

## HANDOUT: COMPARATIVE CHART OF EASTERN RELIGIONS

	Zoroastrianism	Jainism	Taoism	Buddhism	Confucianism
Year	600 BCE	556 BCE	550 BCE	531 BCE	500 BCE
Country	Iran	India	China	India	China
Prophet / Founder	Zoroaster (Zarathustra)	Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara	Lao Tzu	Siddhartha Gautama	K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius)
Followers	2.6 Million	4.2 M	20 M	360 M	6 M
Ahimsa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Theistic	Monotheistic: Ahura Mazda	No	No	No	No
Karma	No	Yes	Silent	Yes	No
Rein-carnation	No	Yes	Silent	Yes	No
Gender equality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Called a "philosophy"	No	Sometimes	Yes	Sometimes	Yes

NOTE: Ahimsa = Nonviolence; do no harm

## HANDOUT: TAOISM FACT SHEET

**Founded/Created:** It is estimated that the Tao Te Ching (DOW duh jing) was written in China in 550 BCE; however, the origins of Taoism go back hundreds of years before that.

**Adherents:** 20 million—predominately in Asia but distributed worldwide.

**Ranking:** Seventh in size, behind Christianity, Islam, Atheism/Agnosticism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

**Prophets:** Lao Tzu (LAU tsuh), who is often considered the father of Taoism because he authored its primary text; also Chuang Tzu (JWONG tsuh) and Chang Tao-Ling.

**Texts:** There are many, but three key texts are the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu by Chuang Tzu, and The Art of War by Sun Tzu.

### Symbols:

- *Yin/Yang:* The yin/yang (shown on Handout 2, Yin/Yang Symbol) depicts a seamless interconnectedness of opposites, the perpetual flowing together of the elements of existence. Each is necessary to create the whole; each part flows into the other, equal in strength and influence. Each is contained within the heart of the other.
- *Water imagery:* These images remind us that humans are part of Nature; water illustrates the concept of flow and of great power deriving from softness, adaptability, responsiveness, and balance.

### Terms and Fundamental Precepts:

- *Tao:* This translates as "the Way" or "the Path."
- *Balance:* This is maintained by accepting what is—flowing with reality rather than fighting it.
- *Emptiness:* The ideal internal state to maintain in order to be ready for truths as they present themselves. This pertains to ego as well as ideas: If people are full of their own ideas or importance, they will not be able to recognize or absorb truth as it emerges around them.

- *Chi*: The natural energy of the universe that permeates all things, including the human body. A key concept associated with chi (chee) is harmony.
- *Harmony*: Most difficulties in the universe, or in the heart, from the largest to the smallest scale, are caused by imbalance and disharmony and will be aided or resolved by restoring harmony and attaining equilibrium.
- *Nature*: Human beings are part of the natural order and will be guided in their spiritual growth and personal harmony by paying attention to and experiencing nature and by recognizing their own energy—their chi—that flows with that of all living things.

### **Shared with Unitarian Universalism:**

- One's personal responsibility for their spiritual journey—no dogma or set of fixed beliefs that people must accept without question
- The importance of nature and human beings' place in the natural order
- The interconnectedness of all things (the interdependent web—the seventh UU Principle)
- Acceptance of all people and all occurrences (acceptance of one another—the second UU Principle)
- Many songs and readings—for example, in *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993), Readings 600—604 and 606 and Hymn 186 are from the Taoist tradition.

### **A Taoist Riddle**

What is greater than God, more evil than the devil, the poor have it, the rich need it, and if you eat it, you die?

Answer: Nothing.

Why can this riddle be seen as Taoist? Because the "nothing" in this riddle is an active principle, not a passive one. It speaks not to the absence of something but to the presence of Nothing. It is not that the rich do not want for anything; it is that people who have too much could use more emptiness and would benefit from embracing the idea of Nothing. They need to empty their cups.

**HANDOUT: YIN/YANG SYMBOL**



## HANDOUT: APHORISMS OF CONFUCIUS

Gathered from online sources including the [Quotations Page](#) and the [Brainy Quote](#) websites.

1. Those who would perfect their work must first sharpen their tools.
2. Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it.
3. A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do you know the youth's future will not be equal to or greater than your present?
4. A person who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it is committing another mistake.
5. Forget injuries. Never forget kindnesses.
6. One who exercises leadership by means of virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the other stars turn toward it.
7. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.
8. I hear and I know. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.
9. If a person takes no thought of what is distant, sorrow will be near at hand.
10. In errors a person is true to type. Observe the errors and you will know the person.
11. Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.
12. It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.
13. Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.
14. To move a mountain, one begins by carrying away small stones.
15. They must often change who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.
16. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.
17. Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart.
18. Plant a thought, reap an act. Plant an act, reap a habit. Plant a habit, reap a character. Plant a character, reap a destiny.
19. Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we do.
20. Before embarking on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.