

A Fairy Tale THE STORY OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

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This is a story, an easy way to introduce the five elements in a TFH class.

A long time ago, in China, there were 2 different cultures. The people from the 1st culture were living in little villages, built with houses, and working in the fields around their villages. They were dependent on the weather (rain , sun,...), the seasons, and the climate.

The people from the 2nd culture were called nomads. They too were dependent on the weather and the seasons, but in another way. Always travelling, they were looking at the sky to know where they were and where to go. They had little influence on the development of the 5 elements. The sky is more related to the number 6 (2 times 6 is 12: the 12 meridians, the 12 astrological signs,..) I won't talk about these people; this is another story.

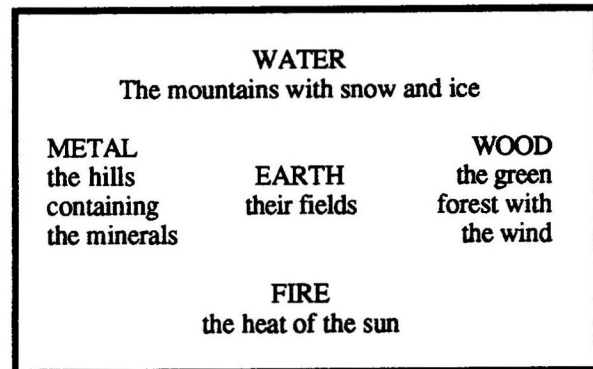
So we are coming back to the sedentary people, the people from the 1st culture. They were living on their fields, planting seeds, and waiting for and needing water and sunlight for their seeds to become mature plants. They were looking around to the east, the south, the west, and the north.

On the West side they were surrounded by hills, and they knew that they could find minerals, Metal, inside these hills. Looking to the East, they saw green woods, large areas of green forests. They didn't know that the China Sea was hidden by these large forests. They just saw the Wood and felt the wind coming through the woods without knowing from where it was coming.

If they looked to the South, what could they see? There was the sun, high in the sky, giving them the same kind of heat as the Fire.

And looking to the North, they could see very high mountains, bringing cold Water and ice to their villages. And this water was a big reason for anxiety in their life.

Finally, standing on the ground, the Earth, and looking around, their view was something like this:



But for them it was impossible to imagine their world to be like that with the sun, giving them the best in their life, placed at the bottom of the diagram. So they decided that its place should be at the top; the sun was almost like a god for them. Therefore they turned their diagram, placing the sun, Fire, on top, and the Water on the bottom; therefore the Wood found his place on the left side and the Metal on the right side. The Earth, the ground where they were living, stayed in the middle.

They began to live with this vision of the world: 4 "elements" plus 1. And their life, their way of thinking, were dependent on these "elements". That was their life, and they explained everything with them: colors, feelings, seasons, climates, directions...

The sun, Fire, was related to the color Red and the feelings of Joy and Happiness. Heat and sun were related to the Summer.

The Water coming from the mountains recovered by snow and ice, received the cold color Blue and becomes a sign of Fear and Anxiety. Survival was difficult during the cold Winter.

The Metal was related to that part of the country where everything was so dry. The

minerals hills, where the mineral-rich ground was found and where it was impossible to live or to survive for a long period of time, was therefore White. All that gave them a feeling of Sadness. The same sadness they felt seeing the Autumn coming.

The Wood, with its wind coming through the trees, was given the Green color, the color of the Spring. The wind was sometimes so strong that they couldn't live with it without feeling a big Anger.

The Earth, their home ground, which was the center of their world, was Yellow and they had a lot of Sympathy for it.

Their natural body feelings told them that they had energy pathways that were reacting on the seasons and also on certain parts of the day. These energy pathways are what we call the meridians. And they felt that during the Spring, they had more energy in the meridians we call Liver and Gall Bladder. In the Summer the energy was higher in 4 meridians: Circulation Sex, Triple Warmer, Heart and Small Intestine. In the Autumn the energy increase was in the Lung and large Intestine meridians. And in the Winter, they sensed the energy increase in the Kidney and Bladder meridians.

And what about the Spleen and Stomach meridians? They were related to the center, the Earth; and the energy increased in those two meridians during a short period (18 days) at the end of the Summer, a time we call the Fifth Season or the Indian summer. These two meridians help the energy to go from the Summer, to Indian Summer, and then to the Autumn.

Therefore the Earth element moved from its central position to a place between fire and metal. And so, finally we arrive to the 5 elements we know.

They first saw their world from their central position, until they related it to their body feelings. And they went from a Static position to a Dynamic circle of energy flow. They were no more looking at the world, they were an active part of the world. And they developed a lifestyle in which everything in their lives found its place in the elements. It became a philosophy. The world outside

became the mirror of their inner world and conversely.

They observed that two laws were needed to maintain the balance of this energy cycle: the Generation law, called the Tcheng cycle and the Control law, called the Ko cycle.

The Generation cycle is like a mother feeding her child: she is giving him milk, but it's important for him to receive the right amount. This is the role of the Control cycle. The Control cycle is the love cycle. The mother loves her child; she doesn't want him to eat too much or too little; she doesn't want him to become ill. Therefore, the love cycle controls the food cycle to keep the child healthy.

In the Law of the 5 Elements the Tcheng cycle is seen like this:

The Wood is feeding the Fire. The Fire by burning is giving ashes to the Earth. In its bowels the Earth makes the Metals. Metal in melting becomes liquid, like Water. And to complete the cycle Water is needed for the Wood to grow.

The KO cycle is seen like this:

The Wood controls the Earth with its roots. The Earth controls the Water by not allowing the water to go everywhere. Water extinguishes the Fire. Fire is controlling the metal by making it melt. And to complete the cycle Metal is able to cut Wood.

These two cycles are important to maintain the balance in the both outer world and the inner world. This is what these ancient Chinese people discovered. This is the philosophy of a balanced life we received from them.

I "received" this story from one of my acupuncture teachers, Dr. Marc Lefevre, MD, from Belgium. I thank him very much for the help this story gave me to introduce the concept of the five elements in a TFH class. It makes the five elements so easy to understand. If you want to, use the story in your turn, make it yours, and share it.