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# 2

UNIT

# Thinking matters

## Learning objectives

**Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- understand the East-West cultural differences in emotional well-being;
- explain why ancient Chinese philosophy is popular in Harvard;
- talk about the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western ways of thinking.

Everything you can imagine is real.

— Pablo Picasso (1881–1973, painter)

## Warm-up

### Step Talking about the pictures

- ① Look at the following two pictures and try to talk about the differences between Chinese and Western ways of thinking.



### Step Brainstorming

- ② Besides what is shown in the above two pictures, can you think of any other differences between Chinese and Western ways of thinking? You may illustrate them from the following aspects.

- Ways of communication
- Attitudes toward risks and challenges
- Attitudes toward uncertainty
- Attitudes toward hierarchy
- Teamwork styles

### Step Sharing your ideas

- ③ How do you understand the saying “Ways of thinking define our ways of living”?

## Reading 1

# East-West cultural differences in depression

## — Strategies for coping with negative moods

**disorder** /dɪs'ɔ:də/  
*n.* 失调; 疾病

**prevalence** /'prevələns/  
*n.* 患病率; 流行

**analytical** /,ænə'lɪtɪkl/  
*a.* 分析的; 用分析方法的

**holistic** /həʊ'lɪstɪk/  
*a.* 整体(论)的; 全面的

**incidence** /'ɪnsɪd(ə)ns/  
*n.* 发生率

**give rise to** 引起

**likelihood** /'laɪklihəd/  
*n.* 可能(性)

**setback** /'set,bæk/  
*n.* 挫折; 阻碍

**mutually** /'mju:tʃuəli/  
*ad.* 相互地; 彼此地

**exclusive** /ɪk'skluzɪv/  
*a.* 排斥的; 排他的

- 1 Anxiety and mood **disorders** are much less common in China than in the United States. In this country, the lifetime **prevalence** of anxiety disorders is nearly 30 percent but only five percent in China. Likewise, about 20 percent of Americans will experience a major depressive disorder at some time in their lives, but for their Chinese counterparts, it's only two percent.
- 2 Some researchers propose that cultural differences in emotional disorders are due to the way Easterners and Westerners think about and respond to emotions.
- 3 Over the past several decades, cross-cultural psychologists have documented fundamental differences in the world view between Eastern and Western cultures. Westerners approach the world from an **analytical** perspective. In contrast, people in Eastern cultures tend to view the world in a **holistic** fashion.
- 4 If the **incidence** of emotional disorders is so much lower in Asia, De Vaus, an Australian psychologist, and her colleagues argue, we may be able to learn some effective coping strategies by studying how Asians deal with negative emotions. In their research, they found three ways of thinking about emotions that are different between Eastern and Western cultures. These ways of thinking then **give rise to** particular responses that reduce the **likelihood** that **setbacks** in life will lead to depression or anxiety.
  - Emotions co-occur. Westerners tend to view happiness and sadness as opposites and therefore as **mutually exclusive**. In their pursuit of happiness, they avoid sad feelings at all costs, believing these will



harm their **well-being**. Easterners, however, are open to experiencing **contradictory** emotions at the same time. There's always some sadness on any happy occasion, and some happiness can be found even in the darkest times. Thus, negative experiences are less threatening because they don't **preclude** happy feelings.

- Emotions change. Westerners tend to think of emotions as arising from a **stable** self. If I think of myself as a happy person, then I need to discount any negative experiences as anomalies — not really part of who I am. Likewise, those who suffer from depression often think that's the way they'll always feel. Easterners, in contrast, view emotions — as well as the self — as constantly changing. Thus, negative experiences are less threatening because they're only **temporary**.
- Emotions arise from context. Unlike Westerners, who view emotions as arising from within themselves, Easterners see emotions as emerging from the situation they're in. This means that moods can be changed by **altering** the context, in particular by **aligning** thoughts and behaviors with the expectations of their social groups. By distancing themselves from

**well-being** /,wel 'bi:ɪŋ/  
*n.* 舒适; 健康; 幸福

**contradictory** /,kɒntrə'dɪkt(ə)rɪ/  
*a.* 矛盾的; 抵触的

**preclude** /prɪ'klu:d/  
*vt.* 阻止; 妨碍

their emotions, Easterners are better at managing them. Thus, negative experiences are less threatening because there's something you can do about them.

**rumination** /ˌruːmɪˈneɪʃn/

*n.* 沉思

**suppress** /səˈpres/

*vt.* 抑制; 克制

**backfire** /ˌbækˈfaɪə/

*vi.* (计划或行动) 发生意外, 产生事与愿违的结果

5 De Vaus and her colleagues then consider how these cultural differences in ways of thinking about emotions impact two common behaviors that people engage in when they're feeling sad — suppression and **rumination**. Westerners often try to cope with negative moods by pushing them out of mind. But **suppressing** bad feelings in this way usually **backfires**, increasing the likelihood of sinking into depression.

6 Easterners also suppress negative emotions, but in a different way. Although they feel bad, they try not to show it because they don't want to affect other people. The result of this is that when Asians feel sad they remain socially engaged, which generally boosts their mood.

7 When we're sad, we also have a tendency to focus our thoughts on our feelings. Westerners tend to ruminate about their negative emotions by thinking: "What's wrong with me?" In contrast, Easterners are more likely to think: "What's wrong with the situation?" Thus, while ruminating leads Westerners into a **vicious cycle** of negative thoughts about themselves, the same process leads Asians to seek solutions to their problems.

**vicious cycle** 恶性循环

8 As we consider cross-cultural differences, it's important not to think of one world view as **superior**. On the one hand, the Western world view — analytical and independent — leads to high levels of subjective well-being for most people, but at the expense of greatly increased risk of anxiety and depression. On the other hand, the Eastern world view — holistic and interdependent — provides protection from emotional disorders, but it also reduces overall levels of happiness.

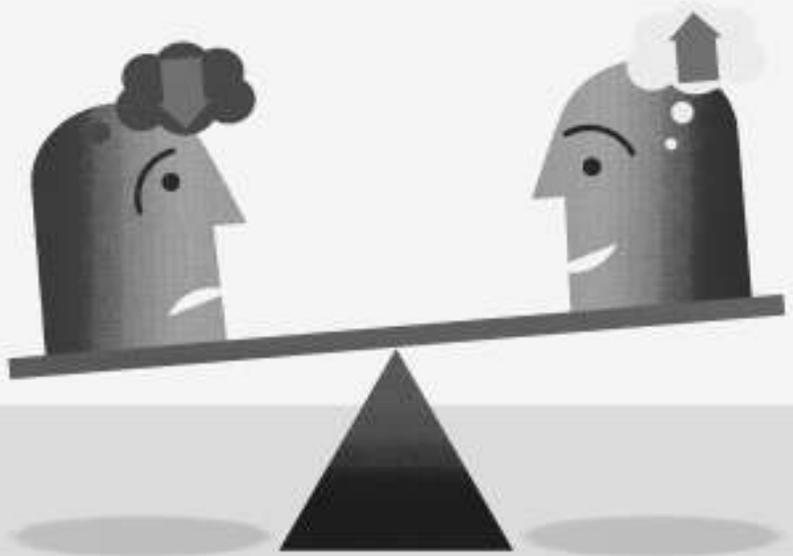
**superior** /suˈpɪəriə/

*a.* 更好的; 更强的; 更有效的

**captive** /ˈkæptɪv/

*n.* 囚徒; 俘虏

9 You aren't a **captive** of your culture. By learning how others view the world, you can selectively adopt world views to your benefit. When you're feeling blue, try taking a holistic perspective. Remind yourself that bad times eventually give way to good times. And keep in mind that your moods are telling you something about your current situation. Start focusing on how to change the situation, and you're well on your way to feeling much better about yourself.



## Language focus

Complete the sentences with suitable words or phrases from the box. Change the form where necessary.

<b>alter</b>	<b>analytical</b>	<b>disorder</b>	<b>give rise to</b>	<b>holistic</b>
<b>prevalence</b>	<b>superior</b>	<b>suppress</b>	<b>vicious cycle</b>	<b>well-being</b>

1. \_\_\_\_\_ thinkers have the ability to deal with complicated issues by evaluating the information they've gathered and organized.
2. After two years of treatment, my friend Ann was able to control her emotional \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ thinking is the ability to see things as a whole and to understand the relationships between many elements in a complex system.
4. Negative thinking patterns are a common concern. It's important to learn to \_\_\_\_\_ your thinking and think positively.
5. One study found that anxious people prefer texting over phone calls, rating it a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ medium for contact.
6. Much research shows that the \_\_\_\_\_ of emotional problems among young children is increasing.
7. Studies have discovered that people with higher psychological \_\_\_\_\_ are more likely to live healthier and longer lives.
8. Scientists find that when we try to \_\_\_\_\_ emotions, it can be dangerous to our physical and mental health.
9. When you notice your anxiety, you think that you can't cope with this situation, and you therefore become more anxious. This is the start of the \_\_\_\_\_ of anxiety.
10. Negative thinking \_\_\_\_\_ the feelings of hopelessness and despair that are typical of depression.



## Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the research report with information from the passage.

### Research report

- **Research question:**  
Why are anxiety and mood disorders 1) \_\_\_\_\_ in China than in the United States?
- **Previous research:**  
Some researchers suggest that cultural differences in emotional disorders are due to different ways of thinking about and responding to emotions.
- **Research purpose:**  
To learn some effective strategies for dealing with 2) \_\_\_\_\_ from Asians.
- **Research findings:**
  - Three ways of thinking about emotions differ between Eastern and Western cultures:  
3) \_\_\_\_\_;  
4) \_\_\_\_\_;  
5) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Cultural differences in ways of thinking about emotions can impact two common behaviors:  
6) \_\_\_\_\_;  
7) \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Research conclusion:**  
No world view is 8) \_\_\_\_\_ than another.
  - The Western world view leads to high levels of 9) \_\_\_\_\_ but increases the risk of anxiety and depression.
  - The Eastern world view provides protection from 10) \_\_\_\_\_ while reducing overall levels of happiness.

## Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and match the information in the following three columns.

Westerners

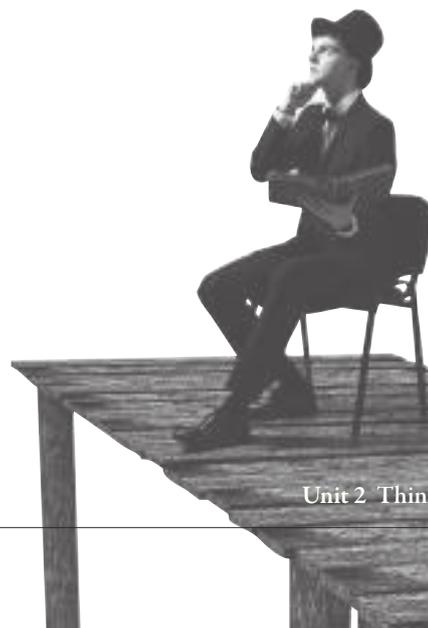
Easterners

- A. Push negative feelings out of mind.
- B. Remain socially engaged.
- C. Think: “What’s wrong with the situation?”
- D. Think: “What’s wrong with me?”

- a. They will get into a vicious cycle of negative thoughts about themselves.
- b. They begin to seek solutions to their problems.
- c. Their mood will be boosted.
- d. They are more likely to sink into depression.

## Cultural thinking

1. In the passage, the author maintains that Westerners tend to approach the world from an analytical perspective, while Easterners in a holistic fashion. How do you usually deal with negative feelings, for instance, when you fail an important test? Judging from the way you deal with emotional problems, do you consider yourself an analytical thinker or a holistic thinker?
2. What do you think of the research findings in the passage? Choose one research finding and explain why you agree or disagree with it.
3. The author reminds the reader that “As we consider cross-cultural differences, it’s important not to think of one world view as superior.” What can Westerners and Easterners learn from each other about how to cope with negative emotions?





## Why are hundreds of Harvard students studying ancient Chinese philosophy?

**classical** /'klæsɪkl/  
a. 经典的；古典的

**ethical** /'eθɪkl/  
a. 伦理的；道德的

**narcissism** /'nɑːsɪ,sɪz(ə)m/  
n. 自恋；自我陶醉

**harmoniously**  
/hɑː'məʊniəsli/  
ad. 友好和睦地；和谐地

**rapt** /ræpt/  
a. 全神贯注的；专心致志的

**semester** /sə'mestə/  
n. (尤指美国中学和大学的) 一学期

**profound** /prə'faʊnd/  
a. 深刻的；极大的

*The professor who teaches **Classical** Chinese **Ethical** and Political Theory claims, "This course will change your life."*

- 1 Picture a world where human relationships are challenging, **narcissism** and self-centeredness are on the rise, and there is disagreement on the best way for people to live **harmoniously** together. The society that Michael Puett, a professor of Chinese history at Harvard University, is describing to more than 700 **rapt** students is China, 2,500 years ago.
- 2 Why are so many students spending a **semester** trying to understand **profound** Chinese philosophy by scholars who lived thousands of years



ago? For one thing, the class fulfills one of Harvard's more challenging core requirements, Ethical Reasoning. It's clear, though, that students are also attracted by Puett's promise: "This course will change your life."

- 3 His students tell me it is true: Puett uses Chinese philosophy as a way to give students **concrete**, **counterintuitive**, and even **revolutionary** ideas, which teach them how to live a better life. Puett requires his students to closely read original texts (in translation) such as *The Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, and *Tao Te Ching* and then actively put the teachings into practice in their daily lives. His lectures use Chinese thoughts in the context of contemporary American life to help 18- and 19-year-olds who are struggling to find their place in the world figure out how to be good human beings, how to create a good society, and how to have a flourishing life.

**concrete** /'kɒŋkri:t/  
a. 具体的  
**counterintuitive**  
/ˌkaʊnt(ə)rɪn'tju:rtɪv/  
a. 反直觉的  
**revolutionary**  
/ˌrevə'lʊ:ʃn(ə)rɪ/  
a. 革命性的; 突破性的;  
创新的

- 4 Puett began offering his course to introduce his students not just to a completely different cultural world view but also to a different set of tools. A recent report shows a steep decline over the last decade in the number of Harvard students who are choosing to major in the humanities. Finance remains the most popular career for Harvard graduates. Puett sees students who orient all their courses and even their **extracurricular** activities toward practical, predetermined career goals and plans.

**extracurricular**  
/ˌɛkstrəkə'rɪkjələ/  
a. 课外的

- 5 Puett tells his students that being **calculating** and **rationally** deciding on plans is precisely the wrong way to make any sort of important life decision. The Chinese philosophers they are reading would say that this strategy makes it harder to remain open to other possibilities that don't fit into that plan. He aims to open his students' eyes to a different way to approach everything from relationships to career decisions. He teaches them that:

**calculating** /'kælkjʊ,leɪtɪŋ/  
a. 精于算计的  
**rationally** /'ræʃn(ə)li/  
ad. 理性地; 合理地

- 6 The smallest actions have the most profound consequences. Confucius, Mencius, and other Chinese philosophers taught that the most **mundane** actions can have a **ripple effect**, and Puett urges his students to notice how even the most ordinary acts — smiling at the grocery clerk — change the course of the day by affecting how we feel.

**mundane** /ˌmʌn'deɪn/  
a. 平凡的; 平淡的  
**ripple effect** 连锁反应



**fraction** /'frækʃn/  
*n.* 一点; 少量  
**elicit** /ɪ'lɪsɪt/  
*vt.* 引起 (某人的反应)

**inextricably**  
/ɪnɪk'strɪkəblɪ/  
*ad.* 紧密相连地;  
密不可分地  
**spontaneous**  
/spɒn'teɪniəs/  
*a.* 自发的; 自然而生的

**radical** /'rædɪkl/  
*a.* 前卫的; 激进的

**yearning** /'jɜ:nɪŋ/  
*n.* 渴望; 向往

**pros and cons** 利与弊

**sophomore** /'sɒfə,mɔ:/  
*n.* (大学或高中的)  
二年级学生



- 7 According to one psychology professor at Yale, if we see a happy face for just a **fraction** of a second, that's long enough to **elicit** a mini emotional high. In one study, viewers who were flashed a smile — even though it was shown too quickly for them to even realize they had seen it — perceived the things around them more positively.
- 8 Decisions are made from the heart. Americans tend to believe that humans are rational creatures who make decisions logically, using our brains. But in Chinese, the word for “mind” and “heart” are the same. Puett teaches that the heart and the mind are **inextricably** linked, and that one does not exist without the other. Whenever we make decisions, we will make better ones when we integrate heart and mind to blend our rational and emotional sides into one. Zhuangzi, a Taoist philosopher, taught that we should train ourselves to become “**spontaneous**” through daily living, rather than closing ourselves off through what we think of as rational decision-making.
- 9 To be interconnected, focus on mundane, everyday practices, and understand that great things begin with the very smallest of acts are **radical** ideas for young people living in a society that pressures them to think big and achieve individual excellence. This might be one reason why interest in Chinese philosophy is taking off around the nation — not just at Harvard. And it's a message that especially echoes those **yearnings** for an alternative to the fast track they have been on all their lives.
- 10 One of Puett's former students, Adam Mitchell, told me, “We're expected to think of our future in this rational way: to add up the **pros and cons** and then make a decision. That leads you down the road of ‘Stick with what you're good at’” — a road with little risk but little reward. But after Puett's introduction to Chinese philosophy during his **sophomore** year, he realized this wasn't the only way to think about the future. Instead, he tried courses he was drawn to but wasn't naturally good at because he had learned how much value lies in working hard to become better at what you love. He became more aware of the way he was affected by those around him, and how they were affected by his own actions in turn. He told me, “I can happily say that Professor Puett has lived up to his promise, and that the course did in fact change my life.”

## Language focus

Complete the sentences with suitable words or phrases from the box. Change the form where necessary.

<b>elicit</b>	<b>ethical</b>	<b>pros and cons</b>	<b>revolutionary</b>
<b>ripple effect</b>	<b>semester</b>	<b>spontaneous</b>	<b>yearning</b>

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ to access the deep wisdom of the East brought many foreign students to Asia.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ thoughts of Confucius on good behavior and moral characters have influenced generations of people.
3. Negative thinking not only \_\_\_\_\_ poor mental health, but can also lead to a cycle of negativity.
4. The new professor introduced \_\_\_\_\_ techniques in the teaching of critical thinking.
5. The book explains the \_\_\_\_\_ of creative thinking and its influence on our life and work.
6. Taoism holds that life is a series of natural and \_\_\_\_\_ changes and just let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.
7. The mind is just like the pond. When you start thinking a certain way, a series of thoughts create a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In the next \_\_\_\_\_, our university is going to introduce several lectures that are related to ancient Chinese philosophy.

## Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the summary with information from the passage.

Name of the course 1) _____ _____	<b>Teaching objectives</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To help the youth who are struggling to find their place in the world figure out how to be 2) _____, how to create 3) _____, and how to have 4) _____.</li><li>To open students' eyes to a different way to approach everything from 5) _____ to 6) _____.</li></ul>
	<b>Teaching materials</b>
	7) _____ (in translation) such as <i>The Analects of Confucius</i> , <i>Mencius</i> and <i>Tao Te Ching</i> .
	<b>Key ideas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The smallest actions have the most 8) _____.</li><li>Decisions are made from 9) _____.</li></ul>	
	<b>A student's comment</b>
	Professor Puett's course "did in fact change my life."

## Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and choose the best answer to the questions.

- Why are so many Harvard students learning Chinese philosophy?
  - They want to improve their Chinese by taking the course.
  - Professor Puett is one of the most popular teachers in the university.
  - More and more Harvard students become interested in Chinese culture.
  - Professor Puett promises students that the course will change their lives.
- Which of the following statements is true according to a recent report about students' course and career preferences at Harvard?
  - More and more Harvard students are majoring in the humanities.
  - The most popular career for Harvard students is finance.

- C. Professor Puett encourages students to rationally decide on their career goals.
  - D. The number of Harvard students who orient all their courses toward practical career goals is in decline.
3. What did the study in Para. 7 try to prove?
    - A. Even a fleeting smile could elicit a mini emotional high in the viewers.
    - B. The viewers couldn't realize they had seen the smile if it was flashed to them quickly.
    - C. People would hold a more positive view toward the things around them if they smiled for a little time.
    - D. A smile for just a fraction of a second wouldn't have any influence on the feelings of the viewers.
  4. According to Professor Puett, how should people use their heart and mind when they make decisions?
    - A. Decisions are the spontaneous overflow of emotions.
    - B. People should try to avoid emotional factors in decision-making.
    - C. People should use their heart to make logical and rational decisions.
    - D. People should combine heart and mind in decision-making.
  5. What do you learn from what Adam Mitchell said?
    - A. People should always weigh the pros and cons before making a decision.
    - B. Sticking with what you are good at is less risky and more rewarding.
    - C. To become better at what you love through great efforts is a more valuable experience.
    - D. People should make career decisions according to what they are good at.

## Cultural thinking

1. In the passage, Professor Puett teaches his students that "The smallest actions have the most profound consequences." What other examples can you find from Chinese proverbs, idioms, classic works, etc. to support his point? The following is an example. Read the example and make a list of small things you will do daily to improve yourself.

勿以恶小而为之，勿以善小而不为。

——《三国志》

Don't hurry to do an evil deed though it might seem to be tiny; don't hesitate to do a good deed though it might seem to be small.

— *Records of the Three Kingdoms*

2. In the passage, Professor Puett suggests that "Decisions are made from the heart." Do you agree with him? Should we listen to our heart or our mind when we make decisions?

# Integrated <sup>?</sup> thinking

In Passage 1, the author makes a comparison between Eastern and Western ways of dealing with emotional problems and tells readers that the Eastern culture and world view can better protect people from emotional disorders. In Passage 2, the author explains why ancient Chinese philosophy is so attractive to Harvard students and indicates that ancient Chinese philosophy can help people figure out how to be good human beings, how to create a good society, and how to have a flourishing life. Read the two passages again and then answer the following questions.

1. Are there any examples in Chinese philosophical or literary works (for instance, some quotes by Chinese philosophers or literati) that teach us how to achieve emotional well-being, how to be good human beings, how to create a good society, and how to have a flourishing life? Please give examples. Some have been given for your reference.

## A How to achieve emotional well-being?

非淡泊无以明志，非宁静无以致远。

——诸葛亮

One can't show high ideals without simple living; one can't have lofty aspirations without a peaceful state of mind.

— Zhuge Liang

## B How to be good human beings?

见贤思齐焉，见不贤而内自省也。

——孔子

When we see men with worth, we should think of equaling them; when we see worthless men, we should turn inward and examine ourselves.

— Confucius

## C How to create a good society?

老吾老，以及人之老；幼吾幼，以及人之幼。

——孟子

Treat our elders as they ought to be treated, as well as the elders of others. Treat our young as they ought to be treated, as well as the young of others.

— Mencius

## D How to have a flourishing life?

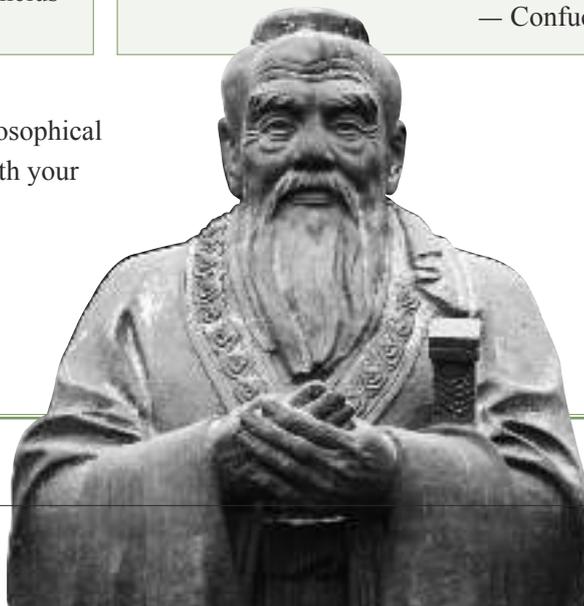
志于道，据于德，依于仁，游于艺。

——孔子

Let the will be set on the path of duty; let every attainment in what is good be firmly grasped; let perfect virtue be accorded with; let relaxation and enjoyment be found in the polite arts.

— Confucius

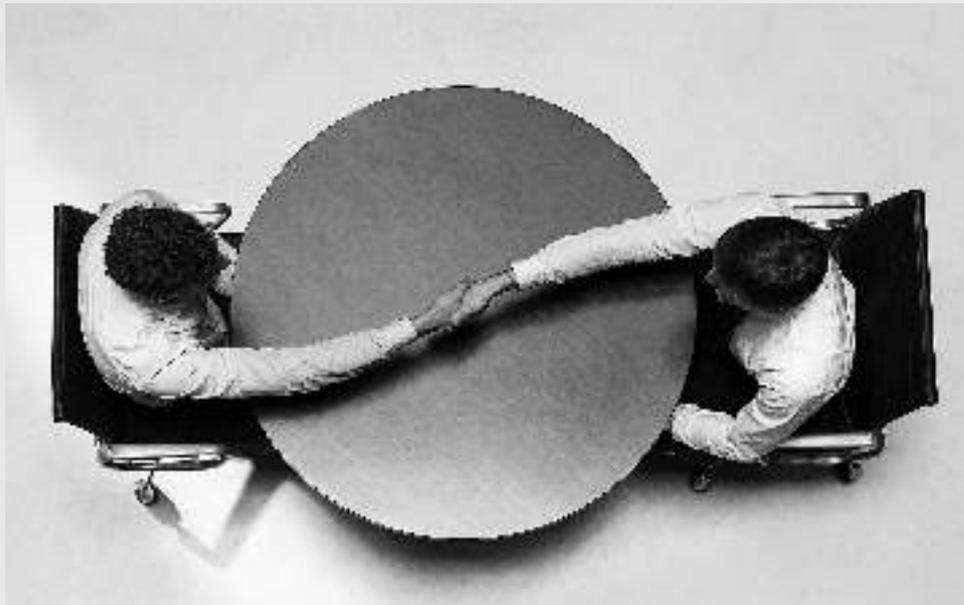
2. Have you ever benefited from Chinese philosophical thoughts? Please share your experiences with your classmates.



# Culture mosaic

1

## Yin and yang



The Eastern dialectical way of thinking reflects the deep influence of ancient Chinese philosophy — Tao. Yin (the female principle, which is inactive, dark and negative) alternates with yang (the male principle, which is active, light and positive). Indeed, yin and yang coexist harmoniously, perfectly representing Eastern “paradoxical thinking” — everything is partly composed of its opposite. The founder of Taoism, Laozi, once said: “When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness; when they know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil. Therefore, being and non-being produce each other.”

The yin and yang theory expresses the relationship that exists between opposing but interconnected forces that may complete each other, make each other understandable, or create the conditions for one to change into the other.

**Task** Please use yin and yang to interpret some phenomena in your daily life, such as happiness and misfortune, success and failure, etc.

## Thinking in categories vs. thinking in relationships



Which choice best matches with the “bull” in the above picture, the “chicken” or the “grass”?

Most Americans chose the “chicken” as the best match for the “bull,” since both were seen as part of the same category — “animals.” However, most Asians chose the “grass” as the best match for the “bull,” because they were looking at it in terms of the relationship — “The bull eats the grass.”

This again illustrates how Westerners focus more on objects, properties, and categories, while Easterners focus more on relationships, context, and environment. According to Richard E. Nisbett, a professor of psychology, Westerners are more likely to mentally group things together in terms of “categories” while Easterners are more likely to mentally group things together in terms of “relationships.”

Neither perspective is right or wrong, because each gives us a different lens to look at the world and interpret it. One perspective is more analytical, while the other is more holistic. Each can lead us down a different path of thinking about the world.

**Task** Which will you choose to match with the “bull,” the “chicken” or the “grass”? What do you think of the research finding mentioned above? Is it overgeneralized? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two thinking patterns: thinking in categories and thinking in relationships?

## 3

## Similarities between Eastern and Western ways of thinking

The British poet Joseph Rudyard Kipling said in his poem: “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet ...” Eastern and Western ways of thinking, however, present similar issues when it comes to the idea of the state of being a human being. Both philosophies have the goal of finding out the meaning and purpose in life.

One illustration is the focus on Confucius and Aristotle who discuss the same basic concepts. Both philosophers state that the highest goal human beings can strive to achieve is virtue. They further discuss that lasting rewards come to one who considers virtue before the possessions of the world.

Another is innate morality. Two philosophers Plato and Wang Yangming discuss this fundamental topic. They argue that there exists innate knowledge for all human beings. The philosophers state that all human beings are born with the ability to tell apart right from wrong and good from bad. Therefore, people should only be encouraged to follow goodness so that they can live a better and fulfilling life.

**Task** Besides the examples used in the above passage, brainstorm more examples to illustrate the similarities between Eastern and Western ways of thinking. The following sentences and phrases are given for your reference.

### Eastern

- 三个臭皮匠, 顶个诸葛亮。
- 居安思危

### Western

- *Two heads are better than one.*
- *The sword of Damocles*

