

## Chapter 29

# The Yin & Yang of Politics

Since humans are emotional animals with a tribal ancestry, we can understand why we might easily get pulled into heated political debates. In fact, friends and families have been torn asunder through political disagreement. Furthermore, emotional unrest tends to dampen rational thinking, as described in chapter 11. In this case, emotional charge limits our ability to objectively assess what is happening politically. We can minimize these issues 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, which leads us to focus on principles, rather than personalities.

### Individuality and Community

Politics is ultimately a dance between the individual and the collective. We see this 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 opposites, 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 to achieve goals which 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 border called a membrane 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 not be possible.

The natural 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*.

### **Life is 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 thus 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 further expand, evolve, and progress. In other words, the conservative and progressive elements of life exist in a state of synergy.

### **The Body Politic**

The harmony between the body as a whole and the individual cells, as described above, also describes the ideal functioning of any political system. The political right promotes a conservative approach to governance, while the political left urges us to be progressive. If each side abides by its core principles, they synergize to create the body politic.

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 desire for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Though the natural synergy of the two political wings is obvious, the two are frequently in conflict. Such conflict is likely when we lose sight of their interdependence and their natural complementary relationship.

### **Two Parties in Conflict**

When the two sides are in conflict, each expresses its truth in a way that denies the truth of the other. Consequently, the fundamental truth presented by each side becomes incomplete and ultimately meaningless. Stated simply: there can be no sociopolitical unity without individual freedom, and vice versa.

On the surface, political conflict seems to produce social unrest which is random and chaotic. However, when seen through the lens which recognizes dancing opposites, some definite patterns emerge, and the drama becomes predictable. For example, 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. There seems to be a sort of symmetry in their respective doings; the corruption on one side is matched by its mirror image 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. In other words, the political right insidiously abandons its own conservative values — raising taxes and restricting individual freedom; until the sovereign citizen becomes a cog whose sole purpose is to keep the machine going.

Likewise, the political left can metastasize into many bloated bureaucracies which insidiously divert public funds to private interests. In other words, the vision of equality and fairness becomes a facade which conceals gross exploitation of the many at the hands of the few.

In summary, conservatism gone bad looks like greed and selfishness. Progressivism gone bad looks like slavery wherein personal 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 fascistic or communistic. 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. They tend to do so (in the mind, 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. Their natural synergy has to do with the fact that we are social animals for whom individual freedom and the common good are just two sides of the same coin. Therefore, we recognize and appreciate the natural synergy between personal responsibility (self-interest) and social responsibility.

### **The Key to Harmony**

The key word is *voluntary*. To the extent that political unity is achieved through voluntary participation, all is well. Anyway, that is how it would work if the individuals in such a society were free, as well as socially responsible.

Voluntary participation makes sense when we remember that all political power ultimately resides in the individual — whether the individual knows it or not. This is true for the obvious reason that the individual provides the energy and vitality which create the collective.

Governments cannot operate without the energy provided by individual 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 have the grace to acknowledge that our personal freedom, 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**

To be spiritually awake translates into awareness of unity. It is the awareness that the life within oneself and the life in his or her fellow citizens is the same life.

Most of us do not have a strong feeling-level experience of the One Life, except perhaps as a momentary peak experience. However, it does show up quietly in everyday life as the inclination to treat others as we would want to be treated. Such an attitude cannot be legislated; it must emerge silently 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 as politically minded individuals who support policies which are guided by conscience and higher principles. It shows up as the willingness to challenge laws and policies that violate these higher principles. It shows up as recognition of the harmony between personal responsibility and social responsibility. And it shows up as recognition of 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 each individual is free to pursue personal dreams within a society that is fair and just. Under such circumstances, our natural caring and generosity tends to emerge, because we have both the desire and resources to contribute to the society that supports us.

Again, such a system can work only when enough citizens are spiritually awake enough to live by the Golden Rule, which inspires us to voluntarily contribute, rather than being forced to do so through threat of violence or incarceration.

Granted, in a society where a significant number of citizens are just trying to survive, a sudden transition into voluntary participation is likely to produce chaos. However, the good news is that the government starts taking baby steps in that direction as more individuals see the bigger picture. As public awareness changes, government changes accordingly.

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 between them), and we can avoid getting sucked into energy-draining political battles. 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.

## **Political Freedom and Emotional Freedom**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, politics can be a highly charged topic because we are emotional animals. The more we become emotionally embroiled in current events, the harder it is to rationally navigate through the political landscape, and the more easily we can be controlled and manipulated by the powers that be. Therefore, if we wish to harmoniously navigate through the outer sociopolitical landscape, we must be willing to recognize how it dances with our own inner landscape, as described in the two chapters that follow.

See the book on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Dance-Opposites-Ed-4/dp/0982683278>