

Ying and Yang

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Adopted from Session 16 Popular Taoism (Yin/Yang) in:

Liebmann, Jeff. *Sacred Threads An Asian Religious Curriculum for High School Youth*.
Pittsburgh: Jeffrey D. Liebmann, 1997.

Can you name some opposites?

- Dark/light
- Cold/hot
- Wet/dry
- Passive/active
- Feminine/masculine
- Winter/summer

Can you name some other opposites?

- Are your mom and dad opposite?
- Is it good to live with two parents who are opposite?

The Taoist Symbol

The ("yin and yang") symbol are associated with Taoist symbolism.

The yin and yang make a backwards "S" shape, with yin (black or red) on bottom.

One is likely to see this symbol as decorations on Taoist organization flags and logos, temple floors, or stitched into clerical robes.

Taoism, pronounced **Daoism**, refers to a variety of related philosophical and religious traditions and concepts. These traditions have influenced East Asia for over two thousand years and some have spread to the West.

The word Tao means "path" or "way",

Taoist ethics emphasizes the Three Jewels of the Tao:

- compassion,

- moderation
- humility

Taoist thought generally focuses on

- nature
- Human-cosmos correspondence
- health
- longevity
- wu wei (action through inaction) (can you think of some examples of action through inaction?)
- liberty immortality
- spontaneity

Reverence for ancestor spirits and immortals are also common in popular Taoism.

These things have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history.

- Chinese alchemy
- astrology
- Cuisines
- Chinese martial arts
- Chinese traditional medicine
- fengshui
- breath training disciplines

Eastern philosophy (Wikipedia)

Eastern philosophy views the nature of man as initially quiet and calm, but when it is affected by the external world, it begins to have desires. When the desires are not properly controlled and the conscious mind is distracted by the material world, we lose our true selves and the principle of reason in Nature is destroyed. From this arise rebellion, disobedience, cunning and deceit, and general immorality. This is the way of chaos. [Confucianism](#) stands with [Taoism](#) as two of the great religious/philosophical systems of China.

A hallmark of the philosophy of **Confucius** is his emphasis on tradition and study. According to Confucius, musical training is the most effective method for molding the moral character of man and keeping society in order. He said: “Let a man be stimulated by poetry, established by the rules of propriety, perfected by music.”

The theme of Taoism^[8] is one of harmony with nature.

Do you remember the movie Kung Fu Panda?

Taoism is not an organized religion. Taoism is better understood as a *way of life* than as a religion. Taoism is a school of thought focused on the quest for immortality.

A focus of Taoism is to live in attunement with nature, not to try to dominate. This ecological approach is akin to our seventh principle.

Who can tell me what the UU seventh principle is?

Taoist emphasize:

- living in harmony with natural laws
- living as a model to others rather than trying to control them

Why do you think the Taoist teach that humans should live in harmony with Nature and not try to adapt their environment?

One answer is that controlling nature is impossible.

How is Taoism different from Christianity?

You cannot “grasp” Taoism, but you must “receive” its vision.

How is Taoism similar?

There is a time for being ahead,
A time for being behind;
A time for being in motion,
A time for being at rest;
A time for being vigorous,
A time for being exhausted;
A time for being safe,
A time for being in danger.

What poem from the Bible is this similar to?

The Tao of Pooh¹

Winnie the Pooh is a "Western Taoist." The simple bear introduces Eastern philosophical principles. Pooh epitomizes the "uncarved block," as he is well in tune with his natural inner self. Pooh enjoys simple pleasures and the daily progress of life. Pooh's

¹

Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. New York: Dutton, 1982.

simplicity is contrasted with other A.A. Milne characters, including Owl, who is a "mind that tries too hard," and Eeyore, the eternal pessimist.