

From One to Four in The Philosophy of Chinese Medicine

Chinese philosophy conceives of the universe as an assembly of vibrations or energy frequencies reverberating on various levels. On some levels, these frequencies undergo solidification and assume material form, whereas on other, more refined levels, they are wholly imperceptible to the human senses. All frequency levels are products of the energy frequencies from which they derive and the changes resulting from the interaction between different frequencies.

Numerology

Chinese philosophy starts with the number 1 and continues to develop sequentially. Each subsequent level goes into greater detail than the one preceding it but remains fundamentally linked to the levels from which it derived. The philosophical concept based on the number 1, which is the most fundamental concept in the system, develops into the concept based on the number 2—*yin* and *yang*—and so forth. Each number represents a philosophical concept that can stand on its own, but that is also consistent with the concepts from which it was derived. The concept of 3 is derived from the concept of 2 and is therefore consistent with its laws. The concept of 2 is consistent with the laws of the concept of 1, and the concept of 1, in turn, is consistent with *Tao*. Just as man accedes to the laws of Earth, Earth accedes to the laws of Heaven, which are consistent with *Tao*.

The basic energy frequencies are extensive and all encompassing. They exercise influence that is broad and extremely mild, but decisive over time. They are the cosmic forces that are everywhere. For example, although the sun's energy has influence on the solar system, the sun is also part of a larger system and is subject to its laws.

Understanding the manner in which the philosophy of Chinese medicine conceives of human beings requires an understanding of the philosophy as a whole, as Chinese philosophy and its fundamental concepts provide the essence of the language of Chinese medicine. After all, all medicine is the product of the culture in which it evolves, and Chinese medicine is no exception.

Western conceptions are mathematical, logical, statistical, and thus reflective of linear Western thinking. When characterizing and classifying phenomena, Western thinking examines every phenomenon in itself. In an effort to learn more it explores the phenomenon in greater depth, and does not place an emphasis on understanding it

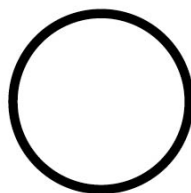
in relation to the phenomena surrounding it. Accordingly, in an effort to understand the human body, Western science has carefully examined it down to the cell membrane and even further. The Chinese, in contrast, first looked around to assess the simple laws of the phenomena surrounding them, and then assumed that humans, like other elements of their surroundings, are a microcosm influenced by the universe: just as every cell in the human body contains D.N.A. which reflects all living organisms, we, and all parts of our bodies, contain the pattern of nature around us. By understanding the laws of nature, Chinese philosophy maintains, we can also understand man.

Culture Shapes Not Only Perceptions but the Physical Structure of the Mind

Experiments undertaken on Western and Asian subjects reveal two different ways of thinking. Japanese and Korean subjects, for example, were more likely to comprehend the overall picture, whereas Western subjects focused only on the more prominent elements and less on the background (Norman Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, p. ____, Scribe Publications, 2010).

Tao

The primary fundamental concept of Chinese philosophy is *Tao*. According to Chinese philosophy, *Tao* is all encompassing, and its energy is the sum total of all the energy in the universe. It cannot be described in words, as every word that attempts to do so necessarily misses the mark. *Tao* transcends words: it is everything, and it is nothing.



道可道非常道

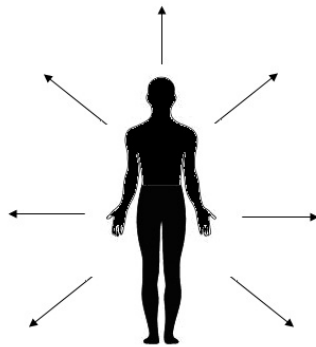
dào kě dào fēi cháng dào

*"The dào that can be told is never the eternal dào."*¹⁴

Lao Zi (600 BC)

The concept of 1 is similar to *Tao* in that it is everything. However unlike *Tao*, which is undefinable, the concept of 1 is defined by man. Man's definition of the concept of 1 constitutes the boundary of that which his consciousness and wisdom can accommodate. Because man himself defines the concept of 1, he can also define its limits. *Tao*, in contrast, is the general sum of everything and is beyond human comprehension, just as an ant cannot possibly understand that it is walking on an elephant because the size of the mammoth beast defies the comprehension of the tiny insect. From the perspective of the ant, the elephant approaches infinity. The concept of 1 is the sum total of existence that man can accommodate and understand.

A human being looks outside and sees the sky and everything around him. When he looks inward, he sees himself. When we think about the perspective generated by human consciousness, we can think of man as being positioned at the narrow end of a boundless cone that begins with him and expands outward. In this manner, man's way of viewing the world—from himself outward—is necessarily limited relative to *Tao*. *Tao* is beyond the perspective of human understanding. It is a cosmic way of seeing.



The Concept of 1 from the Perspective of Man

If it is possible to define a whole, even one that is extremely broad, then it is also possible to define its limits and to divide it into components. Man sees the entire world from his perspective, as it is from this point of view that he examines and defines.

The Concept of 2 – *Yin and Yang*

Because the Chinese understood the world around them as an assemblage of vibrations at different frequencies, they stressed the two extremes of these vibrations

known to man: on the one hand, vibrations at frequencies of solidification and matter, or *yin*; and, on the other hand, subtle vibrations of energetic influence alone, and no material form, or *yang*. This method of dividing the concept of 1 into two parts—one part that is more energetic and another that is more matter—is applicable to every observable phenomenon, from the smallest molecule to the greatest galaxy.



Su Wen³, chapter 5 (100 BC)

Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, p. 8.

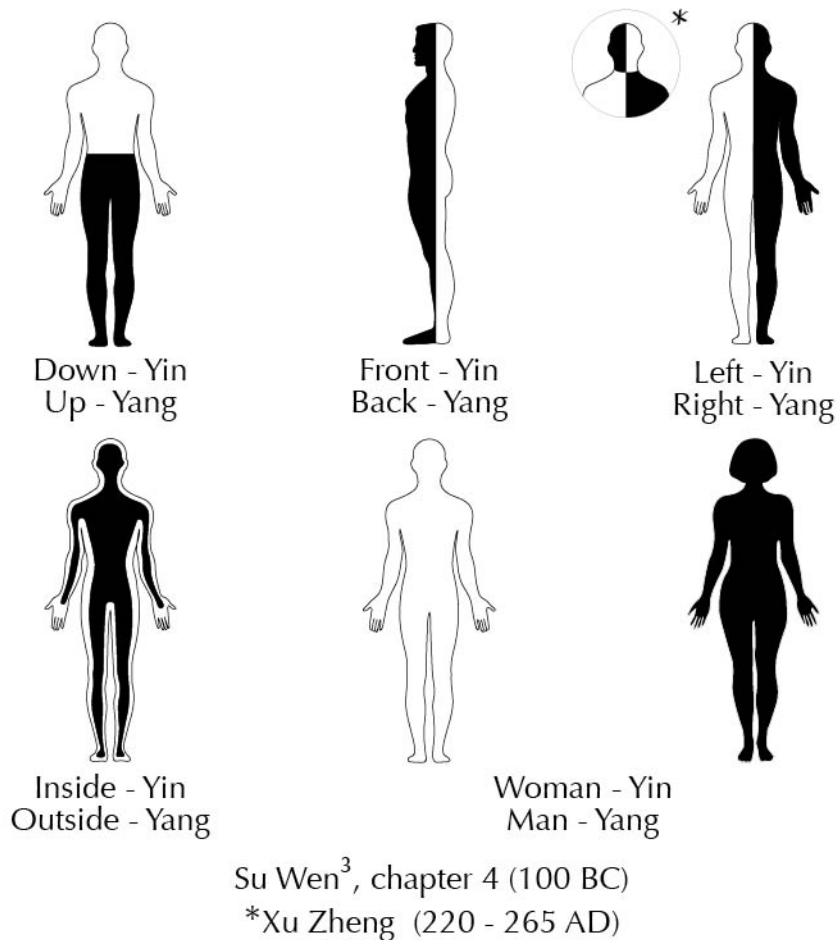
Somewhat like the line between heat and cold, which is indistinct and changes in relation to our perspective and our definition of the terms in question, the line between *yin* and *yang* is unclear. Something that is lukewarm is hotter than it is cold, but colder than it is hot. But is it hot, or is it cold? The answer depends on our point of view on the phenomenon in question and its impact on us. *Yin* and *yang* are tools of observation and inquiry, comparison and classification.

Our thinking is fueled by the limited information we receive from our five senses, which provide us with a limited field of frequencies. We can see up to a specific frequency of light, and no further. On the level of words and thoughts, our consciousness draws on the five senses for which it is easiest to analyze and understand the more material levels. Although we view it as a high level process, thought is nonetheless limited to understanding phenomena within the range of the frequencies that provide its senses.

When we examine a phenomenon through the prism of *yin* and *yang*, the resulting picture is always dynamic and never static. The balance between *yin* and *yang* is dynamic and cyclical: inhaling and exhaling, day and night, winter and summer – because they move cyclically from one extreme to the other, all have two extremes distinguished from one another by an indistinct line.

Yin and *yang* are the rhythm of nature, which is characterized by cyclical movement from one side to the other. Both sides are at once linked to each other and contradict one another, and are actually one.

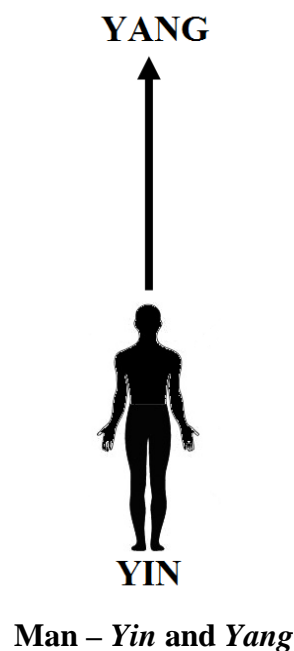
A whole can be divided into *yin* and *yang* on different levels. For example, in the case of the human body, the Upper Heater is *yang* in relation to the Lower Heater; the front of the body is *yin* in relation to the back; the physical body is *yin* in relation to the soul and the mind; man is *yang* in relation to woman; and so forth.



Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, p. 9.

When man examines phenomena, beyond the fact that they are part of the indescribable *Tao*, in the resolution of *yin* and *yang* or in a more detailed resolution he does so from his point of view, as someone living on earth. In this way, in using the concept of *yin* and *yang*, which asserts that *yin* and *yang* exist, he conceives of what is far from him as *yang* and calls it Heaven, and conceives of his location as more *yin* in nature and calls it Earth. On the range between Earth and Heaven, between *yin* and *yang*, man is closer to *yin*.

The moment that man postulated that the heavens were above him and that he was down on the ground, it is as if he drew a line of consciousness that would thus forth serve as an axis along which he would understand reality. The fact that man is securely fixed to the time and place from which he understands reality—the here and now—affords him with a relatively limited conception of *Tao*. We can think of it in terms similar to the difference between a photograph and a movie. Although photographs reflect reality and provide us with a plethora of information, the reality we experience in photographs will always be two-dimensional when compared to that which we experience in a movie. Because it is squarely fixed at the moment in time at which we examine reality and the place from which we do so, the perception of reality based only on one point in time and space is two-dimensional. When examining a photograph of reality, we can thoroughly learn every pixel but still not understand its deeper meaning. After all, every photograph is only one in a series of consecutive photographs, and understanding its significance requires an understanding of the series as a whole and the movement it reflects.



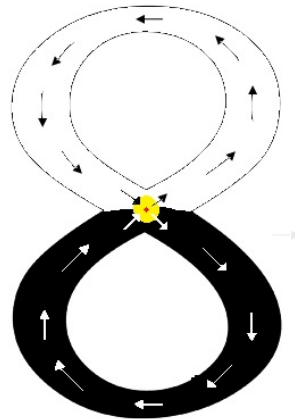
The Concept of 3 – Heaven, Earth, and Man

The concept of 3 is derived from the concept of 2. As man continues to classify things and to increase the resolution at which he understands the world around him, beyond *yin* and *yang* or Heaven and Earth, he begins examining the world through a prism of 3. As his resolution increases, his language grows richer and

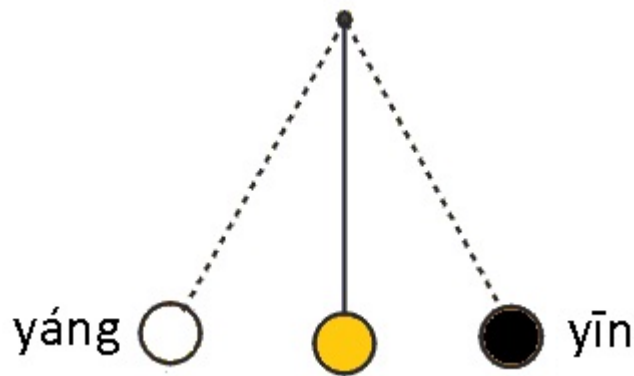
his analytical abilities grow stronger. However, he also binds himself to an interpretation that is increasingly influenced by his own point of view as a human being, thereby distancing himself from *Tao*.

The concept of 3 that is derived from *yin* and *yang* is the line of division between the two: the place at which *yin* and *yang* can be separated, if only for a fraction of a second. After all, *yin* and *yang* are cyclical concepts that complete one another, and are actually one. The line that can be drawn between *yin* and *yang* is the point of balance at which *yin* and *yang* are almost identical, or, if not qualitatively identical, at least identical from a quantitative perspective.

When *yang* moves toward *yin*, it decreases gradually until it reaches an imaginary moment at which *yin* and *yang* are identical. As *yang* decreases in the direction of *yin* and reaches the halfway mark, just before *yin* becomes dominant, there is a point at which the two are equal. Then, when *yin* increases in the direction of *yang*, the exact opposite occurs: *yin* increases in the direction of *yang* and for a moment, the amount of *yin* and *yang* are identical. The point at which *yin* and *yang* are equal is the point of balance, the dividing line between *yin* and *yang*. It is also the concept of 3, born of the concept of 2.



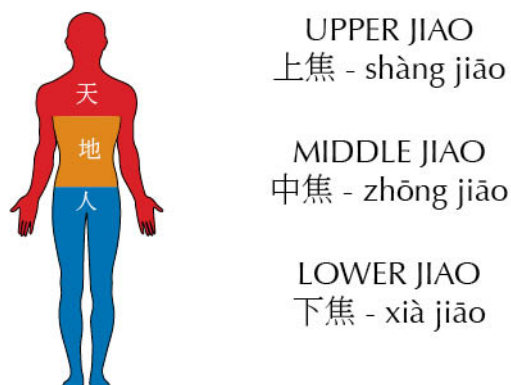
The Point of Balance between *Yin* and *Yang* – The Cyclical Model



The Point of Balance between *Yin* and *Yang* – The Pendulum Model

When man conceives of the number 3 on the level of Heaven and Earth, the third component located between Heaven and Earth is Man himself. We might also say that Man is nourished by Earth, and Earth is nourished by Heaven.

Heaven, Earth, and Man (H.E.M.), or Heaven, Man, and Earth (H.M.E.) are two different conceptions of three. When Man occupies the middle position between Heaven and Earth (H.M.E.), it is a concept of balance in which Man acts as a balancing force between the two powerful forces of Heaven and Earth. When Man is on the bottom (H.E.M.), it is a concept of creation: Heaven nourishes Earth, and Earth nourishes man. These concepts of creation and balance are used in treatment strategies that divide the body into three parts representing the three components of the concept: the Upper Heater represents the energy of Heaven, the Middle Heater represents the energy of Earth, and the Lower Heater represents Man.



Su Wen³, chapter 2 (100 BC)



THE H.E.M CONCEPT OF NEEDLING ORDER¹⁰

Needle	First →	Second →	Last
CREATIVE (Fu Xi ⁷) CREATED (King Wen ⁸)	H (Upper jiao) H (Upper jiao)	E (Middle jiao) M (Lower jiao)	M (Lower jiao) E (Middle jiao)

Needles should be removed in the opposite order - the first inserted should be the last removed.

Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, p. 11.

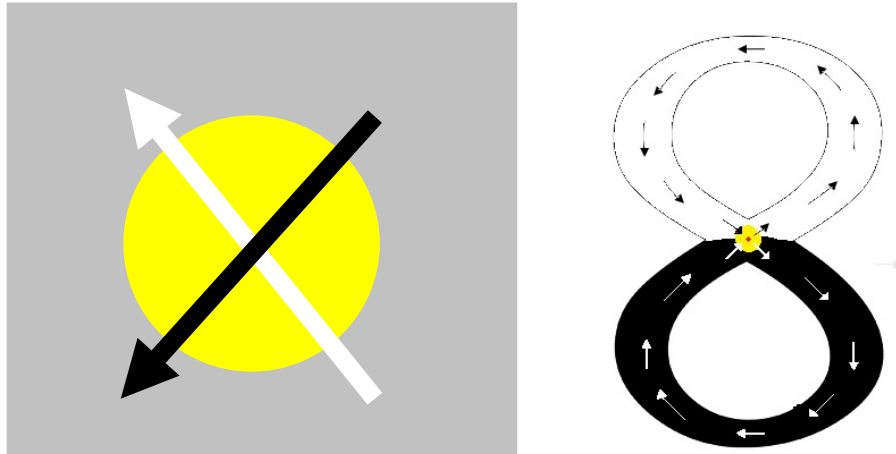
Four

The concept of 4 is the product of the concepts of 3, 2, and, of course, 1. The point of balance between *yin* and *yang*, which is the concept of 3 derived from the concept of 2, can also be divided into two distinct attributes.

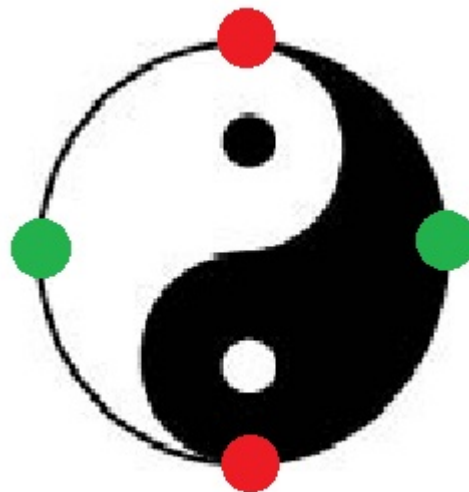
The Point of Equivalence from *Yin* to *Yang*, and the Point of Equivalence from *Yang* to *Yin*

As *yang* decreases toward *yin* and reaches the point of equivalence, it is moving in the opposite direction from *yin*, which increases toward *yang* and reaches the same point. This state can be compared to fall and spring, which are identical to one another from a quantitative perspective (the same angle of sunlight, the same duration of night and day, and the same temperature) but nonetheless differ

profoundly from one another and can even be considered opposites. In the spring, energy is moving toward *yang* and radiates growth and expansion, whereas in the fall, energy is moving toward *yin* and radiates convergence and solidification. The point of equivalence moving toward *yang* is called small *yang*, and the point of equilibrium moving toward *yin* is called small *yin*.



The Point of Equivalence between *Yin* and *Yang* – Division into Opposites

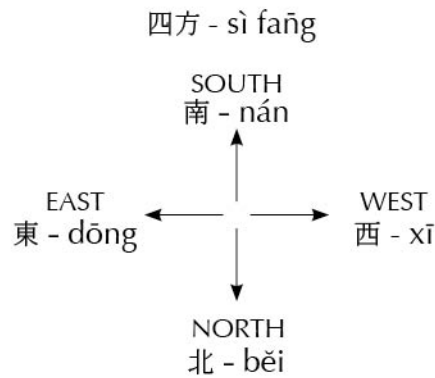


נקודות השיא ונקודות השוויון
במתחזרות שבין היין והיאנג

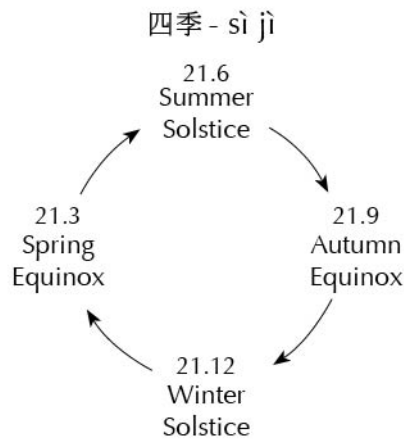
The High Point and the Points of Equivalence
In the Cyclical Relationship between *Yin* and *Yang*

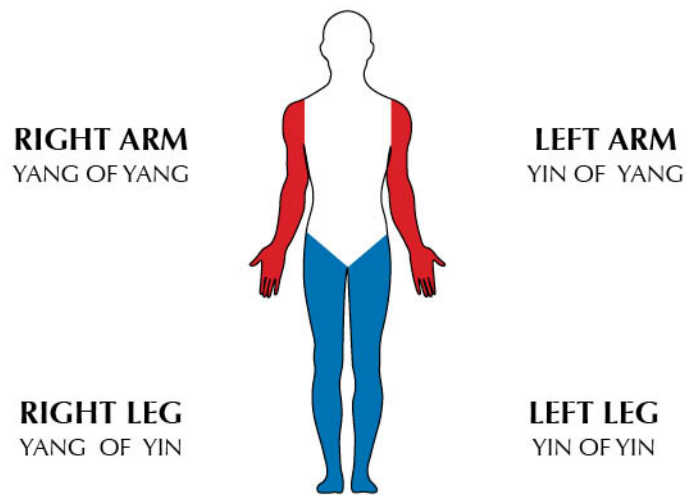
Our definition of up and down also enables us to relate to the sides as well. From the perspective of Heaven, the four directions are not fixed to a specific direction but rather depict the division of the concept of 1 into four directions. The fourth level is consistent with the dictates of the concept of 1 in that it portrays a whole. It is consistent with the laws of the concept of 2 – *yin* and *yang* – in that it demarcates two axes: up and down, and side to side. It is consistent with the laws of the concept of 3 in that it portrays two high points and one point of equivalence. The concept of 4 emerges with the specification of the point of equivalence between two different attributes: the point of equivalence in the transition between *yin* and *yang*, and the opposite point of equivalence in the transition between *yang* and *yin*.

THE FOUR DIRECTIONS



THE FOUR SEASONS



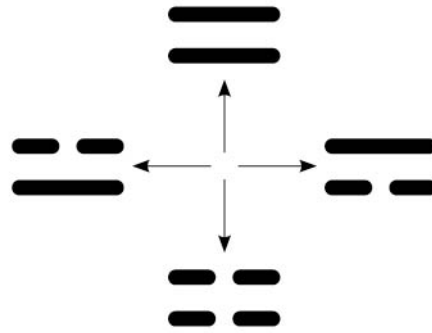


Su Wen³, chapter 4 (100 BC)

Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, pp. 13, 15.

From Man's perspective, the four directions are a tool for understanding the motion of Earth and this motion's impact on human beings. As we have noted, Man regards himself as being down and Heaven as being up, which also yields two sides. Because man's perception is two dimensional, he positions up and down as drawn on a piece of paper, resulting in reference to that which, from the perspective of Man, is regarded as right and left. This is another intellectual limitation of Man's cosmic conception, and is related to the fact that Chinese philosophy developed in the northern hemisphere. From the perspective of a person living in the northern hemisphere, at noon, when *yang* is at its height, the sun is in the south. For this reason, south is forward, and man faces *yang*. When he faces south, his left side faces east and his right side faces west. This division into four with regard to the Earth stifled man's awareness of the cosmos and limited it to his own planetary-worldly awareness. Each level elaborates on the level above it, thus restricting man's understanding to the worldly and the physical.

THE FOUR DUOGRAMS

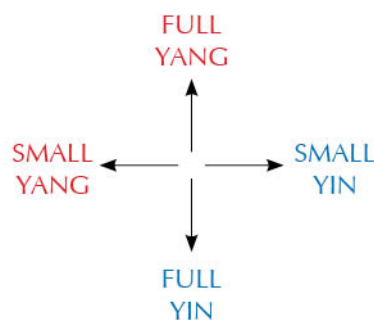


Yi Jing¹³ (I Ching)
 (The Warring States Period,
 480 - 221 BC)

Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, p. 13.

The lower the level of cosmic consciousness and the broader man's consciousness from his point of view, the more importance and actuality is assumed by words. The cosmic consciousness that nourishes us cannot be described in words, and each time we descend another level from the *Tao* we add another fixed framework of consciousness that may limit our cosmic conception, but also provides us with common language and understanding.

YIN/YANG



Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, p. 14.

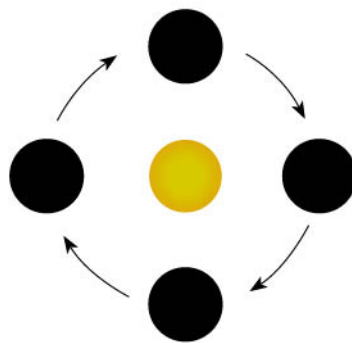
Western and Eastern perception differ primarily in their emphasis on how a phenomenon is perceived. In Eastern perception, the emphasis is on the relationship between the phenomenon and its surroundings, whereas Western perception focuses on the constituent elements of the phenomenon itself. On this basis, Western

perception conceives of day and night, winter and summer, and fall and spring not as phenomena that complete one another but rather as opposites.

When man examines reality in relation to himself he uses linear thought. He himself is the point of departure of the line along which his consciousness proceeds; that which this line touches exists, and that which lies in a different direction does not. Multiple lines increase our knowledge quantitatively but do not enable us to ascend to a higher level or to achieve a higher level of perception, one that regards every phenomenon in the contexts of its surroundings. Relinquishing anchor points of consciousness, such as the premises that the sky is above us and that south is straight ahead, liberates consciousness. The Chinese tried to link worldly consciousness with the higher consciousness that affects our lives. Consciousness is expanded by examining all things in their various contexts, including their many different aspects, and by trying to view them from different points of view.

The concept of 4 represents balance on a two dimensional level, up and down and side to side. On the earthly level it represents Earth, the four heavenly winds, the four directions, our ability to move in all directions, and our perception of reality in the here and now. The fifth dimension expands the four by enabling us to view space not just in the here and now but as it changes over time.

FROM SPACE (4) TO TIME (5)



Source: Tzayig, *Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine*, pp. 17.

Recent publications of Aram Tzayig include
Philosophical and Clinical Tools in Chinese Medicine

