

**FROM THE ORGAN LOFT**  
**"THE POWER OF GREAT AND SMALL"**  
**YIN YANG, THE TAO - ONE MEANINGFUL SOURCE OF MASONIC PRACTICE**  
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In this brief article on the subject of the deeper meaning of Great and Small, or Yin-Yang, notice how many points of contact there are with our Masonic practices and symbols (underlined below). It is always fascinating to discover the varied and ancient sources of our traditions, especially concerning personal growth and maturity.

*I Ching*, the "*Classic of Change*," is the world's oldest and most sophisticated system of wisdom divination, the fundamental source of China's philosophy, medicine, and spirituality. *Change*, as it is often called, aims at adding something crucial to our awareness that can connect us to what the old sages called the *Dao* (or *Tao*), the ongoing process of the Real. Its job is to make us deeply aware of the now, the present moment, and what is truly at play in the everyday events of our lives. It was put together in a time of troubles much like our own and can speak directly to our situation in the modern West.

### **Gates of Change**

We are all familiar with the terms "*Yin*" and "*Yang*" and often use them to organize our own thinking about dualities and polarities. But these terms were created comparatively late in the written tradition of *Change*, which begins about 1100 BCE (Before the Common, or Christian Era). *Yin* and *Yang* came out of the synthesizing thought of the school of cosmologists (c. 300 BCE), who were attempting to organize the complexities of the old world myth and ritual world into a conceptual system. A whole world of myth and image is hidden behind them.

From the Chinese myth, the Ghost River, which unites the Sun Tree and the Moon Tree in a constant interchange between dark and light, death and life, acting and being. These two powers [pillars] were the *Gates of Change*. Everything that exists in this world we live in [assuming there are others we have lived/will live in] is created by passing through these gates. The "*Yang pole*" is the Dragon's Gate, the masculine, firm, establishing and divine inspiring force. The "*Yin*" gate is the Earth Gate, the feminine, receptive and fertile. Together these gates established a pattern of interconnected opposites that permeates the oldest layers of Change. They mirror the "*Above and Below*" concept of the ancient *Emerald Tablet of Hermes*.

### **Great and Small**

In the old mythic world the two powers [pillars] were directly embodied in the two worlds that represent stances or qualities of - the personal Will.

"*Da*" (Great) calls on you to be strong; to collect your strength, to organize yourself around a central idea or purpose, to impose your will, and act to help and protect others. The *Great Person* is someone who has done this.

"*Xiao*" (Small) calls upon you to be flexible, to adapt to whatever crosses your path. It means to let go of your sense of self-importance [meet on the level, part on the square] and yielding in a spontaneous and flexible way; an important step in finding the *Way*. The *Small Person* became a

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Daoist byword for those who could see the small beginnings of change, unencumbered by pride and complication.

### The Friendship of the Spirit

Moving from the concepts of *Yin* and *Yang* to the psycho-active symbols that lie behind them opens a potent, mysterious, yet knowable world. It is a personal way to the spirit, a way of transformation allied to early practices of mediumship. The experience of this helping spirit can make you sage: clear-seeing, knowing death and birth, feeling the friendship of the spirit and compassion for fellow human beings. In the words of C.G. Jung, it is the ground of symbolic life; it reclaims the reality of the psyche.

Jung also remarked that the exclusion or repression of this old world of gods and spirits is actually quite illusory. In the words of one of his book titles, we are "modern men in search of a soul," who none-the-less are far from having left these gods and their sacred cosmos behind. Jung also maintained that recognition of this unseen world and the language it represents is the therapeutic act par excellence. It turns us away from the prisons of [exclusively] logical thought to the underworld of the psychic image, to what he called the "*living units of the unconscious psyche that are the architects of dreams and symptoms*."

This way of *Change* as a process of spiritual transformation [making good men better] is what we are recovering from the later conceptual and philosophical systems that reduce it to verbal specters as opposed to the psychic facts. This way of the spirits is the most powerful and perennial appeal of *Change*, the thing that has drawn people to it for thousands of years. In following this practice, we are imitating the early spirit intermediaries who could see and hear what is hidden, giving those Above (*shen*, the light spirits) and those below (*gui*, the dark spirits) what is due them. This imaginative generosity causes a luminous spirit to descend in us, and it lives within our hearts. We become clear-seeing, profoundly connected to the invisible world. There is a limit to complete knowing here on earth in the true sense, and that limitation is - imagination. *Change* puts you on the *Way*; vitalizes your imagining with its symbols, opens your heart - and that is enough. As the *Guanzi* says:

*"Look, there is a spirit within your person.  
Now it goes, now it comes.  
No one can capture it,  
But if you reverently clean its abode  
It will return of itself.  
You will recover your own true nature,  
Fixed in you once and for all."*

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