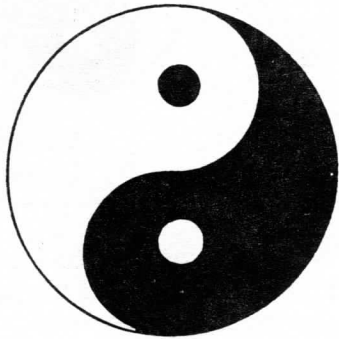


T'AI CHI



&

YIN YANG

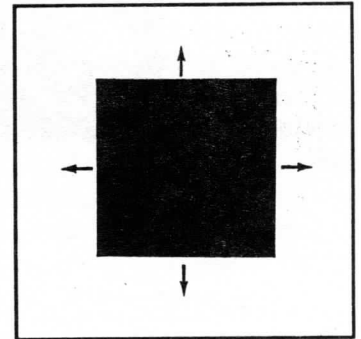
The
Cyclical Nature
of the
Universe

By
Pat Gorman

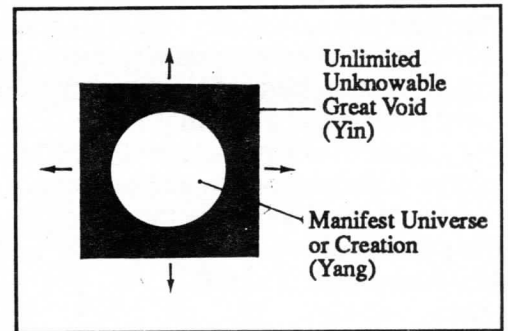
The Yin-Yang symbol: so simple, so plain, but full of mysterious suggestion. Composed of light and dark, there is no conflict, rather, a sinewy coiling of one around the other. It always exerted a quality of fascination when I saw it as a child on artifacts around our home. I feel I've chased its meanings all my life and, slowly, it has been revealing its secrets.

In Chinese and other philosophies there is a premise that everything springs from the unmanifest, sometimes known as Void; there is the unnameable, the unknowable, the name which cannot be spoken. From the classical Chinese perspective this unmanifest Void is the Great Tao, the great mother from which all things come, and to which everything returns.

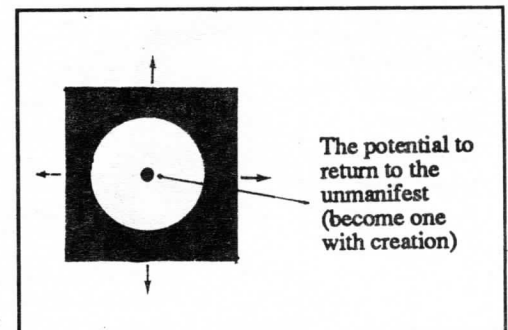
If we were to try to draw the undrawable, the best we could do would perhaps look like this:



From this unknowable Void springs the manifest world which, relatively speaking, could look like this:

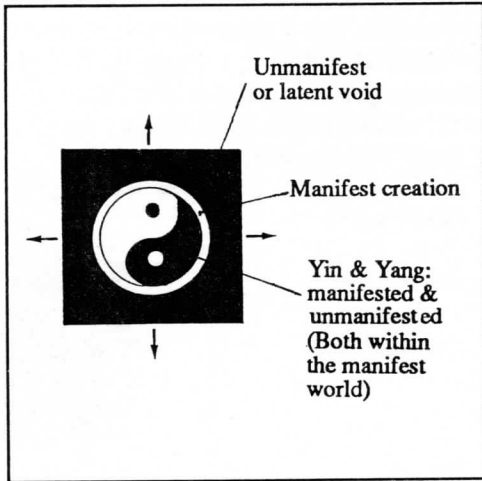


Yin within Yang would be represented by a black dot in the center of creation:



Already we have the origins of yin and yang. Yin being the great storehouse, the content, the latent, the dark, the potential, the Void, the mother. Yang being the impulse, the light, the manifest, the desirous, the father. From the unmanifest is sparked the impulse, the manifest. This is, in a sense, the 'Great Yin and Yang', but as we cannot comprehend the unknowable aspect of this we turn to what we know, the manifest world.

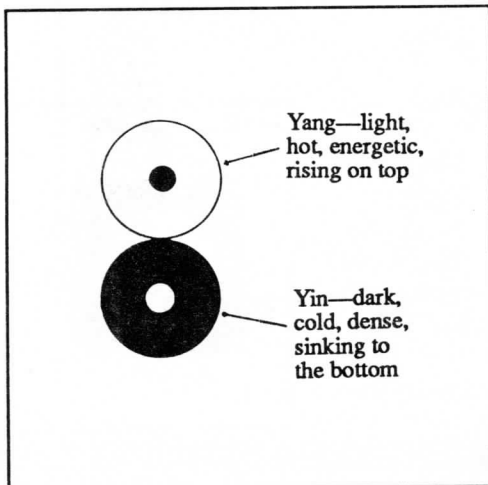
Within it we find the microcosm of the 'Great Yin and Yang', which could look something like this:



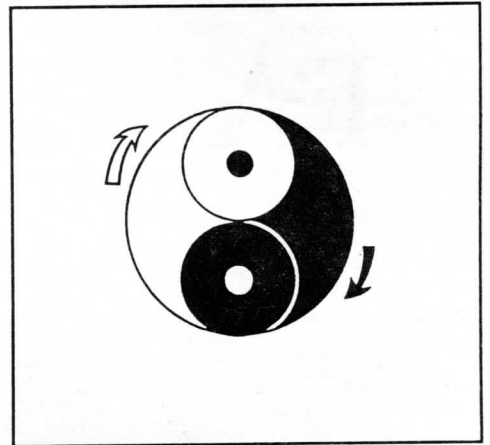
Here we see yin and yang as the world we know: the constantly interchanging relationship of the potential and actual, of matter and energy, of the manifest and unmanifest within ourselves and the universe. This smaller pattern is the reflection of the big original pattern of Void and creation; this yin-yang pattern has a familiar name: T'ai Chi. The yin-yang symbol is a picture of 'T'ai Chi', or the 'Supreme Ultimate' origin and process of *everything*.

So, yin and yang are the principles from which the process of interchange springs, and the name of that process is 'T'ai Chi'.

Another way to look at it is to position the manifest and unmanifest worlds in relationship to each other:



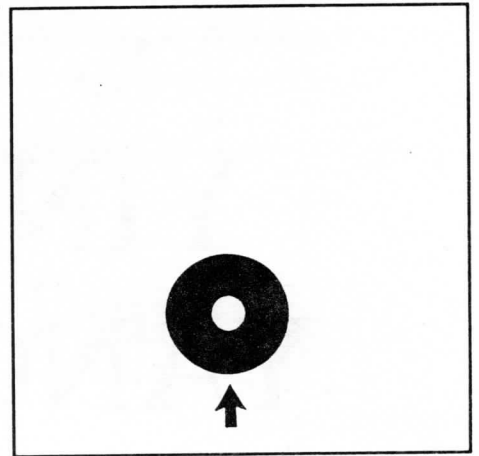
The process of *onebecoming* the other is then shown like this:



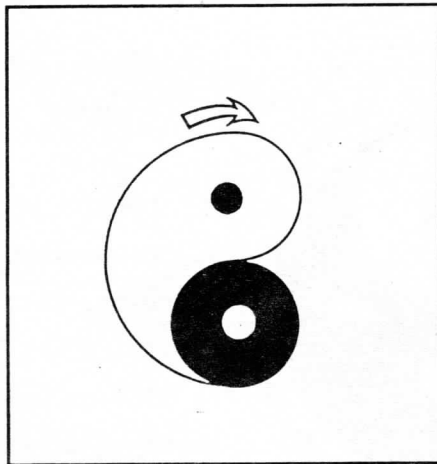
To look at how this works in the known world let's pick a moment in the process to start from: the very bottom—the quietest, absolutely 'nothingest' place we know: the mostly yin or receptive.

In terms of a day this would be the deepest, darkest part of the night. In terms of a year it would be the depths of winter, the coldest, most still place, the place of least manifestation and least energy. In the cycle of a life this is the stillness of death, or the potential of a life before it is created: the unfertilized egg.

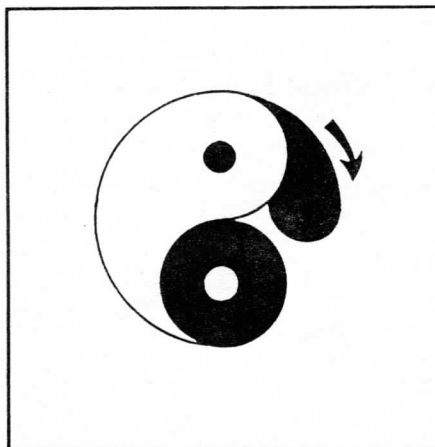
Now this is a scary place: the end of things, before new things begin. We like noise, activity, action, sex, light and energy—keeping still has never been big on our cultural agenda. In the circular view of matter and energy if we let go of our fear of yin and *accept*, and become one with this least manifest, darkest place, this is a restorative and replenishing place, *but will not last forever*. It is an important part of the cycle: the heaviest, darkest, quietest place—and it gives birth to the light (thereby containing the seed of its apparent opposite). The complete surrender and turning inward comes to a natural end as the cycle progresses with the birth of yang: the tiny tail of white which starts at the bottom and grows as it moves upward, manifesting its energy and strength.



The little tail of white can be considered as conception, the very beginning of life; the new year, the first light of day, the promise of things coming into being and springing forth. The white tail grows as gestation and birth occur: as spring energizes, as the day grows light, as a new cell is created. The white tail emerges into full blown yang at the apex of the circle: the hottest, the brightest, and the most energetic—summer, sexual maturity, the height of the day—this is the peak of yang energy. Much of our culture reflects this as the 'best' place to be, at the height of our potency and power. The flowering of sexual love is strongest at this time, as is the pollination of our plant life. Yet all of this is just a phase in the process leading to a natural and important result: the bearing of fruit. At this point we are curving around the top of the cycle, and the seed of the apparent opposite of yang takes hold.



The tiny black tail emerges naturally from all this yang, and as we can't keep climbing forever, it brings us into descent. One climactic moment is not followed by another, but by a decrease,



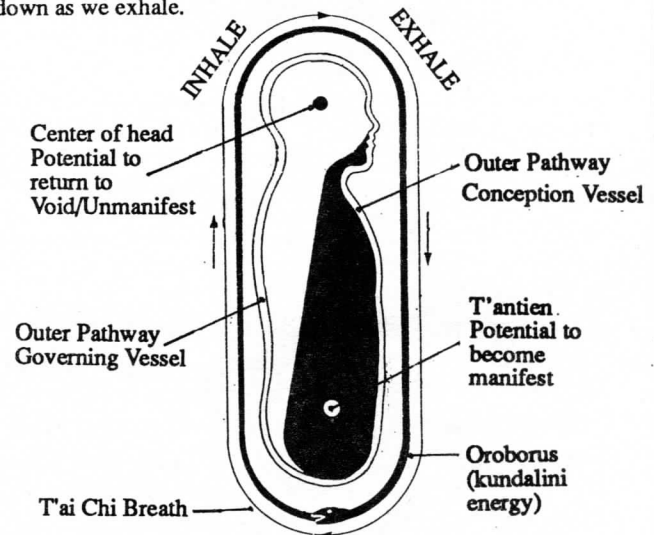
and though we may be afraid of decrease it is the only way to eventual emergence back into yang.

We give our own chi to our our children, just as the plant gives its life energy to its fruits, thereby decreasing our own energy to give life to another. And in so doing we become more yin: slower and heavier, with less energy. But there is a special harvest here which isn't available anywhere else on the cycle, the overview of having lived through a cycle; it changes you, whether its raising children, completing a novel, doing a day's work, or living through a lifetime, or a relationship.

As we complete the processes we've been engaged in, and let go of them, we gain wisdom and can perceive our connection with the yin-yang of the manifest world. In the growing stillness there is growing spirit, and this spirit—the dot of white in the yin—will spring forth from the most still, least manifest, recreating the cycle again.

And the next manifestation of the cycle will be just a shade different, having the wisdom and experience, and genetic changes, of the previous cycle as its source. So, in sometimes infinitesimal steps, the process of yin and yang leads us towards the greater wisdom and perception of the Tao.

If we look at our body-mind-spirit the overall pattern of circulation of yin and yang may be seen this way: the back and the spine, carrying the strength and energy to stand erect and rise towards the heavens, is predominantly yang; here the oroboros energy--the T'ai Chi breath, kundalini--rises. The front of the body, from the mouth to the perineum, has the power to decrease: to receive things into the body to be broken up and carried downwards; here the oroboros, the kundalini, returns down as we exhale.



'Cultivating the chi with the breath' is a classic phrase which means: gathering chi in the t'antien through breathing, and conserving and collecting it ready for use--ready to transform into the yang energy of the rising oroboros, the governing vessel, the kundalini.

In this way we can say the process of yin and yang is a *law* of the universe; it is a description of the inevitable cycle. If we work toward health and natural balance and act on our growing awareness and wisdom, the law of yin and yang will work towards our survival. If we try to force it or use it for selfish purposes it will lead to our destruction.

Ultimately the law of yin and yang becomes a

wonderful tool to work with in the manifest world we call 'reality'. It's strongly reassuring to know that '...the darkest hour is just before dawn', and to have the awareness that the cycle is unceasing. It is the process that that brings us towards our small achievements and the final goal of Self Realization and return to the One ■

An Overview

Yang

Ascending

(becoming) energy

lighter

brighter

more male

expanding

(opening up)

focussing (coming
together)

birth and growth

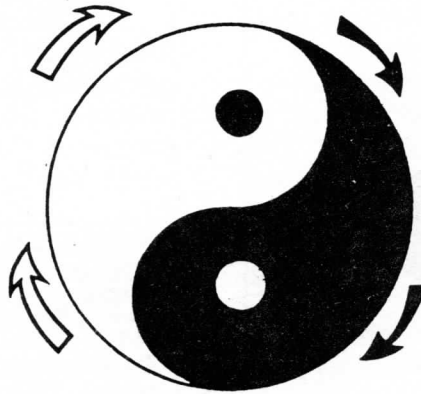
dawn to waning light

new year to summer

heating up

increasing

activity



Yin

Descending

(becoming) matter

heavier

darker

more female

contracting

(closing down)

expanding

(closing down)

nurturing and decay

twilight to dawn

late summer to years end

cooling down

decreasing

quiescence

A final note:

Since yin and yang are relative to each other something may be yin in relation to one thing and yang in relation to something else. For example: birth is *yang* in relation to gestation but *yin* in relation to sexual and physical maturity—it all depends where on the wheel you're looking *from* and where you're looking *to*.

The ideas presented here are based on classical Chinese yin and yang philosophy and Five

Element Theory; they are one way, but not the only way, of perceiving yin and yang—other theories may have different understandings.

Pat Gorman, Dipl. A.C. (NCCA) wishes to acknowledge her debt to her father, Tom Gorman, Patrick Watson, J. R. Worsely and staff of the College of Traditional Acupuncture, and T.A.I. of Maryland and all her teachers there, as well as Oscar Ichazo and Steve Flores for revealing yin and yang and the cycles of life to her. ©1991