

Understanding of Yin Yang

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Understanding of Yinyang Theory

Yin and yang are the most commonly known concepts from Chinese culture; these have practically become English words themselves. What is yinyang? This question is at once utterly simple and wildly complicated. Yinyang finds expression in numerous classical Chinese texts and commentaries, especially during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), and it has retained its preeminence through thousand years of Chinese tradition and even survived modernization.

In the *Yantie lun* (*Discourse on Salt and Iron*, 81 BCE), one of the most significant texts in early China, we read: “The middle kingdom (*zhongguo*/China) is in the middle (*zhong*) of heaven and earth and is at the border (*ji* 際) of yin and yang.”¹ China is framed here in two contexts: human beings live between heaven and earth and at the intersection of yin and yang. The word *ji* literally means the border or boundary of a land, but it applies just as well to interactions between things. This early text views Chinese culture within the borders of yin and yang. It is also possible to read this claim from the *Yantie Lun* slightly differently, as one contemporary Chinese scholar argues that “middle” and “border” should both be taken as verbs. According to this view, Chinese culture arises from the attempt to stay centered between heaven and earth and to maintain the appropriate relations between yin and yang.²

Q1

Another early view of the centrality of yinyang comes from a medical text unearthed at the Mawangdui Han tombs that was buried in 168 BCE. The “Ten Questions” begins with a dialogue between the legendary sage kings Yao and Shun:

Yao asked Shun: “In Under-heaven, what is the most valuable?”

Shun replied: “Life is most valuable.”

Yao said: “How can life be cultivated?”

Shun said: “Investigate Yin and Yang.”³

This statement identifies life itself as the most fundamental value for the myriad things, and the key to fostering life is yinyang. Yinyang is not only offered for matters of basic health but also for the highest levels of self-cultivation and spiritual transformation. Thus, the oldest extant Chinese medical treatise (written around 200 CE), the *Huangdi Neijing*,⁴ known as *The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic*, states that the “authentic person” (真人) is one who can: “carry and support heaven and earth and grasp and master yinyang.”⁵

These passages, spanning four centuries, illustrate the importance attributed to yinyang at all levels, from governing the state to maintaining the health of the body. As Joseph Needham says, yinyang ideas “were the most ultimate principles of which the ancient Chinese could conceive.”⁶ The *Huainanzi*, a synthetic work of the early Han Dynasty (200 BCE) presents the human condition in a similar way: “Heaven as father, Earth as mother, yin and yang as warp, the four seasons as weft.”⁷ The metaphor suggests that without the binding thread of yinyang, the embroidery of human life would unravel.

Q2

Beyond Common Understandings of Yinyang

Discussions of yinyang in the West generally focus on three points. First, yinyang describes a condition in which there exist two opposite but related and interdependent ideas or objects. For example, one popular online dictionary defines yinyang as,

Two complementary principles of Chinese philosophy: Yin is negative, dark, and feminine. Yang is positive, bright, and masculine. Their interaction is thought to maintain the harmony of the universe and to influence everything within it.⁸

Webster's Encyclopedia Unabridged Dictionary of English Language says,

Yin and Yang (in Chinese philosophy and religion) two principles, one negative, dark, and feminine (Yin), and one positive, bright, and masculine (Yang), whose interaction influences the destinies of creatures and things.⁹

As we see in these dictionary entries, things like the earth, the moon, water, the night, the feminine, softness, passivity, and darkness all accord with yin, while heaven, the sun, fire, day, masculinity, hardness, activity, and brightness can all be attributed to yang. This division simultaneously emphasizes that these two elements are interrelated and interdependent.

Second, yinyang offers a normative model with balance, harmony, and sustainability as ideals. When one compares something to yin or yang, this usually suggests a way of dealing with things through the balance or harmony between two elements. Such advice is popularly applied to almost all fields of action: leadership, business, art, media, sports, and psychoanalysis. In science, there is a life cycle assessment and green chemistry, in which one finds phrases like “the yin and yang of industrial ecology” or “the yin and yang of optimal functioning.”¹⁰

Third, a more scholarly understanding involves conceptual construction, whereby yinyang is characterized as a “correlative” mode of thought or cosmology.¹¹ This “correlative cosmology” as a comprehensive system was formed between the third and the second centuries BCE. The focal point is “stimulus and response” (*ganying* 感應) among things and events. An event or action happening or performed in one domain affects corresponding factors in another domain. This cosmology is not based on linear causality between distinct entities but rather on making a connection between entities and phenomena. In *Yinyang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, Graham (1986) explains Chinese cosmology in terms of correlative thinking.¹² Rather than taking it as a primitive form of thought, Graham took correlative thinking as a fundamental element of all reasoning. In the Chinese context, this correlative thinking is yinyang thinking. For example, yinyang is not just an important tool for grasping the cosmic body, namely the universe, but it is also applied to the micro body: “human flesh.”¹³ The human body bears the same rhythm and properties as the greater cosmic body. Yinyang presents a justification for this association and a conceptual tool for understanding it.

These common views show that yinyang places the human flourishing within a rich and deep context involving the interrelatedness of the cosmos and human beings. They also demonstrate that these relationships and connections must also be understood in terms of differentiation between related but distinct forces. This view of yinyang is frequently used to characterize the Chinese worldview as a whole, in a way that situates it in contrast to Western thought: the Chinese focuses on interconnection, immanence, and cyclical changes, while Western philosophers emphasize dualism, transcendence, and eternal principles.

Such generalizations are too broad, and they miss the complexity and diversity of both Chinese and Western philosophy. Nonetheless, yinyang can be thought of as a kind of horizon for much of Chinese thought and culture. It serves as a horizon in the sense that

while the terms are invoked in particular contexts for concrete purposes, they imply a deeper cultural background and a paradigm for thinking about change and effective action. At the same time, yinyang can also be seen as a constellation of lay beliefs and practices, functioning explicitly and implicitly in activities ranging from philosophy to health care and from warfare to a way of life.

Lived Yinyang: A Multiplicity of Relations

A careful study of early Chinese texts shows that these common accounts of yinyang are far too simple. Yinyang embodies a wide range of linked meanings, many of which are in play simultaneously. The invocation of yinyang itself is always predicated on a particular situation, a unique moment in which we must engage in the world.

The common understanding of yin and yang as related pairs often takes yin and yang as things or fixed qualities of things. In fact, yin and yang are not simply things, entities, or objects. They can be used to characterize structures in which things exist, but they can also be used to analyze the functions of a thing in any given condition. In Chinese terms, yinyang can be both *ti* 體 (structure) and *yong* 用 (function). In both cases, yinyang always applies in particular and relative contexts. As Alfred Forke puts it,

Ultimately, yin and yang do not mean anything in themselves at all, being only employed to express a relation; one notion is the opposite of the other, the one is positive, the other negative.¹⁴

Even at its inception, yinyang was used to denote the function of the sun in the context of a hill, with yang referring to the sunny side and yin to the shady side. If yinyang is the result of the temporal interplay of the sun and the hill, then does yinyang exist in its own right if either the sun or the hill is absent?

Because of this dependence on context, a single thing can be yin in one way and yang in another. Again, Forke provides a nice illustration:

The left hand is Yang, the right hand is Yin, in this no change is possible, but raise both hands, then they are both Yang, and put them down, and they are both Yin, and no matter whether you raise them or put them down, when they are hot they are both Yang, and when they are cold they are both Yin.¹⁵

These are not contradictory labels, and it would be absurd to argue whether or not the right hand is *really* yang or *really* yin. The qualities only make sense when one specifies a certain context. The fact that anything is simultaneously yin and yang mirrors the fact that things are always implicated in multiple relations at once. Moreover, which relation is in view depends on the particular purposes and priorities of the viewer.

Aside from the fact that yin and yang differentiate things only within particular relationships and contexts, the precise relationship between yin and yang could be characterized in different ways, many of which can be invoked simultaneously. It is important to point out that yinyang is neither dualistic in positing two absolutely independent entities nor even simply dialectical in projecting one single pattern for change. Yin and yang contest each other in a temporal framework and in multiple ways. In order to better encapsulate the complexity and multiplicity of yinyang thought, we can generalize these different relationships into six forms.

1) *Maodun* 矛盾: Contradiction and opposition. Although yinyang thought may prompt us to think of harmony, interconnection, and wholeness, the basis of any yinyang distinction is difference, opposition, and contradiction. Any given two sides are connected and related, but they are also opposed in some way, like light and dark, male and female, and forceful and

yielding. It is the tension and difference between the two sides that allows for the dynamic energy that comes through their interactions. It is also this difference that enables yinyang as a strategy – to act successfully, we must sometimes be more yin and sometimes more yang, depending on the context.

This aspect of yinyang is often described in terms of *maodun* 矛盾, which literally means “shield-spear” and originates from a story in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (280–233 BCE). A person who sells shields and spears promotes his shields by saying they are so strong that nothing can penetrate them, while he promotes his spears by saying they are so sharp they can penetrate anything. Someone then asks him – what happens if one tries to use your spear to penetrate your shield?¹⁶

The *Hanfeizi* story raises opposites as logical contradictions. In this sense, something cannot be yang and yin (light and dark, and masculine and feminine) in precisely the same way at the same time and in the same context. This approach to distinctions can be seen as the one of most fundamental in European philosophy. Such an approach, though, works only in the abstract. In reality, we not only find that opposites exist through interaction with and in dependence on each other but also that the same thing can be considered to have opposite qualities depending on the context, as it is not a logical contradiction to say that one thing is small (in comparison to a mountain) but large (in comparison to an ant). In thinking about opposition and difference, Chinese thinkers concentrate much more on these latter aspects. The most well-known modern example comes from Mao Zedong (1893–1976) who took *maodun* as the title of one of his essays, *On Contradiction* 矛盾論 (*Maodun Lun*), which highlights the unity of opposites as a force for class struggle and change.

2) *Xiangyi* 相依: Interdependence. One side of the opposition cannot exist without the other. This interdependence can be seen on several different levels. On one level, it points out the interdependence of opposites as relative concepts. In labeling something as “high,” one must implicitly label something else as “low.” One cannot have a concept of “good” without existing a concept of “bad” (*Daodejing*, chapter 2). According to yinyang thinking, though, the interdependence of opposites does not simply refer to the relativity of our concepts but also to how things themselves exist, grow, and function. One way that this interdependence appears most clearly is through the alternation of yin and yang. The sun is the best example of yang – bright, warming, stimulating growth, and giving a rhythm; but when the power of that yang is developed to the extreme, it is necessary for it to be anchored, regenerated, and sustained by the force of yin. The sun must set. While yang is the obvious, it cannot thrive without attention to yin. This interdependence appears in traditional Chinese medical texts, where the surge of *yangqi* 陽氣 depends on the regeneration of *yinqi* 陰氣, of the five internal organs. Without that basis, the *yinqi* of the organs, there will be no a surge of *yangqi* or its extension outward.

The *Gui Guzi* 鬼谷子 (*The Master of Spirit Valley*), a classic text of the school of *Zongheng* 縱橫 (School of Strategy) in the Warring States Period (451–221 BCE) illustrates this interdependence, using an opening and closing door as a metaphor. To be a door, it must be able to open and close as two interrelated modes; otherwise, it will be simply a wall (that does not move) or an open space (that does not close). The *Gui Guzi* gives this a cosmic significance:

Opening and closing are the way of heaven and earth. Opening and closing change and move yinyang, just as the four seasons open and close to transform the myriad things.¹⁷

3) *Huhan* 互含: Mutual inclusion. Interdependence is linked closely to mutual inclusion. If yin depends on yang, then yang is always implicated in yin; which is to say, yin cannot be

adequately characterized without also taking account of yang. The same is true for yang – it necessarily involves yin. Regarding things themselves, even something that is strongly yang can be considered yin in some relations, as we have seen. The constant alternation between yin and yang also entails that yang always holds some yin and yin holds some yang. In the cycle of four seasons, summer is the most yang of the seasons, yet it contains a yin force, which will begin to emerge in the summer, extend through the fall, and reach its culmination in the winter. Winter is the highest stage of yin, yet it unfolds a yang force that will attain its own full swing through spring to summer. This mutual inclusion is best captured in the famous yinyang symbol that will be discussed in Chapter 6, which includes a small circle of yang within the fullest yin and a small circle of yin within the fullest yang.

Similarly, in the *Yijing* (*The Book of Changes*), all yin hexagrams have a dominant yang line, and all yang hexagrams have a dominant yin line. This mutual inclusion has important consequences in terms of strategy because it indicates that when one thing appears to you as present, that thing also entails opposite forces that are in hidden and motion but that have not yet appeared.

4) *Jiaogan* 交感: Interaction or resonance. Each element influences and shapes the other. If yin and yang are interdependent and mutually inclusive, then a change in one will necessarily produce a change in the other. Thus, as yang ebbs in the autumn, yin strengthens, and as yin declines in the spring, yang grows. For example, in Chinese traditional medical diagnoses, too much yin in the body is a sickness of yang, and too much yang in the body is a sickness of yin.¹⁸ Changes in yin will affect yang and vice versa.

This mutual resonance is crucial to yinyang as a strategy because it entails that one can influence any element by addressing its opposite, which in practice most often takes the form of responding to yang through yin. In the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE), a Daoist text, *Taipingjing* (*Classic of Great Peace* 31–7 BCE), also known as a valuable resource for early Daoist beliefs and practices, applies this yinyang resonance to oppose female infanticide. Q4

In medical treatment, yin and yang should be fostered at the same time. It is said, for example, that yin will not respond to the drug or acupuncture without a certain amount of yang. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* (c. 240 BCE)¹⁹ takes this resonance as a general principle, approached through the relationship between action and non-action:

Not to venture out is the means by which one does venture out; not to act is the means by which one acts. This is called ‘using the Yang to summon the Yin and using the Yin to summon the yang.’²⁰

5) *Hubu* 互補: Complementary or mutual support. Each side supplies what the other lacks. Given that yin and yang are different but interdependent, properly dealing with a situation often requires supplementing one with the other, which is a way of achieving the appropriate balance between the two. This relationship appears clearly in discussions of art and crafts. For example, the *Zhouli* (*The Rites of Zhou*, 5–221 BCE) describes the craft of making a wheel:

The way of making the hub of wheel must be measured according to yinyang. Yang is densely grained and thus is strong; yin is loosely grained and thus is soft. Therefore, one uses fire to nourish its yin, making it even with its yang. Thus, even if the wheel is worn, it will not lose its round form.²¹

This passage addresses the difficulty of creating a wheel that is firm but made of materials that are soft enough to bend into a circle. Here, softness and hardness complement and support each other. This complementarity is different from the submission of one to the other because both sides stand on equal ground in performing different roles.

6) *Zhuanhua* 轉化: Change and transformation. One side becomes the other in an endless cycle. Yinyang thought is fundamentally dynamic and centers on change. In nature, there is decline, deficiency, decrease, and demise, as well as flourishing, surplus, increase, and reproduction. In the human world, life is filled with trouble, failure, exhaustion, and insufficiency, as well as fullness, fruition, mastery, and success. Considering these various states of being, one can derive that change is perpetual, never ending. Reversal (*fan* 反) is a constant theme in Chinese thought, especially in the *Daodejing*. It invokes the image of a circle, or more precisely, a spiral movement that forever continues in a ring formation. According to the *Daodejing*, reversal (*fan*) is the movement of *Dao* and the rhythm of life.

The *He Guanzi*, (*Pheasant Cape Master*), a text most likely from the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE), gives an influential characterization of this movement: “Beautiful and ugly adorn each other: this is called returning to the full cycle. Things develop to their extremes and then reverse. This is called circular flowing.”²² The character translated as flowing, *liu* 流, refers most literally to the flowing of water, and the character itself contains the image of water on the left. The term for circular or ring is 環 *huan*. We might thus also translate the phrase as “flowing circulation.”

The *Huangdi Neijing* often identifies yinyang interplay as a cycle (*huan*) without beginning or end: “Yinyang are mutually connected, like a cycle without beginning. Thus, one knows that attack and defense always follow each other.” Another passage says: “Yinyang are interlocking like a cycle without limit, *yinyang* follow each other and internal and external interlock each other like a cycle without limit.”²³

We can see now the ambiguity and complexity in saying that two things “are like yin and yang.” Everything is bound up in a plurality of relationships at the same time, related both to multiple things and to the same thing in multiple ways. These relations are not distinct but reflect the actual complexity of life and nature. Yinyang claims must be taken as a point of reference that is defined by location (*wei* 位) and time (*shi* 時). This study will accentuate these complex, multidimensional frameworks in order to explore the wide array of practices that constitute yinyang understanding. The defense of this pluralistic picture of yinyang thought illuminates the diversity and variety within the paradigm itself, a diversity that has enabled yinyang to serve so many different functions throughout various aspects of Chinese culture.

Generation 生 (*Sheng*) and Emergence

The common understandings of yinyang, especially the emphasis on “correlative thinking,” have taken correspondence as their basis, recognizing the important role of yinyang in connecting heaven, earth, and the myriad things. These common views, though, often overlook one of the most important forms of change: *sheng* 生 (generation, growth, life).

The word *sheng* originally referred to a plant growing out of soil. It can be a noun indicating life itself or a verb that conveys the generative living process. It is also the term for birth or giving birth. While cosmological correspondence is important to the use of yinyang as an explanatory tool, it is also necessary to consider the relationships between the yinyang and the generativity that emerges from interaction. In fact, although we often think of yinyang as focusing on polarities, yinyang thought really is a type of triadic thinking centered on the thirdness that results from the interaction between yin and yang. The whole is made of the interactions between parts, not the individual parts, themselves.

A passage in the *Zhuangzi* (third century BCE) connects yinyang directly to life itself, referring to living things as, “all the creatures taking shape between heaven and earth and receiving vital energy [*qi*] from the yin and yang.”²⁴ It is the movement of yinyang *qi* that leads to the life or death of any living thing.

Early Chinese texts tackled structural questions about the universe through yinyang as a way of highlighting the self-generative and self-organizing forces of complex phenomena. Yinyang thought appeals to integrated processes rather than divided dualisms. It addresses what we could call a state of complexity, a term widely invoked in the field of contemporary science, particularly in relation to biological systems. The idea of complexity shows “the whole being formed of numerous parts in nonrandom organization.”²⁵ In this sense, complexity is about seeing a thing in terms of its parts in connection with the whole. There is structure or order in the way in which the whole is composed of parts. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Yinyang thought has been a kind of complexity thinking, where the whole is perceived through multiple interactions. Any given existence is a complex system such that parts are arranged and their relations make its structure. Biological and organic processes, rather than the more abstract disciplines of physics or mathematics, were the favored conceptual sources for Chinese understanding of the world. This contrasts the analysis of the universe through geometrical logic and mathematical order more familiar in the West. This weight on biology prompted Zhang Xianglong 張祥龍, a contemporary Chinese scholar, to promote the idea that Chinese thinking at a fundamental level is gendered and that biological interaction between male and female is the ultimate model for Chinese philosophical speculation.²⁶

One other aspect of the generative force of yinyang seen in many classical texts is an emphasis on probable reasoning with an open-end dimension. This again contrasts the common focus through most of the history of Western thought on certainty and universality, something that appears in Classical Greece, where geometry and reason were honed as tools for understanding natural phenomena.²⁷ This can be seen as reflecting a common human desire for stable and certain knowledge.

At the same time, however, human beings also have a need to develop the capacity for successful prediction in order to avoid danger. Such predictions are never certain and must go beyond abstract calculations. For the Chinese, the uncertainty involved in our ability to predict regularities was a practical matter of agriculture, not an abstract problem of philosophical skepticism. Facing an unpredictable world, we might lose confidence and feel as if there is no stability at all. Yinyang thinking emerged as a conceptual apparatus to ease the anxiety of lost control by creating ways of predicting and accepting the inevitability of change. At the same time, since there is no way one can exhaust the unknown, one must also have constant concern, *youhuan*, regarding the future.

Harmony and Strategic Efficacy

One of the most common ways to characterize yinyang has been through the idea of harmony (*he* 和). In fact, many interpretations of yinyang stop at this point, going no further than the idea of harmony or balance. But what are the parameters for harmony? Can we give an unambiguous explanation of what constitutes a state of harmony? One might claim that an orderly society is a harmony of policy, institutions, and citizens; a healthy body is a harmony of different bodily functions; a delicious dish is a harmony of all its ingredients.

For example, the current Chinese government has been using “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui* 和諧社會) as a way to deal with the divergence between rich and poor brought out by economic development and to stabilize the Chinese society as a whole. As these examples suggest, “harmony” itself needs further definition and explanation. For example, Alan Chan formulates two models of harmony in ancient China: culinary harmony and musical harmony.²⁸ Musical harmony pays most attention to hierarchical relationships that require different elements or sounds working together in a coordinated way. In contrast, culinary

harmony focuses on an integrated relationship that results from the interaction and blending of different elements. These two models have different practical implications, and both are present in the Chinese tradition.

The most obvious inadequacy with a focus on harmony is that the focal point of yinyang as a strategy is not so much on achieving a static balance but rather on generation and transformation. This is the issue of emergence, which will be significant to this study, as it implies a thinking paradigm directed primarily toward self-organization and complexity.

A second key limit with an exclusive concern for harmony is that yinyang thinking, when considered as a strategy or guide, was used primarily to achieve concrete results, such as victory in battle, cultivating the body to attain longevity, and having constructive sexual intercourse. These goals are all relative and connected to human purposes. The goal of yinyang thinking as a strategy is efficacy in general; harmony is frequently a means toward this goal as well as manifestation of its success. Even so, from the perspective of nature itself, a long or short life, or the loss or victory in a particular battle, is probably all equally harmonious results.

Yet, the difference between them is crucial to the actors involved. Thus, an account of the aspirations behind the use of yinyang must go beyond harmony itself. This applies to how yinyang functions. In addition to using balance and harmony, yinyang as a strategy calls attention to and helps to organize the specific elements needed for efficacy, such as timing, situation, and background factors not immediately present. This attentiveness to the hidden background from which things originate and transform is an awareness of the yin side and is a common strategy of yinyang thought. Yinyang does not solely concern perfect symmetry but rather a kind of intelligence which is, in the words of Jullien (2004), “manifestly, eminently *strategic*.”²⁹ Q5

Yinyang is a *shu* 術, a strategy or technique that enables one to function effectively in any given circumstance. The meaning of *shu* also extends to a profession or even a way of life. There is a *shu* of medicine and a *shu* of divination. Martial arts are *wu shu* (武術), literally the *shu* of combat or what is martial (*wu*). In modern usage, academia is referred to as *xue shu* (the *shu* of study or learning). Any school of thought could be described as a kind of *shu*. For example, the *Xunzi* comments that if the Mohist *shu* 墨術 is carried out, the world will have ever-increasing poverty, hardship, conflicts, sadness, and disharmony.³⁰ On the contrary, the *Ru shu* 儒術 (the Confucian method) will bring greater wealth and success, like the harmonious music of bells and drums.³¹ More specifically, the Confucian way is described as *ren shu* 仁術, (the *shu* of benevolence or humaneness) (*Mengzi* 2A7). *Hanfeizi* has a law (*fa*) *shu* 法術; *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* have *dao shu* 道術. On this account, *shu* is the particular kind of *zhi* 智 (wisdom) endorsed by any school. Characterizing a school of thought as a *shu*, though, has decisive implications. It reveals how even philosophical systems were intended to be practical ways of living, to be methods or techniques. Yinyang theory manifested itself concretely in a wide range of cultural practices, ranging from divination to medicine and from the art of war to the art of sex.

Short Biography

Prof. Wang is currently a Daum Professor in the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Professor in Philosophy Department, and Director of Asian Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. She is an editor of *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*, (SUNY Press, 2004), *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period to the Song Dynasty* (Hackett, 2003), and author of many essays in scholarly journals such as *Philosophy East & West*, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, *Journal of Chinese*

Philosophy, *American Academy of Religion*, *Journal of History of Ideas*, and *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. She has regularly given presentations in North America, Europe, and Asia, and has been a chief organizer for major academic conferences in both the United States and China. She has been a consultant for the media, law firms, museums, K-12 educators, and health care professionals, and was a credited Cultural Consultant for the movie *Karate Kid*, 2010.

Notes

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¹ Heng (1934), 桓寬 *On Salt and Iron 鹽鐵論*, with commentary by Z. Li. 林振翰校釋. (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1934), p. 55.

² Chen Yun takes this as the mission of Chinese culture: “Moreover, the ‘middle’ of the ‘middle kingdom’ functions as the middle between heaven and earth, and ‘border’ of yin and yang has a verbal sense, meaning that as a kind of civilization, China has the cultural mission of linking heaven and earth and connecting yin and yang.” Chen Yun, “The Death of Hundun and the Deconstruction of the View of China Centralism” 陳賡 “混沌之死”與中國中心主義天下觀之解構 in Discussion Forum for Chinese Thought www.zhongguosixiang.com/thread-23589-1-1.html October 7, 2010.

³ D. J. Harper (trans.), “Ten Questions in Early Chinese Medical Literature,” *The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998) p. 399.

⁴ The date and author of this text are debatable. The text consists of two parts: the first is a series of questions and answers; the second section is known as the “Vital Axis,” which deals with medical physiology, anatomy, and acupuncture. P. U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China, A History of Ideas*, 25th ed., (University of California Press, 2010), p. 108.

⁵ Y. Zhang 張隱庵 (“Qing Dynasty”) (ed.) *Huangdi Neijing Commentaries 黃帝內經素問集注* (Beijing: Xueyuan Press 學苑出版社, 2002), p. 7.

⁶ J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, 7 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1956) vol. II, p. 232.

⁷ Roth (2010), *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early China* (Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 241. The *Huainanzi* provides the most elaborate early philosophical account of the beginning of the universe. The picture of universe is carefully drawn in a Daoist framework, but it integrates many different schools. The text claims an important role in the Chinese intellectual tradition, having inspired approximately two hundred commentaries over a span of 2,000 years.

⁸ www.Dictionary.reference.com

⁹ *Webster's Encyclopedia Unabridged Dictionary of English Language* (New York: Gramercy Publishing Company, 1994).

¹⁰ E. Voit, *Design Principles and Operating Principles: The Yin and Yang of Optimal Functioning*. www.sciencedirect.com

¹¹ B. I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 351–382. A. H. Black, “Gender and Cosmology in Chinese Correlative Thinking,” in C. W. Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman (eds) *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston: Beacon Press); D. L. Hall and R. T. Ames, “Sexism, With Chinese Characteristics” in C. Li (ed.) *The Sage and the Second Sex* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2001).

¹² A. C. Graham, *Yinyang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), p. 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁴ A. Forke, *The World-Conception of The Chinese: Their Astronomical, Cosmological and Physico-Philosophical Speculations* (London: Late Probsthain & Co., 1925), p. 214.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁶ G. Gu 顧廣圻 commentary on *Han Feizi 韓非子*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press 上海古籍出版社, 1996), p. 204.

¹⁷ F. Xu, ed. 許富宏 *Gui Guzi, Master of Spirit Valley*, (Beijing: Chinese Press, 2008), p. 13.

¹⁸ Y. Zhang, ed. *Huangdi Neijing Commentaries*, p. 46.

¹⁹ J. Knoblock and J. Riegel, *The Annals of LüBuwei: A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. vii–viii.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

²¹ Y. Wang, 王雲五, ed. *Zhouli 周禮今注今譯, The Ritual of Zhou* (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1972), p. 424.

²² X. Wang, ed. 王心湛, *Collection and Interpretation of He Guanzi, 鶡冠子集解* (Shanghai: Guangyi Press, 1936) p. 9. The statement of *wuji zhefa* thing will reverse after developing to its extremes and has become a popular idiom in contemporary China. There is a term in contemporary Western science called “Self Organized Criticality,” which refers to the tendency of large dissipative systems to drive themselves to a critical state, with a wide range of length and time

scales. The idea provides a unifying concept for large-scale behavior in systems with many degrees of freedom. It has been looked for in such diverse areas as earthquake structure, economics, and biological evolution. It is also seen as “regression toward means.”

²³ B. Niu 牛兵占, ed., *Huangdi Neijing*, (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Science and Technology Press 1993), p. 59.

²⁴ B. Ziporyan (trans.), *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2009), p. 69.

²⁵ S. D. Mitchell, *Biological Complexity and Integrative Pluralism* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 167.

²⁶ X. Zhang 張祥龍 “‘Gender Difference’ in Sino-West Philosophies and Their Thinking Consequences” *Jiangsu Social Sciences*, 6 (2002) 1–9.

²⁷ L. M. Lederman and H. Christopher, *Symmetry and Beautiful Universe* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), p. 121.

²⁸ A.K.L. Chan, “Harmony as a Contested Metaphor and Conceptions of Rightness (Yi) in Early Confucian Ethics,” in R.A.H. King and D. Schilling (eds), *How Should One Live? Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 37–62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁰ Knoblock (trans.), *Xunzi*, p. 290.

³¹ *Ibid.*

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