

THE NATURE BASED PRINCIPLES OF UBUNTU OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Milton Introduction:

What follows is an old cosmological model from chapter 61 of the 'Hua Hu Ching' written by Lao Tzu. I have adapted the first five of these cosmological principles into my own work.

My perspective of the cosmos & natural world is that of a unified whole; one in which we as humans are integrated into this inherent oneness.

This is not asserted as a religious perspective, but as a practical holistic view of things.

The flow of it is as follows:

- *The Oneness of all things*
- *The Day & Night: (The Bright & the Clear / Fullness & Emptiness)*
- *The Three Realms/Powers: (Solar Time & Weather + The Ground/Terrain + Humanity). Simply put it is what is above our heads, below our feet, and in our hearts.*
- *The Four Season's: (Cycles of growth and change). Sunrise, noon, sunset, midnight. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.*
- *The Five Elements: Represent both nature awareness and practical know-how.*

I hope this is useful to all of you who read it and apply it in your own lives.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ONENESS OF ALL THINGS & THEIR INTERDEPENDANCE

You and I are earthlings. I am because of the diversity of life on this planet, and its wellbeing is a reflection of my own. Even if I were to go to space and live off planet, I would still need to duplicate all the systems of our natural environment here on earth.

Basically; no earth, no earthlings. It is for me; Ubuntu ('I am because we are') on a planetary level which the Shona philosophy & language of Zimbabwe has called: **UKAMA**.

'Ukama, a Shona word that implies the 'interdependence of all that exists.'

THE DAY & NIGHT: *The Bright & The Clear*

As we revolve on this planet at nearly the speed of sound, we have two distinct periods of time. The first is one in which we are facing the sun, like a deer in the highlights, on high beams. It's so bright that it obscures everything else. We rely on this. For everything.

The next period is when the sun is shining on the opposite side of the planet. We call this night. At night is when we get a chance to see the observable universe. We see into the clear. The stars, planets and other objects we see in space are only visible through the clarity of the universe.

I sometimes refer to day and night as 'the bright' & 'the clear'. Emptiness & Fullness. I see it as the in and out breath of life here on earth. The rising and falling of the tide.

THE THREE REALMS/POWERS. SAN-CAI: [Tian+Di+Ren]

The three realms are something that I learned from philosophical Taoism. In its original context it was referred to as; Heaven, Earth & Humanity. My modern approach to this is like this:

SKY: (ASTRONOMY & WEATHER)

HUMANITY: (UBUNTU & AKINOMOOSHIN)

GROUND: (TERRAIN & NAVIGATION)

This is a dynamic principle that also serves as a tool for planning/preparation and constant situational awareness.

In terms of Situational Awareness, the wellbeing of a group is based on understanding:

- What's the climate, season & weather?
- Where are we & where are we trying to get to?
- And how are the people dealing with it?

Outdoor Leaders must always be aware of these dynamics.

THE FOUR SEASONS

I see the four seasons both as the procession of seasons, and as a subjective process of growth, change and development within an individual.

Each of the Four Seasons has its own particularities, advantages & disadvantages. One of the things I've learned about the seasons is that there is a tendency to balance the effects of one season with its opposite, for example, in the heat of summer we strive to be cool. We want cool drinks, water to swim in and seek shade. In the cold of winter we strive to stay warm, drinking hot drinks and being close to a fire.

The Four Seasons can also be seen as a metaphor of subjective cycles of growth. A metaphoric Winter is a time when we find the seeds of a new complete cycle. In Spring we tend to our idea, which is only a sprout, a seedling. In the Summer, there is free expansive action. In Autumn we harvest the crop of what we cultivated throughout the year.

Through the time I've been living in Canada (23 years) I've let the seasons show me their qualities. Winter has its cold and silence. Spring has its new green growth, rain and bugs. Summer has its heat, hot winds and storms. Fall has its colours of reds, oranges and yellows, butterflies & birds begin their migrations south. I have been watching what the animals do throughout the years and I've been able to integrate it into my understanding of Canada's climate and ecosystems. It helps me feel more integrated into the natural environment.

SUNRISE + NOON + SUNSET + MIDNIGHT
SPRING + SUMMER + AUTUMN + WINTER



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The Four Seasons

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

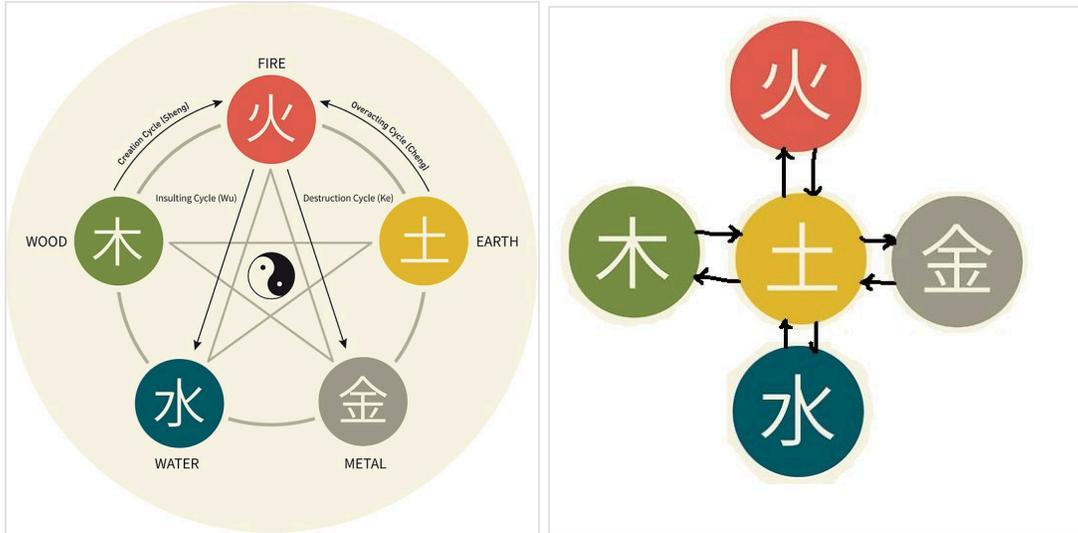
When I say the five elements I am referring to an integration of two different systems. The first is the Taoist system called Wu-Xing. The second is the “Five C’s of Survivability” as taught by Dave Canterbury. Because of my lifelong practice of the I Ching & philosophical Taoism and my interest in Bushcraft; these seemingly diverse things came together in an organic way.

These elements represent many things.

- They represent the cycles of the seasons throughout the year.
- They represent bodies of knowledge & skills to develop.

The five elements in the Wu-Xing system are: Water, Wood/Wind, Fire, Earth & Metal.

The Five C’s of Survivability are: Cover (Earth), Cordage (Wood), Combustion (Fire), Container (Water), Cutting Tools (Metal).



The Five Elements shown in two different configurations.