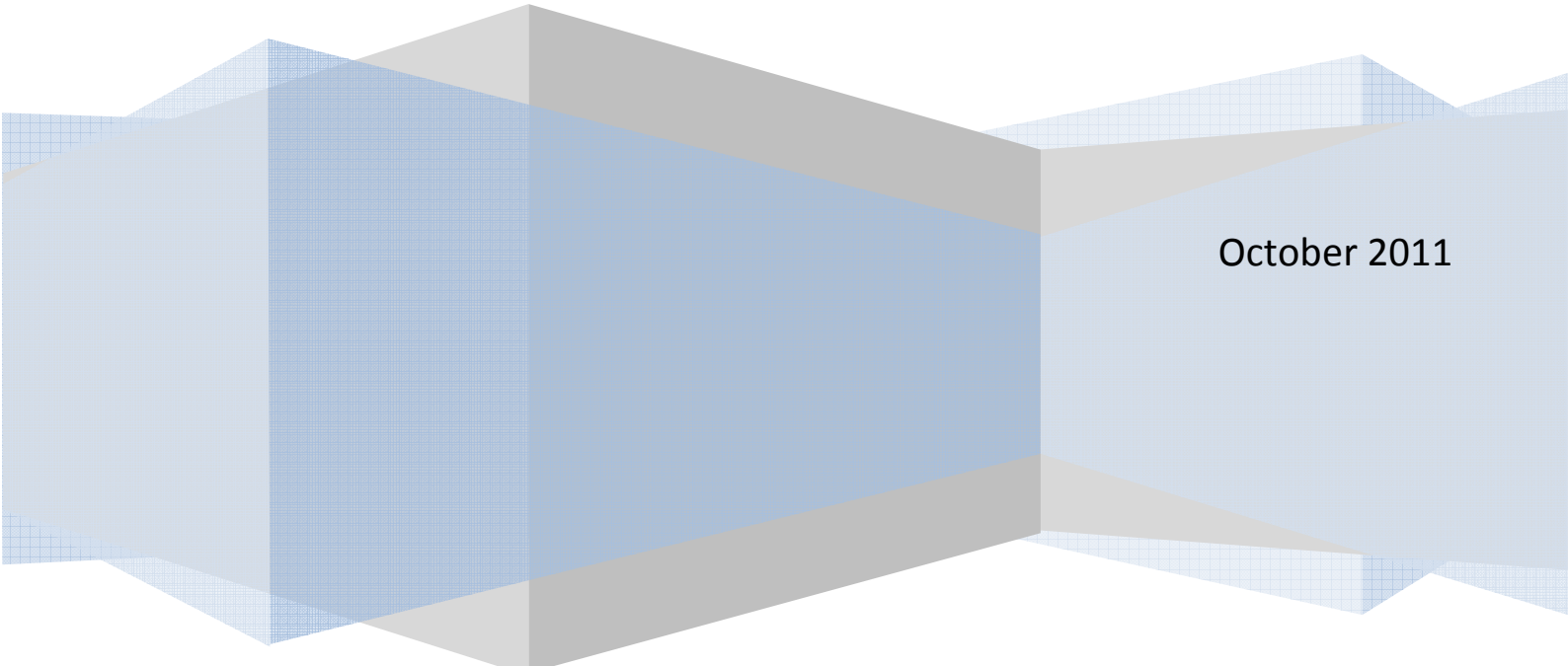


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# Natural optimism

The future is bright – Ignore the rumours

Andrew Marshall



October 2011

# NATURAL OPTIMISM

## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT - IGNORE THE RUMOURS

There is great danger afoot. So run the reports in the world's media. Politicians and financial mandarins, who no doubt have enormous knowledge and experience, warn of national, international and, indeed, global collapse. We are all on the road to disaster, comes the message, which is reminiscent of the man wearing the sandwich board outside the railway station when I was young, warning everyone that "the end of the world is nigh". Pessimism has always been around. Sometimes it is comical, like the grumblings of Eeyore the donkey in Winnie the Pooh, and we can just brush it off. At other times, spreading a dark view can have a harmful effect, and that needs countering with positive action.

Pessimists often argue that they are realistic rather than negative. Telling a group of people to stop having a party because the house is on fire may be deemed realistic; but warning that there should never be a party because a calamity could occur strays into pessimism. Pessimists have a tendency to cast a cloud on the moods of others and guarding against such negative effects on consciousness is essential for our evolution. Creating a general mood of pessimism is like administering poison because, when people feel down about the world and themselves, they lose their sense of well-being. Their vitality goes down and life can even begin to seem rather pointless.

Anyone with the slightest interest in world affairs knows that the global economy is woefully out of balance. It always has been and will no doubt continue to be so for a very long time to come. The worst aspect of imbalance has been the impoverishment of the majority of the world's population in favour of the few. We also now have an imbalance due to too much spending. In recent years, the major economies of the world have become too yang - over-stimulated and over-active - and have had to retreat. It is this retreating that is causing many people great concern because it can threaten livelihoods and financial security generally.

Economies, though, are a reflection of consciousness. When there is fear of loss, stock markets plunge; conversely, when there is a feeling of confidence, they recover. Over-stretching of the economy reflects an imbalance in consciousness. In the major economies, we had sufficient for our needs but desired more; then, arguably having too much, we are now frightened of losing what we have. Those who are without remain without, sadly. The pessimistic view is that this is all a dreadful state of affairs and that there is only suffering ahead. Even the optimist may get drawn into believing that everything has to contract without any expansion whatsoever. This is when we may need to remind ourselves of the principles of yin and yang.

Yang - outward movement, stimulus, heat, action - is balanced by yin - inward movement, calming, coolness, rest. Neither is intrinsically good or bad; they are principles of life that

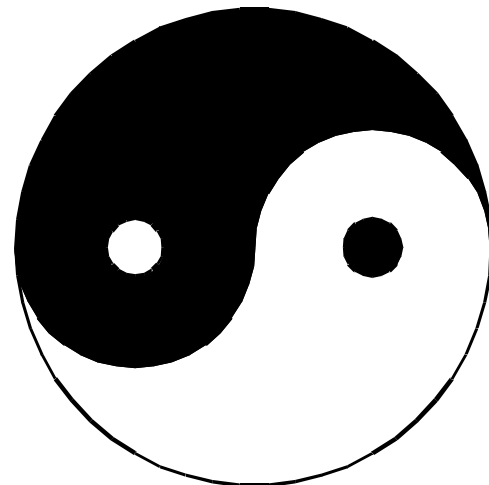
demand to be kept in a state of relative balance. If we are very tired, it means we have allowed ourselves to become too yang and so we have to rebalance ourselves by resting. However, if we rest too much or are very inactive, then we become too yin and have to exercise in order to revert to a balanced state.

It isn't difficult to see that it is very easy to go from one extreme to the other. The same applies to matters of economy. If the world's activity, as measured by the flow of what we call money, takes a nosedive that is too steep, humanity's affairs go from being too yang to a condition that is too yin, and then it can become very difficult to recover. This is a danger of a pessimistic view and of creating an atmosphere of gloom and unhappiness.

Some argue that this is precisely the medicine that humanity needs to recover its spirituality. Because we have been, and still are, too materialistic, a shock like this will reshape the way we think and behave, they say. They may have a point. Certainly we do have a need to change. But the Victorians and, long before them, the Puritans also had strong views on the benefits of austerity and their eras contained the seeds of the times we live in now. If we are not careful, we could find our global society careering from a state of almost recklessness abandon to one of joylessness - from extreme yang to extreme yin.

Those who are familiar with the traditional taiji symbol depicting yin and yang will know that each aspect contains the seed of the other. In

other words, there cannot be pure yin or pure yang. Yin always carries the potentiality of yang, and vice versa. In a time of contraction or withdrawal, there has to be the readiness to expand or advance. To spend less, we nevertheless still have to spend to some degree, otherwise there is a total absence of anything - a vacuum which nature will find a way of filling. In a sense, the opposite of spending is earning or labouring and our problem has not been that there has been no earning or labouring at all but the earning hasn't matched the spending. So, on the one hand there has to be some contraction of spending but there also has to be an expansion of earning. Each contains the principle of the other, just as yin contains yang and vice versa – indicated by the dots within the classic taiji (yin yang) symbol:



If we practise meditation or tai chi, we may be familiar with the concept of a state of nothingness or emptiness; if we are fortunate to experience nothingness from time to time, we know that it isn't a vacuum at all but has great potentiality. All our activity and creativity spring from it and, when we begin to touch that state, it fills us with confidence.

This is relevant to the question of optimism because we have a real responsibility to make the world a better place. It is vital that in our own lives we help society as well as ourselves by remaining positive and balanced in outlook. In these times of economic recession, we need to feel confident and convey that feeling to others. Usually that will be by example and sometimes it may be by reasoning and logic. Being positive raises not only our own energy but the energy of others. We don't need to be a cheerleader or a rebel-rouser; being quietly happy and confident is sufficient. This is natural optimism that is an aspect of our inherent boundless state of being. And on those occasions when we have doubts or feel a little negative or fearful, it is important not to spread those feelings – there are enough people doing that already – but instead recognise them as being fleeting, arising because we have temporarily lost touch with our true nature. Gradually the feelings will pass and then we can radiate the smile of optimism once more.

There is nothing to fear in the current climate. If we observe the seasons, we know they come and go; they always have and always will. Everything in the universe is subject to ebb and flow, yin and yang. Changes happen. If we think it's a terrible day because it is pouring with rain, it means we are allowing the weather to rule us rather than remaining constant inside. Similarly, if we think the world is a terrible place, we are not grounded in consciousness and are viewing everything from a false perspective.

Our natural state of being is totally bright and not influenced by outer events. Outer events, however, can be influenced for the better when we live from our firm base of inner brightness. The seeds of the future are contained within the present. If we can learn or, rather, *remember* to be in touch with the present and with our true, extraordinary nature, we plant bright seeds for the future. Then, in spite of the pessimists, the future really is bright.

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Andrew has written two books – [The Great Little Book of Happiness](#) was published in 2008 and [Awakening Heart](#) was released on 1st June 2011. Both are available from bookshops and from [www.radiantsunbooks.com](http://www.radiantsunbooks.com).

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