# THE QUEST FOR A GENERAL SYSTEM THEORY FOR ANY PARTICULAR PERSPECTIVE

- does it ever exist or has it been there all the time?

# INTRODUCTION

Holism\_is about analyzing a problem with all the components and relationships ('statics'), the change of states, and the rules of change ('dynamics') in order to have a full view within a particular perspective or a particular set of perspectives.

(Wong 2008a) presents our research of the general structure of a system according to the theory of Taichi Yin-Yang system theory. The Good and Evil Yin-Yang chart was employed for the representation of the spectrum of states of a system.

This paper presents our research of the general structure of the other part of a system, the observer, according to the theories in the teaching of Buddha. With these two structures together we have a better picture of a general system theory. A possible solution to the common situation when different observers are involved in a system will also be presented. The rules of further differentiation of systems into subsystems are also presented. However, the rules for integration of different systems into one system and the system dynamics for these structures require further research.

# The properties of the general system theory of any particular perspective

In order to search for a general system theory, we need to know what we are searching for, and what properties it should have. It is believed that a GST should have the following properties:

- should be general enough to explain theories in all field of sciences
- could be expressed in a common language in a simple manner so that layman can understand it, but at the same time could be expressed in any other scientific language so that any field of physical, social and biological scientists can make use of it to explain all the phenomenon in their respective fields
- should simply state the facts and have no attitude of right or wrong because that exists only in the perspective of the observer(s)
- should not indicate which perspective is the best or is good all the time
- should not indicate which strategy is the best or is good all the time
- should indicates that every perspective has good (balanced) and bad (Deficient of Essence good and the Excess of Toxin evil.
- a general theory that will include all observer does not exists
- should answer the following questions: how do we know we have the big picture? how can we know that we have taken everything into consideration? how many components should we consider? how do we know that we did not miss something?

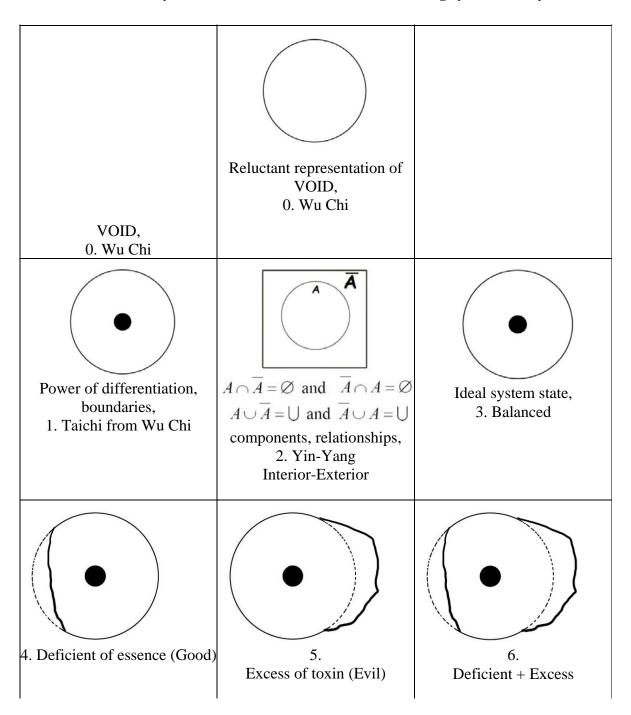
## However, the difficulties are:

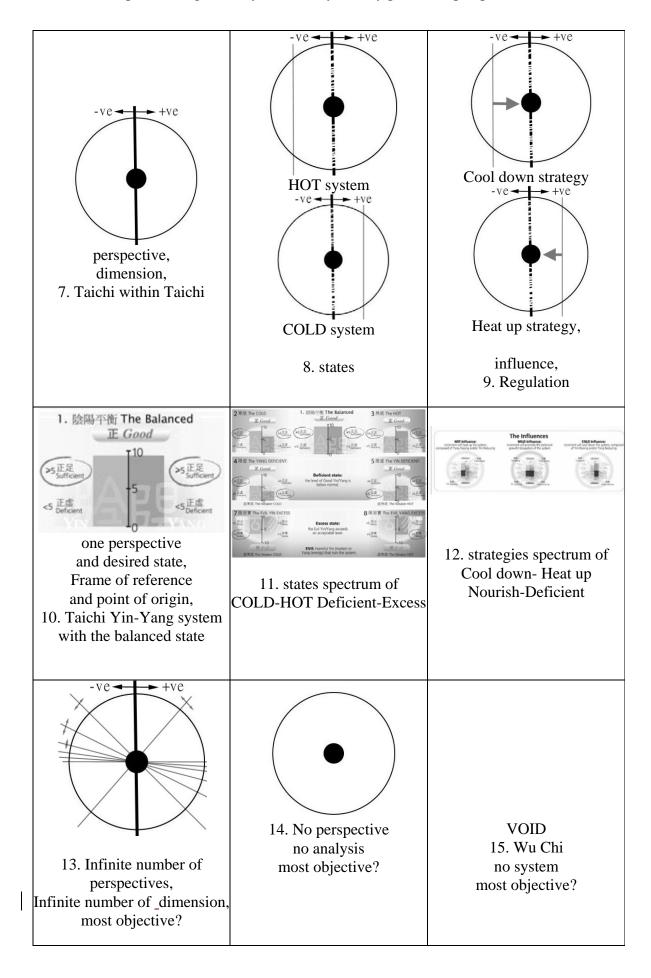
- in quantum physics there is an uncertainty principle, it is not because the observer has done something wrong, it is because the very act of analysis make the whole process subjective in some way. The very act of observation or analysis already change the behavior of the system we analyze.
- one can only imagine anothers' perspective or the object's perspective, not until others or the object become the observer itself will one know if a particular perspective is the same perspective for others.
- how to be objective? how big is the population of the observers? If it is not the whole population of the universe, it is still subjective relative to the population. That is, being subjective and objective is still within the scope of relativity.
- there is no universal perspective, there is a perspective for every one observer, a common perspective for a larger population of observers can be found but there will never be "the perspective for all", there will only be a common structure and process for any particular one perspective, and there is no right or wrong for the common structure and process.
- Having "no perspective" is by definition "a perspective". Therefore from "no perspective" to "all perspective" is the spectrum of perspective, as found in duality theory. The ultimate truth is not "no perspective" and not "all perspective", which comes back to the theory of paradox of all ancient great thinkers like Buddha in Vipassana, Laozi (Lao Tse) in Taoism, Plato in Platonism. Fortunately, the technique of how to experience the ultimate truth is both logical and practical, with clear instructions for us to perform experiments, and even with safety pre-cautions (Goenka 1969).
- Our research shows that such a theory exists not because of the truth of the universe, but actually become of the properties of the observe, it is the way on how observer "see" and analyse this universe, namely differentiation.

# THE STRUCTURE OF A GENERAL SYSTEM

System theory is believed to contains two components: System and Observer. The basic structure and basic dynamics of the system component are discussed in (Wong 2008c), which is summarized in Table 1, Fig 1 and Fig 2.

Table.1 The summary of the formation of the Taichi Yin-Yang system theory.





Note that mathematically, the definition of a system is already the first perspective, forming the Deficient-Excess state spectrum and Nourish-Dissipate influence spectrum. The perspective within the system should be considered as the second perspective, forming the Cold-Hot state spectrum and the Cool down-Heat up influence spectrum. The Cold-Hot Deficient-Excess state spectrum and the Cool down-Heat up Nourish-Dissipate influence spectrum in (WONG 2007d) is actually the combination of the two perspectives expressed as a combo bar chart called the Good n Evil Yin-Yang chart.

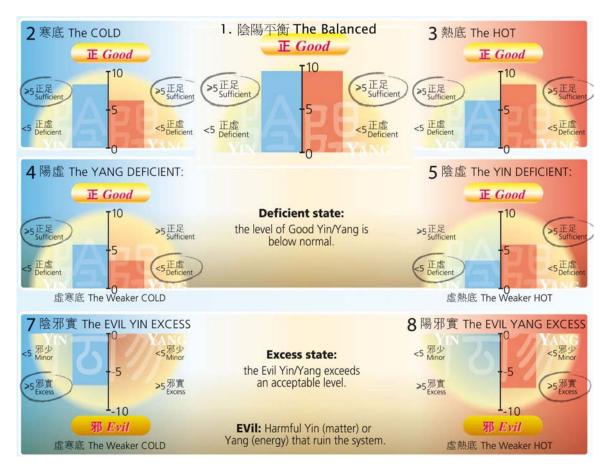


Fig.1 The state spectrum in the Taichi Yin-Yang system theory.

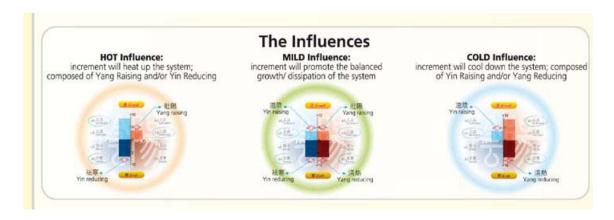


Fig.2 The influence sperturm in the Taichi Yin-Yang system theory.

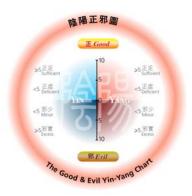


Fig 3. The Good n Evil Yin-Yang Chart representation of a system with a particular perspective.

Extending from the one perspective analysis in (WONG 2007d), the combination of two perspectives of a system (three perspectives in total) is employed in this paper\_for the analysis of observers on system theory.

The idea of Superficial was graphically illustrated in (Wong 2008h), it could be considered as the interface between a system (interior) and its environment (exterior). It could be more similar to the system or more similar to the environment, thus introducing a third level of logic as illustrated in Fig 4. It is believed to be the ancient theory on fuzzy logic.

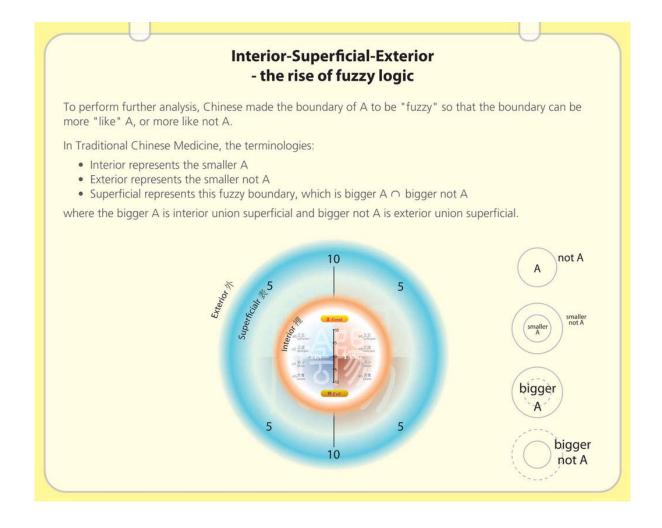


Fig. 4 The Interior-Superficial-Exterior system structure, the rise of fuzzy logic in ancient system theory.

Note that in Traditional Chinese Medicine (Huang 200BC) (Wong 2005) (Wong 2006), five of these Superficial-Interior Good n Evil Yin-Yang charts are employed for the analysis of the five sub-systems of human body.

# THE STRUCTURE OF A GENERAL OBSERVER

Observers can be analyzed as a system by other observers, therefore the methodology for applying the Taichi Yin-Yang system theory in (Wong 2007d) can be employed again for the analysis of observers as well as systems. Note that sometimes it is very hard to have a clear boundary between observers and decision makers. Both of them have the power to choose how to act and the reason of why to act. The act of an observer by choosing a system to observe and choosing a particular perspective to analyze a system is also a decision making process. Hence they could be classified with the following perspectives shown in Table 2

Table 2

Observers' ability in system theory (Taichi)	reason of why to act (Yin supports)	power of how to act (Yang operates)
Observer (Yin supports)	awareness (consciousness, cognition* 識)	perspective (perception*, recognition 想)
Decision maker (Yang operates)	Desire to achieve the idel balance state from current state according to preferences, prejudices, ignorance and wisdom (sensation* 受causing desire)	strategy (reaction* 行; mental conditioning)

<sup>\*</sup>These four characters together with the physical body (色) is said to be the five aggregates of human in the teaching of Buddha (Buddha 500BC a), (Buddha 500BC b) (Goenka 1969).

It should be noted that this paper is about the analysis of a general system theory, and hence it should recursively fall into the pattern of the same general system theory. It is similar to the situation that a computer programming language should be able to be used for writing a compiler for the programming language itself.

The above illustration is called a "table" and is a common format of illustration of ideas nowadays, however, it is actually composed of two perspectives, or two Taichi Yin-Yang systems, or two dimensions. This could be considered as the formation of hierarchy with emerging power (Taichi) as illustrated in Table 3 to 5.

Table 3. The Taichi Yin-Yang system structure of observer

Yin	Tai Chi: Differentiation,	Yang
Component supports:	System definition:	Component operates:
Observation		Action
	The ability of observers in	
	system theory	

Table 4. The next level of hierarchy according to Taichi Yin-Yang system theory:

Yin	Tai Chi:	Yang	Yin	Tai Chi:	Yang
supports:	Observation	operates:	supports:	Action	operates:
Observe		make decision	reason of why		power of how

Table 5. The interaction of two Taichi Yin-Yang systems at the same level of hierarchy:

Sufficient Yin	Minor Yang	Minor Yin	Sufficient Yang (greater Yang*) 太陽 ——
(greater Yin*)	(lesser Yang*)	(lesser Yin*)	
太陰	少陽	少陰	
2 <sup>nd</sup> level->	—		
1 <sup>st</sup> level->	—	—	
awareness(conscious ness, cognition)	perspective (perception, recognition)	Desire according to preferences, prejudices, ignorance and wisdom(sensation causing desire)	strategy (reaction; mental conditioning)

<sup>\*</sup> World Health Organization standard terminologies in traditional medicine

Observers are usually regarded as the ones who analyze the system. However all humans that are capable to observe should be regarded as observers, especially in the application to social systems. The observer's perspective defines the ideal state of a system. Decision makers identify the current state of a system and compare it with the ideal state which produces desires to implement strategies.

The first group of observers identify the problem and setup the boundary of a system. With a particular perspective, the group of observers may have a common ideal balanced system state, or may have different ideal balanced system states. With a common ideal balanced system state, the observers and decision makers will implement strategies to maintain the state (resilience) due to turbulence caused by the influences from the environment of the system. In the case of observers having different ideal balanced system states, the observers and decision-makers (governing body) have to determine a common tolerable ideal balanced system state. Note that decision makers could be observers at the same time.

One common perspective to classify observers could be described by the basic characteristics of preference, prejudice, and no comments. Employing the classification of Taichi Yin-Yang system theory, observers could be classified into the *deterministic* (Yang operates) and the *whatever* (Ying supports). *Deterministic* could be further classified into For (like, preference, craving, Yin) and Against (dislike, prejudice, aversion, Yang). *Whatever* could be further classified into Ignorance (Ying) who follows the Deterministic, and the Wisdom (Yang) who only cares about the harmony of all observers. This can be illustrated using the Taichi Yin-Yang system structure as in Table 6.

Table 6. The characteristics of the desire of observers

Yin Component supports: Whatever type		Tai Chi: Differentiation System definition:  The characteristics of the desire of observers		Yang Component operates: Deterministic type	
Yin Supports: ignorance Tai C Whate type	ever	Yang operates: wisdom	Yin supports: like, for, preference	Tai Chi: Determinist ic	Yang operates: dislike, against, prejudice

Each type of observers has their own characteristics and is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 The characteristics of each type of observers

Yin Component supports: Why to Act	Tai Chi: Differentiation System definition: Observers' Mental Contents	Yang Component operates: How to Act
Whatever with wisdom the understanding of the three characteristics of phenomena of this universe: 1. impermanence 2. egolessness 3. suffering	Good Proper methods that will purify our minds and be liberated	four qualities of a pure mind selfless love compassion sympathetic joy equanimity  peace and harmony of all observers
Whatever with ignorance physical sloth and mental torpor agitation and worry doubt, uncertainty	Evil Improper methods that will poison our mind and keep suffering	conditional love coldness selfishness agitation sloth
like (craving) pleasant sensations: preference, ego, pride  dislike (aversion) unpleasant sensations:		thought: greed, lust, gluttony, hatred, ill will, animosity, wrath, pride, envy speech: deceive, curse, gossip

# prejudice, humiliation

action: kill, steal, rape,

Most observers are a combination of these four types and the size of each of the components determine the individuality of observers.

Deterministic observers are usually leaders because they have a strong opinion with passion of like or dislike on a system. Whatever ignorance observers usually follows them. Whatever wisdom observers always have compassion for the other three kind of observers. They reckon that all of them are suffering in their whole lives because their unlimited desires. These wise people left techniques of how to come out of suffering and these techniques are analyzed in (Wong 2008d) using ancient and modern system theories.

(Wong a) illustrated that any system has a spectrum (continuum) of possible states with any particular perspective. Each observer has a preference on the spectrum of states to be used as their ideal state. However, in order to achieve their respective ideal state, they may hide their real agenda and show a false agenda to the public. These characteristics of observers actually caused many methodologies and strategies in system theory to fail in practical situations. The exterior-superficial-interior extension of Taichi Yin-Yang system theory in (Wong 2008h) is employed to illustrate these characteristics as in Table 8.

Table 8. The open agenda and hidden agenda of an observer

	environment of observer Exterior	
open agenda of why to act (consciously or subconsciously)	Superficial: interface with the environment: the open agenda of an observer	how to act publicly (consciously or subconsciously)
Yin Component supports: why to act Deterministic: like, dislike, Whatever: ignorance, wisdom	Tai Chi: Differentiation System definition: Observers' perspective	Yang Component operates: how to act analyze, opinion, actions
hidden agenda of why to act (consciously or subconsciously)	Interior: the hidden agenda of the action of an observer	how to act secretly (consciously or subconsciously)

(The Taichi Yin-Yang system simple Exterior-Superficial-Interior component structure)

An example of a typical observer is shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Example of a typical observer:

open agenda of why to act: wisdom	Superficial: interface with the environment:  the open agenda of an observer	how to act publicly: determine strategies to maintain harmony of all observers
Yin Component supports: why to act	Tai Chi: Differentiation System definition: perspective of one possible Observer (government official)	Yang Component operates: how to act
hidden agenda of why to act: the like of the power to control	Interior: the hidden agenda of the action of an observer	how to act secretly: strengthen the power of control among observers

(The Taichi Yin-Yang system simple Exterior-Superficial-Interior component structure)

All the above structures of observers are derived from the Taichi Yin-Yang theory and Set theory in mathematics (Wong 2007d). It is believed that any other structure is a subset of this particular structure. This structure exists because of the way observers see the world: differentiation (Buddha 500BC a) (Buddha 500BC b) (Goenka 1969).

#### Observers

- see an object by differentiating it from the background view,
- hear a sound by differentiating it from the background noise,
- taste a flavor by differentiating it from the background flavor in the mouth,
- smell a fragrance by differentiating it from the background fragrance in the nose,
- feel a touch by differentiating it from the background sensation in the body,
- remember a thought by differentiating it from the background thoughts in the memory.

Therefore any system theory that is a subset of the proposed complete theory would be an incomplete system theory. On the other hand, even if there may exist a more complete theory in which the proposed complete theory is just a subset of it, such a theory will not be describable because it is beyond the ability of the observers to be aware of it. All human languages are invented by observers and hence are based on differentiation. Therefore, no human language is possible to describe what it is like beyond differentiation. In the teaching of Buddha and other ancient texts in different cultures, they can only describe the "world" beyond differentiation as nothing like our world and hence is not describable 不可思議 (Buddha 500BC a)(Buddha 500BC b) (Goenka 1969) (Laozi 500BC) (Wong 2008d).

When the structure of observers (decision\_makers) combines with the structure of the system it could be considered as a complex interaction of two systems. However, it is believed that the solution to the problem of complexity should be the idea of simplicity.

## **EXAMPLE: HALF FILLED or HALF EMPTY?**

Example 1: Half filled or half empty? The analysis of a oil storage-usage system.

Observer's awareness causes system definition: a jar of oil and the environment

Observer's *perspective* defines the ideal state of the jar of oil.

The current state: the oil level inside the jar is half the height of the jar. The jar system (Taichi) = {the level of space, the level of oil} {Yin, Yang}

Observers compare the difference between the current and their respective ideal system states and may have the following *desires*:

- 1. Half-filled already, could reduce: optimistic, only the yang (content) is considered.
- 2. Half-empty already, should raise: pessimistic, only the yin (space) is considered.
- 3. Half-filled and half-empty, could reduce or raise: realistic and objective with wisdom, both yin and yang are considered.
- 4. Looks like half filled but also looks like half empty: agitation with ignorance, disturbed by the fact that there exists both yin and yang in the world.

Decision makers implement the followings *strategies*:

- A. use up the half filled oil for cooking dinner
- B. fill up the half empty oil for furture use
- C. maintain or change the half filled oil for the harmony of others
- D. all options have advantages, but they also have disadvantages, what should we do? Maybe follow one option first, but can change later.

In the above example, which observer is correct? Which decision maker has the proper strategy? It all depends on the desire of the observers and decision makers. A general system theory only points out the structure and properties of a system, and that of an observer and that of a decision maker. Only all the possibilities (spectrums) of every perspective are included in the theory. There is no right or wrong, not good or bad. Objective and Subjective is a spectrum only. It may seem that the third observer is very objective. However, if the shape of the jar is not perfectly symmetrical from the top to bottom, the volume of the lower half of the jar maybe larger then the upper half. That is, the jar may be 60% full already. Moreover, some other observers may want to analyze the system with more perspectives. For example, the current state of the system maybe as follows:

Example 2: Current system state of a system with a combination of perspectives of another group of observers, i.e. a multi-dimension system analysis:

- a sealed glass jar of the capacity of 1L in traditional Indian style with the wording "Stories of Vipassana" engraved on the outside,
- containing 80% of 99% pure high-grade grape seed oil produced in Margaret river in Perth, Australia in year 2007,
- with internal pressure of 1psi and temperature 40 degree C

Perspectives involved:

• level of interaction with the environment: sealed

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• size: 1L

• style: traditional Indian

- labeling: simply has the wording "Stories of Vipassana" engraved on the outside
- quantity of content: 80%
- quality of content: 99% pure high-grade grape seed oil
- popularity: produced in Margaret river in Perth, Australia in year 2007
- physical environment within the jar: internal pressure of 1psi and T 40 degree C,
   1L

It could be seen that being objective in the population of observers in the first example is not objective at all among the population of the observers in the second example, even though each one of the perspectives in the second example could be measured objectively in physics. Therefore, objectivity depends on the population of observers.

# BEHAVIOR: HOW TO DETERMINE THE CURRENT STATE OF A SYSTEM

A general state identification process from the behavior of the system, according to a particular perspective of a particular set of perspectives, will be illustrated in (Wong TBPa).

Note that the behavior of the system in the first example may simply be the level of the oil and space. However, as pointed out earlier, analysis with system theory should include observers. Therefore the satisfaction of the observers and hence their level of happiness should also be considered.

## **INFLUENCE**

Influences are the cause of the changes of system states. They can be classified according to the Taichi Yin-Yang system theory with two perspectives as in Table 10.

Table 10. The influence towards a system.

Influence (Taichi) towards a system = {causes, desires}	not desired (Yin) (entropy increase with impermanence)	Desired (Yang) (entropy decrease with maintenance, regulation and control, i.e. Taichi)
Natural factors (Yin)	environment / atmosphere* influences (non-necessity)	Necessity (requirement of essence from the environment in order to maintain the integrity of the system e.g. food*)
Artificial strategies (Yang)	memory feedback triggered by new information, uncontrolled residue effect of some old strategies (a past mental reaction*)	strategies (a present mental

<sup>\*</sup> these are considered as the four causes for the arising of matter in the teaching of Buddha (Goenka 1969)

Some of the rules of change of a system in ancient theories are:

- the environment becomes part of the system, or the system becomes part of the environment
- input or output between the system and the environment
- interaction of the interior, the superficial (interface), and the exterior
- the appearance of change are the flows going in and out of boundaries
- the flows can be regulated or controlled
- what flows? energy? matter? information? the power? consciousness?

Different kind of strategies are illustrated in ancient Chinese texts:

- Golden rule of regulation (over-control) (Wong TBPa)
- Sun Tzu's Art of War
- 36 Strategies of Ancient China
- I-Ching
- Taichi pushing hands exercise

The Taichi exercise therapy is benificial to the physical and mental health of human (Wong TBPc). And the Taichi pushing hands exercise is about the implementation of a

strategy to a system, which is the other essence of the exercise. The technique is to maintain the point of interaction (same system) but never involve in a direct conflict (on the opposite sides of the same perspective). Instead, another force in a different direction (different perspective) on the same point of interaction (system) should be implemented (Wong TBPd).

Decision makers implement strategies to influence a system so that it behaves as they desire. However, all actions performed according to any strategy are also an act of differentiation. Otherwise observers cannot be aware of them because observers aware through differentiation. The general influence spectrum of a Taichi Yin-Yang system in (Wong 2007d) is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11. The Cold-Hot Nourish-Dissipate Influence Spectrum

environment of system

	Tai Chi: Differentiation system definition: Influence	
COLD influence	Do nothing	HOT influence
cool down the HOT system	when Balanced	heat up the COLD system
Yang Raising influence for	Yin Yang Raising	Yin Raising influence for Yin
Yang Deficient system	when both are in Deficient	Deficient Ssytem
Yin Reducing influence for Yin Excess system	Yin Yang Reducing when both are in Excess	Yang Reducing influence for Yang Excess system

(The Cold-Hot Nourish-Dissipate Influence Spectrum)

The process of the application of strategies to a social system:

- 1. identify the system, e.g. Public smoking areas
- 2. identify the set of different perspectives in a population of observers
- 3. understand that observers can be classified into the four categories of like, dislike, ignorance and wisdom
- 4. identify the observers' open agenda on the preferred states on the state spectrum, but expect the observers' hidden agenda to come out anytime (the identification of the hidden agenda is an art of war and will be illustrated in (Wong TBPd)
- 5. decision makers decide on the states that will allow different observers to live in harmony within the system (also harmony between decision makers)
- 6. decision makers choose the proper strategy from the strategy spectrum according to the current state (turbulence) and the agreed balance state (resilience)

7. expect that the group of like (for) and dislike (against) observers will always arise with any state or any strategy, and the ignorance group of observers usually follows one of these two groups of observers

# Post strategy stage:

- 8. Once the strategy is implemented, the state of the system changes, and the memory of the observers changes. Their open agenda and hidden agenda may change and then they may have new preferences, opinions, and actions. That is, they are adaptive systems with memory feedback.
- 9. Decision makers would wait until a new crisis level is reached before repeating the above process.
- 10. Decision makers themselves could have hidden agenda as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is believed that no single strategy is good for all systems in all times. Observers change, systems change, and the environment changes. Hence, system states change, ideal states change, and even the definition of the systems change. New strategies are required from the strategy spectrum to reduce the difference between the current state and the newly agreed ideal balanced state.

This is a never ending story. Observers keep changing their desires, hence changing their like and dislikes. The current states of systems are always different from their respective desired ideal states. Observers always have different desired ideal states.

Currently the environment system and financial system are under crisis and changes will affect all observers causing social changes. Humans do not like social changes, not because they do not like changes. Humans change fashions, mobile phones, computers, house, cars, or even lovers. They need changes to stimulate all six senses to feel sensations and hence happiness. Humans just do not like changes that do not match their direction of desires.

The proposed general system theory is believed to be universal and could be used to understand the nature of systems and observers. Only by taking into consideration the nature of both of them at the same time can a proper strategy be selected for the current state of the system, observer and environment. There will be future problems, conflicts, and suffering and new strategies are required to maintain our happiness and harmony. As long as the characteristics of the observers remain the same, the characteristics of systems will remain the same as well. Perhaps the enlightened persons throughout human history are correct; the most important task of our life is not to formulate strategies that may keep us happy only temporarily. This is the reason why the enlightened ones discarded the knowledge that they had come to know. They only concentrated on formulating the strategies that will eliminate the bug in the characteristics of observers: differentiation. It is interesting that such strategies are all very similar. They all have morality, concentration, and wisdom (equanimity, as it is, acceptance, contentment, forgiveness) and generate selfless love, compassion,

sympathetic joy and equanimity (Buddha 500BCa) (Buddha 500BCb) (Goenka 1969) (Wong 2008d).

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