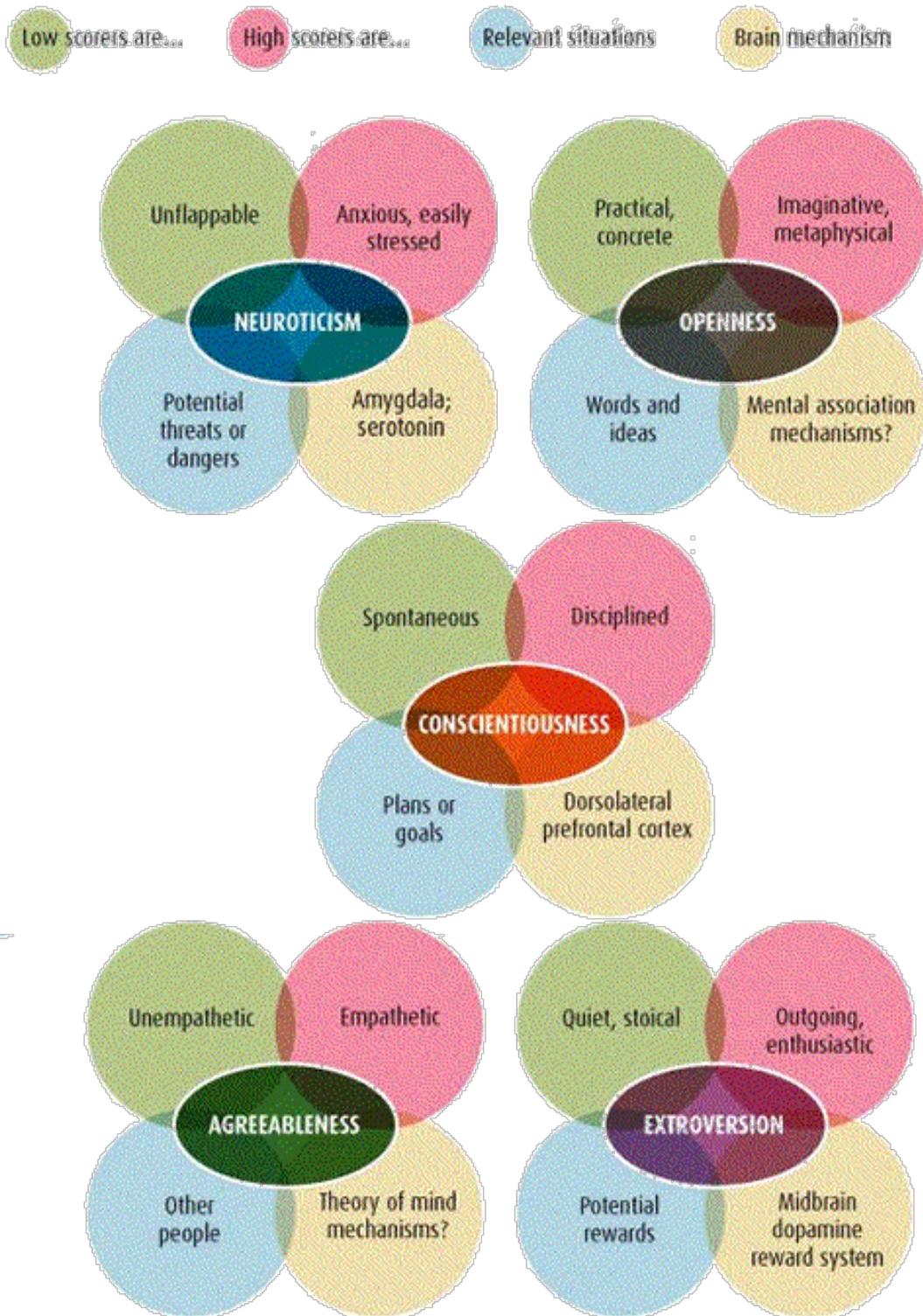


BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS



Five facets of you. Image source: Nettle, David: *The personality factor: What makes you unique?* New Scientist: February 9, 2008.

EVIDENCE FOR 5 PERSONALITY TRAITS

Psychologists have long studied the systematic ways in which individuals differ. Daniel Nettle writes that consensus has emerged in recent decades that five personality traits: “extroversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness and agreeableness, define five axes along which all individuals fall.” According to Nettle, psychologists view these personality traits:

as thermostats within the brain, each regulating a range of behaviours and attitudes. Some of these behaviours and attitudes seem to be linked. For example, people who are highly competitive and like loud music and travel tend also to have high sex drives. People who have a specific phobia tend to worry a lot about other things too, and they are more prone to depression... From such correlations, we infer that there are a limited number of thermostats, each working independently.

Nettle reports that “[n]euroscientists are now beginning to relate the big five to the brain”:

Take neuroticism. Neuroscientists know which parts of the brain are involved in the response to threats: there's a circuit involving a structure called the amygdala... There is... evidence that the size of the amygdala is proportional to a person's neuroticism score... (Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews, Vol. 30: 511). Amazingly, the simple, self-rating questionnaires used by personality psychologists actually turn out to measure something about the nervous system that can be verified through objective scientific techniques.

GENERATIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE TEST

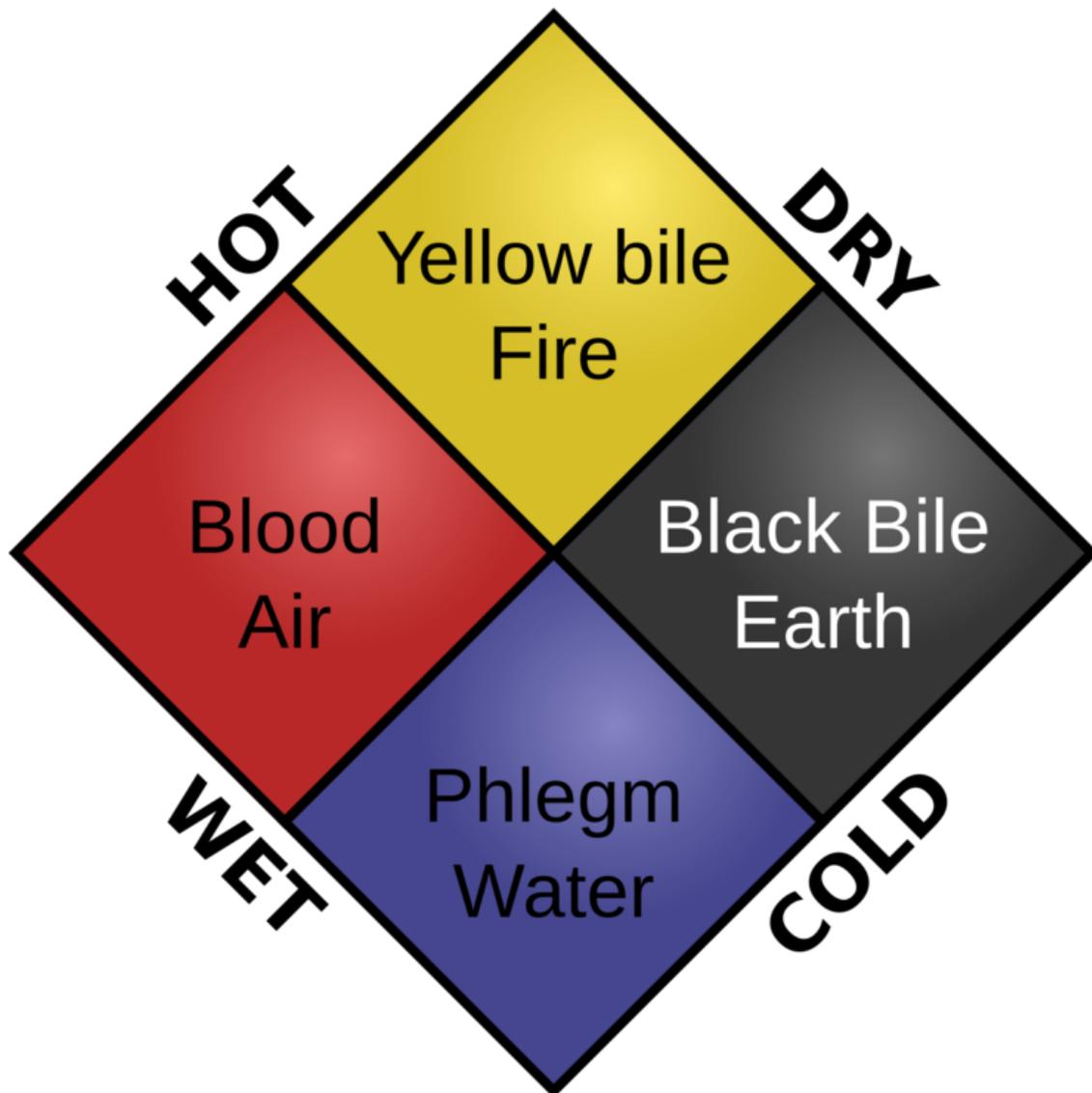
- How accurate was your own test feedback?
- Be honest, did being observed by your partner influence your responses?
- Was your test feedback objective? Did the algorithm merely rearrange and regurgitate your own responses to the questions or did it reveal something new?
- What makes the “Big Five” test superior to the numerous personality quizzes popular on the internet like “What girl scout cookie are you?”

PRE-SCIENTIFIC GRIDS ON THE WORLD



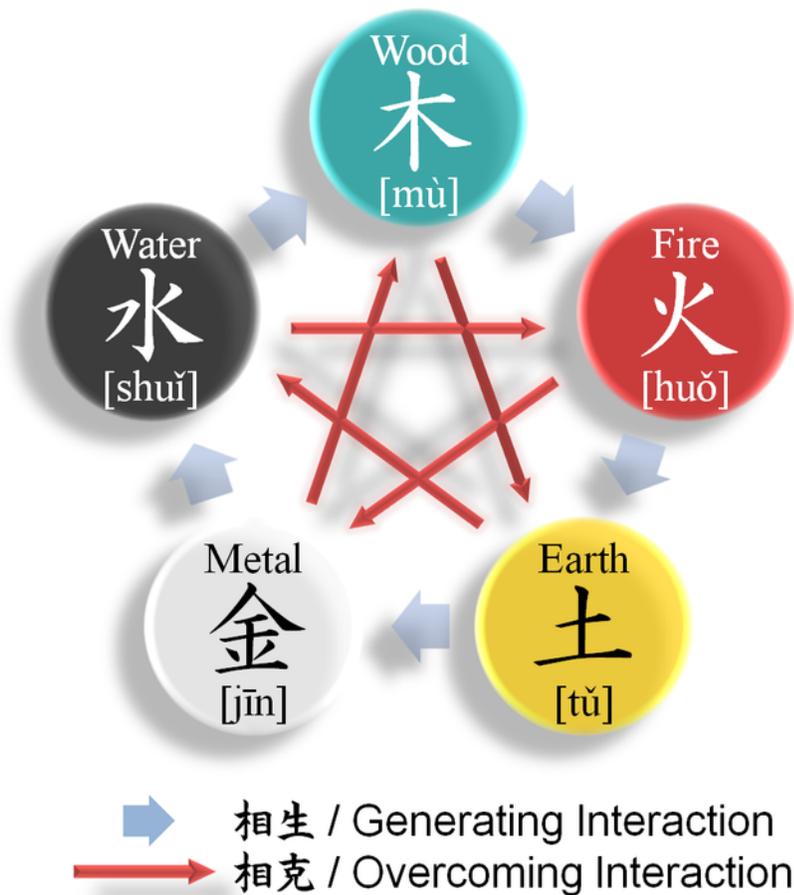
Choleric—Sanguine —Phlegmatic—Melancholic: The Four Temperaments of Tudor medicine. How do these compare with the Five Personality Traits of modern psychology?

A traditional theory of physiology in which the state of health—and by extension the state of mind, or character—depended upon a balance among the four elemental fluids: yellow bile, blood, phlegm, and black bile. These were closely allied with the four elements. Their correspondence can be visualized as follows:



The humours gave off vapors which ascended to the brain. An individual's temperament was determined by the equilibrium (or lack thereof) of that person's humours. The perfect temperament resulted when no single humour dominated. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act 5; Scene 5) Antony eulogizes Brutus, who just died honorably by falling on his own sword:

**His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"**



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The Five Confucian Elements

GENERATIVE QUESTIONS

- **What do you conclude about pre-scientific grids or frames that attempt to understand human nature and the physical world? Are they false?**
- **How do the five Confucian elements compare with Western Medieval elements?**
- **What are some of the differences and commonalities between Chinese and Western astrology?**
- **What is the relationship between astrology and astronomy?**
- **What is the relationship between alchemy and chemistry?**
- **Keeping the problem of induction in mind, how can we differentiate science from pseudoscience? To what extent are the Five Personality Traits of modern psychology scientific?**

ASTROLOGY/ASTRONOMY

The White Tiger, one of the Four Symbols of the Chinese Constellations, represents the west and the autumn season. Each Symbol has Seven Astrological Mansions which correspond to positions, of the moon juxtaposed with specific stars. The other three Symbols are the Azure Dragon of the East, the Vermillion Bird of the South, and the Black Turtle.

