Conceiving Yin and Yang — The Socio-Economic Interpretation
悟在阴阳—社会经济观

Be Yin and Be Yang

Everything within,
And everything without
In this vast universe.
Waves after waves,
Outward,
Moving towards
The edge of the universe.
As the yang energy expands,
The yin energy contracts;
As the muons\(^1\) and pions\(^2\) rush into my heart,
The energetic neutrinos\(^3\) gather in force
Towards an infinite inner world.
Ah, suddenly the awesome God Particle\(^4\),
The boson,
Arrives where the harmony is,
And matter amasses into stability.
Instantly.
My heart is full of gluons\(^5\) —

The fascinating world of sub-atomic particles inspires poetic notions that can be linked with human emotions and aspirations. Each particle has its own personality and character as the physicists have discovered. These particles are within us and they link us to the universe at large. They constitute a colourful part of our existence.

\(^1\) The muon is an unstable sub-atomic particle with a long decay lifetime.

\(^2\) The pion is the lightest of the mesons amongst the sub-atomic particles which could decay into an anti-muon.

\(^3\) A neutrino is an electrically neutral, weakly interacting elementary sub-particle whose mass has never been measured accurately.

\(^4\) The Higgs boson is a particle responsible for the origin of matter, hence its nickname ‘the God Particle’.

\(^5\) The gluon is a colourful sub-atomic particle that acts as the exchange particle for the strong force between two charged particles.
The gluons let me laugh and let me cry,  
Let me indulge  
In nature’s absolute contradictions,  
And I begin to sing the joy of nature.  
As the elementary particles dance,  
My thoughts vibrate beyond this universe  
And into the inner world.  
Unknown.  
Finally,  
I arrive into the ultimate,  
Together with you  
And everyone else,  
Transforming  
Into the two phases of yin and yang.  
Contemplate within Tao,  
Reach the horizon of existence and beyond,  
As man  
Between heaven and earth  
Is at one  
With himself.

Modern particle physics reveals to us not only more than the naked eye can see but also more than the mind can immediately comprehend. The holistic interconnectivity of all things in this universe, tangible or intangible, is intrinsically mysterious and beyond our conscious recognition and imagination. While humans are obsessed with concrete experimental evidence, the new physicists are encountering ingenious discoveries of the micro-world within and the macro-world without that open up new horizons. Mankind has been searching with all its intellectual passion since the beginning of human evolution to understand the world. And yet we know by inference that the significance of human efforts to grasp the nature of existence through physical evidence alone is like a little bubble in a vast ocean. Yet the noble pursuit of humans for their own self-realisation will continue relentlessly to survive all odds. The yin and yang theory describes the world philosophically whereas quantum theory and the standard model of the new physics perceive the world scientifically. Both are valid methods in the theory of knowledge. We can apply both theoretical principles to the phenomena of socio-economic activities. In his search for the Theory of Everything, Stephen Hawking describes in his book The Grand Design the interconnectivity between people in a society and everything that exists in this universe, and how they can interfere with each other either by enhancement or diminishment.
Throughout the 5,000 years of Chinese history, historians as early as Si Ma Qian⁶ (司马迁) employed yin and yang as interpretative concepts. This intellectual theme laces Chinese civilisation together. The philosophical concept of yin and yang has understood that all things and phenomena in this world are mutually dependent in a relationship of unity of the opposites, while at the same time being also mutually transforming in a process of synthesis. Chinese medicine uses the concept of yin and yang to explain health and disease as a process of inner and outer physical, emotional and mental balance and harmony, within and without a specific human body. But the theory of yin and yang can also be applied to other fields, such as society and economics. The discovery of the Majorana particle that is both matter and antimatter is significant in affirming the correctness of this general postulate, for it candidly mirrors the conception of yin and yang as conceived several thousand years ago in China.

From time immemorial, the relentless quest for survival has motivated the creation of great civilisations in which the passion of the human mind to search for the reality of existence and of the universe has exhibited moments of brilliance. In the continuation of that search, we may be about to witness another such brilliant moment amid the chaos and reordering of the early 21st century. For history has now reached the point of convergence to achieve a possible coexistence and synthesis between different civilisations. As the "mirror worlds merged" in our universe amongst the multiverses (the headline on the cover of the New Scientist 12 May 2012 Vol. 214 No. 2864), we as individual human beings

⁶ Si Ma Qian (司马迁) 145BC-91BC whose work Shi Ji (史记) Historical Records began the consequent tomes of 24 Official Dynastic Histories (二十四史 ) which followed the style of Si Ma Qian of recording Chinese history accurately for the past 3,000 years.
could only be awed by the interconnectivity of existence. Hitherto, physicists were convinced that matter and antimatter annihilate each other as they meet. This is a revelation of startling significance. This scientific discovery is now converging with the philosophical conception of a past tradition. Interestingly, the micro-world inward and the macro-world outward somehow find a balance of coexistence. (Details of a scientific interpretation of yin and yang theory can be found in the MFM E-Letter No. 10 Conceiving Yin and Yang - Towards a Scientific Interpretation.)

Einstein pronounced that nothing in this universe travels faster than light. Yet his discovery is about to be superseded by the latest experimental evidence provided by CERN. Assuming that dark matter and dark energy compose 90% of our universe, the number of photons beaming in the vastness of space may be only a minority substance. Even so, the visible universe is quite enough for our intelligence to comprehend in the foreseeable future! And so now, in the sea of photons, we are leaving the world of science temporarily, to look at the one 'super-photon' that is relevant to us all: the human civilisation. We begin this intellectual journey by applying the theory of yin and yang to society, economics and politics.

I would like to tell you about an amusing observation of mine while watching Bloomberg Television. I caught an interview with Mr Henry Hu, the Chairman of SEC (the US Security Exchange Commission), on 2nd December 2010, expressing his views on regulating Wall Street in the current climax of the post-financial crisis in the disorderly banking world. He said that Wall Street is very far ahead of the regulators in its ingenious invention of structured financial products, and that this leaves the SEC experts far behind. But he insisted that the regulators had to continue working while they can still see the banks in the far horizon, beyond which they will disappear and will never be caught. The yin and yang dynamic between the regulators and those being regulated is like a cat-and-mouse game, and is an ongoing dynamic that all societies are facing.

In the industrially advanced countries, achieving the balance between regulation and freedom is a yin and yang problem. It is comfortable to live in a 'nanny society', yet the freedom of individuals and their ability to look after themselves are being sacrificed by laws and regulations. At this instance, with SEC, the makers and enforcers of the rule of law are finally admitting that they have failed to control the 'clever-bad-boys' who were responsible for the economic meltdown of 2007-2009. And yet in the emerging countries the corrupted elements within their societies are also playing the yin and yang game with the anti-corruption authorities. In the struggle for survival quite a few in the West are now trying to live on the welfare state by exploiting the system originally created to help those in genuine need. Bogus insurance claims, patent and trademark disputes, trade protectionism, discrimination against foreign cultures, financial fraud and speculative opportunism are all
common elements that we often experience in the contradictory world of regulation and deregulation under capitalist globalisation. These are expressions of a breakdown in the moral fabric of society.

How do we balance the demands of the poor and the rich, the deficiency of the 'underdeveloped third world' in contrast with the excess of the advanced world? The balancing dynamics of the emerging economies classified by the media as the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) are causing headaches to the advanced economies by their rapid GDP growth and by their holding a vast amount of dollar reserves that are owed by the US. Excessive consumption in the West and thrifty sweat of the populations of the emerging countries is at the centre of the dynamics of the yin and yang balance. The modern world is facing the turbulence caused by the rebalancing act, whereby the citizens of the developed countries are tightening their belts and the populations of the emerging countries are raising their living standards. The problem is that there are also many poor people being left behind while the very affluent in those countries are getting richer day by day and displaying outrageous wastes of wealth. Our modern civilisation is facing a period of readjustment that may hopefully be achieved. A new order of harmony can emerge.

When we look into the complexity of human life, nature and the socio-economic and political organisation of our societies, we can apply the timeless concept of yin and yang to the modern world order. Let us look at some practical applications of this concept within contemporary situations. The modern info-tech corporations are now influencing our minds into ‘technological elitism’ through relentless advertising of their products. We the consumers are constantly engaging ourselves in being up-to-date and learning how to operate every new gadget. The consumer society created by capitalism distracts our minds from noble pursuits while encouraging excessive materialism. The modern world is characterised by a relentless consumption fed by huge competing corporations, and based on the built-in redundancy of their products. And yet, quoting Alan Greenspan’s The Age of Turbulence "Competition, capitalism’s greatest force, creates anxiety in all of us [...] Regrettably, economic growth cannot produce lasting contentment or happiness" (pages 268-9). This relentless consumption and competition are preventing our society from focusing on other noble pursuits. Excessive indulgence of any activity causes imbalances described in the yin and yang principle of 'Wu Ji Bi Fan (物极必反)' which means when things reach an extreme they reverse. Hence social economic changes.
Consider the recent policy of quantitative easing by the FED (US Federal Reserve 美联储) to revive growth in America. This action may have had a stimulating effect on the US economy but has translated into inflationary pressure elsewhere, especially in the emerging nations. The continued printing of a huge amount of dollars will ensure excess money supply being exported to countries beyond America where large profits can be made from speculations. But the developing economies are aware of the danger of hot money and are taking actions to prevent any adverse consequences by controlling the inflow from the US. Apparently the Hong Kong financial authorities are very uncomfortable that George Soros’s Quantum Fund (索罗斯的量子基金) is building up its strength in Hong Kong to take advantage of the appreciating Yuan and the inflationary trend of the Chinese economy. The Chinese property bubble and the ballooning of borrowing by regional governments that previously had been absorbed by central government may yet result in a banking crisis in China. Fuelled by the sluggishness of Chinese exports to the West and the inevitable speculations of hot money around the world, this would lead to further world economic crises.

Temporary corrective measures such as quantitative easing, monetary fixing by issuing treasury bonds or by accepting backing from the IMF are all short-term fixes. No long-term recovery can be built upon them. Furthermore, the risks of quantitative easing are both rampant inflation and speculation that will increase the danger of further bubbles in the Western advanced economies. The danger in turn will be exported to the emerging BRIC economies. The consequence of this may be another world economic meltdown which will lead to the fear of a double dip in the global recession. Commenting on the possible dire consequences to the Euro of a Greek default during the news conference on the inflation report (16th May 2012), Governor of the Bank of England Sir Mervyn King warned that quantitative easing extends the deficit and supply equilibrium with a loss of competitiveness of the countries which will result in further trade deficits and acid purchasing of the banks. He also emphasised that the UK can only prepare for the storm ahead and limit the damage. The unfolding Greek default and possible exit from the Euro prove that the option of ever increasing money supplies as a solution to the current economic crisis is untenable. Shockwaves emanating from the earthquake in the Eurozone will produce cracks in the austere fabric of the British economy and will travel across the Atlantic to the seemingly recovering America.

The apparent recent success of the American policy of quantitative easing has produced short-term optimism in a recovery that may yet turn out to be an illusion. Furthermore, as President Obama seeks to give a positive impression with the intention of obtaining a second term, the economic outlook is being massaged for the purposes of electioneering. However, the policy of stimulation does not tackle the underlying problem of the huge US national deficit. Monetary policies will not repair the fundamentals of an economy, even one as large as the
US in terms of GDP. Sooner or later the USA will have to face the reality of a deficiency of the real economy.

This painful lesson is not being learned by the EU authorities in their policy of giving increasingly large loans to Greece with stiffer terms, in the hope of deferring repayment to future generations. Huge financial burdens are now levied upon unborn Greeks. Ireland might have escaped from a similar fate for now but will limp on together with Portugal, Spain and Italy as the Euro crisis develops. The firewall supposedly built around Italy and Spain will never be fireproof whatever haircuts their financial institutions might be having. The current huge bailout of the Spanish banks may not be enough to prevent a banking crisis in Spain and beyond. France, Belgium and other stronger nations in the EU may also be infected.

Nouriel Roubini and Stephen Mihm, in their book Crisis Economics, concluded their work by quoting Arthur Pigou that "Prosperity ends in a crisis...the error of optimism dies in the crisis, but dying it gives birth to an error of pessimism. This new error is born not an infant, but a giant." (page 310). The European crisis is only the continuation of yin cycles in economics. According to the I Ching and the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine the Chinese yin and yang cycles wax and wane within a numerology of 24. Hence we have 24 hours. 12 hours belong to the yin and 12 hours belong to the yang in a cycle of changes. The day is the yang period and the night is the yin period. We can use this theory to look at the cycle of the financial crisis which began in 2007 with the sub-prime mortgage crisis of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae (see The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report by the US government).

According to the Chinese theory of yin and yang cycles, we can predict that the current economic crisis will be reversed by 2019. In other words, that is 12 years from 2007. The yin and yang numerology describes the 24-hour clock as a yin and yang cycle. The first 12 hours from midnight to 12pm is the first half of the cycle changing from maximum yin to early yang. The next 12 hours from 12pm to 12am is the period in which the great yang changes to early yin. Hence recovery may begin after the maximum yin period in 2013 and reach the yang period in 2019, from when there will be a period of sustained growth until it reaches another yin period in the next cycle. The I Ching describes this in detail with the eight octagons of Ba Gua (八卦) being the fundamental
principles of reality from which 64 (8 x 8) hexagrams Yao (爻) represent the pattern of change upon which the Chinese theory of numerology is based.

As a Chinese medical physician using the Chinese diagnostic principle of deficiency and excess in identifying changes in disease patterns, I believe that the current imbalance requires stimulation of the positive energy which lies at the basic level of society and of the real economy. Major changes and enlightened leadership are required to rescue the world. If this does not happen in Europe soon I predict that default will develop. Already large-scale withdrawals by depositors are leading to an enormous uncertainty amongst the investment institutions. Liquidity problems of banks could lead to national insolvency spreading across the Eurozone, inevitably fuelled and accompanied by damaging speculations from hedge funds. The consequence of all this will be a split of the Eurozone, and even worse, the disappearance of the Euro. This effect will reverberate around the world.

The prudent austerity measures pursued by the British government may prove effective if the real economy is revived with a massive programme of socio-economic reform and a revitalisation of morale and motivation by education. Sometime in the future there will be days of reckoning. The mounting debts - whether an individual's, a corporation's or a nation's - cannot be restructured in the long term without first achieving a balance in production and consumption, or in other words, a balance in income and expenditure. Countries need to stimulate their real economies to be in surplus to consumption. America will be facing a greater crisis when the cracks reopen. And then the world will have to accept a new economic order. From this dynamic you can see that if yin waxes then yang wanes, and vice-versa. This brings us to a yin and yang interpretation of economics.

If the deficient economies of the poor countries can be classified as yin, and the excessive economies of the rich countries can be classified as yang, then the relative dynamics of yin and yang must interact to find some form of balance. And when a balance is achieved, the mutual dependency will lead to stability. When the balance is maintained, stability will lead to sustainability and orderly growth which will further lead to harmonious prosperity for all. Economic imbalances between different countries are an important dynamic that can cause conflicts leading to wars. Economic and political interests are very much linked in our modern world. Protectionism may well lead to an escalation of global conflicts, leading to further instability.

How then do we balance yin and yang in economics? In order to answer this question we have to identify what are its two elements, while bearing in mind that in the real world as in their transformational dynamic within the human body, there is no such thing as strictly yin or yang as absolute values. Yin and yang are always expressed in relative terms and in comparative coexistence. This is the reason why the
famous symbol of the two elements interacting visualises the concept of yin within yang, and of yang within yin. In economics, the yin elements are usually opposite to - and yet mutually dependent on - the yang elements in the relevant sphere. Examples can be found in the relationship between consumption and production, deflation and inflation, deficit and surplus, loss and profit, labour and capital, as well as real value and speculation.

We can now summarise in fundamental terms that concrete materials for consumption belong to the yin category whereas the financial investment (capital) in monetary terms belongs to the yang category, with the act of production being the energy (Qi 气) that links the two elements in a process of transformation. This is what Marx described as the dynamics of supply and demand resulting from the synergy of labour and capital. In social economics this gives rise to the contradiction between different sectors of society. Other parallels arise in Keynesian economics, which asserts that aggregated demand is influenced by a host of economic decisions in both the public and private sector, which from time to time behave erratically. The Keynesian argument that monetary policy is powerless is argued contra the monetarists, who hold that fiscal policy is of no use in resolving many economic contradictions. These include government borrowing and taxation in relation to the tight fiscal policy levied by some governments on industrial output and employment. Such contradictions can be fluidly resolved by applying the yin and yang economic principle.

Capitalism in its earlier form was compelled to transform itself through shareholder culture by resolving contradictions between the workers and capitalists through share ownership and by the creation of stock markets and commodity exchanges. This gave rise to a new kind of capitalism. I call this ‘financial capitalism’, and it manipulates the means of production through financial investment by owning companies and selling them by means of shares. From this derive terms such as ‘Shareholder Value’, ‘Price/Earning Ratio (P/E Ratio)’ and ‘Book Value Per Share’. With the creation of credit, the concrete value of a company based on real economic terms such as production, turnover, profit and loss are now bought and sold by conglomerated capitalists in terms of future instruments such as calls and puts, and financially structured products which may not reflect real asset value, but are subject to speculations that spur supply and demand. The recent flotation of Facebook illustrates this process of artificial enhancement of value. Hence the financial world has now created an unseen virtual economy. The invisibility is also enhanced by technology and the internet. Even within financial circles, bankers and investment experts alike do not understand what is happening to them when financial crises arrive, resulting in the collapse of big banks and corporations, leading to national debts and crises in the global economy such as we are facing now.
The above dynamics illustrate the recent economic manifestation of theories hitherto not providing answers to the wellbeing of society. The current Mainstream Economics is the result not just of Keynesian economics but also Keynesian-Neoclassical synthesis with influences from other modern schools with a heterodox approach such as Institutional Economics, Evolutionary Economics and the Austrian School represented by Hayek providing the opposing models of economic development. There are other influential figures such as Milton Friedman in the invention of monetarism with his theory of consumption and his ideas on capitalism and freedom. The overriding influence of mainstream economics over the rival Marxian theories has spilled over to the ideological sphere through a century of struggles globally between capitalism and socialism.

Y. F. Fukuyama called this “the end of history” as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union symbolised by the demolition of the Berlin Wall. The progression of human history in the struggle between ideologies inevitably involved economic competition between the two ideological models, but more importantly in socio-political competitions which in its highest form is a contest between ideas and cultures. Fukuyama’s pronouncement of “the last man” being the liberal democratic mode is somewhat premature judging by the current social economic crisis that is fermenting after the financial crisis. This signifies that capitalism in its liberal democratic mode is being derailed into troubled waters by the systemic financial crisis we are facing now. There was a discussion in the special report by The Economist (January 21–27, 2012) on the rise of "state capitalism" as a competing model for social economic development signifying the shift from private grassroots enterprise to state controlled enterprises that may offer a more efficient system capable of preventing an economic crisis.
Ideology cannot be divorced from history, and neither can history be separated from intellectual and cultural traditions. Today we have contradiction and mutual transformation between the Chinese civilisation of the East and the Western civilisation represented by the US and Europe. As a result of such transformations, after 30 years of open policy the systematic differences between the economic model of the West and that of China are somewhat blurred. The socialist market economy adopted by China has developed rapidly to rival the US as the second biggest national economy, with trillions of dollars in foreign currency reserve, compared with the enlarging American economic deficit. True, the market economies of China and the West may be differentiated in the proportional ratio between state controlled enterprises and the private sector. The regulatory region of government policies involving macroeconomic and microeconomic control also differs between the economies of China and the US, with Europe somewhat between the two. In the future, however, the fundamental elements in the new dynamics of the world will be a renaissance of the Chinese intellectual tradition, involving not just economic and ideological systems but also intellectual and spiritual aspirations of the Chinese civilisation, in a fruitful synthesis with Western intellectual traditions and values.

These are some of the categories we can go into in detail when we consider an economic theory constructed with the concept of yin and yang. Here we are introducing this concept in terms of balancing the fundamental elements within our economies. What we call the 'soft factors' and the 'hard factors' of economic dynamics should be moving towards harmony because absolute balance is seldom achievable in our complex world. Inflated values in an economy will always be balanced out by the corresponding deficient ones. There are fundamental elements such as credit and money in relation to money supply and financial institutions, consumer demands, market conditions and labour in relation to manufacturers, capital and the means of production. There are other financial elements such as money supplies and speculation in relation to hedge funds (对冲基金) as well as institutional leverage (机构杠杆). Globally, the yin and yang dynamic between the poor emerging
countries and the advanced rich countries can also be interpreted not only in terms of economics but also in the social, political and military spheres.

Let us analyse our current economic crisis of recession and possible national defaults as manifested in the theory of yin and yang. We can broadly categorise the real economy as yang and the virtual economy as yin, and the imbalance between the two as Deficiency or Excess. This is a new idea, yet in line with one of the oldest intellectual traditions in human history. Yin and yang dynamics manifest themselves in the creative and destructive process in society. For instance, the synergy between China and the US is one of the yin and yang dynamics that dominate the current strategic balances, which may synergise in different ways either through conflicts or convergence. In economic theory, yin and yang dynamics filter through all the elements of socio-economic activity. The general categories being identified through my research are: ‘social organisation’, ‘capital mechanism’, ‘production’ and ‘environment’, with ‘humans’ being the central category affected by all the other four categories. The relationships between the five categories of socio-economics I describe as the ‘unity of the opposites’ in accordance with the dialectical logic of synthesis, i.e. dialectical progressivism. Here I just wish to outline my thoughts on what I call ‘Yin and Yang Economics’.

The setting up of stocks and commodity exchanges, the creation of credit and the ever more complex nature of financial products have blurred our vision in identifying the fundamental flaws of the capitalistic system. These flaws have manifested in over-inflated bubbles, increasing disparity in wealth, the value of greed instead of social morals encouraged by competition, and the destruction of the natural environment through excessive consumerism driven by incessant growth models. There are many other cracks that are being papered over by international trade, the glamour of globalisation and the seemingly thriving consumer world. True, capitalism has made many positive contributions to society, especially where feudalism endured into the 19th and even 20th centuries. And the sense of freedom and democracy for the individual has been enhanced by the rise of science and technology which it made possible. Yet in many ways these successes have led us to neglect the cultivation of our moral and spiritual sensibility, losing the individual in the vast apparatus of consumerism and technological progress.

The economic crisis of the 1930s led in part to the Second World War; the heroic battle that ensued saved us from a terrible regression of human civilisation. We must learn our lesson and readjust imbalances without military confrontations. Harmonisation is a process in which we can all coexist, a process in the peaceful and orderly adjustment of yin and yang dynamics. The tragedy of the Second World War must not be allowed to happen again.
From the past we must therefore learn to recognise dangerous financial bubbles, the huge disparity between the rich and the poor, and the increasing contradictions and tensions between religious and cultural values of different civilisations, in order to defuse imbalances and injustices. Over-indulgence in self-interests, national protectionism and a lack of international dialogue, exchange and mutual respect will lead to disaster. Historically we have also experienced a period of excessive materialism and a deficiency of spiritual wisdom. All these symptoms lead to confrontations that are damaging to the human civilisation. In order to ensure stability and sustainability we have to recognise those symptoms and treat them with harmonisation of yin and yang at different levels of society and in different spheres of human activities nationally and globally.

There is another important factor in achieving harmony: the consideration of our relationship and interaction with nature. After all, if mankind is to achieve sustainable development then a sustainable environment should be the prerequisite. This concept has been promoted throughout the history of the Chinese intellectual tradition. Harmony with nature is expressed in the concept of Tian Ren He Yi (天人合一) which means ‘men and heaven are one’.

We are in the middle of an eventful year. It is the year of the Phoenix and the Dragon. The yang year of the Dragon necessitates a yin element which is symbolised by the Phoenix to complete the yin and yang unity according to the Chinese concept of dynamics. In Chinese mythology a phoenix represents the yin and a dragon represents the yang. Each one is a different type of energy: the Yin Qi and the Yang Qi. The yin is the physical form of Qi ‘Xing’ (形), and yang refers to the functional dynamics of Qi which can be manifested between the physical world and the world of consciousness ‘Shen’ (神). The spirit of a being can be expressed through the body, mind and soul.

Amidst the chaos of recession, survival, depression, international contentions and contradictions in the values between different civilisations, I suggest that now is the time for us to look at the basic meaning of existence. The Chinese describe this as harmonisation between ‘Xing’ (the physical) and Sheng (the moral spirit of the mind). Hopefully, through this process we will regain a sense of balance between our physical economic existence and our moral, spiritual and intellectual pursuits.

A condition of wellbeing and socio-economic stability can only be achieved through collaboration rather than through a competing, self-seeking economism whose values have been overwhelming in our materialistic consumer society which breeds excessive self-gratification. This has led us into a messy world of financial crisis and national defaults, where the international manipulations in economic competitions may lead to a process of politicisation and militarization of economic interests. This is a dangerous scenario for us to contemplate.
Therefore, mankind should now take a fresh look at our civilisation, and its social, moral and intellectual values and their relationship to economic development and material consumption. Let us review the basic aspirations of human society and the destination of the human civilisation. As individuals we desire love, happiness, security and material wealth. There are some who aspire to higher existence in artistic and aesthetic expressions, to comprehend the meaning of life and to discover the mysteries of this universe. Whether you are a scientist or a philosopher, you are trying to unravel, with different methodologies, the truth of existence and the destiny of beings. The dynamics of the human civilisation, according to the Chinese perception, lie in the interactions of yin and yang in all the elements and values of society that manifest in its political, economic, artistic and intellectual activities. Hence a yin and yang interpretation of history and socio-economic development characterises the Chinese intellectual tradition. The dynamic of the mutual transformation of yin and yang changes society and transforms an economy. The logical explanation of this process can be described as a dialectical synthesis in Hegel's thinking. But as confirmed by Professor Deng Tie Tao (邓铁涛), the Chinese had already arrived at this concept 2,000 years before Hegel.

The concept of yin and yang is the expression of Qi energy, which is a substance between Xing (material forms) and Sheng (non-material consciousness). A substance can be in a material form or in a non-material form i.e. in between matters and abstract energies. There is speculation that the existence of the elusive Higgs boson is about to be confirmed by the scientific experiments in particle physics in the LHC at CERN. The revelation of this ‘God Particle’ (上帝粒子) hunted by scientists for the last 45 years is finally affirming the theory of yin and yang in the horizons that are being described in philosophical terms as transforming “one into two”. That is the transformation of formless energy into matter, and hence multiplied into everything that exists in this universe.

The nature of this process of the transformation from nothingness into being has long been an intellectual enquiry of Chinese history, predating the recent discovery of the Majorana particle by around 5,000 years! Physicists now believe that a particle can be both matter and antimatter coexisting in mirror worlds that are merged. The coexistence of matter and its opposite is a Western scientific expression of the coexisting Xing and Shen (神). The Chinese differentiate this as being metaphysics and physics, Xing Er Shang (形而上) and Xing Er Xia (形而下). In order to establish stability, we need to balance the yin and the yang of all things. We all know that absolute balance is not possible and therefore we seek to establish harmony. Harmony within the body promotes health. Harmony in society promotes stability. This analogy also applies to the current economic situation and the continuing progress of human civilisation. But hope must be engendered. The hunger of all people for positive development must be revitalised in
order to combat the regressive forces that are prevailing in today’s world.

As individuals all too aware of our struggle for survival in an increasingly chaotic and complex society physically, emotionally and spiritually, we require solutions that are simple and inspired. We fall in love and procreate; we learn through education and survive through work. We produce and consume, coping with our material existence by overcoming difficulties that take a toll on our physical and psycho-emotional wellbeing. The fundamental factor which may be contributing to the withering of our civilisation is the obsession with our physical existence while neglecting the cultivation of our inner being. To do that, we need to refocus on the meaning of life. We each go through our individual journey from Spring to Winter in the natural movement of time. Living in harmony with nature has been the wisdom of Chinese civilisation. Human transformation of nature can only be made within the laws of nature, or else there will be a danger of the decay of human civilisation. As we seek our own happiness and the happiness of future generations, should we take a step out of time in order to savour the beautiful moments of existence without the incessant pursuit of rapid growth in the material world and its destruction of our natural environment? This fundamental question is posed to each of us and requires an individualised self-realisation. Chinese medicine believes in a holistic cultivation of health in body, mind and spirit. A holistically healthy and happy individual is the basic unit of a healthy society.

Different civilisations in the history of humankind rise and fall in the journey of time from Spring to Summer, Autumn to Winter. Like all creatures, everything in this world endures the passage of time. While some wither and some survive, we ask for the reason behind. The Chinese say ‘Dao is the middle way’, the way of balance and harmony in the yin and yang, the nature of things. This understanding applies to socio-economics as well as the individual. Chinese medicine seeks to harmonise the yin and yang in the body, mind and spirit of a person in order to regulate illness and achieve longevity. For each one of us to survive difficult times we need to strike a balance between our materialistic desires and our psycho-emotional wellbeing. In a time of doom and gloom, it is essential for us to raise our spirits with a change of perspective from sadness to joy, from fear to hope, from despair to happiness. To do this, each of us needs to pursue a journey of self-realisation by cultivating our moral strength in the spirit of enlightenment and inspiration. We should cultivate our love for all and not just for ourselves by promoting the good elements of life. Just as a Chinese physician promotes the genuine Qi (energy) of the body to keep at bay the invasion of evil Qi (pathogens), similarly a society must encourage each individual to be positive and hopeful, contributing towards a brighter future for our children. Many parallels of such seasons have existed in the history of Chinese civilisation; but by conceiving the dynamics of yin and yang, the Chinese have managed to
survive the past 5,000 years of ups and downs, and are now beginning to regenerate and reinvent themselves in their search for a renaissance.

To survive the current crisis, each one of us can begin our own process of renewal by conceiving yin and yang, and the world will certainly be a better place. After all, when Winter arrives Spring follows.

When you conceive yin and yang, the beauty of the moment is like a flower sensing its fruitfulness in the moment of encounters with a beautiful butterfly. With such insight, such imagery, the flower is in a poetic mood passionately anticipating a noble civilisation, the next human paradigm...

After Winter There is Spring - Wither Human Civilisation?

The Hope of Spring

Imagine, my friend -
The smell of Spring
Is around the corner.
With the fresh leaves
Budding amidst the green shoots,
Daffodils sprout.
Allow me
To give you
The hope of spring
With a branch of plum blossom -
A gift of nature,
Harmonious nature
Returned from the storm
Of yin and yang transformations.
Imagine a world
Without crises,
Without sorrow,
Without fears and tears,
Where joyful chimes
Interrupt tranquillity,
Where despair
Is dispelled,
Where the sick are healed,
Where people are together
Singing the song
Of harmony,
The symphony
Of human civilisation.
After all, life is a dream,
A dream of happiness
As we walk
On the road of life
From spring to winter;
Such beauty at every step,
With all the surprises
Round the corner,
With all the emotions
That life brings.
And this moment,
In the words
Of the wondering poet,
Is the sensation of being
That no words can reveal.

Man Fong Mei
London
24 May 2012
梅万方
二零一二年五月於倫敦

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Dear reader,

The intended content of my next newsletters will be lighter reading! They will include my philosophical poems of life, love and happiness. There will also be discussion of how to avoid the psycho-emotional lifestyle-related health problems of our era, as well as the advantages of an integrative approach using Chinese medicine in the treatment of serious diseases.

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The Chinese version of this paper is also available in two parts for Chinese-speaking readers. This is an ambitious attempt to merge the intellectual worlds of the past and present, the philosophical and the scientific interpretations of socio-economic phenomena. Chinese research and editing was energetically conducted by Adena Zhao Hanjing to whom I am sincerely grateful.

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THE MFM E-LETTER expresses the personal view of Professor Man Fong Mei on health, medicine and other East-West intellectual issues. He is currently the Chairman of the Chinese Medical Institute and Register (CMIR), Chairman of The Chinese Medical Council, UK (CMC), and Executive Chairman, Consultative Working Committee of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS). Professor Mei has published and delivered numerous papers in the past two decades. He is also a professor and visiting professor at three Chinese medical universities and an active member of several medical specialty research committees. If you are interested in receiving future issues of the MFM E-Letter, please visit http://www.acumedic.com/email-updates/mfm_e-letter/ to subscribe for free.

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