

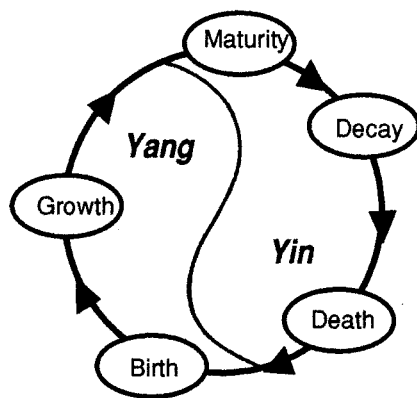
THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF CHANGE applied to Intentional Communities

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Introduction

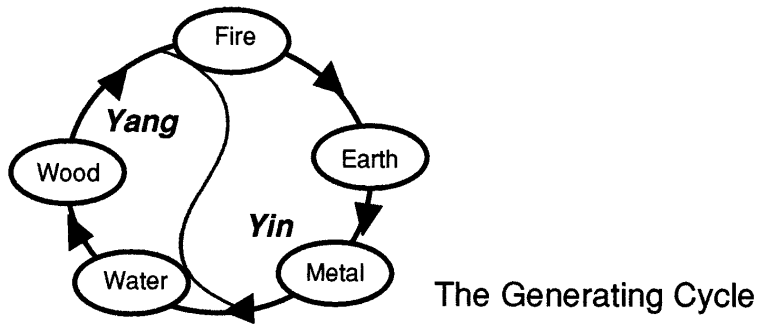
The Five Elements is a model of change developed by early Chinese thinkers around 300 B.C. Nowadays, it is used mainly by acupuncturists, shiatsu and feng shui practitioners as a diagnostic tool for health and energetic balance. I've adapted the model to work with change in organisations and communities, perhaps to the same end, but with a slightly different theory and practice.

The Five Elements grew out of the older philosophy of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang describe a cyclical flow between opposites. One turns into the other and balances the other in a never-ending cycle. The Five Elements effectively divide that primary cycle into five stages - roughly corresponding to birth, growth, maturity, decay and death.



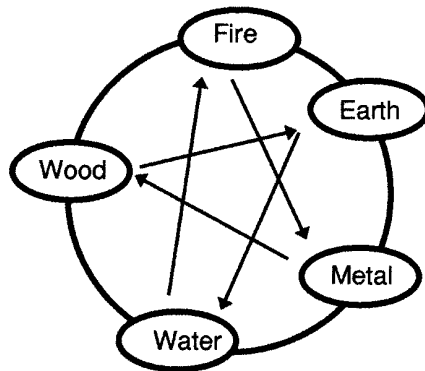
The Primary Cycle

Though the term 'element' is the generic translation into English, it is more accurate to translate the Chinese term as 'process', or 'action', or 'movement'. So the Five Elements describe five fundamental processes or movements which follow the lifecycle of any living system from the simplest organism to the most complex structure. The cycle can happen in a matter of seconds, as you think through your day, or it could take millennia.



The elements are called Water, Wood, Fire, Earth and Metal, because these aspects of nature are seen to embody or express each quality of change in the cycle. For instance, the Water phase is the most fluid and changeable stage. The Metal phase is the slowest, most structured stage.

As with Yin and Yang, the Five Elements not only generate each other, but also regulate or balance each other. Joseph Needham¹, an historian of Chinese science, noted the parallel to modern ecology in the way that species population will rise and fall within a food chain according to who is eating whom. Likewise, in the Daisy World of Gaia theory, when there are too many black daisies, then the change in temperature and precipitation encourages the white daisies to grow, and this regulates the growth of black daisies and so on



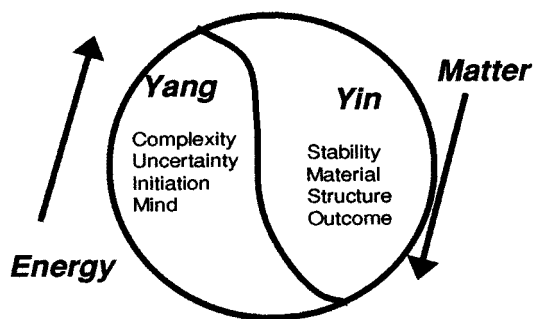
In this paper, I shall describe the general cycle in terms of Yin and Yang. Then I shall look briefly at each stage of the cycle in terms of intentional communities. Finally, I shall apply the model to these aspects of Braziers:

- sensory/executive process;
- the group mind;
- balance between college and community;
- honouring the original vision of a founder.

The Yin-Yang cycle

The Yang side tends towards dynamic instability, the Yin side is less dynamic and more stable. Yang side has a tendency to expand and 'hot up' as the other side moves towards

contracting and cooling. That might sound odd in psychological terms, but it is not surprising that conflict between people tends to be on the 'heated' unstable Yang side; and fixed roles, routines and beliefs tend to be on the contracting Yin side. There seems to be a tendency on the Yang side towards complexity and evolution of life; and on the Yin side you have a more entropic tendency, dissipation of heat and movement towards steady states. Overall, there seems to be a process of energy/matter conversion throughout the cycle. The beginning and end of the cycle, in Water, seems to have the most potential energy and the least conversion into matter. This gradually shifts around the cycle until, in Metal, you have the most structured or condensed matter, and the least available potential energy.



The Matter / Energy Conversion Cycle.

Again, that may sound odd but it means that in the Water phase you have the most enthusiasm and fluid resources (like liquid assets). You also have the closest connection to the original source of the vision, like divine inspiration. And minimum roles and structures. This original energy, and sense of potential, gradually materialises and condenses into structures around the cycle until in Metal you end up with fixed assets, fixed outgoings, unspoken codes of conduct, doing things because that is the way they have always been done, people doing certain jobs because that's what they have always done. It's not that the energy has gone, it's just been caught up in structure. And if you are to question those routines, leadership styles, power bases and so on - it may come across as if you are dishonouring the original vision - because the vision is now embodied in a sacred structure. That is the nature of the cycle, from 'raw' vision to realising that vision in material structures, embodying belief structures in roles and routines. You may need to free up (let go of) some of these structures in order to re-access the potential energy and vision of Water. But the paradox is that, in doing so, you are challenging the 'sacred expressions' of community life, from a building to a certain protocol. This will be considered in more detail later.

The other primary movement of the Yin-Yang cycle is from action to reflection (and then back to action). You can set an action in motion - let's say you change the house cleaning rota at your community - that is movement on the Yang side. However, you cannot predict the exact outcome of that change until it starts to emerge as something you can experience, perceive, feel, something which has substance - on the Yin side. So the house is now cleaner but certain areas are neglected. Peter feels angry about the changes. Mark likes the changes.

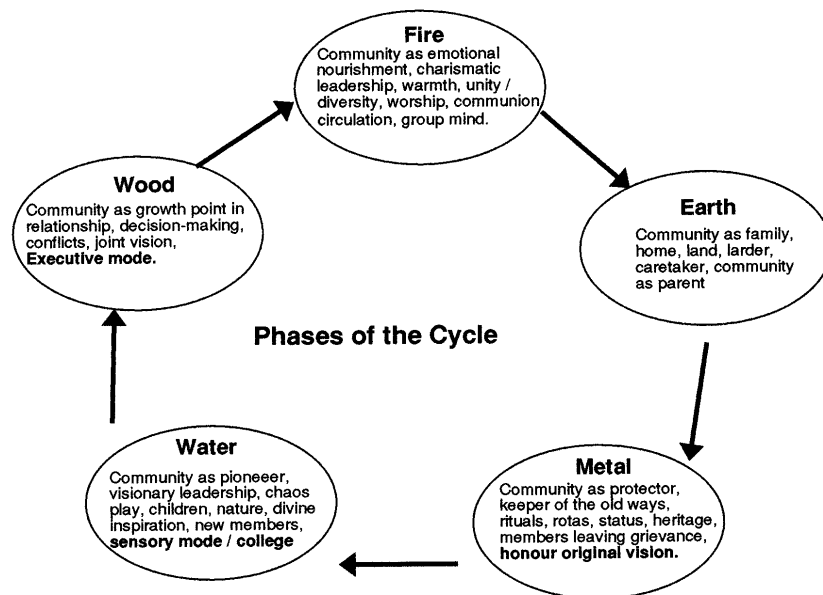
You register, take in, the effects of a cleaner house, but also Peter's anger and Mark's pleasure. You feel your internal response, and this 'moves you' (literally) to initiate another set of actions. The more you learn to be aware of the effects of change, in yourself and others, the more informed and conscious you can be about your next sets of actions or changes. This is the basic cycle of action research, and, presumably, the basic cycle of evolution in a community.

The phases of the cycle

Now let's consider each phase of the cycle

Water

An intentional community often starts with one person or small group coming together based on realising some form of inspiration or ideal. This is the Water phase - inspiring, visionary, but also not very fixed. Perhaps it is not yet clear what the community rules are, who the leaders are, where the money is coming from. It can be touch and go whether the 'potential' community really takes form. The Water phase is characterised by a lot of 'free energy' that is not yet bound in structures, such as buildings or established routines. The "free or radical" energy could be liquid assets, or just a lot of enthusiasm. Even after a community is established, the Water phase is still characterised by these qualities. It is the place of fresh ideas, fluid discussion time, enthusiasm for new possibilities. You'll often feel a 'togetherness' with others, a passion with others, but it has to go through the next phase in order to produce any 'real' results, i.e. actual changes on the ground.



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Wood

The Wood phase is about long-term growth and sustainability, making the vision practical and real on an on-going sustainable basis. This means that you now have to decide on your leadership structure (i.e. how decisions are made and carried through). You might all agree on the ideals, but when it comes to the daily expression of those ideals, there are conflicting visions and priorities. You rub up against different perspectives of what the vision is, because it is being seen from different angles. People will also have a different sense of ownership of the vision.

For instance, suppose that you have brought together a group of people who want to form a community. Now you have to look at various properties, buy one that you all agree upon, and

decide how costs are shared. The people who bought the house originally may see the vision as theirs, because their money went into it. Someone who comes in with a lot of building expertise but no capital may see it as theirs because they put so much work into it. Someone who only joined because their spouse wanted to, may feel varying degrees of ownership and may not bother to participate in key decisions. The sense of ownership directly affects how much energy, capital, or 'engagement' each community member puts into the place.

Some people emphasise the reality of costs as the primary vision. Others see divine intervention as the real guiding force. Wood is a process of negotiating all these different visions into one coherent whole. Difficult? Yes! Easier if you have one assigned leader who holds all the vision and all the anxiety, and others are happy to follow. But that has its own shadow. More challenging is if the leadership structure is held throughout the community (in some form or other), but this is also a path of maturation, as responsibility now becomes shared. Wood is character-building, it strengthens our resolve to follow our own vision and, at the same time, strengthens our ability to listen and respond to the needs and perspectives of others. It is probably the most demanding practice of community life!

Fire

The success of negotiating your way through the Wood phase now impacts on your expansion and fruition - the Fire phase. The image here is not so much growth upwards as circulation outwards. The degree to which you handle conflicts and conflicting priorities in Wood will impact on the degree of circulation- who talks to whom and about what. Because of its circulating nature, Fire tends to have a core (or heart) and an orbit. The pattern between core and orbit dictates the channels of communication. For instance, a small tightly knit community may all be together, think together, but there is little contact with outsiders. So the circulation channels are restricted to small pathways. High unity and shared values exist within the community, but everyone outside is to be mistrusted, as there is little communication or sharing on which to develop trust. That may be true, for instance, of a small fishing community or a religious cult. A community which grows and expands in the Wood phase may bring in new members, who have new visions. This increases circulation and diversity, which on the whole is healthy, but can also destabilise the sense of internal unity. So there is a role in Fire of embracing, of reaching out to connect to others, and integrating diverse people, or ideas, or values into a larger whole. The community gets stretched into a bigger whole or dissipates into smaller factions.

Earth

The warmth and coming together in Fire (or indeed a sense of disconnection or being burnt by the fire of a charismatic leader) now affects the way in which the community feels like home, like a family, a resting place. Who talks to whom, about what, will affect what resources you get, what room you live in, whom you feel safe with, and whether the community is a 'good' or 'bad' parent to you. Now the community starts to settle into established patterns of communication, of routine, of familial behaviour. It's a comfortable, settling phase. Perhaps you had conflicts in Wood, but you talked about it and forgave one another in Fire. Now you can have a meal together and relax in front of the fire for a doze. The Earth phase brings up the tricky borderline between community 'as community', and community 'as family' in the sense that a residential community has qualities of family but they may not be your blood relations. So community members are a given in one sense, but not in another (in the way that your mum, or your child, are a given in your life). Questions of loyalty and boundaries emerge. Another issue is the balance between work and home in a community. We all need that comfortable resting space away from work. Usually it's called home (though sometimes home can feel more hard work than the office!). We switch off, relax, we don't want to 'deal with things'. Yet a community is not quite like this. It's not quite a given in the same way. This leaves us with a slightly more 'active' feeling than we would usually have in this phase. My sense of this stage comes from the action/reflection cycle. There needs to be some process

of consciously reflecting on this tension, feeling it, chewing over it. Seeing if there are creative ways of addressing this tension, and remembering that there are no obvious models for this area, except other intentional communities.

Metal

Now, we reach the last phase, where your patterns of communication, of decision-making, of loyalty, become bound into structures. Your decisions in the Wood phase are now expressed as particular routine actions. For instance the Sensory/Executive process was once just a thought, a way of dealing with community life and joint decision-making. It was a good thought. It has lasted. Now it is a sacred structure. It is part of what Braziers is, Braziers would not be the same without that structure. The same can be true of people and their roles. This sense of familiarity develops through the original contact and engagement in Water, Wood and Fire. It emerges in Earth, and now becomes very ingrained into our nervous system. If someone is always sitting reading the newspaper at 4pm. then, if that person is not there, we feel slightly confused. Our senses grow used to a certain atmosphere, role, style of communication. Things aren't the same when changes happen. We literally don't feel the same. If our sense of self has become very bound up with a particular structure or way of doing things, we literally won't feel ourselves.

At this point, you need a new self! You need to ask yourself what sacred structures can be changed, re-oriented in some way, without losing the original vision so that you can liberate the energy held in the structures. This leads you to the core meditation of the Water phase. Necessary, if you are to find a way to continue to evolve, survive, grow. We all have to go through this transition, every time we lose a familiar friend, a familiar job or lifestyle, even a familiar belief. It's very painful. There needs to be some ritual process for grieving, in order to move through this time. Otherwise energy is bound up in nostalgia, and routine as opposed to ritual.

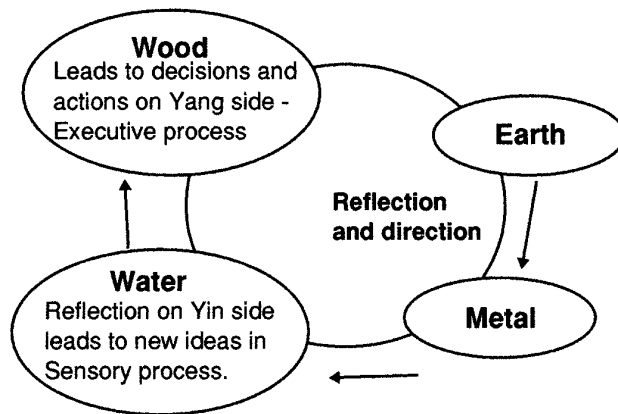
Applying the cycle to Braziers

So let's go around the cycle again and look at Braziers' issues in particular.

Sensory Process

The Water and Wood phase are very interesting as they very much parallel the Sensory/Executive process. One thing I haven't emphasised in Water is that it is the culmination of Yin. That is to say, it is your greatest point of reflection, the time when you can most fully receive and reflect on previous actions and changes. This greatest point of reflection can be quite condensed - all the feelings, perceptions, changes, all that has affected you from living in a community - come down to a gestalt of everything you've experienced. This is the 'Sensory point' - the well of sensation (literally) that moves you into action. Water is the transition time, not yet action, but you feel the movement or energy for action, you feel the impulse towards action. You may brainstorm about potential changes, but you don't yet make decisions.

In the Water phase, various qualities are present (and I am drawing directly here from the theory of Non Violent Communication). One thing that emerges is a basic awareness of feelings. Positive feelings imply that a basic need has been met. You feel good about



The Sensory Cycle

yourself.... so perhaps your need for validation or appreciation has been met (by you or another). You feel happy, excited? Your need for stimulation or contact has been met. Negative feelings point to a need that has not been met. You feel sad, disappointed, angry, lonely? Then some basic need for contact, safety, creativity, has not been met.

The awareness of these feelings and needs, particularly the power of an unmet need, tends to arise in the Water phase. So, one role of the Sensory process, I would argue, is to draw out what people feel and what they need. The actual meeting structure needs to be conducive to this - i.e. needs to feel safe for people (if you do not feel safe you are hardly going to put yourself in the vulnerable position of appearing needy). Water is also a very deep quality, it is the deepest phase of the cycle. So the Sensory process needs to allow for a quality of depth.

A few things can help here - an atmosphere of democracy, everybody being and feeling equal in the Sensory space. For instance, you may be a new member and therefore think that your needs and feelings are not so important. This may be true within reason, and you may want to respect protocol. But, assuming the emperor is wearing no clothes in the Water phase, a sudden unexpected insight can point to deeper collective needs. So, you may well want to say that you are feeling lost, excluded, excited, you have a good idea. Thinking outside the box can be initiated from outsiders.

A connection to nature or wildness is also helpful. The wildness is the radical inventive side of Water that comes up with new surprising angles and solutions. An atmosphere of play can be helpful, or the adult form of it which is closer to scientific inquiry - exploring a topic without pre-conceived ideas of the answer but just allowing the question to deepen. Water has a quality of meditation, the empty space. You may have been around a community issue 3000 times before, in the same way as you have breathed in and breathed out 3000 times before. But it's only in this Water phase that new angles, new perspectives may come up, and you need the ears ready to listen out for them.

But what are you listening out for? In essence you listen first for the feelings, the happy, sad, angry feelings. These reveal the core needs which might be personal needs, or collective needs. For instance, what was Braziers' core need in setting up? How did the core needs 'move' into a core purpose? Is the core need still valid? It could have been a need for sanctuary (safety and sacred) after the experience of World War II. Therefore the vision of sanctuary is still a dominant one. If this core need is no longer so important, contextually, you may have to address what the core need is now. This may have an impact on how you see the core vision and the core purpose in present times.

Within that broader collective inquiry are each person's needs - e.g. need for home and family, need to stretch and learn something new, need to land, to feel settled somewhere.

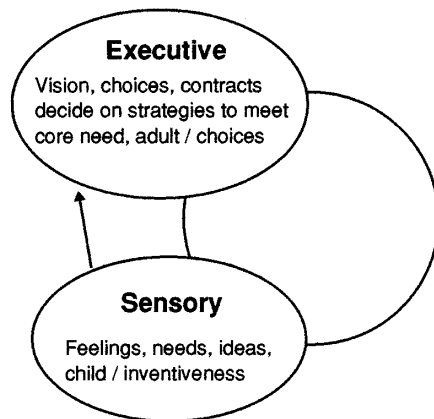
The empty space, the inquiry, not trying to achieve resolution (in this phase) allows the awareness of specific needs to emerge. Without that basic framework of core needs, it's easy to lose sight of what you are each trying to achieve from being at Braziers, or what Braziers as an on-going experiment is trying to achieve.

Another part of the Sensory process (from my understanding of Water phase) is then to come up with a wide range of options and strategies to meet those needs. This is the brainstorming, radical, inventive aspect of Water. But you are not trying to decide on specific solutions which is the Executive process. However, I do want to point out a danger here which can potentially confuse the Sensory/Executive boundary. That is to fail to separate out the actual need, from the strategy to meet the need.

Let's say you decide to live in a community because, consciously or not, you believe it will meet your need for a home and family. But you have to change rooms, because of some new building regulation or change in members. Unknowingly, your room is the embodiment of that need. When it's lost you feel 'needy' literally. And neediness is quite painful as we are very vulnerable. So we quickly latch on to a strategy to meet the need.

Therefore, what you might say in the Sensory process is not, 'I feel vulnerable and I need reassurance about where I am going to stay'. But instead you might say 'What I need is my own room!'. At this point, people may feel uncomfortable, don't know how to respond to you, and the depth of the Sensory process can get sidetracked into more shallow issues.

This distinction is important as, although strategies and options are definitely part of the Sensory process, the energy or demand behind meeting a need can bring in the Executive quality. People may move into Executive mode when they feel uncomfortable with the depth charge of what is expressed. Then the depth gets sidelined and the 'real' sensory meetings end up as corridor chats. That's acceptable too, it just can compromise the development of unity, or 'group mind.' There would need to be another process of re-including people, drawing them back into the overall group when they felt excluded because a basic need was not met.



Sensory / Executive Boundaries

Executive process

For me, the Executive process is very much the phase of Wood comprised of actions and decisions based on what is raised in the Water phase, and a leadership structure, a core group of some form. It will feel more adult, more 'sensible' and rational (though this can mean that irrational conflicts end up in Sensory meetings and then Executive becomes parent to Sensory child).

The main thrust here is, having identified collective and individual needs, how are you going to find strategies to meet them, weave them together in a way that is sustainable and satisfying? Very difficult job! Let's say the community has a need for new stimulation and vitality, so they invite new members. The same fundamental need in a year's time might be best met strategically as a new course programme, not new members. You need to be 'inflexible' i.e., tough, on meeting the basic needs. Else the community falters or dissipates in some way. But you need flexibility around your strategies, else you get locked into one strategy for meeting your need, either because it has become a sacred structure, or because you haven't separated out the need and the strategy.

Another point here is what Charles Handy² calls the 'psychological contract'. Each time we subscribe to a vision, it's usually based on that vision meeting a basic need. So we join a community for stimulation and contact because that's our vision of community life. If that situation changes, let's say the community becomes much smaller and less diverse, then we feel as if the psychological contract has been changed (this is often all unconscious). The contract is always held as a vision. If you want to unearth the contract, you need to unearth each person's vision - of their life at Braziers, of what Braziers should be, what they want it to be, what should be done. You have to draw out the vision (because it is often deeply buried), and, this is the catch, you have to 'listen' to the needs behind the vision. It's very easy to get into conflict at this point - my vision of what needs to be done is different from yours - argument or withdrawal ensues. So, you need to stay very aware of your own vision and what needs it represents. Stay with your vision (don't lose it because other people have a stronger argument), but you have to 'listen' to another person's point of view, not 'see' it. This will always externalise the other, and turn them into an 'enemy' (getting in the way of your 'life' contract).

So, one implicit job of the Executive process is to address these contracts, because, if a contract is changing, then you may make a decision and find that it is not carried out, since at some level, it was not in the contract! Let's say one person agrees to be programme manager for three years. Perhaps the person is drawn to the job because they have a need for challenge, and see the job description as meeting that need. But what happens if the challenging aspect of programme management is all in the first year, and by the second year it is more routine. If the need for challenge has not been fulfilled in the person, and they still associate that job as the strategy to meet that need (as opposed to taking up rock-climbing instead) then they might feel that a contract has been broken. This might emerge as feelings of frustration, disappointment. The person may try to create exciting new programmes which receive blank faces, or financial constraints.

The contract has changed between Braziers and the person. The strategy for meeting the need for challenge has changed. If the need for challenge is not re-directed, then the person will feel that Braziers has somehow let them down - broken the contract. Take a more simple analogy of a marriage. We marry into a contract - usually implicit and unconscious - that the other person will meet our needs in some way. We know, almost immediately, when the contract is broken because we feel let down or betrayed in some way. Perhaps we feel that our partner is not pulling their weight with the housework, for instance. When the contract is shaky, it is harder to make decisions together. So, if any one person's contract with Braziers is changing, because they have changed or Braziers has changed, then the Executive process needs to take an over-view and say "What is the contract here, and how has it changed?" If feelings and needs of the Sensory Process, can lead into new options and new strategies (still in Sensory) that more clearly meet the need, then the Executive Process can make clearer decisions which are more likely to be followed through and realised because they honour the contract with each party involved.

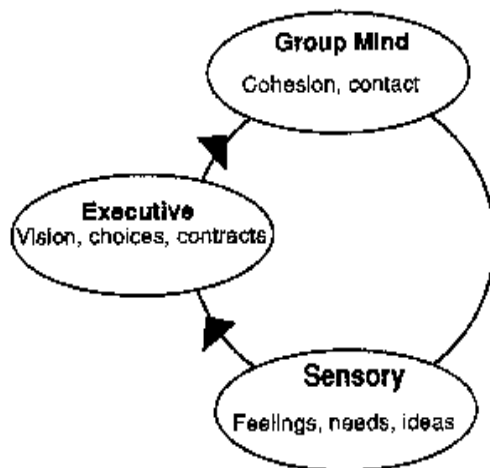
Group Mind

I would suggest that the degree to which Sensory and Executive processes come together, or reach fruition, will directly influence the quality of 'group mind' - the process of social

evolution. I don't mean just in Braziers, but in the world in general, because these core needs are an impetus to grow and evolve. On the one hand it's basic survival, adaptation through novelty. But, at least for the human species, there is a creative need too which cannot just be put down to raw survival. Most us in the affluent West have those basic needs met. Yet we are still driven to evolve and explore. All these needs, for growth and creativity, safety and security, come into strategies that interact with each other on the world stage. Need for access to water drives the Kashmir boundary dispute. Need for oil (fuel for a cultural identity) or need for parental approval drove the war on Iraq. And so on.....the collective character-building is how do we grow and evolve, meeting the challenge of these basic needs through creative strategies. The inter-weaving of the contracts, the inter-dependence, the way we resolve conflicts, form the process of growth, of developing a group mind - at whatever level of cultural collectivity, small community or the UN.

I want to draw on Dialogue to illustrate the process of developing a group mind. Dialogue, as a practice, came about in part through conversations between David Bohm and Krishnamurti on the subject of consciousness and society. How the very way we think shapes society and keeps us repeating perceptions and interactions that scatter and separate us into conflicting factions - nations, religions, economic systems. Seen as diversity, if you can tolerate it, it's fine. Seen as a battle of needs, it creates wars, racism, religious hatred, and more.

The aim of Dialogue, not dissimilar to the Sensory space, is to explore the edge of thinking where your beliefs and expectations are less certain, fixed or polarised. You slow down the exchange of opinions and emotions until a group starts to see that the very way they are thinking creates the issues themselves. In doing so, you may find that the strategy to which you are so attached, or the issue you want to see resolved, is a red herring or a pointer to something else which is actually more potent or inclusive of conflicting views.



The Cycle leading to Group Mind

In my own experience of Dialogue, this point of transition emerges when you identify a core need that was being hidden, usually somewhere in people's hidden agendas. It's a magical point, as if some unknown force comes into the room. The old strategies then take on a relative or flexible perspective, rather than an absolute one. And a larger sense of meaning emerges in the whole group. Meaning of what? Well, it's almost a feeling of meaning. The original charge of Water, which is often felt as friction or antagonism in Wood, now reforms as a more collective or communal charge in Fire. Something you share or participate in together. It's not euphoric in the evangelist sense of togetherness. You feel as if the group itself starts

to take on its own quality of thinking, beyond that of each person. Not as one. You are still individuals, but you support and draw out an emerging or collective line of inquiry which is bigger than all of you. It feels a bit as if you are being 'thought through'.

Right at the beginning, I mentioned that in the Water phase you can feel togetherness but it's a slightly false feeling. You feel a collective buzz more than you are actually thinking together. It's like the early stages of falling in love. You feel like it's love. But until you go through the testing stage of practical living, daily conflicts, working together - in the Wood phase - you don't get to the deeper shared love of Fire, of your hearts having worked through the tension and pain of differences, and you are still able to look each other in the eye and forgive.

The Fire phase, in its best capacity, brings out shared language and meaning that is not caught in an exclusive clique (though you'll always have some coded language and gestures in a community) but really extends out to all humanity. So that any visitor to Braziers, however brief, will feel touched by, will feel a resonance of some connection that is bigger than any one individual community member. You can feel this in a dubious way in a religious cult, the shining eyes and wide smiles that make you feel slightly wary of further contact. At some level, our expression of heart will always be culturally defined through language and gesture. But a community that increases its quality of sound or coherence, and lessens the noise (by which I mean unresolved conflicting strategies), will take on a resonance which means you are thinking, 'vibrating' on the same wave-length. This can be felt throughout the building.

Balance between community, college and honouring the vision of the founder

Going back to the original point of need, there are various basic needs, but in general it's possible to put them into two areas: a need for safety, withdrawal, stability, sanctuary; and a need for stimulus, creativity, engagement, charge. In others words, a basic need in Yin and a basic need in Yang. I mentioned right at the beginning that the Yang side of the Five Element cycle is a movement of increasing complexity and evolution. The Yang side is also more about consciousness, and mind, whereas the Yin side veers towards the material, the embodied. Yes, there is thinking on the Yin side but reflective, ruminative thinking, not creative, initiatory thinking.

Now, it seems to me as an outsider, that Braziers was definitely set up with a view to sanctuary, finding a point of peace in the post-war world. But Glaister's concept of social evolution is more geared towards the 'Yang need, of creativity, learning and development.

The 'Yin' side of Braziers is very strong, and it is perhaps most represented in the building. In Earth, you have the safety of a sense of home and family. In Metal, your sense of safety is more represented in structures, patterns of relationship, work routines, and physical buildings. I think this aspect, together with the actual history of Braziers as a family estate, creates a pattern where 'Braziers itself', not necessarily any one person, becomes a 'parent'. The building, the routines, the home-like quality, creates the quality of Parenthood. Which is different from Adulthood. And therefore it is easy for people to slip into a child mode, whether guests or long-term community members. If Braziers changes, it could be experienced as if your family home changes, such as when parents get divorced or change the decor without asking you. That basic need (especially in the child state) for safety and security is challenged if Braziers changes.

Braziers serves that function very well. It acts as an additional family home for many people. But that can lead to a situation where the creative dynamic (and unstable) force of change, in the Yang side, is difficult to really get going - because the need for movement and change fundamentally challenges the need for safety and stability. Yet, in the Yin-Yang theory, one becomes the other, is dependent on the other. A business that does not change with the times will find that its long-term financial security, let's say in one key product, will suddenly

collapse. So it needs innovation in order to guarantee future security. Yet the process of innovation will inevitably challenge the current experience and structure of security.

Returning to an earlier point, the process of honouring, of respecting and following the work set up by a founder is a Metal process. The visionary ideals of a founder become increasingly embodied into structure as time goes on. A visionary idea about communication becomes expressed in language, the way meetings are held or conversations happen. A visionary idea about a way of working together becomes embodied in certain routines and values. As I said in the first section on Metal, to argue for change in any of those structures is a bit like becoming a heretic, or expecting others to do the same, because the structures are now a sacred embodiment of the original vision.

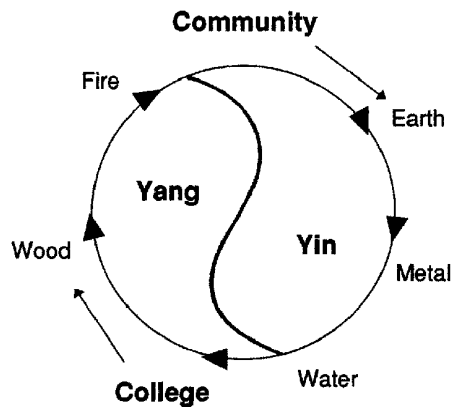
Yet, Glaister's concept of social evolution is definitely an expression of the Yang side of the cycle. And to continue to re-vitalise that movement of complexity, for it to grow, we have to let go of the sacred structures - not all of them - but ones which no longer hold life - i.e. they have become a purpose in themselves. If I read this correctly, then the Sensory/Executive process is key to evolving a 'group mind', so that seems a good basis on which to develop changes. I suspect the changes need to happen more at the level where the role of Braziers 'as parent', and therefore family home, has taken importance over Braziers as a college, in the sense that the community aspect of Braziers is a function of the Yin side, and the college aspect is a function of the Yang side.

Looking again at the twin needs, it seems to me that the residential, community aspect of Braziers was seemingly there to serve the evolution of a group mind. But it could prevent that development by too much emphasis on the familial, safe, aspect of togetherness. It emphasises the Earth quality of group mind which is more like a family mind, not a social mind. The social development of a group mind, paradoxically, is based on having an increased circulation and diversity of people going through Braziers.

Let me try to explain what I mean. The Yang side of the cycle is a process of evolving consciousness through greater complexity and levels of order. Complexity implies an increased web of relationships and contact which weaves together to create a greater whole, a greater sense of oneness. That oneness is based on expansion and circulation. not contraction and constriction. So you are constantly having to expand, within yourself, to accommodate greater diversity of perspectives and values. That destabilises your own sense of unity and harmony, but challenges you to find the unity at a greater or more expanded level. That's where I think Glaister's ideas come very close to the conversations between Bohm and Krishnamurti.

In essence, I feel that the role of Braziers as a college, a place of learning, a place of people passing through, will increase the strength and activity of the Yang side. Having more throughput of people, with greater diversity of ideas and backgrounds, will paradoxically, develop the group mind or stretch it to new levels of complexity. Once you've been stretched (enough for now) you can contract or close back in to the opposite need of sanctuary.

The opposite need of sanctuary, privacy and familiarity, which is more represented in the community proper who see Braziers as their first home, could be at odds with the Yang need. But both need to be in relationship to honour the original vision. So, if Braziers offers a sanctuary and home, then I think the question is, just what, out of the land (Earth) food, rooms, building, routines, will really nurture that sense of sanctuary as a quality of being (as opposed to being fixed in a particular structure), as a quality that you can feel when you come to Braziers? And what tends to push Braziers into the sanctuary of an unchanging family home, a 'parent figure' which could easily restrict the initiation of new life and vitality on the Yang side?



The Community / College Interaction Cycle

The Water element is the switch point from Yin to Yang, from community to college. Water, more than any other element, is the culmination or embodiment of sanctuary - and the deep reflection that comes out of sanctuary. It is the deep reflection which is often the beginning of new radical ideas. It is the beginning of change. As soon as you feel the buzz and excitement of new ideas, or letting go of the grief and resentment of past experiences, then you start to move out of sanctuary and towards evolution, complexity, uncertainty, change. So the Sensory process is the switch point between community and college, and theoretically, it is the source of change.

What needs to change? Well, it is the transition from Metal to Water that you need to look at - the way in which beliefs, values, assets, heritage, are held in structures - routines, roles, buildings. And the questions are basically:

- what do you let go of, get rid of;
- what can be re-formulated in some way,
- what can be renovated?

The aim is to update your structures so that more charge, more life can be channelled through them. For instance, a decaying building that is not used, or under-utilised - should it be pulled down to make way for something new? Can it be renovated so it can be used more fully (and generate more income in the process)? Or an old rota? What is in the old rota that still represents a need? (Let's say contact between people, or hygiene). Can the need be met another way? If people resist the change, it is because they are concerned that a core need will no longer be met. What is it? You can only change the strategy behind a structure when you identify all the needs held within it. And it's important to emphasise that any resistance to change concerning newness will probably challenge the Yin side (people's need for safety, lineage, privacy).

But a break can occur. In the Wood phase, the Executive process, the 'Parent' can re-emerge. Remember that the Parent is very strong on the Yin side. It is representative of the safety and boundaries on the basic Yin need for sanctuary. But in the Water phase we let go of the Parent. We have to in order to grow, in order to find new ideas, new ways of seeing things. We talk direct to God, so to speak, and miss out the middle layer of social groupings and 'hand-me-down' belief structures.

The Wood phase is the way in which the Child, with its 'hotline to God' develops the new, evolving and uncertain ideas into something tangible, actual changes on the ground. This is a process of maturity, of becoming an Adult (not yet a Parent). The Executive process needs to be one of 'engaged adults in dialogue' who are working towards change - changes which ensure long-term security, but are not beholden to it as the priority need. The first and foremost need in this Wood phase is evolution, is growth. Growth and change ensure long-term security. There's a risk, of course, but there's an equal risk in staying the same.

So the Parent, who will probably come in along the lines of emphasising security and heritage, can compromise the initiatory energy of change, the source of social evolution. This can create a sense of rebellion (frustrated teenager) in those who try to initiate change. Or a sense of 'holding responsibility' which feels like being a Parent on behalf of other people's Child.

So this is where you need to go back to the contracts - what was Braziers' original 'contract' for becoming an institution. Was the balance between the two primary needs always there, or always favouring one side and not the other? Has the balance changed over time? What is each person's implicit contract with the place? What was their original contract with Braziers, and has it changed over time? And how does each individual contract represent the balance between the two needs?

Discussed in the Adult framework, (remember the Adult is not Parent, Adult is the excitement of the Child with the determination and patience to make their dreams real), this form of conversation may stimulate key questions as to what aspect of Braziers' structure needs to stay or go. It should also develop the strength, or staying power, that is needed to evolve a 'group mind.'

Alice Kemp-Welch

1. Joseph Needham - *Science and Civilization in China* - Vol. 2 [1956]
2. Charles Handy - *Understanding Organisations* - Chapter 2 [1976]
