

## WU-XING FOR PSYCHOLOGY – AN ANCIENT MODEL TO DISCUSS PSYCHOSOCIAL EVOLUTION AND DEGENERATION

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**ABSTRACT.** *While the Yin-Yang system describes polarity in nature, Wu-xing – known as the Traditional Chinese System of 5 Elements – deals with its diversity. Looking upon it as a key natural principle of possible interactions, the same pattern is here applied to living nature and to psychology, where five main human aspects (contact, care, order + responsibility, self-limitation and own realization (growth)) are regarded as interacting in the same way as the Chinese elements fire, soil, metal, water and wood. Typical examples of behaviour, emotions and thought patterns are attributed to each of the five aspects, and listed in the sense of thesis – antithesis, active – passive, towards oneself – towards others and positive – negative. Additionally, the western sixth element “air” is regarded in this article – interpreted as the whole network’s atmosphere, through which personal libido, pleasure (from inside) and personal environment (from outside) have remarkable influence on the duration and thus on the weight of each of the five main qualities of this “Five Phases Rotation System”. As illustrated, dynamic and harmonious psychosocial evolution usually goes along with clockwise support and diagonal limitation of their components – equally distributed influences of environment and sufficient own libido close to contact provided. In contrast to such an idealized dynamic, everyday life is frequently threatened by various possibilities of malfunction in the system: Partial contra-clockwise rotation, shortcuts, dominating phases causing diagonal suppression or even contra-clockwise diagonal disregard. Examples taken from everyday life concerning frequent thinking, behaviour and emotional processes underline the value of this originally Ancient Chinese pattern – extended from the author’s western point of view. Thus Wu-xing offers a theory of Salutogenese (health education) and encourages dialogue between intercultural philosophers, medical psychologists and pedagogic trainers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Wu-xing, Ancient Chinese System of Elements, Five Phases Rotation System + the network’s Atmosphere, Concepts of the Diverse in Life (Exchange, Preservation, Purification, latent Power and Limitation, Realization), Concepts of the Diverse in Psychology (Experiences of Contact, Care, Responsibility, Self-limitation, self-realizing Work, timing of personal Libido – adapted to personal environment), “Natural” Promotion and Limitation, Polarity in single phases, well-balanced Evolution step by step, Domination and Deficiency of Phases, Dysfunctional Patterns, interdisciplinary Dialogue, Salutogenese*

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### **Introduction**

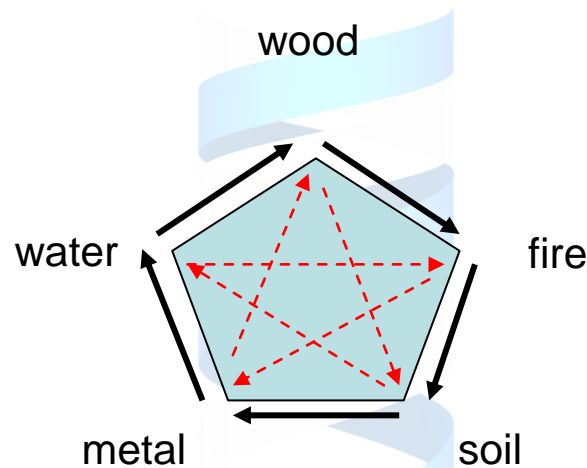
Whereas the Tai Chi symbol illustrates healthful cooperation of polar (yin-yang) components – when applied to psychology: of polar emotions, behavior and thinking (see my previous article), Wu-xing can be understood as a model describing healthful cooperation of the diverse in nature. Natural interaction of the diverse is traditionally explained by five (wu) typical Chinese phases (xing) or elements (in TCM referred to fire, soil, metal, water and wood) promoting each other clockwise and limiting each other diagonally (Granet, 1963; Ngyuyen Van Nghi, 1977; Bachmann, 1959; Porkert, 1982; et al.). Both patterns (Tai Chi and Wu-xing) can be regarded as healthful principles of evolution (causae formales in accordance with causa finalis) which generally can be applied to different fields of science – here especially to psychology.

### **1. TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF WU-XING**

Diversity in nature was traditionally observed between five traditional Chinese elements usually translated with the terms: Water – Wood – Fire – Soil – Metal.

Interactions between these five elements were regarded as a natural pattern, describing circular production and diagonal limitation as interpreted below.

It was astonishing for me to realize that several thousand years ago ancient Chinese Tradition already described models which nowadays would be interpreted as networks.



*Illustration 1. Network of Five elements (Wu-xing)*

***Circle of production*** (arrowed in black):

- Water can produce and promote (growth of) wood.
  - Wood can produce (nurture) fire.
  - Fire can produce (ash and) soil.
  - Soil can produce metal (included in stones, hard surfaces).
  - Metal (hard surfaces) can produce water (hard surfaces can enable springs).
- And so on.

Apparently in this system, the (traditional western) element “air” does not appear as a sixth element, though we all know that water in nature does not only appear as springs from hard surfaces like metal-containing rock, but also falls down as rain from the atmosphere. This is why the author includes the element air (which in Chinese has the same sign as Chi-Energy) symbolizing the property of the atmosphere (Badelt, 1983). Thus the traded Five Elements System is extended by the author and changes from a closed system to an open system – more on this later).

***Diagonal limitation*** (arrowed in red)

- Water can limit (extinguish) fire.
- Fire can limit (melt) metal.
- Metal (stones) can limit (growth of) wood.
- Wood can limit (use up) soil.
- Soil can limit (suckle) water.

Apart from natural production and limitation, also destructive interactions are traded – referring to that model: Dominating Phases causing (clockwise) diagonal suppression, contra-clockwise diagonal disregard, or movements against the clock (contrary to the natural relation between “mother” and “child”). Such occurrences were traditionally used to explain illnesses. This topic will be addressed in the second part of this article.

## 2. WU-XING FOR TODAY’S PSYCHOLOGY

Several years ago it occurred to me to apply this general model of Wu-xing to Western Psychology. I was encouraged by the fact that in acupuncture (beside the

names of elements) also different natural movements, emotions, virtues, names of main meridians and ways of behavior had been attributed to the elements. (Porkert, 1976; Schmidt, 1978; König and Wancura, 1979; Hammer, 1990; Platsch, 2005, Meng, 2011 et.al.). After having applied the principle of yin-yang to psychology as described in my first article, the problem arose of how to integrate six main pairs of meridians into a system of just five elements (or five phases) as described in Old Chinese philosophy. So I reinterpreted the traded Wu-xing pattern from my western point of view in the following manner by placing western terms in it:

1. It seemed necessary for me to work out suitable general headlines describing the diverse in nature in order to derive terms of main psychosocial functions (elements) from them (see illustration 2, table of correspondences).

2. I underlined that to each individual phase – representing vivid systems – typical opposing polar (yin-yang) activities have to be attributed as described in detail in my previous article, in the sense of: Thesis – Antithesis, passive – active; towards myself – towards others; positive – negative (see also illustration 4).

3. As mentioned above, it seemed necessary to me to consider the circumstances to which the change of phases is exposed. In this connection the western element “air” can be regarded as the atmosphere that the traditional Chinese system of interaction between five elements is additionally exposed to. This also corresponds to the sixth pair of main meridians in acupuncture – named Pericardium – Triple Heater in English which obviously did not fit into a system of just five main correspondences. In this context it has to be noted that in German literature this pair of meridians was referred to as “Kreislauf, Sexualität – Dreifacher Erwärmer” by my Austrian acupuncture teacher *Johannes Bischko*, who took over this interpretation from French acupuncture literature. From my point of view, this sixth influence can be interpreted as the role which personal feelings of limited space and limited time play in our existence. This sixth factor considers our environment (acting as outside stimulation) as well as our inner driving forces, our personal libido (as inner stimulation) interacting with the Five Phases Model in each and every one of us. We all know that both (environment and own libido) obviously exert main influence on how often or seldom each single phase is active within us as well as on whether a polar aspect in a particular phase becomes dominant or deficient.

*Table 1.*

**Table of correspondences –**

*(basic ideas, mind functions, social functions and atmosphere interpreted by F. Badelt)*

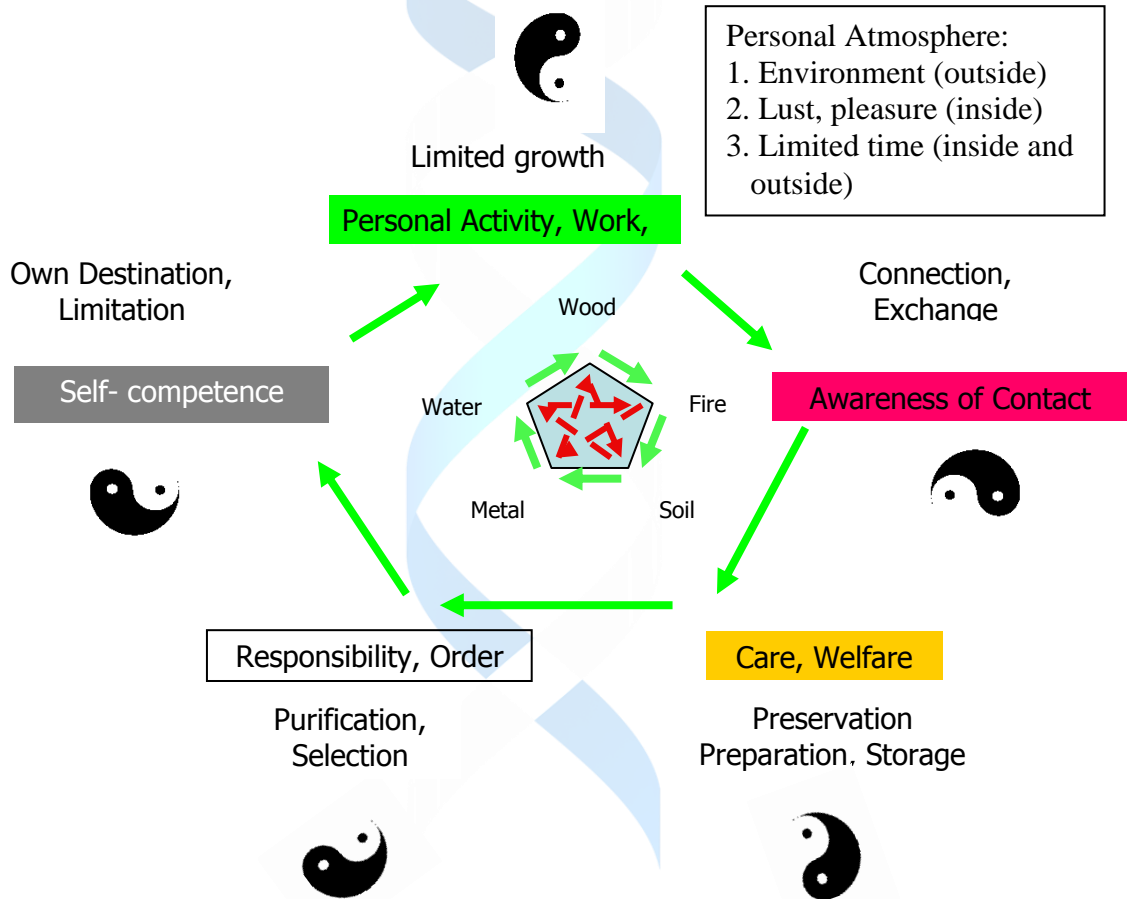
Element	basic idea, concept	mind function	social function	virtue
Fire	exchange, connection	awareness	contact	love
Soil	preservation, preparation, storage	memory	care	hope
Metal	purification, selection	comparison, order	criticism, rules	honesty

Water	latency by limitation	knowledge, wishes	own social position	wisdom
Wood	limited growth	realization, work	personal activity	peaceful strength
Atmosphere	evolution in environment	timing, flexibility	pleasure, adapted to environment, cooperation	freedom (of time and space restrictions)

**2.1 Wu-xing as a natural health model**

Similar to Plato’s approach to nature by describing a world of ideas reflected in nature, here ideas of the diverse are postulated, which fit into the Old Chinese Wu-xing pattern.

**System of elements – from a western psychological point of view**



*Illustration 2. System of elements – from a western psychological point of view*

According to Illustration 2 the idea of Exchange psychologically appears as Experience of Contact.

The idea of Preservation (Preparing, Storage) psychologically appears as Care.

The idea of Purification psychologically appears as Critical Responsibility.

The idea of Limitation psychologically appears as limited Self-Confidence.

The idea of Own Realization psychologically appears as Personal Activity, Self-Realization.

The idea of development:

Psychosocial development (a possible “Causa finalis”?) according to my personal interpretation takes place by personal movements through the five different stages (phases) mentioned above. The main conditions in which development takes place are our experiences of (limited) space (personal borders, personal environment) and (limited) time (own lifetime) as well as personal Life Joy (Libido).

Personal development here is interpreted as a rotation process through five different qualities (five phases) in an atmosphere of personally experienced (limited) time and personally experienced space (environment). Each phase is additionally prolonged or shortened by individually weighted life joy (libido) or personal environmental influences upon a single phase aspect. Both “tools” – Personal Space, Environment, Culture (outer atmosphere) as well as personal Libido preferences (inner atmosphere) have a strong influence on how long (time factor) each aspect of a single phase is experienced (practiced), whether all five phases are balanced equally or whether some phases become dominant or deficient – thus disturbing more or less a well-balanced stepwise evolutionary rotation process.

So personally experienced Space, Time and Life Joy (Libido) here are interpreted as the atmosphere or the circumstances in which personal development according to the Wu-xing model takes place – in correspondence to the influence of the western element “air, atmosphere” upon the rotation among the other traditional Chinese elements water, wood, fire, earth and metal.

## **2.2 A dream of five Symbols in rotation saved by a sixth**

For better illustration of the 5 basic ideas (see illustration 2) rotating in their environment I was asked to use typical symbols for better explanation.

I chose a *heart* symbol for the idea of mutual exchange, a simple *house* for the idea of preparation, storage. A *scale* is meant to symbolize the idea of purification, a *hybrid-like symbol* the idea of limited latency, and a simple *spiral* the idea of limited growth. The symbol *infinity* represents permanent evolution by adapting own lust and pleasure to personal environment and towards stages of freedom of space and life limits. The change of symbols are to be seen in illustration 3 followed by a dream-like tale, which I presented during a congress of TCM Psychology and Sleep medicine in Beijing in May 2011, describing possible evolutionary steps.

## Symbols of main diverse psychosocial aspects (elements)

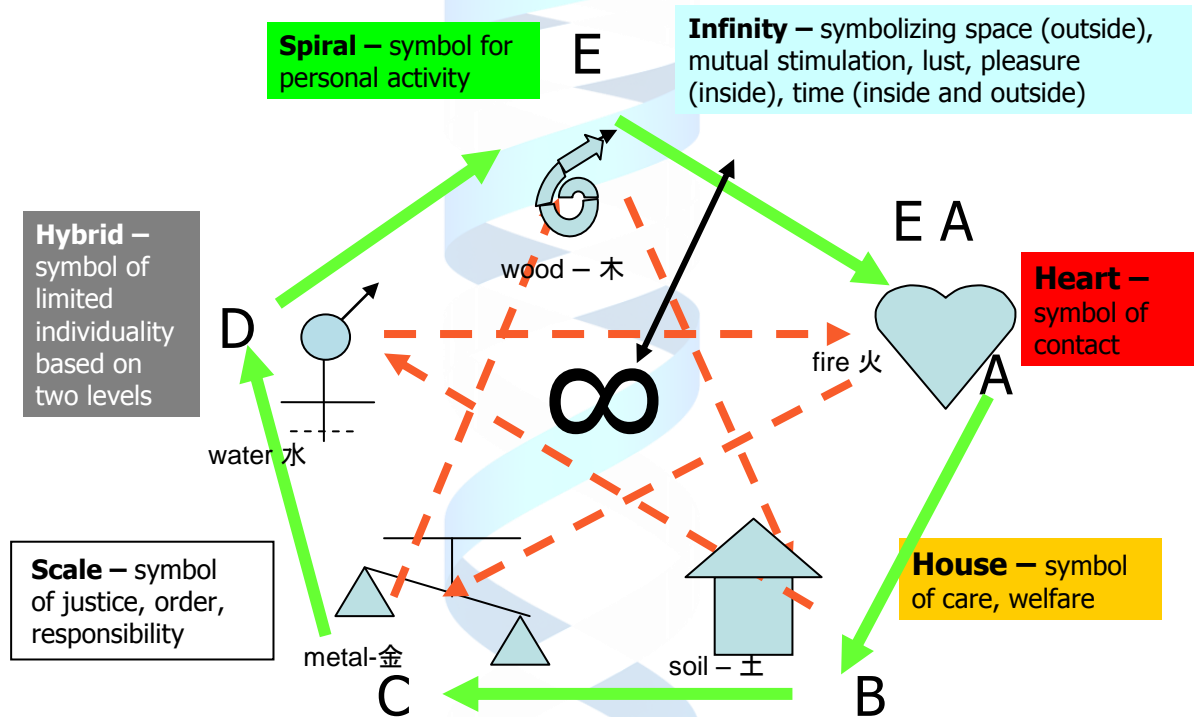


Illustration 3. Symbols of different psychosocial aspects (elements)

1. I dreamt of a little **hybrid-like being**. Its upper part consisted of a little cycle, representing its strict limits, pushing out a little (rather male) arrow which causes much stress, sometimes anxiety because the arrow always points to go beyond these individual limits. The hybrid's lower (rather female) part is rooted in the ground (the horizontal line is symbolizing its social position in reality) and moreover extends far below this surface – ending in an endless, unlimited source (it's Antithesis) from where it additionally derives its energy.

2. Sometimes the nosy little arrow (from the upper side of the symbol) tries to dive down towards the lower part of the symbol. On and under the ground it becomes frightened because of its social limitations – in contrast to the endlessness underneath. Arising again the arrow has now changed into a **spiral**, full of power and energy, often working or fighting but also in danger of breaking apart because of his efforts of continual growth. But now, having changed from an arrow into a spiral, it has learned not only to straighten but also to bend.

3. Thus after some time the spiral is able to find a counterpart in his environment, another spiral which he (she) is able to exchange energy with. So the spiral changes into a **double spiral** looking like a symbol of **infinity**, in which both sides stimulate each other. More and more adapted to each other and to their environment they can (at least during short moments of lust) forget time and space, experiencing something close to infinity.

4. Because of their ideal and lustful cooperation they now grow together more tightly remaining in close contact, exchanging ideas and joy. They enlighten each other, love each other and so change into a **heart** symbol, experiencing much

happiness. But after some time their tight common growth in the limited space of their heart also causes tendencies of detachment – often connected with disappointment.

5. The lack of common space in their heart leads to some pressure, stretching the upper part of the heart symbol and turning it upside down – changing the heart into a **house**, a symbol of property, of protection where caring for each other (for children and old people) can take place, where goods are stored, where meals are prepared – everything close to a comfortable nourishing soil. But storage of more and more goods requires more and more houses which all together lead to more and more sorrow – also because of the lack of resources due to the imbalance between saving and consuming, taking and giving.

6. It becomes necessary to clean and purify all the stored mass, to compare advantages and disadvantages. Several pairs of houses now start to develop towards a **scale** – comparing each other. It is a scale, which does not only compare different metals, goods and property but also distinguishes between worth and worthlessness, honour and guilt. Though the purpose of this scale is to distinguish between differences in nature, it also can be used to promote more balance.

7. Scaling takes a long time but after having distinguished between honour and guilt, cultural and social differences and excuses, necessary and unnecessary borders, the scale is not required any more. Its former horizontal part turns straight upwards. Again a **hybrid**-like symbol appears. The upper part now knows more about its limits and appreciates them, whereas the former other part of the scale has lost its burden in the deep ground of infinity comparable with water, which can appear endless (as the endless sea or as the vapour in the air) – while the upper part of the symbol again appears rather limited, like an glittering ice crystal or a drop of water on a leaf, reflecting sunlight – also maybe a position of a drop of water in a broad river limited by its (cultural) bank?

Nevertheless, a growing little arrow on the upper side of the symbol again might perhaps cause new rotations full of trouble or joy.

### 2.3 Development according to Wu-xing

#### *A – Natural cycle of psychosocial Promotion:*

Experiences, contacts should promote care.

Care should promote critical responsibility.

Critical Responsibility should promote a well-limited self-confidence.

Limited self-confidence should promote personal activity, work.

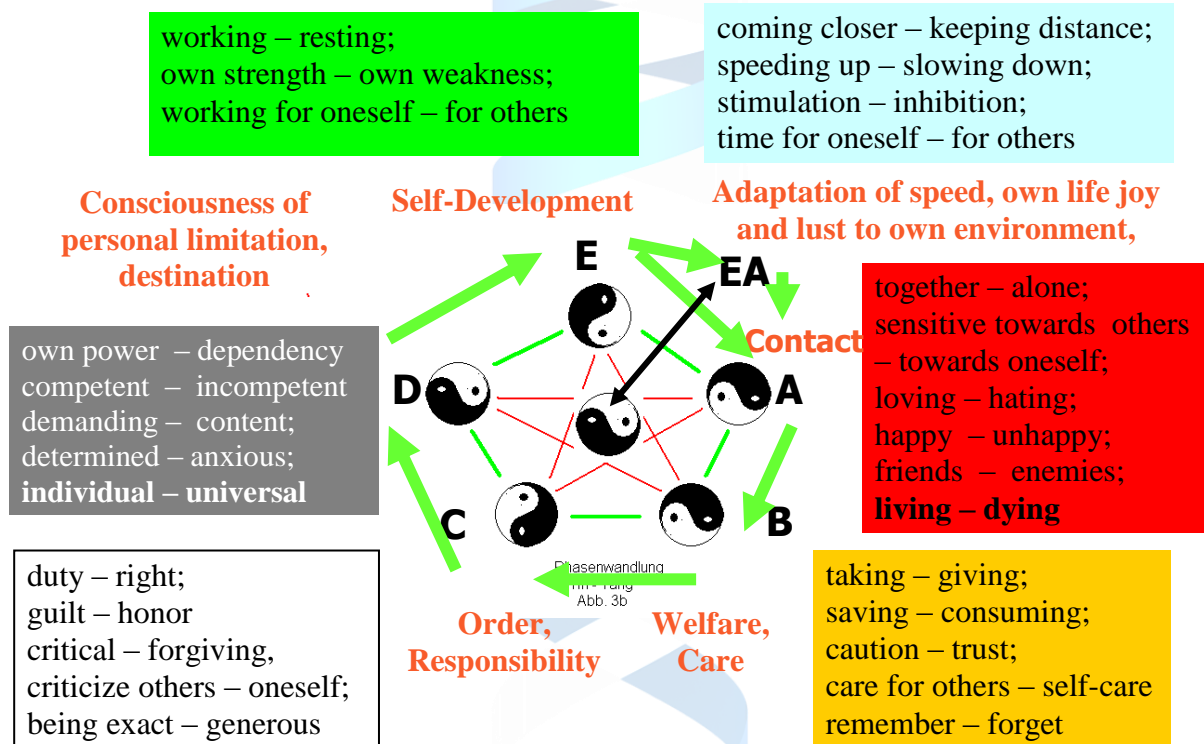
Personal activity, work should promote contacts, experiences.

And so on.

According to this model only well-balanced polarity in one phase promotes well-balanced polarity in the next (see Illustration 4).



**Basic polar functions (of thinking, feeling, behavior) regarding aspects of:**  
*Thesis – Antithesis; active – passive; towards me – towards others; positive – negative*



*Illustration 4. Basic polar functions (of thinking, feeling, and behaviour) regarding aspects of: Thesis – Antithesis; active – passive; towards myself – towards others; positive – negative*

For a better description of interactions, it is helpful to assign letters to single psychosocial elements, single phases (or to the edges of the pentagram). In my book, I chose the letters A, B, C, D, E plus Quality EA like shown in illustration 4.

Phase A – Phase of contacts, connections, experiences

Phase B – Phase of care

Phase C – Phase of order, responsibility

Phase D – Phase of self-limitation, self-consciousness

Phase E – Phase of self-realization

Quality EA – Qualities of adaptation of own pleasure (lust) to space (environment) and to (the right) time.

Actually this quality EA influences all five elements. In acupuncture it corresponds to the pair of meridians Pericardium – Triple Heater. In Chinese Tradition Pericardium is always listed together with the heart at the fireplace; additionally the meridians Pericardium and Triple Heater both are regarded in close pair relation with the Meridians Liver – Gallbladder (attributed to phase E) – described as Jue yin or Shao yang. (Porkert, 1982; König and Wancura, 1979; Meng, 2010; et al.). This is why I placed this EA Quality between phase E and phase A. In acupuncture literature the Triple Heater is also closely related to the “fire kidney” –

an aspect in quality D. (Platsch, 2005; Meng, 2010 et al.). These are hints to the wide influence this atmosphere plays both upon and within the cycle.

### **2.3.A. *Natural promotion according to Wu-Xing***

Here are some further examples for natural promotion, also regarding the polarity in each phase:

Experiences, contacts (phase A) are naturally based upon working and resting, working for others and for oneself (phase E) and upon adaptation of own pleasure to place and time (see quality EA).

Care (phase B) is naturally based upon good and bad experiences, upon empathy (all these terms belong to phase A).

Responsibility (phase C) should be based upon caution and trust, upon caring for others and upon caring for oneself (Phase B).

Limited Self-confidence (phase D) should be based upon responsibility (including criticism and generosity towards others and towards oneself – see phase C).

Own work and own efficiency (phase E) naturally result from own limits and competence, own power or own dependency (phase D).

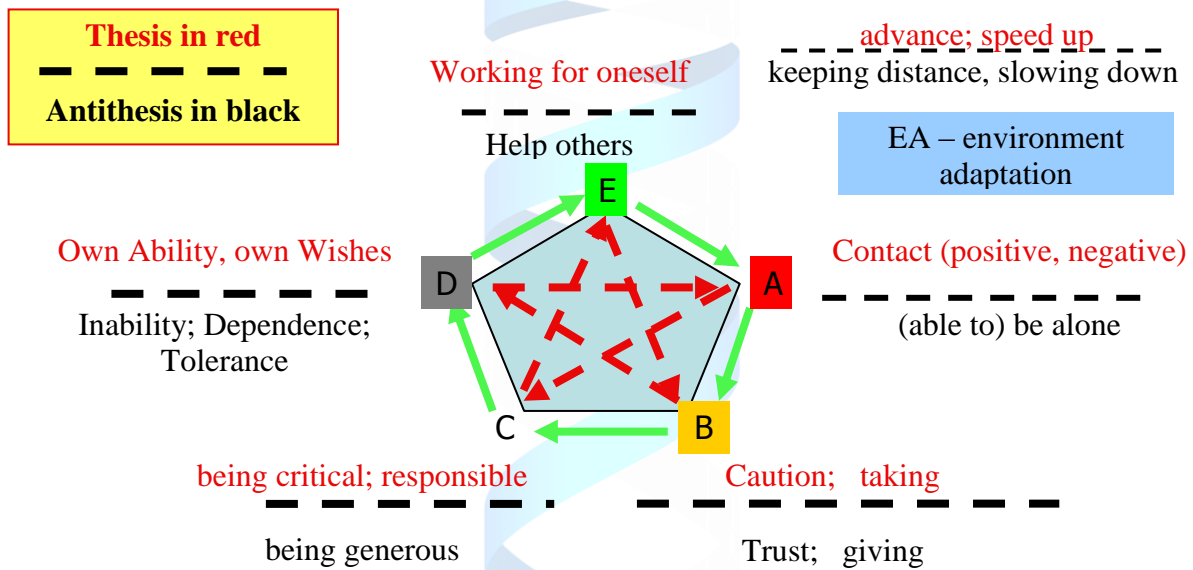
This also fits into daoistic concepts, where “wu-wei” activity (as intuitive activity rather an antithesis of western activity, see phase E) is based upon other possible antitheses in Phase D: upon universe-driven sources and upon personal openness and acceptance of such personally unlimited sources (Fischer, 1992; Wilhelm, 2004).

Suitable personal activity (phase E) combined with well-adapted speed at the right place (quality EA) usually naturally promotes positive contacts and experiences, whereas dysfunctions of adaptation as well as signs of domination or deficits in phase E (see illustration 6) naturally tend to go hand in hand with disappointments or negative experiences such as pain.

### **2.3.B. *Natural limitation – according to Wu-xing***

To understand the following mechanisms of natural limitation according to Wu-xing it is necessary to consider the special Thesis – Antithesis attributions in each phase – as shown in illustration 5. Naturally, Thesis functions of one phase limit Thesis of the next but one – thus indirectly furthering Antithesis in this next but one phase:

## Cycle of Thesis and Antithesis (examples)



1. Balance of Thesis + Antithesis in one phase naturally promotes balanced polarity in the next phase.
2. Thesis of a phase limits Thesis of next but one phase (thus supporting its antithesis).

*Illustration 5. Cycle of Thesis and Antithesis (examples)*

Natural limitation in Psychology according to the Wu-xing model can work as follows:

Experiences of contacts (e.g. empathy) should limit criticism (and indirectly) support generosity and praise – possible antithesis of criticism. Criticism and generosity (or praise) are here considered as polar partners or equal aspects of responsibility.

Personal Responsibility limits self-realization, competition – thus enabling personal help. Self-realization and help here are regarded as important components of optimal, well-adapted efficiency.

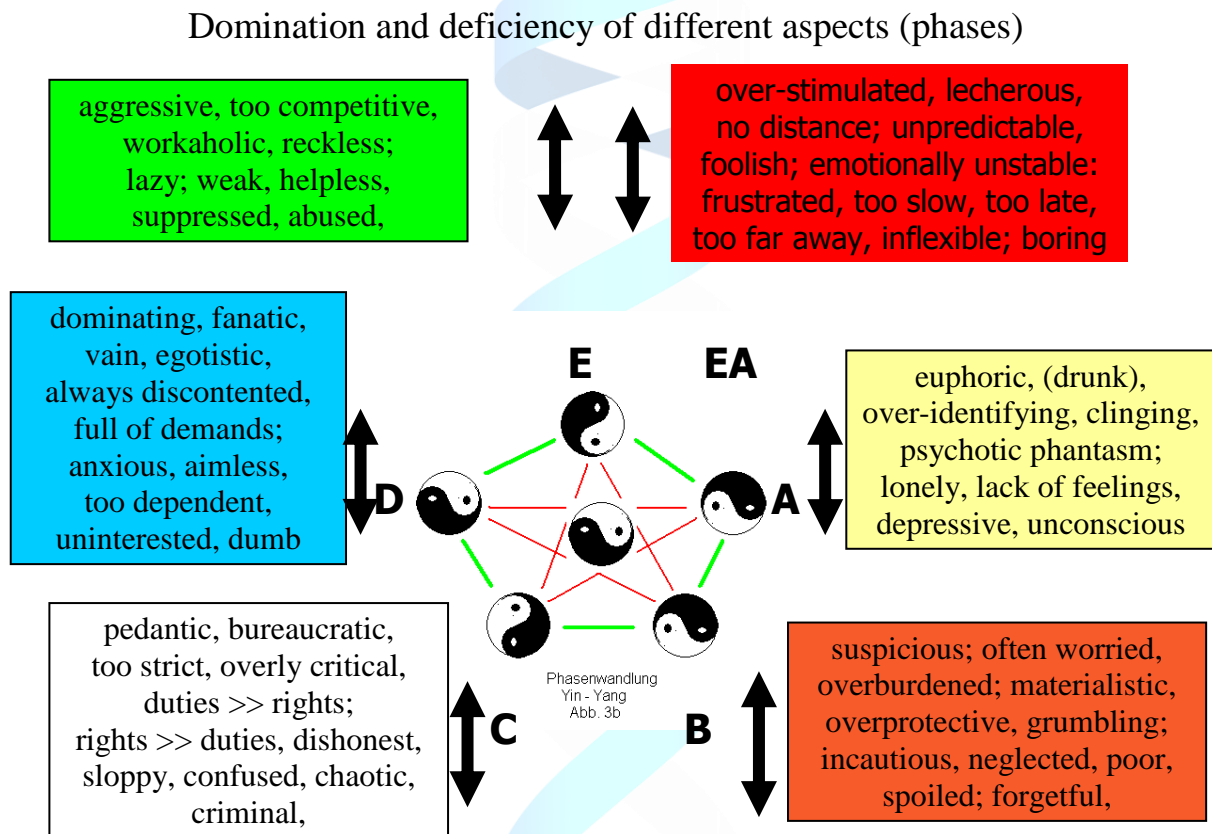
Self-realization and personal strength naturally limit caution and thus will support trust. Both together (caution and trust) are important components of highly developed care.

Caution and care should limit self-confidence, which indirectly helps to accept feelings of dependency. Personal Self-confidence with regard on own dependency will result in realistic self-limitation.

Self-confidence and acceptance of own borders naturally limit own contacts and experiences – thus resulting in the ability to withdraw. Healthful contacts and experiences also need something of their counterpart to avoid unnatural clinging to persons or ideologies.

### 3. PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS ACCORDING TO WU-XING, TYPES OF DYSFUNCTIONS

It is obvious that the dynamics in common life are quite different from the idealistic natural dynamics as described above. Often we are confronted with or might be victims of signs of domination or deficits of single phases as illustrated below:



*Illustration 6. Signs of domination or deficiency among different psychosocial aspects (phases)*

Signs of domination or deficits concerning single phases can be interpreted as disturbed polarity just in one phase (see my previous article in which I concentrated on single yin-yang relations.) Additionally, the network system of Wu-xing offers indirect ways to influence disturbed polarity in a phase. This was already stated in Ancient Chinese Tradition, where several types of “unnatural” dynamics in the Wu-xing system were mentioned (Nguyen Van Nghi, 1977; Porkert, 1982; et al.).

Diagonal suppression: Here a dominating phase (e.g. its Thesis) suppresses the Thesis of its next but one phase instead of just limiting it – in letters: e.g.  $A \gg C$  instead of just  $A > C$ .

Diagonal contra- clockwise disregard, when a very dominating phase disregards its natural limitation, the result of which is severe contra-clockwise suppression instead of clockwise natural diagonal limitation – in letters: e.g.  $A \gg \gg D$ , instead of  $D > A$ .

Contra-clockwise phase movements. Here, the natural law of a “mother nurturing her son (child)” is disturbed.

In addition, the author proposes to consider these very common possibilities of disturbed dynamics:

Unequally distributed personal libido or life joy and unequal influences of personal environment (culture) upon single aspects in single phases.

Shortcuts (diagonal promotion instead of limitation) neglecting the phase in between. Such a mechanism reduces the *Five phases system* to a *Four* or even *Three phases system*, usually going along with severe psychosocial problems (Granet, 1963; Badelt, 1983, 2008).

Together with each type of dysfunction, I will mention a “natural” coping strategy at the end – usually easy in theory but difficult in practice.

All the considerations above and in the following will illustrate, that they are not just mere theory but that “unnatural dynamics” can take place everywhere and anytime. The examples below are only supposed as an outline of this fact and are more extensively discussed in my German-language book “Psychosomatische Vorsorgemedizin”. There, the reader finds more attributions of emotions, behavior and thinking to each phase and to the quality EA as well as more possible interactions resulting from them.

### Wu xing for psychology – Dysfunctional patterns

- 1. Unequally distributed own pleasure, or cultural influences
- 2. Dominance of single fields  
– causing (diagonal) suppression or disregard towards last but one phase
- 3. Contra-clockwise phase rotation
- 4. Shortcuts – neglecting single phases.  
(Promotion instead of limitation of the next but one phase)

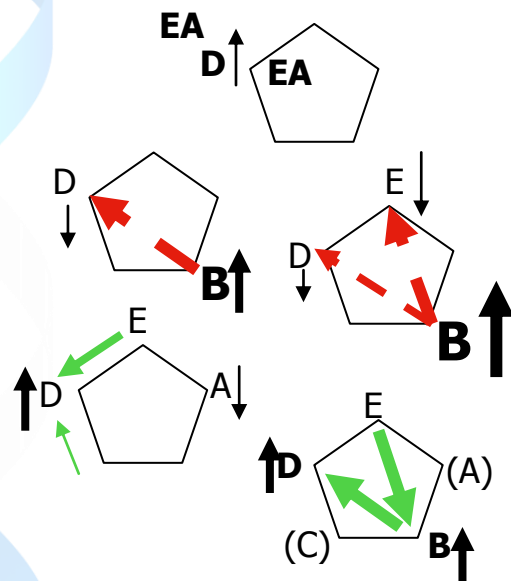


Illustration 7. Wu-xing for psychology – dysfunctional patterns

### 3.1 Unequally distributed own pleasure and influences of culture and environment

In analogy to the names of the acupuncture meridians, where Heart and Pericardium act closely together, phase A lust, pleasure (quality EA) is primarily regarded in connection with experiences of contact (EA close to phase A). Balanced activity between all five elements is more likely if life joy is not too close to another field. If it is, lust can easily lead to special forms of phase dominance and deficiency. Displaced lust can appear as a greed for power (phase D dominance), as raised lustful

aggression (phase E dominance), as raised lustful materialism (phase B dominance), sometimes as lustful perfectionism (phase C dominance).

The same is true for influences of a culture, when laws or public advertising for products favor single aspects of being, so that their natural counterparts are easily neglected – e.g. outwards stimulated own performance and exaggerated self-realization can promote recklessness (phase E dominance). Excessive advertising – primarily to stimulate own claims – easily leads to personal stress due to exaggerated expectations (phase D domination). Artificially stimulated consummation (B Antithesis) can weaken phase B (care) etc.

Coping with such phenomena requires reflection on the gradually and eventually lost personal balance between polar aspects in such a lustful dominating phase, especially between Thesis and Antithesis. Life joy gained through experiences, contacts and love, in which Quality EA Quality is close to phase A, should be supported.

### **3.2 Diagonal Suppression >> and Disregard >>>**

In diagonal Suppression, a dominating phase exaggerates natural limitation. In more severe cases, Domination also takes place diagonally contra-clockwise (Disregard). Here some examples:

D >> A: Egotism can suppress love, contacts, empathy; Fanaticism can hinder experiences.

D >>>B: Fanaticism can promote carelessness. Egotism easily destroys social care.

E >> B: Force can hinder caution, reckless competition can diminish resources.

E >>>C: Wars easily cause irresponsibility and neglect of laws.

A >> C: Idealism or hate easily lead to uncritical behavior or attitudes.

A >>> D: Overly close contacts can disregard individuality by neglecting or destroying individual borders, which is also true when psychotic symptoms occur due to overboarding imagination.

B >> D: Overburdened people easily suppress their own aims; Sorrow easily leads to anxiety, too much property can also cause dependency.

B >>>E Overburdened people can lose their own working power and disregard any activities for their own pleasure.

C >> E: Severe feelings of guilt can easily suppress own activity.

C >>> A: Very severe guilt can cause depression. Severe laws sometimes hinder contacts. Severe punishment can disregard further life (death penalty).

Natural coping strategies aim for more support of the suppressed or disregarded phase directly by underlining the antithesis functions of possible dominating phases or indirectly by addressing Thesis and Antithesis of the naturally following phase (phases) after the dominating phase in the natural circle.

### **3.3 Contra- clockwise instead of clockwise rotation in the cycle**

Contra-clockwise phase rotation steps are very common in daily life. In many cases such steps are regarded or advertised as a “normal” dynamic. According to the

presented psychosocial Wu-xing attributions, they nevertheless might hinder “natural” psychosocial development. For better illustration the following table will distinguish between the two possibilities. The reader is invited to judge which kind of movement seems to be more productive.

Table 2.

### Clockwise versus contra-clockwise phases rotation

(The phase before temporarily is left behind, becomes less aware, appears reduced)

Clockwise rotation	Contra-clockwise rotation
A developed into B – temporarily reducing E: Experiences of Contacts (phase A) are here promoting care, caution, property and consumption (phase B) – temporarily leaving behind personal (competitive) work and effort (phase E).	B changing into A – temporarily reducing C: Experiences of Contacts (phase A) are here primarily based upon care, caution, property and consumption B) – temporarily leaving behind phase C (criticism, rules, responsibility).
B developed into C – temporarily reducing A: Care, caution, property (phase B) should develop order, rules, criticism, responsibility (phase C) – temporarily reducing emotions, contacts, experiences (phase A).	C changing into B – temporarily reducing D: Care, caution, property primarily due to (Self-) criticism, rules, order, responsibility (phase C) – thus temporarily reducing Self-limitation, own position, own claims (phase D).
C developed into D – temporarily reducing B: Criticism, order, rules, responsibility (Phase C) should promote own position, own limits, personal claims (phase D) – thus temporarily leaving behind care, caution and property (phase B).	D changing into C – temporarily reducing E: Criticism, rules, order, response (phase C) are here primarily based upon own position, own claims (phase D) – temporarily reducing own work, effort (phase E).
D developed into E – temporarily reducing C: Own position, own claims and limits (phase D) here further own effort, own work (phase E) – temporarily reducing criticism, duties and Responsibility (phase C).	E changing into D – temporarily reducing A: Own position, personal limits, claims (phase D) are here primarily based upon own effort, competitive work (phase E) – temporarily reducing awareness of contacts and experiences (phase A).
Phase E developed into A – in regard of well adapted lust, right speed and right place (see quality EA) – temporarily reducing D: In this case lustful (EA) own work and effort (phase E) without pressure of speed (EA) are promoting awareness of contacts and rich experiences (phase A) –temporarily leaving behind own claims, limits (D).	A changing into E – temporarily reducing B: Own work, effort (phase E) here is primarily based upon contacts; any emotional guided activity which is primarily based upon personal lust (see EA), sympathy or antipathy (quality A) – leaving behind care and caution (B).

In western cultures some of the contra-clockwise movements are regarded as normal – like gaining a desired position primarily by competitive work and struggle rather than being based upon critical evaluation, election, common rules and a suitable sense of responsibility.

Also in many cases, experiences or contacts – primarily based upon property, care and consummation (in the long run) do not cause as much happiness as when they are based upon own activity, own efforts – performed at the right place at the right time, performed with well-adapted speed or tranquility (see quality EA).

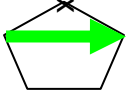
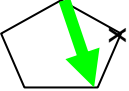

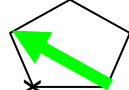

In many cases, burnout symptoms in nursing care (see phase B) can be better avoided, if care is rather based on empathy (phase A) than primarily upon strict rules und feelings of duties (phase C) – easily causing own claims and desires to be forgotten (phase D).

To avoid prejudices it is obvious, that phase C (criticism) should not primarily be based upon personal claims or upon the position of the criticizing person (phase D). Productive criticism is rather developed through care, caution and a good memory (phase B).

### 3.4 Shortcuts

As mentioned above, in shortcuts natural diagonal limitation is replaced by diagonal promotion by neglecting the natural phase in between. Besides producing a few severe dominating aspects, other aspects are more or less dropped, so that the original system of five phases might easily degenerate into a system of just four or fewer phases, which is usually combined with severe psychosocial impairment. The following Illustration 8 lists up some examples:

#### Shortcuts: diagonal promotion instead of limitation

- Phase D directly promoting phase A (neglecting phase E):  
Demanded love neglecting suitable behavior 
- Phase E directly promoting phase B (neglecting phase A):  
Reckless competition only to gain property;  
force and wars as a direct way to fortune (neglecting contacts,  
empathy) 
- Phase A directly promoting phase C (neglecting phase B):  
Emotional criticism (neglecting care, collected material,  
memory) 
- Phase B directly promoting phase D (neglecting phase C):  
Own social position primary due to money, property  
(neglecting responsible evaluation, selection) 
- Phase C directly promoting phase E (neglecting phase D):  
Criticism promoting aggressions (neglecting individual  
borders, individual aims; Strong accusations promoting (use of)  
force (neglecting personal limits of participants). 

*Illustration 8. Shortcuts (diagonal promotion instead of limitation)*



In cases of such shortcuts, coping strategies should try to underline the necessity of the neglected phase in between.

## Conclusion

In addition to polar thinking in Psychology (regarding an individual well-balanced flow between several polar constellations) the Old Chinese Wu-xing system tries to systematize the diverse in nature. Placing suitable western psychological terms into this pattern encourages considering and discussing several steps of possible psychosocial evolution in contrast to possible misleading dynamics. Besides hints for indirect coping of polar disturbances in our thinking, emotions and behaviour, this access can perhaps encourage cooperation between medicine, philosophy, psychology, sociology and pedagogic training – based upon a fruitful combination of eastern and western thinking.

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