

# **Balance of Yin and Yang is Essential for the Chinese Understanding of Health and Wellbeing, give your own Critical Analysis of this view.**

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## **Introduction**

Yin and Yang, an untaught subject in the western world, alludes not many people outside of China, yet it is a practice that can be applied worldwide to any individual at any given time. My intention with my work is to shine a light on the teachings of Daoism and its benefits to those of the west. This famous symbol commonly seen yet rarely understood has a deep-rooted meaning which all people can relate to and apply to daily life. No wonder the practice of Daoist philosophy has grown in popularity in the west, notably over the past 20 years. Many find the practice of Daoism refreshing as it is not a religion where a group of people worships a deity, God, or superhuman, but a philosophy to integrate into daily life to benefit and enrich life in any way they wish to engage with Yin and Yang. I also aim to bring light to the benefits of Taiji. Firstly, explaining how Taiji works, what this symbol represents and how can it be integrated into any area of life. I plan to emphasise how Daoism can benefit people who struggle with illness in my writing, especially regarding mental health. Secondly, how eating certain foods that are well balanced with Yin Yang can benefit people's health and wellbeing.

## **Yin and Yang Explained**

I shall first explain the symbol in basic terms and go on to more detailed explanations as the symbol has varied meanings, but I will discuss the most practiced and plausible beliefs for health and wellbeing. Daoist teachings cannot be put to simple terminology but will be explained steadily.

The symbol's characteristics are called Yin and Yang, and these are polar opposites of each other. The symbol's name is known as the Yin and Yang symbol in the west, but its legitimate name is Taiji (太极 in simplified Chinese characters) which roughly translates to English as 'The Great Ultimate.'

A Daoist could integrate the definitions of the symbols into any area of life, Taiji also has been described as the meaning of life because of its broad context. Apart from the Yin Yang, on the Taiji symbol, there is a third motif, which is considered the most important in this symbol, and this is the centre line called the Wu Wei (无为) which practically translated to "standstill," this the balance between the Yin Yang.

Yin Yang is used to describe any sort of energetic situation or "thing," anything can be referred to and represented by Yin or Yang or even both when there is a balance of both. Everything we know to exist (this can be both physical and non-physical) will contain elements of Yin and Yang. For example, when you converse with an individual, when talking, you become the Yang energy in this situation, the person who is listening is Yin, the energy dynamic changes depending on who is talking and who is listening. But when both parties talk at the same time, both become Yang and the situation would then become uncomfortable and barely sensical, there is no balance in this communication transaction, therefore both are not in Wu Wei. Emotions advise the individual when their energy or the energy of a situation is in or out of balance. You are in Wu Wei when your energy flows naturally, but when this energy becomes out of balance, the energy does not flow smoothly.

## **The Symbol**

The dark areas of the symbol is the Yin, which is the more passive, dark, and earthly side, whilst the Yang, the light areas is more energetic, light and activity. With any situation these two need to balance to make the situation whole, and bring positive energy, too much Yin or Yang can bring negative thoughts and actions. Therefore, the Wu Wei area of the symbol is most important. The Yin is sometimes referred to as the feminine energy which is an incorrect assumption as women have both Yin and Yang energies, as do men, some use more Yin energy whilst others use more Yang. Both sexes will have energies from both the Yin and Yang. Most people who explain Yin Yang in such basic terms that it does not truly disclose its true meaning and benefits.

Contradiction to many false explanations, neither side has bad or evil energy, energy is energy, what Daoists look for is energy in balance or out of balance. When energy is imbalanced it goes from one extreme energy to the other, can become too Yin which can lead to being too passive, or strong Yang energy which brings aggressiveness or can become too forward, a balance is required for non-negative energies.

This energy moves and is not static. It can become difficult to categorise certain qualities to either Yin or Yang as everything in nature changes and moves, therefore attributes cannot be categorised to a certain set of traits as they move from one to the other fluently. The Taiji symbol was of course created by a Daoist, who deliberately made the centre line not straight, but a wavy line, this has a very important reason, it indicates that the YinYang flows and transforms between one and the other, there are no absolutes and no end, it is a constant flow. When the Yin flows towards its limits, it has already gained Yang energy during this process, bringing back the Wu Wei to the individual.

## **The Dots**

The dots within the Yin and Yang sections have many different translations, the most popular being, the light dot of Yang grows stronger and stronger, then at its highest, the Yin begins, and vice versa. To explain in simpler terms, the dead of night, the next day already starts one minute past midnight, yet it is still dark outside, day and night go from one to the other as a continuous flow, like the transitions between each season, they flow from one to the other.

These dots also represent the YinYang, within the Yang, there is another Yin and Yang, and within that, there is another Yin and Yang, it is continuous, these are described as macro-micro, macro being the large, and micro being the small and in constant continuation. A Daoists main objective, stated by David James Lees, a Daoist and a health and wellbeing coach, is to take responsibility for your life, and your energy because you are an energy, and that is how anyone relates to Daoism.

## **Personal and Spiritual Development and Emotional Health, Happiness and Wellbeing**

How does this symbol apply to individuals? You possess both Yin and Yang energies, and the objective is to find the Wu Wei flowing in your Yin and Yang balance. The Daoist teaching is Yang

represents the physical body, for example, hair, eyes, body, heart, mind, emotions, anything of this physical world is your Yang, all that is reflected in your human qualities.

Your Yin on the other hand is your spiritual self, your essence, the non-physical, to put in simple terms, something you cannot bottle and physically show another being. A man named Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a scientist, priest, and philosopher during the early 1940s wrote “We have a choice, whether we believe that we are a physical being having a spiritual experience, or a spiritual being having a physical experience”. Even though this is not a Chinese or Daoist teaching, it still holds value and a considerable way of explaining how the Taiji works.

You choose how to balance these characteristics. In certain situations, it is right to be mostly Yin or mostly Yang. When working in an office it is plausible to possess more Yang energy as the job requires more forcefulness and dynamic energy, but once home as you relax, the energy become more Yin, which brings back the balance of Wu Wei.

A common misconception with Yin Yang is you need to stay between Yin and Yang to have Wu Wei, but when facing difficulties perhaps your Yang will be heightened, your Yin will not stop you, it will step back as it needs to for certain situations, and of course vice versa. At a certain point, you will reach peak Yang and flow back into Yin which is when you regain that Wu Wei.

The mind is truly forceful and dominant (yang), and the Yen is passive, when the mind tries to dominate with one of the two, it brings your mood, spirit, emotions... And influences you negatively, it brings negative thoughts, the inability to cope, but the yin does not fight back, many are constantly allowing our yang to become out of balance to pride out the yin. The yang at its extreme becomes toxic, you begin to self-doubt, a feeling of low self-worth begins to confuse your mind. It is the individual's responsibility to bring back the natural balance.

## **Shen Disturbance**

Shen translates to “Mind” and “Spirit”. The Shen is responsible for consciousness, our emotional life and our presence in the moment. Shen is important for the thought process, your feelings and planning, the Shen is thought to be an entity of Yang which is “rooted in a yin substance” which is the blood. When your Shen is disturbed, you gain strong emotion and negative thinking, when gaining these thoughts, the Daoist teaching is you must think in a harmonious way to regain balance.

When regarding western biomedicine, body and spirit are considered separate matter which different professions attend to, for example, for body matters the doctor is called, for the mind you would consider a therapist or psychologist. But in regards to Chinese medicine, Shen is seen as the essence of the human body. Disturbance to the spirit and mind may cause “illness in the body, and vice versa”. Chinese medicine practitioners address the mental, spiritual, and physical aspects of disease.

## **Chinese Medicinal Cuisine**

### **Yin and yang foods**

Our bodies are made up of yin and yang energies. Yin usually is a cold trait in any regard including food, and yang as hot, they are both opposites and complementary to one another. The foods we eat have yin and yang properties.

Authentic medicinal Chinese dishes are prepared according to traditional recipes and techniques. These recipes are based on ancient ideologies of how the human body operates. Chinese medicine doctors can describe the effects of each kind of meat, grain, herb, or vegetable on the human body, and how the body operates after certain foods. Of course, the effects are different for everyone as everybody is different and requires different nutrients to stay healthy. Doctors can create diets for individuals' needs for a healthy balance within the Wu Wei.

The fundamentals of Chinese traditional medicine are the balance of Qi and body fluids. It is thought that a healthy body and the internal organs have a healthy balance of Yin and Yang. When they are out of balance, there is room for illness to occur.

All foods are categorized by Qi temperature, ranging from high yang to high yin. And one of the five food flavours (sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty). A food item's qi temperature and specific flavour influences the body in its own way. It is thought that people should generally include all the flavours in every meal and balance the "heat". Many Chinese people believe that if too much of one type of food is consumed, it can cause an imbalance in the body, which in turn can bring negative connotations to the body.

The ancient Chinese texts had described not only what to prepare for meals, but also how to eat meals. It might be surprising to learn of these Chinese customs about eating meals, but these eating customs have been a part of Chinese eating etiquette for hundreds of years. But these rules are similar to the practice of mindfulness very popular in the West when healing the mind of worry and stress.

### Eating Etiquette as a Daoist

- ☐ Try to avoid overly processed food
- ☐ Eat naturally
- ☐ Eat seasonal vegetables and fruits
- ☐ Always make sure the vegetables are cooked
- ☐ Sit down to eat at a quiet place
- ☐ Chew the food thoroughly
- ☐ Pay attention to your eating
- ☐ Get away from distractions

In regards to TCM theory, your mind plays a part in how well you digest food, so pay attention to the tastes of the food. Do not skip meals. After lunch, take a nap or rest for a while.

### Conclusion

Looking back to the title of my article 'Balance of Yin and Yang is essential for the Chinese Understanding of Health and Wellbeing, give your Critical Analysis of this view.' I believe this statement to be true, as when the balance of Yin and Yang has become out of balance, both health and wellbeing follow and can cause illness.

Regarding Yin and Yang and its effects on human health and wellbeing, the Daoist teachings greatly increase self-awareness and mindfulness in human action. With mindfulness in mind, Daoist beliefs bring hope that individuals can control their own emotions and be mindful of when the Yin and Yang have become out of balance. Of course, an imbalance can bring greater concerns that only a Chinese medicine doctor can help.

Daoist teachings are both intriguing and questionable, from a western point of view its benefits are not cultivated, talked of nor taught, but through this study, I have been enlightened to its benefits which I believe would be beneficial to all human beings in varied difficulties of life. Yin and Yang are implied to any energy which includes anything, all things can become out of balance. The view of Yin and Yang health-wise is a fascinating view, and I for one would encourage both myself and others to study the ideologies of Daoism.

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