



Five Phase Element Relationships

By Wan Mingying, 14th Century¹

TRANSLATED BY HEINER FRUEHAUF

Metal is generated by Earth; if there is too much earth, Metal will be buried. Earth is generated by Fire; if there is too much Fire, Earth will be charred. Fire is generated by Wood; if there is too much Wood, Fire will flare. Wood is generated by Water; if there is too much Water, Wood will be washed away. Water is generated by Metal; if there is too much Metal, Water will be grimy.

Metal can generate Water; if there is too much Water, Metal will drown. Water can generate Wood; if Wood is in abundance, Water will be in short supply. Wood can generate Fire; if there is too much Fire, Wood will be incinerated. Fire can generate Earth; if there is too much Earth, Fire will be obscured. Earth can generate Metal; if there is too much Metal, Earth will spoil.

Metal can control Wood; if Wood is flinty, Metal will be marred. Wood can control Earth; if Earth is thick, Wood will break. Earth can control Water; if Water is too much, Earth will erode. Water can control Fire; if Fire is ablaze, Water will sizzle. Fire can control Metal; if Metal is too much, Fire will become smothered.

If exhausted Metal comes upon Fire, it will melt. If weak Fire encounters Water, it will become quenched. If weak Water encounters Earth, it will be filled in and become stuck. If weak Earth comes upon Wood, it will cave in. If weak Wood encounters Metal, it will be axed.

If excess Metal receives Water, it will in turn have its edge blunted. If excess Water receives Wood, it will in turn have its momentum drained. If excess Wood receives Fire, it will in turn have its denseness transformed. If excess Fire receives Earth, it will in turn have its blazing quality checked. If excess Earth receives Metal, it will in turn have its calamitous potential restricted.

Note:

¹Title: from Yuan li fu (Recital on the Principles of the Invisible Source), in *Sanming tonghui* (*Compendium on the Convergence of the Three Life Giving Cosmic Influences*) by Wan Mingying (the Mountain Man Who Cultivates the Self), fl. 14th century.