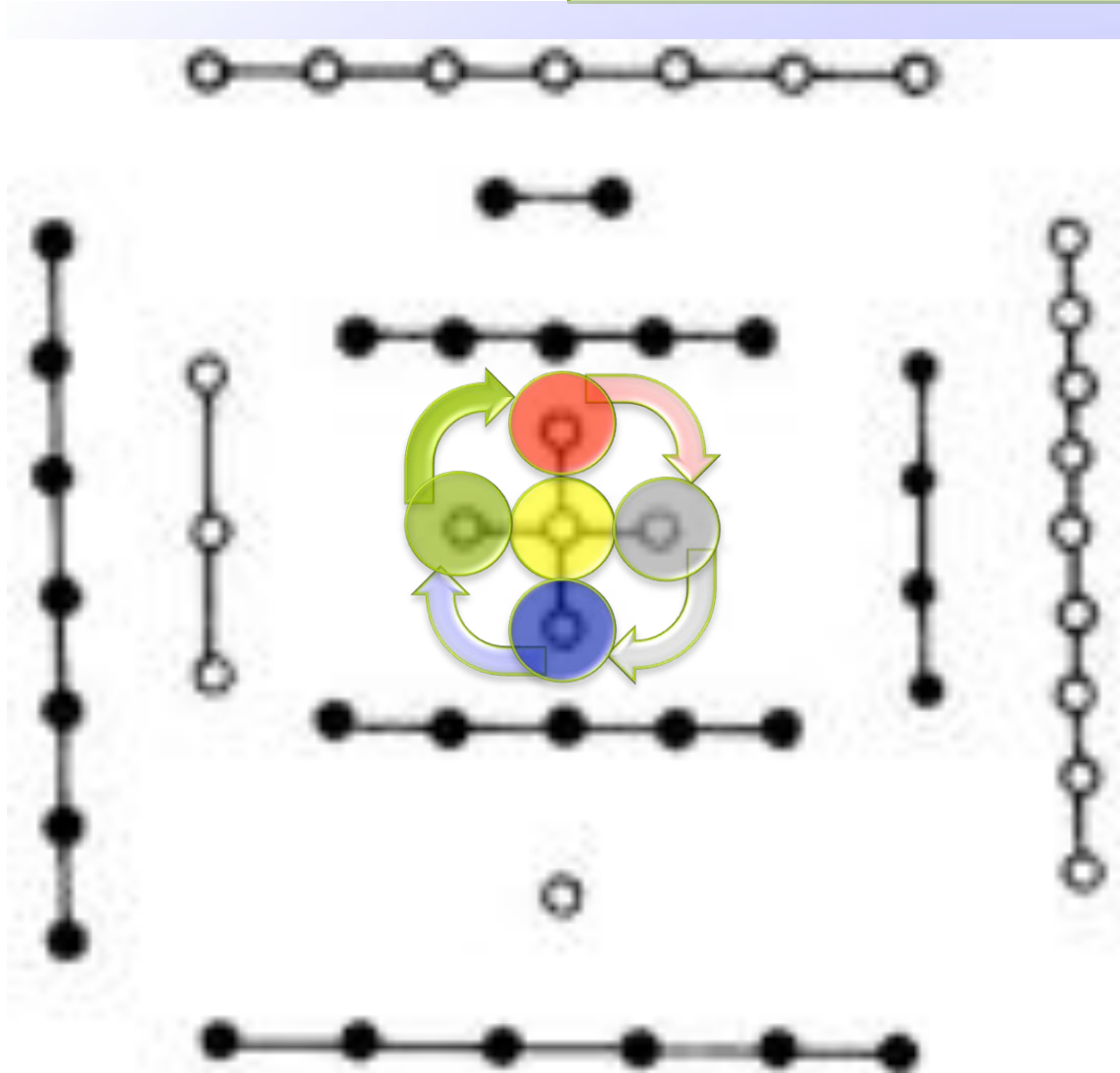


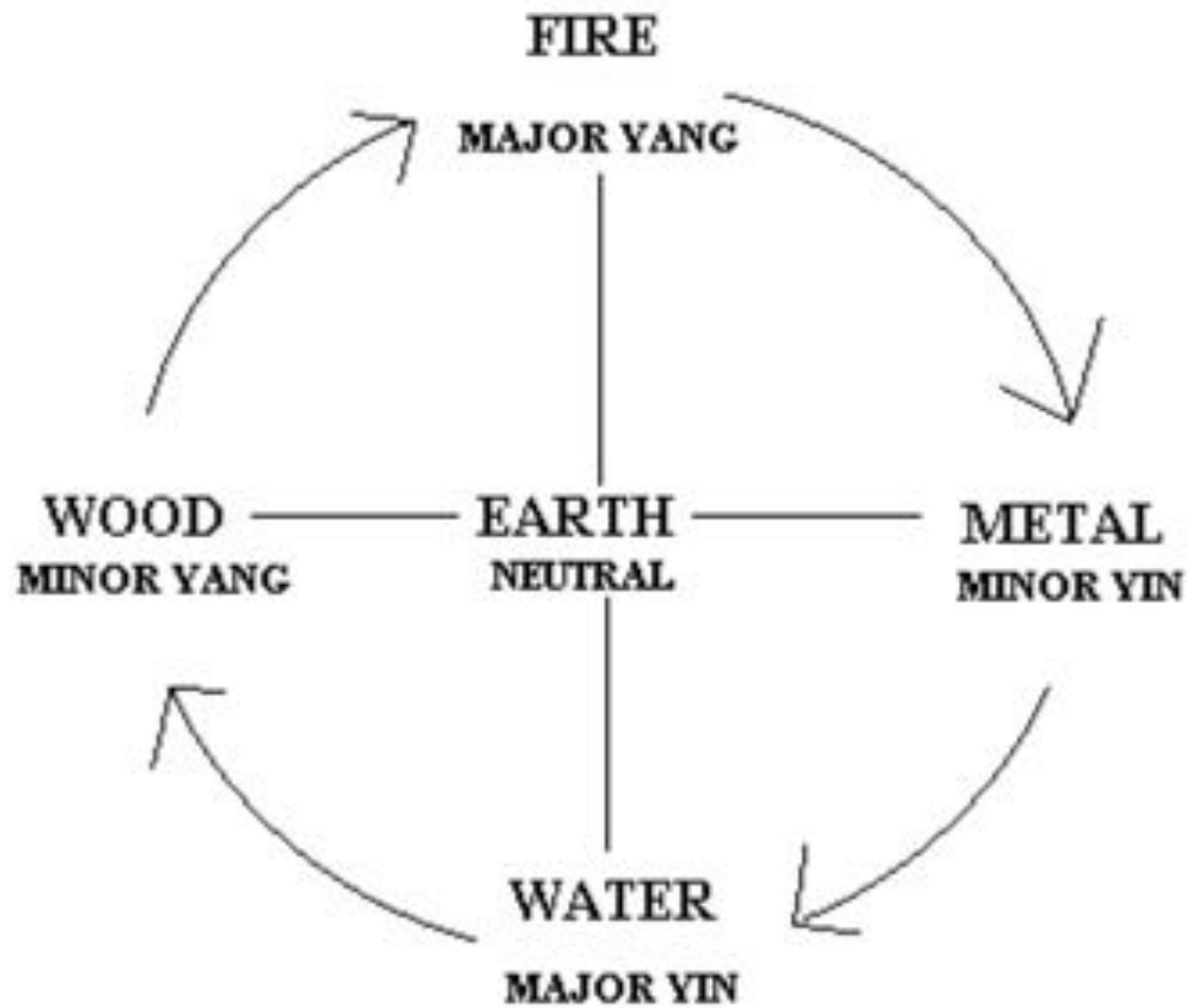
Hetu: Crossroads Imagery

- The word cross is derived from crux or crucible
- Fou Hi (Emperor almost 3000 BC)
 - Earth at the center
 - Alchemical Retort that is critical in energetic transformations in the body



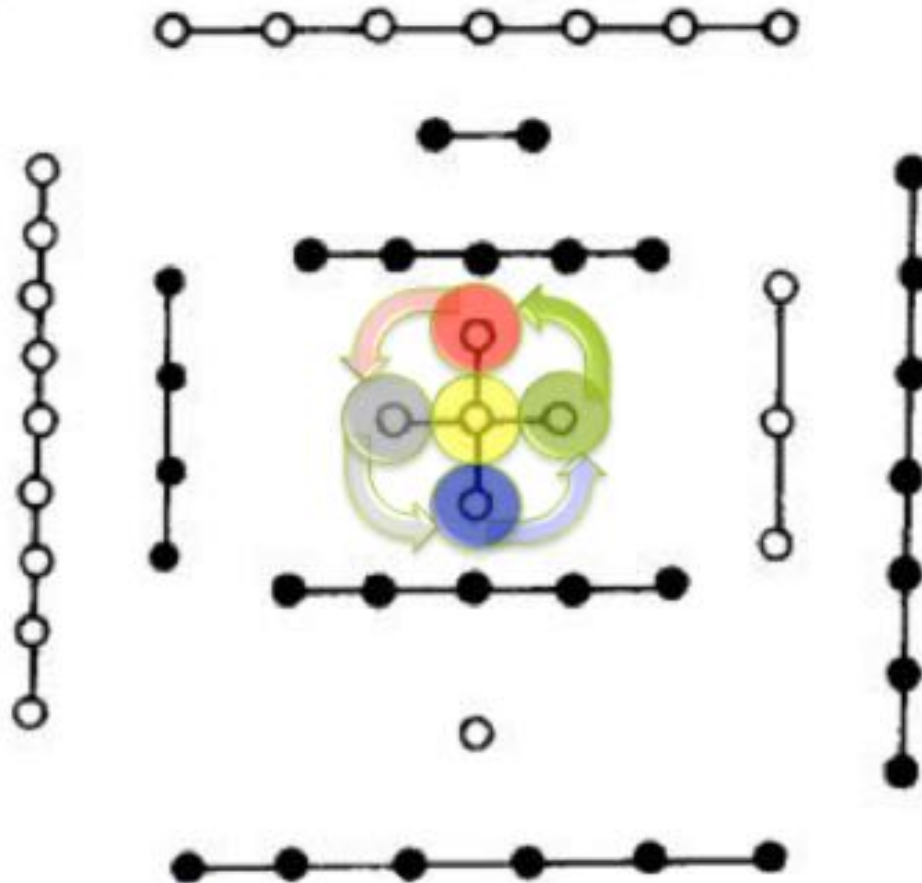
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Hara

Reflection of Universal Pattern



Laws of 5 Element Physiology

- Creation Cycle

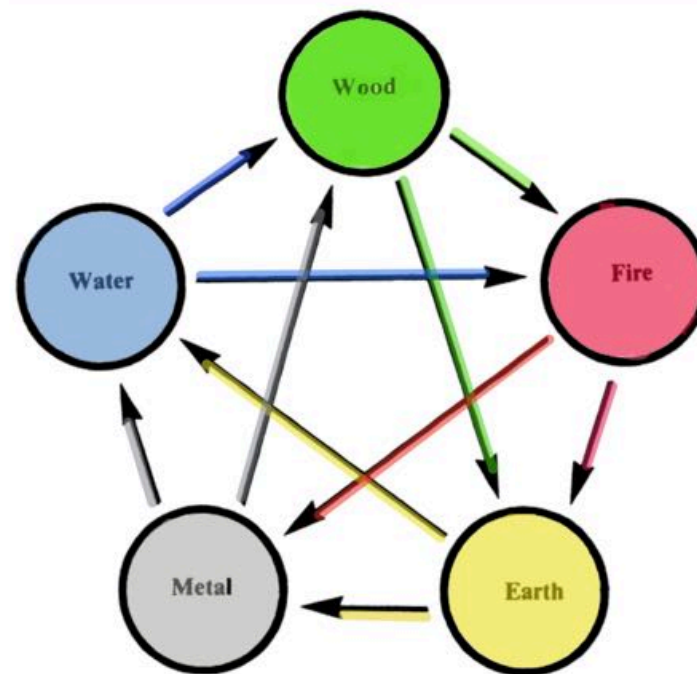
- Wood creates Fire
- Fire creates Earth
- Earth creates Metal
- Metal creates Water
- Water Creates Wood

- Control Cycle

- Wood controls Earth
- Earth controls Water
- Water controls Fire
- Fire controls Metal
- Metal controls Wood

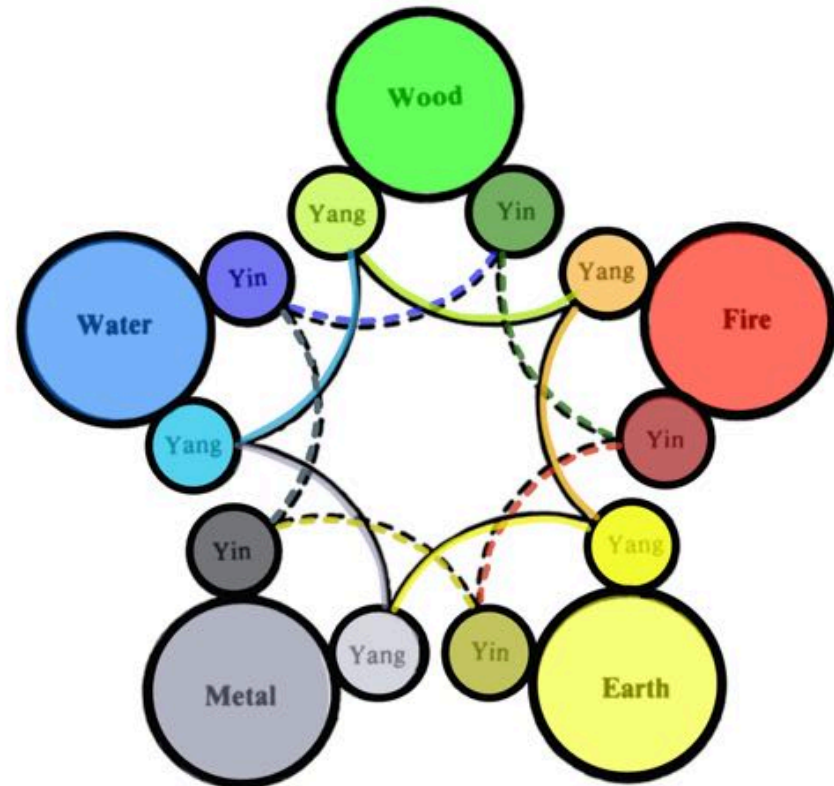
5 Element Transformations

- The Su Wen and Nan Ching develop the 5 element system into a new understanding of the body and the 5 yin organs with a system based on the 5 elements



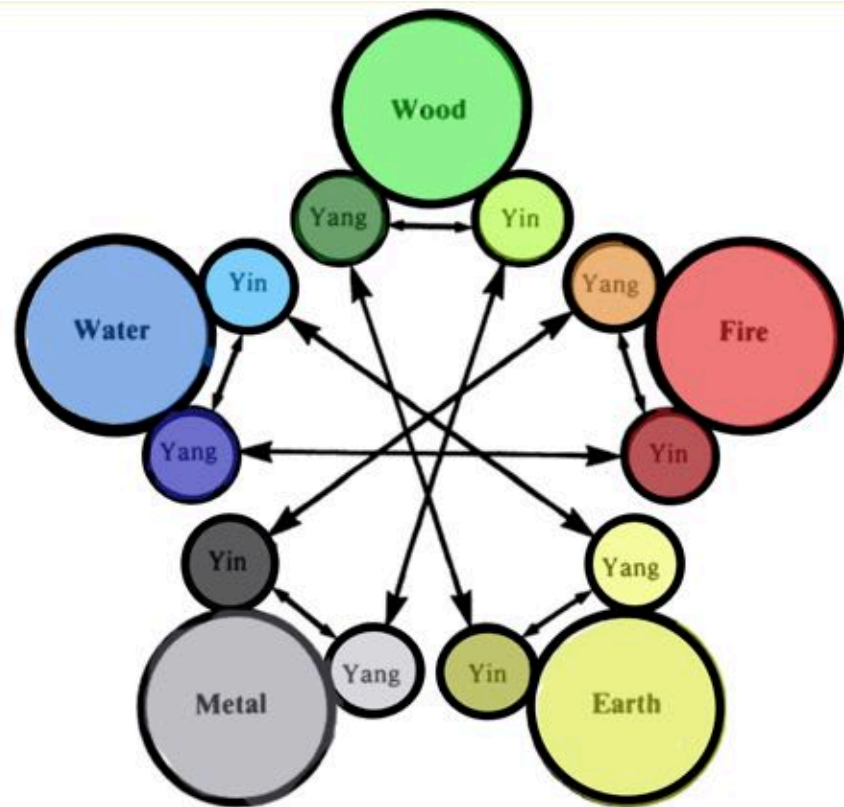
10 Stems – Creation Cycle

- The interaction between elements is nourishing
 - Yin of Water (Kidney) nourishes the Yin of Wood (Liver) and the Yin of Wood nourishes the Yin of Fire (Heart) and so on
 - Similarly the Yang of Earth (Stomach) nourishes the Yang of Metal (Large Intestine)



10 Stems – Control Cycle

- The ebbing and flowing of Yin and Yang are in constant flux
 - Within an Element such as Wood
 - Liver and Gallbladder interact as a Yin/Yang pair
 - Between Elements such as Yang Metal in dynamic interaction with Wood Yin
 - Large Intestine interacting with Liver (common treatment protocol for pain involves LI 4 and LV 3)
- Wood Yin is then held in control by both Wood Yang and Metal Yang
 - Liver controlled by Gallbladder and Large Intestine
 - Oketsu treatment can always be supplemented by Immune treatment (LI 10-11)



5 Elements: Seasonal Correspondences

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Direction | East | South | Center | West | North |
| Seasons | Spring | Summer | Long Summer | Autumn | Winter |
| Climatic Influence | Wind | Heat | Damp | Dryness | Cold |

Balancing Yin and Yang and Seasons

- Reflects internally with the balancing of the 4 elements with Earth at the center
- The Way is to find an internal balance just as we must find balance with the environment

To oppose one's root, is to attack one's basis and to spoil one's true qi.

Hence, yin and yang and the 4 seasons, they constitute end and begin the myriad beings, they are the basis of death and life.

Opposing them results in catastrophe and harms life. If one follows them, severe diseases will not emerge. This is called "to achieve the Way"

Chapter 2, 14-1, Su Wen

Goal of a Physician

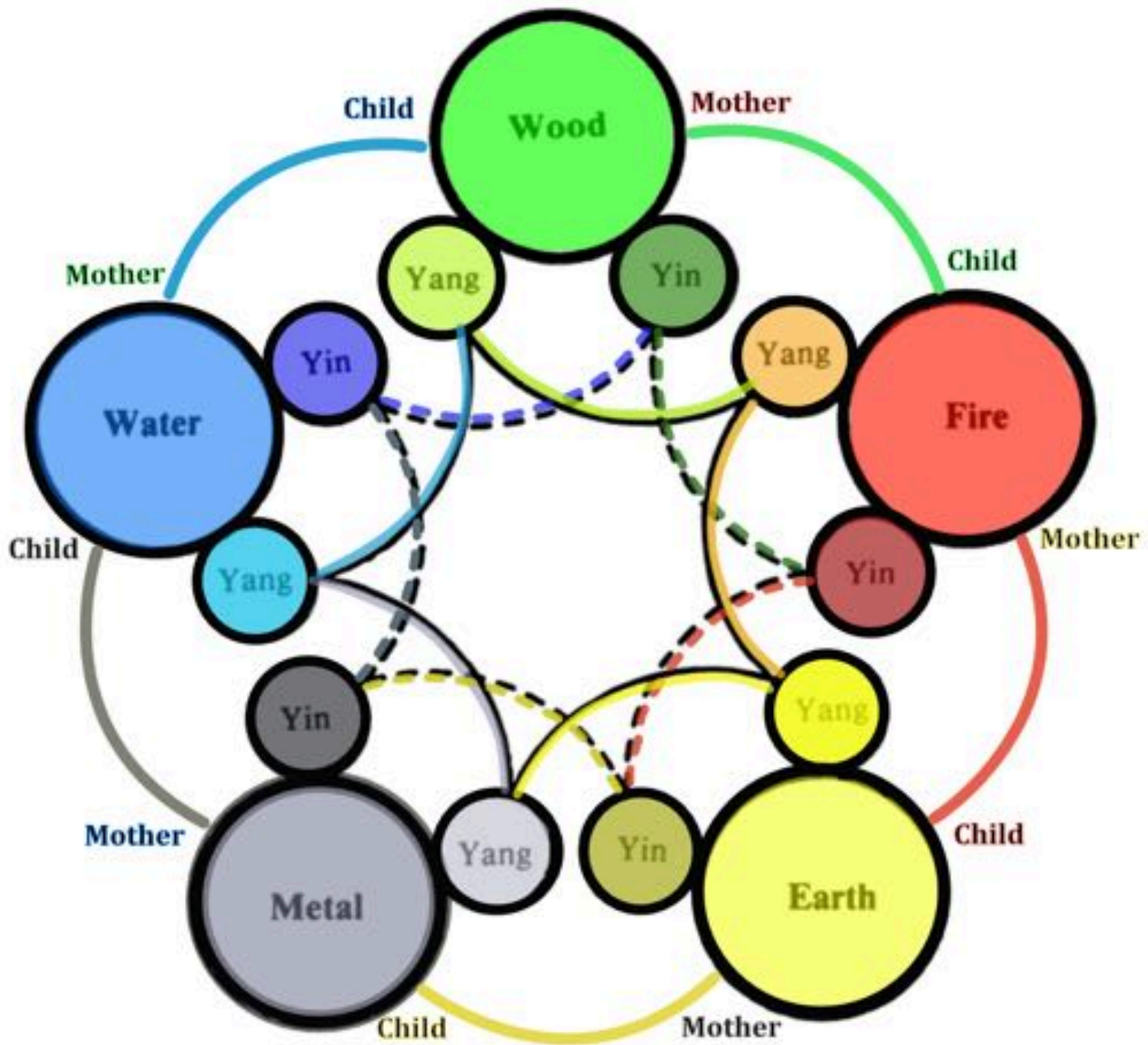
Hence it is said

“the sages did not treat those already ill,
but treated those not yet ill, they did not put
in order what was already in disorder, but
put in order what was not yet in disorder”

Chapter 2, 14-5 Su Wen

Mother Child Correspondences – Creation Cycle

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Children | Child of Water | Child of Wood | Child of Fire | Child of Earth | Child of Metal |
| Mothers | Mother of Fire | Mother of Earth | Mother of Metal | Mother of Water | Mother of Wood |



Spiritual and Sensorial Correspondences

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Senses | Color | Smell | Taste | Voice | Liquid |
| Colors | Blue/green | Red | Yellow | White | Blue/Black |
| Emotions | Anger | Joy | Reflection Overthinking | Grief | Fear Shock Stress |
| 5 Jing (Spirits) | Soul Hun | Spirit (Shen) | Thoughts Yi | Body spirit Po | Jing and Will Zhi |

Symptom Correspondences

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 5 Labors | Walking | Watching | Sitting | Lying down | Standing |
| 5 Disease Transformations | Spasming and clenched hands | Grief | Hiccoughs | Cough | Body chill |
| 5 Injuries | Blood | Chi | Flesh | Bone | Muscle/Tendons |
| Symptoms of each organ | Speaking | Belching | Belching with food | Cough | Yawning and sneezing |
| Symptoms of each organ | Grief/melancholy | Joy | Fear (like stress) | Grief | Fear/Worry |

Organ Correspondences

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Yin Organs | Liver | Heart | Spleen | Lung | Kidney |
| Yang Organs | Gall Bladder | Small Intestine | Stomach | Large Intestine | Bladder |
| 5 Zhong | Blood | Shen | Flesh | Chi | Will |
| 5 Yin Organs Store | Blood | Vessels | Ying | Chi | Jing |
| Opens into | Eyes | Tongue | Lips | Nose | Ears or the 2 Yin |
| Branches into | Nails | Face Color | Lips | Skin/ Body Hair | Head hair |

Emotional Response to Injury

When the liver is attacked, the sick person utters plaintive cries

When the Heart is attacked, the sick person utters pointless words

When the spleen is disordered, the sick person hums

When the Lungs are sick, the sick person sobs

When the Kidneys are attacked, the sick person laments

Nan Ching

5 Element and Pulse

The color Blue (Wood) should be seen with a Wiry or Tight pulse

The color Red (Fire) should be seen with a Floating, Big or Scattered pulse

The color Yellow (Earth) should be seen with a Middle, Moderate and Big pulse

The color Black (Water) should be seen with a Sinking, Soggy or Slippery pulse

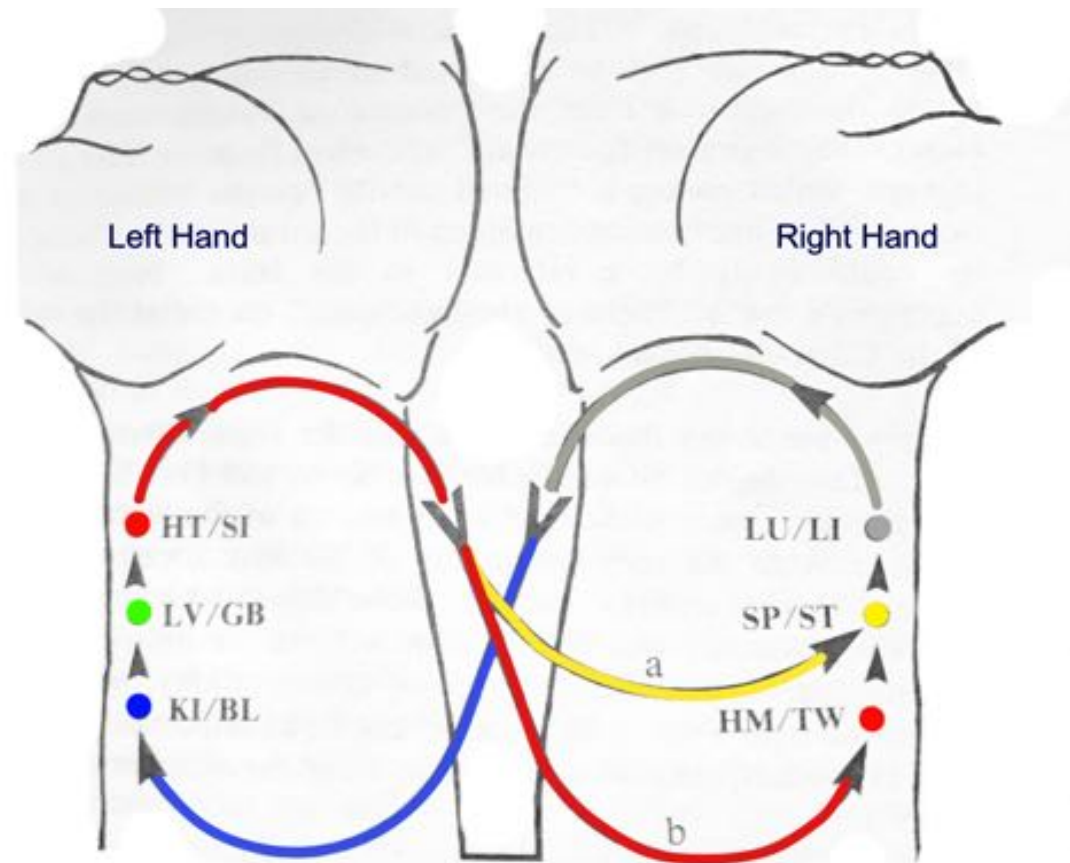
The color White (Metal) should be seen with a Floating, Rough or Short pulse

NAN CHING

Pulse and Skin Texture

- The skin texture of forearm follows the 5 Element Pulse structure
- Wood – Skin tight
- Fire – Skin rapid
- Earth – Skin loose, moderate
- Metal – Skin rough
- Water – Skin slippery

5 Phases and Radial Pulse



5 Elements and Dietary Preferences

- Dietary preferences can give us a hint of root cause of 5 element organ dysfunction
- Liver – Sour flavor (Vinegar)
- Heart – Strong bitter flavor
- Spleen – Sweet flavor
- Lung – Hot, spicy flavor
- Kidney – Salty flavor

Food Correspondences

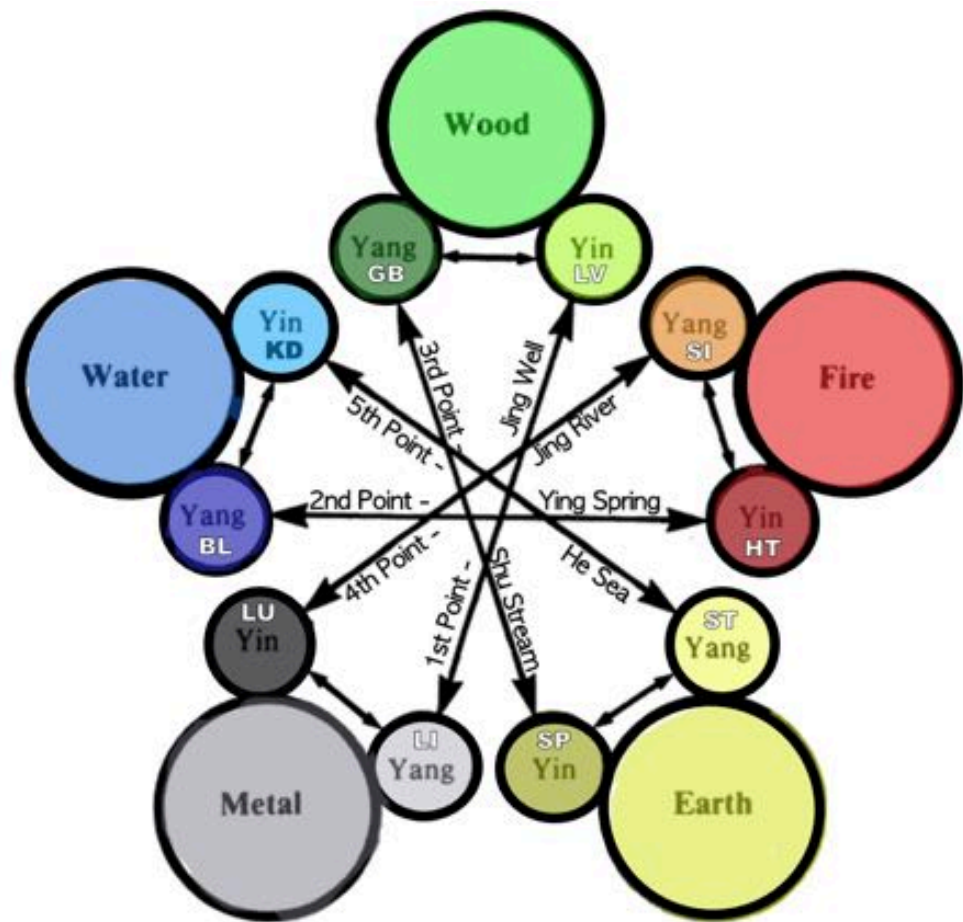
| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|-----------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Grains | Wheat | Millet Flour | Millet | Rice | Bean |
| Meats | Chicken | Lamb | Beef | Horse | Pork |
| Vegies | Leek | Shallot | Hollyhock | Scallions | Leaf of Beans |
| Fruits | Plum | Apricot | Date | Peach | Chestnut |
| Nourishes | Sweet | Acid | Salty | Bitter | Hot |
| Injures | Hot | Salty | Sweet & Acid | Acid & Bitter | Bitter & Sweet |

5 Element Correspondences

| phase | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | Macrocosm | | | | |
| compass point | east | south | center | west | north |
| season | spring | summer | late summer | autumn | winter |
| climatic effect | wind | heat | humidity | dryness | cold |
| taste | sour | bitter | sweet | spicy | salty |
| stage/phase | germinating | growing | changing | maturing | saving |
| | Microcosm | | | | |
| Zang | liver | heart | spleen | lung | kidney |
| Fu | gall bladder | small intest. | stomach | large intest. | bladder |
| emotion | anger | joy | sorrow | grief | fear |
| Sense organ (-function) | eye (seeing) | tongue (talking) | mouth (tasting) | nose (smelling) | ear (hearing) |
| tissue | tendons | vessels | flesh | skin pores | bones |

Interplay between the Stems

- When the Wood Point of Liver is treated it will have a dynamic action via the control cycle to balance the Yang Jing Well or Metal point
- Similarly if you treat the BL Water point it will balance the Heart Fire



| ELEMENT | Element Aspect | Transporting Point | Organ | Point |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------|----------------|
| FIRE | Fire | Jing River Ying Spring | SI HT | BL 60 KD 2 |
| EARTH | Earth | He Sea Shu Stream | ST SP | BL 40 KI 3 |
| METAL | Metal | Jing Well Jing River | LI LU | BL 67 KD 7 |
| WATER | Water | Ying Spring He Sea | BL KD | BL 66 KD 10 |
| WOOD | Wood | Shu Stream Jing Well | GB LV | BL 65 KI 1 |



ELEMENT

Element Aspect

Transporting Point

Organ

Point

FIRE

Fire

Jing River
Ying Spring

SI
HT



SI 5
HT 8

EARTH

Earth

He Sea
Shu Stream

ST
SP



SI 8
HT 7

METAL

Metal

Jing Well
Jing River

LI
LU



SI 1
HT 4

WATER

Water

Ying Spring
He Sea

BL
KD



SI 2
HT 3

WOOD

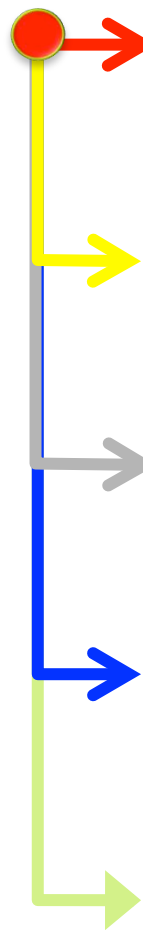
Wood

Shu Stream
Jing Well

GB
LV



SI 3
HT 9



| ELEMENT | Element Aspect | Transporting Point | Organ | Point |
|---------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
|---------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|

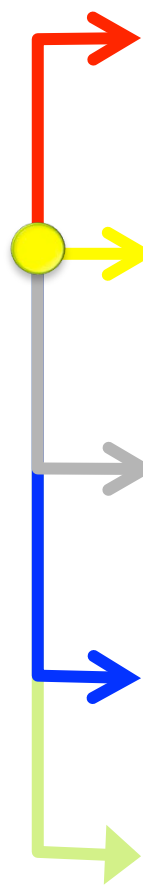
| | | | | |
|------|------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|
| FIRE | Fire | Jing River Ying Spring | SI HT | ST 41 SP 2 |
|------|------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------------|
| EARTH | Earth | He Sea Shu Stream | ST SP | ST 36 SP 3 |
|-------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------------|

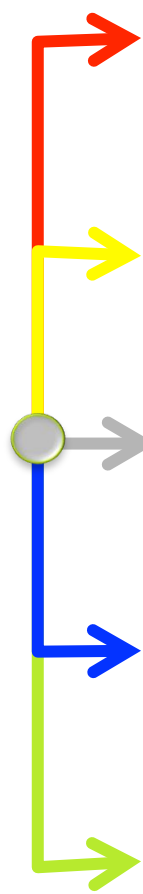
| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|
| METAL | Metal | Jing Well Jing River | LI LU | ST 45 SP 5 |
|-------|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------------|
| WATER | Water | Ying Spring He Sea | BL KD | ST 44 SP 9 |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|------|------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|
| WOOD | Wood | Shu Stream Jing Well | GB LV | ST 43 SP 1 |
|------|------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|



| ELEMENT | Element Aspect | Transporting Point | Organ | Point |
|---------|----------------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|
| FIRE | Fire | Jing River Ying Spring | SI HT | LI 5 LU 10 |
| EARTH | Earth | He Sea Shu Stream | ST SP | LI 11 LU 9 |
| METAL | Metal | Jing Well Jing River | LI LU | LI 1 LU 8 |
| WATER | Water | Ying Spring He Sea | BL KD | LI 2 LU 5 |
| WOOD | Wood | Shu Stream Jing Well | GB LV | LI 3 LU 11 |



| ELEMENT | Element Aspect | Transporting Point | Organ | Point |
|---------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
|---------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|

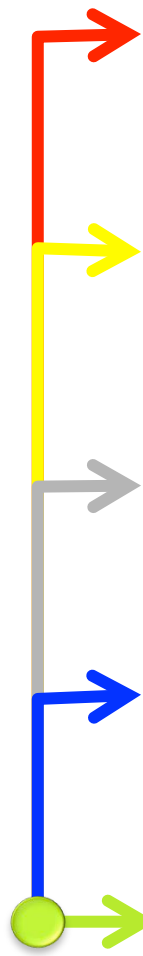
| | | | | |
|------|------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|
| FIRE | Fire | Jing River Ying Spring | SI HT | GB 38 LV 2 |
|------|------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------------|
| EARTH | Earth | He Sea Shu Stream | ST SP | GB 34 LV 3 |
|-------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|
| METAL | Metal | Jing Well Jing River | LI LU | GB 44 LV 4 |
|-------|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------------|
| WATER | Water | Ying Spring He Sea | BL KD | GB 43 LV 8 |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|------|------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|
| WOOD | Wood | Shu Stream Jing Well | GB LV | GB 41 LV 1 |
|------|------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|



5 Element Approach

- Horary Point: Reinforcing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Lung | LU 11 | LU 10 | LU 9 | LU 8 | LU 5 |
| Spleen | SP 1 | SP 2 | SP 3 | SP 5 | SP 9 |

- SP 3 also Yuan Source point

5 Element Approach

- Horary Point: Reinforcing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Pericardium | PC 9 | PC 8 | PC 7 | PC 5 | PC 3 |
| Liver | LV 1 | LV 2 | LV 3 | LV 4 | LV 8 |

5 Element Approach

- Horary Point: Reinforcing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------|------|-------------|-------|-------|--------------|
| Heart | HT 9 | HT 8 | HT 7 | HT 4 | HT 3 |
| Kidney | KD 1 | KD 2 | KD 3 | KD 7 | KD 10 |

5 Element Approach

- Mother Point: Nourishing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Lung | LU 11 | LU 10 | LU 9 | LU 8 | LU 5 |
| Spleen | SP 1 | SP 2 | SP 3 | SP 5 | SP 9 |

- Lung 9 is also the Source Point

5 Element Approach

- Mother Point: Nourishing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------------------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Pericardium | PC 9 | PC 8 | PC 7 | PC 5 | PC 3 |
| Liver | LV 1 | LV 2 | LV 3 | LV 4 | LV 8 |

5 Element Approach

- Mother Point: Nourishing

| | Wood | Fire | Earth | Metal | Water |
|--------|-------------|------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Heart | HT 9 | HT 8 | HT 7 | HT 4 | HT 3 |
| Kidney | KD 1 | KD 2 | KD 3 | KD 7 | KD 10 |

Summary

- 5 Element system powerful tool to both diagnose root cause of patient presentation as well as providing concrete treatment options
- Major factor in Japanese approach to treatment
- Provides creative options for treatment
 - Focus for now on
 - Fire – Metal/Water combinations
 - Mother Child relationships of major organs