

Yin Yang



The concept of yin-yang is used to describe how seemingly opposite forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, and how they give rise to each other in turn. This concept is familiar in popular Taoism and in many branches of classical Chinese science and philosophy, as well as being a primary guideline of traditional Chinese medicine (acupuncture), and a central principle of Chinese martial arts (Tai Chi, Qigong).

There is a misperception (especially in the West) that yin and yang correspond to good and evil. However, Taoist philosophy generally avoids good/bad distinctions as superficial labels, preferring to focus on the idea of balance. Yin-yang represent complementary ends of a spectrum or harmonizing elements of a cycle, where each element is necessary to create balance.

For instance, dropping a stone in a calm pool of water will simultaneously raise waves and lower troughs between them, and this alternation of high and low points in the water will radiate outward until the movement dissipates and the pool is calm once more. When one quality reaches its peak, it naturally begins to transform into its opposite quality: grain that reaches its full height in summer (fully yang) will produce seeds and die back in winter (fully yin) in an endless cycle.

Yin and yang transform each other: like an undertow in the ocean, every advance is complemented by a retreat, and every rise transforms into a fall. A scientific way of expressing this is that “every action creates an equal and opposite reaction.”

(Learn more: <http://libguides.stthomas.edu/c.php?g=88705&p=571262>)



Yin-Yang in Your Life

Brainstorm and make a list of things that you personally have to try to keep in balance.



Yin-Yang in the World

Brainstorm and make a list of things in the world that are NOT in balance or threaten to go out of balance.



Taoism

Taoism (or Daoism) refers to a variety of related philosophical and religious traditions that have influenced East Asia for more than two millennia, and the Western world since the 19th century. The word, **Tao** (pronounced *Dao*), literally translates as "path" or "way" (of life), although in Chinese folk religion and philosophy it carries many more meanings. The active expression of *Tao* is called **Te** (pronounced *De*) and often translates as "virtue" or "power." *Te* results from a person living and cultivating the *Tao*.

As a mixture of religion, magic, reverence for the past, ethics, and philosophy, there are different ways of being a Taoist. But two very basic forms include:

Popular religious/magical Taoism:

This form developed from the philosophy of Lao Tzu and others, and then blended with older forms of magical and ritual traditions in China. Popular Taoism has rituals, sacred spaces, meditative and energy practices, including acupuncture, medicinal herbs, ancestor worship, palm reading, Feng Shui, Tai Chi and Qigong.

Philosophical Taoism:

This form is associated with the teachings and sacred texts of Lao Tzu and Zhuang Zhou. Philosophical Taoism is reflective and speaks of the sage who returns to an undistorted way of being through contemplation on the *Tao* and living a life of pure naturalness.

Taoist ethics emphasize the Three Jewels of the Tao: compassion, moderation, and humility; while Taoist thought generally focuses on nature, the relationship between humanity and the cosmos, health and longevity, and *wei wu wei* (action through inaction, doing without doing), which is thought to produce harmony with the universe and *Tao*.

Excerpt from Chapter 2 of the *Tao Te Ching*:

When people see some things as beautiful,

Other things become ugly.

When people see some things as good,

Other things become bad.

Being and non-being create each other.

Difficult and easy support each other.

Long and short define each other.

High and low depend on each other.

Before and after follow each other.

Therefore the Master

Acts without doing anything

And teaches without saying anything.

Things arise and she lets them come;

Things disappear and she lets them go...