

## Chapter 27

# The Yin & Yang of Politics

Since humans are emotional animals with a tribal ancestry, it is understandable that we might easily get caught up in heated political arguments. In fact, friendships and families have been torn asunder over political disagreements. Furthermore, excessive emotional charge tends to dampen the rational mind, as described in chapter 11. In this case, excessive emotional charge limits our capacity to objectively assess what is happening politically. We can minimize this in two ways:

- Regardless of our political leaning, we remind ourselves that our primary loyalty is to the truth.
- We recognize the dance of opposites at the core of any political system.

### **Individuality and Community**

Politics is ultimately a dance between the individual and the collective. We see this dance as the so-called right-leaning and left-leaning political systems around the world. The political right typically promotes individuality, often expressed as individual freedom, small government, and low taxes. The political left promotes community, often expressed as the common good and a call for cooperation, justice, and fairness.

As with other expressions of Yin and Yang, neither one can exist without the other. Therefore, the question, “which is better?” has no meaning. The real question is this: are they in harmony or not?

As with other opposites, when the two are in harmony, each side supports and stabilizes the other. In this case, the result is a harmonious society where free and self-responsible citizens provide the energy, vitality, and creative passion that translate into wealth which can then be used to fund public works, as

well as institutions that maintain justice, peace, and the rule of law. Likewise, the safety, stability, and conveniences provided by organized society allows each individual to pursue his or her personal dreams and achieve goals that otherwise would not be possible.

## **Life Shows Us How to Govern Ourselves**

To better understand the harmony between the individual and the collective, as described above, let us consider the workings of the human body. As with other multi-celled plants and animals, the human body consists of trillions of living cells, each of which has a certain degree of autonomy. Each cell has a physical membrane, a border, which establishes its identity.

Each cell is responsible for generating all the energy it needs. Each cell also contributes some of its energy and resources for maintaining the body as a whole. In exchange, the well-organized and unified body provides a safe internal environment where the individual cells can survive even under harsh external conditions, as well as accomplish things that would otherwise be impossible.

The natural harmony and deep synergy between the body as a whole and the individual cells includes two fundamental features shared by all life forms. All living systems are designed by Mother Nature to be supremely *conservative* and ever *progressive*.

## **Conservative and Progressive**

Each living cell can generate enough surplus energy to contribute to the body as a whole because each cell is, by its very nature, supremely conservative. One of the commandments of Mother Nature is, “Thou shalt not be wasteful! Thou shalt conserve energy and do things in the most efficient way possible.” This is how each cell is able to gather enough energetic capital to contribute to the body as a whole, without depriving itself.

Having amassed more energy than is needed for mere survival, life can express its other fundamental quality: to be ever progressive. Life cannot be static. Life, in the very act of

living, must evolve. It must expand itself, move forward, and fulfill its potential.

The evolution of life includes a tendency for living organisms to become increasingly conservative and energetically efficient. Thus, even more energetic capital is available to allow life to expand, evolve, and progress even more. In other words, the conservative and progressive elements of life exist in a state of synergy.

### **The Body Politic**

The harmony between individual cells and the body as a whole, also describes the ideal functioning of the any political system. The political right typically promotes a conservative approach to governance, while the political left urges us to be progressive.

The conservative right advises us to keep government small and taxes low, while advocating individual freedom. Naturally, such freedom comes at a price. Each individual must be *personally responsible* for his or her own personal wellbeing. In contrast, the progressive left urges us to focus on the common good, so as to allow for the evolution of social and political systems designed to promote a more perfect union, a kinder and gentler society. Naturally, the creation of such a system comes at a price. Each individual must be *socially responsible*, financially and otherwise.

In other words, neither side can energetically exist without the other. The energy needed to create the ever-progressive society must ultimately come from the individual. Likewise, the individual must have the support of the collective to fully express his or her personal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Personal responsibility and social responsibility are  
inseparable

Though the natural synergy of the two political wings is obvious, the two are frequently in conflict with one another. Such conflict is likely to happen when we do not see the two as a dancing pair of Yin and Yang.

Conflict between the two often includes both sides exhibiting some degree of corruption wherein each side

violates its own core values and projects its failings on the other side. For example, the political right can insidiously drift into oppressive, autocratic rule, which is the antithesis of small government and low taxes. Likewise, the political left can drift into bloated bureaucracies wherein public funds intended to benefit whole or to help individuals in need, are diverted to private interests.

Conservatism gone bad looks like greed and the seeking of personal gain at someone else's expense. Progressivism gone bad looks like slavery wherein individual freedom is sacrificed at the altar of the so-called common good. Either way, the result is suffering on the individual level and tyranny on the sociopolitical level. Either way, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It does not matter whether the tyranny is labeled as fascism or communism. It does not matter whether the boat leans too far to the right or left. Either way, the boat sinks.

### **How do we keep the boat afloat?**

We keep the boat afloat by keeping the two sides balanced. As with other opposites, these two tend to harmonize (in our minds, first and foremost) when we simply recognize them as a dancing pair of Yin and Yang. In other words, we recognize their interdependence, which is to say, we recognize the interdependence and natural synergy of the individual and the collective. We are social animals, therefore, individual freedom and the common good are two sides of the same coin. In other words, we recognize and appreciate the natural harmony between personal responsibility (self-interest) and social responsibility.

### **The Key to Harmony**

The key word for achieving harmony between the individual and the collective is *voluntary*. To the extent that sociopolitical unity is achieved through voluntary participation, all is well, and everyone is happy. Anyway, that is how it would work if the individuals in such a society were free, as well as socially responsible. As described in chapter 25, freedom and responsibility are inseparable.

Voluntary participation makes sense when we remember that all political power ultimately resides in the individual. This is true for the obvious reason that the individual provides the energy which creates the collective. In other words, the only power that governments have is the power that we the people give them.

Governments cannot operate without the energy provided by individuals citizens, just as the human body as a whole cannot exist without the energy generated by the individual cells. In addition, we as individuals must also have the grace to acknowledge that our personal prosperity and fulfillment depend on our willingness to honor our responsibility to the collective that supports us. Such grace is natural to the extent that we are spiritually awake.

### **The Spiritual Side of Politics**

Being spiritually awake means awareness of unity. In other words, one is aware of, or at least strongly believes, that the life within oneself and the life in his or her fellow citizens is the same life.

Most of us humans do not have a strong feeling-level experience of the One Life, except perhaps as a temporary “peak experience.” However, it shows up indirectly in everyday life as the inclination to treat others as we would want to be treated. Such an attitude cannot be legislated from without; it must emerge silently and organically from within. Indeed, when we try to force it from without, we kill it before it is born.

When it is allowed to emerge naturally from within, it shows up tangibly as politically minded individuals who support laws and policies which are guided by higher principles, and to challenge laws and policies that violate these higher principles. It shows up as harmony between personal responsibility and social responsibility. It shows up as the tendency to recognize the natural synergy between the so-called political left and right.

### **The Eagle Needs Two Wings to Fly**

If we let our imagination soar, we might envision an ideal society wherein individuals are free to pursue their personal

dreams, and to prosper in every way. Under such circumstances, our natural caring and generosity can and does emerge. Individual citizens have both the desire and the resources to contribute to the society that supports them.

Again, such a system can work only when a significant percent of citizens are spiritually awake enough to live by the Golden Rule. This is the same attitude which also compels each individual to *voluntarily* gives back to society, rather than being forced to do so through threat of violence or incarceration.

Realistically, this might be too much to ask in a society where a significant number of citizens are just trying to survive. Under such circumstances, a radical transition to voluntary participation might be rather chaotic, to say the least. However, the good news is that society will start taking baby steps in that direction when enough individuals see the bigger picture.

Whether we find ourselves leaning to the political left or right, we need only remember that governments can do what they do only when we the people allow it — through our active participation or the passive endorsement of our inaction. Add to this the recognition of the legitimate roles of both the conservative and progressive elements of government (and the complementary relationship of the two), and we can avoid getting sucked into energy-draining political battles. Thus, we can gracefully participate in the political process in ways that allow us to maintain our inner peace, while making positive contributions to the body politic.

## **The Psychology of Politics**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, politics can be a highly charged emotional topic because we are emotional animals with a tribal ancestry. This is why friendships and families can be torn asunder over political disagreements. Furthermore, excessive emotional charge tends to dampen the rational mind and clouds our discernment, which further compromises our ability to navigate through the political landscape.

Bottom line: if we wish to harmoniously navigate through the outer sociopolitical landscape, we must be willing to

understand our own inner (emotional) landscape, as described in the two chapters that follow.