

ORGANIC BALANCE AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL CHANGE MOVEMENTS

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"Think of the tennis player waiting to receive a service, the Tai Chi expert ready to move in any direction, the caring human being ready to sense the signals from another person or group, the health professional alert to the least sign of change in a patient near a life and death crisis. These people are in balance."

Robert Theobald, The Rapids of Change

INTRODUCTION

Going up and down on a teeter-totter was my introduction to balance. Of course, I was aware of the old-fashioned scales used to weigh out flour and justice; and at some point I wondered why gyroscopes and healthy diets also maintained balance but of such a different sort. But it was when I spent time in a hospital observing patients, as one bodily system and then another became "out of balance" -- juxtaposed with trying to write a "balanced" journalism story about it -- that I noticed the difference between organic and mechanistic notions of balance. Life wasn't a machine that switched "on" or "off"! However, and importantly, it was this either-or model that seemed to frame our thinking about it.

The teeter-totter worldview that fills our language and lives with extremes like *either sick or well*, up or down, win or lose, us or them -- came to worry me so much I began to study "entropy and redundancy" -- and learned everything in the world adjusts and readjusts to sustain dynamic equilibrium within the systems which compose our universe, from aquariums to bodies to the biosphere.

Eventually, I wrote a book aimed at improving the either-or, "reductionistic," reporting style that is taught to journalists. I suggested that by "adding a W" for the whole system to the original who-what-when-where-why questioning framework of journalism we systematically could build into each story a more holistic perspective and, thereby, begin to make a more contextual, whole-system framework for decision-making accessible to global citizens. Instead of simply countering one extreme point of view with another extreme view, we could learn to ask: "where does this seemingly disconnected story or idea fit within larger contexts through time and space?" Rather than reducing balance to two opposing views within a story or stories, the organic model places each point of view within its environment - more like one element within a mobile.

I came to think the accepted wisdom of gaining knowledge only by breaking things down into the smallest components without considering context was a critical lapse in Western thinking because, as a conceptual tool, it is so limiting. The mechanistic model leads our minds, laws, values and our whole

culture toward fragmentation, extremes, fanaticism, and crisis-oriented reactions. Either "fight or flight," "rich or poor," "right or wrong."

In a fast-changing world teeming with information and possibility -- where mass destruction is well within human capability -- the absence of an encompassing conceptual tool for analyzing the world and our place in it is dangerous. It also is unnecessary.

"Unnecessary" because everything in life exists within a context. We are not machines. By applying a framework which reveals this, perhaps we can begin to view what we thought were disconnected details from a perspective that allows us to see some connections. Fortunately, for the first time in history, a global "circulatory system" also exists -- in the form of cheap air travel, the internet, satellite TV and e-mail, among others -- that can make insights about context and perspectives accessible, quickly, to global citizens.

It is hard to grasp this new way to see reality however because discoveries making a more holistic worldview possible have existed only within our own lifetime!

The point I hope to make here is that applying a dynamic, organic, ecological model of "balance within a continuum" to all incoming information is a more pragmatic way to understand the world than the old mechanistic, either-or model because it provides a lens through which we can see connections within a diverse but inclusive whole. It gives us a "tree to climb" from which we can see more of the forest.

Where might topics and issues that appear in this volume -- fair trade, equal rights, participatory democracy, public education, nonviolence, feminism, ecological concerns, and the other progressive social concepts -- "fit" within the global and cultural system? What common ground do they share? What role do they play, singly and together, in system sustainability?

Thirty years ago the importance of grasping a "bigger picture" was part of the public dialogue. Maybe this is because the new technological, communication and transportation innovations that made it possible were brand new and we saw the "threat and promise" of interconnectedness and interdependence (from photos of the earth in space to the discovery of acid rain) for the first time. A truly global perspective was high contrast to the isolated and myopic worldviews of our youth.

However, I work with students now and have begun to realize most young people do not think about the role they play with respect to balance within the whole system. Many want to be socially active but too often they work from extreme perspectives with no conceptual framework that links their work to anything larger or moderates their own tendencies to react and become extreme. I am hopeful that revisiting these ideas about balance will remind all of us to ask questions that are critical to sustainability and, perhaps, give us a calmer language to generate awareness and public dialogue about these abstract ideas and ideals: To what extent is Western civilization built on an unquestioning acceptance of a mechanistic worldview? Can we nurture a healthier, transformed civilization without gaining a more holistic perspective? How can socially progressive groups work together on behalf of mutual concerns? Can we find common ground - not only among "us" but also with the many "thems"?

Imbalance occurs naturally and unceasingly in the world, of course, and when in control it keeps life flowing. The urgency today is that, for the first time in the history of the world, human beings have evolved to the extent that extreme imbalance is stressing personal, social and global systems beyond their natural capacity to recover. Like patients attached to life supports, we Earthlings need to generate a second opinion about our predicament and decide if we want a worldview that leads to extremism or one that trusts organic balance to frame our collective future.

PART ONE: BEYOND TEETER-TOTTERS

LINKING A UNIVERSAL PATTERNS TO GLOBAL AND PERSONAL CHANGE

Dynamic, asymmetrical balance is vital to the survival of all systems. This is so because the world as we know it is a single system composed of ever-smaller interdependent systems. With his famous $E=MC^2$, Albert Einstein even told us that when all of the bits and pieces of the universe move fast enough (the speed of light, squared), everything is composed of the same "stuff" -- energy. All of the seemingly separate parts of any system -- diverse species, varied cultures, kinds of work, kinds of energy, categories of traits ascribed to males and females by our social system -- all play a role in sustaining the system, just as the seemingly separate parts of a body are necessary for sustaining physical and mental health.

What I am suggesting is that, even beyond biology and the natural environment, dynamic, asymmetrical, organic balance also is necessary to sustain healthy human cultures.

Extrapolating from physical to social patterns is risky business; however, it is painfully obvious that when imbalance occurs within the body, within the environment, or within the mind (although it will not find perfect balance because that would mean no movement and death), unless the system constantly re-adjusts toward better balance, it risks disaster.

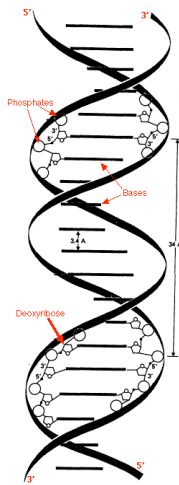
What I suggest is that:

- 1) when social systems gets out of balance in the extreme, like a gyroscope tilting precariously to one side, it also risks disaster;
- 2) over generations, Western civilization (and in various ways other world cultures) has in fact tilted increasingly out of balance;
- 3) that imbalance now is harming individuals, societies, and the environment; and,
- 4) all of us who are fortunate enough to be alive today have the opportunity to participate in a massive social re-balancing movement that must occur if our civilization is to survive.

Borrowing from a pattern that occurs throughout nature, I'll try to illustrate what I mean by "dynamic, organic balance" -- as opposed to dualistic, teeter-totter balance.

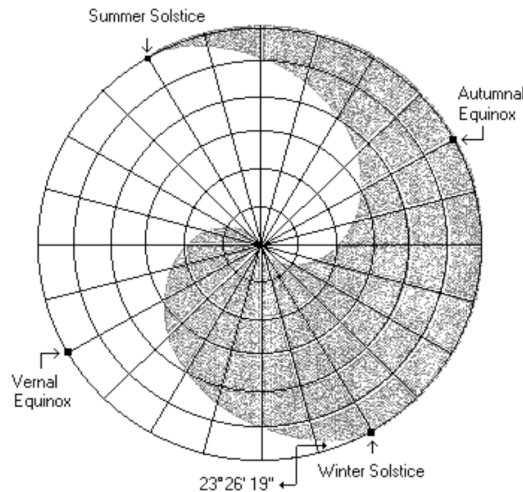
WHY USE THIS MODEL

Not surprisingly, the natural world has provided us with the perfect conceptual model for learning we live within an interconnected, interdependent system that is not ultimately divisible into isolated parts. The relatively newly discerned DNA molecule illustrates the pattern in a double helix structure that repeats itself throughout nature (Watson, 1968). All organisms in the universe (and even mathematical simulations of star formation!) are represented by spiraling arms that never fully separate (Discover, 1989).



From the double helix structure in human DNA to the simulation of star formation a pattern revealing wholeness appears (Discover Magazine, 12/89)

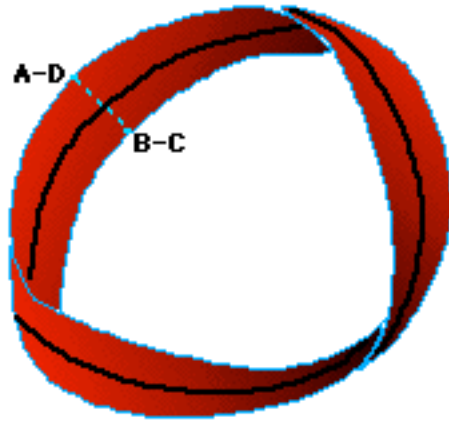
The basic construct that appears in DNA also appears in the 5000-year-old yin (moon) yang (sun) concept. What we think of as the "yin yang symbol" originally was the result of early-day Chinese scholars' observations of the sun, and their measuring and charting the length of daily shadows in an annual cycle of the sun, as in the following illustration (Capra, 1975).



Just as mystics and observers the world over have intuited in various ways, Taoist sages deduced from their observations that, although human perceptions are limited, the natural world is an indivisible whole. Within the whole system there are discernable patterns; within patterns perpetual adjustment assures system sustainability and the whole system must maintain dynamic balance to survive; and, like everything else, human beings are a part of this moving web of life.

One can observe patterned movement within the whole by watching a mountain throughout the course of one day. First one side is in shadow and then the other side. As one aspect reaches its zenith it leads into the other just as moments that compose the continuum of a day flow seamlessly along. There is not *either* dark *or* light; both dark and light are aspects of *one* whole, moving continuum. It is we who name and perceive a separation.

The design also is illustrated by a Mobius strip, named for German astronomer and mathematician August Ferdinand Mobius. Like the yin yang model, the Mobius strip continues to amaze mathematicians, artists and scientists with the simple way it illustrates the inseparable wholeness of the universe (www.scidiv.bcc.edu/math).



Möbius Strip

A simple Möbius strip can be made by cutting a flat strip of paper about an inch wide and 8-10 inches long. The flat piece of paper symbolizes our traditional Flat Earth "myth-conception" that the world consists of opposites -- like top and bottom.. The more accurate Möbius model is formed by giving the paper a half-twist on one end and joining it to the other end, to match the pattern of the DNA molecule, the yin yang symbol, and many other examples from nature. The beauty of this concrete representation is that we can see for ourselves the seamless continuum where opposites never fully separate.

Artist M.C. Escher's 'Parade of Ants' can walk completely around the one-sided, one-edged structure without falling off!



M.C. Escher's "Parade of Ant" (www.scidiv.bcc.edu/math)

Limited, "flat-earth" perceptions and the social-cultural constructs they foster are what have divided the world into so-called parts and opposites. For thousands of years humans have been limited by an inability to acquire perspectives necessary for revealing wholeness. We simply did not have the intellectual or technological tools to grow beyond the teeter-totter worldview.

It wasn't until 1965 that the electron microscope was first put to practical use; and it was four days before Christmas, 1968, when we saw planet Earth from space for the first time! Although science and technology now have given us tools to acquire holistic perspectives -- on both outer space and inner space - human thinking and culture have not kept up.

Within the confines of humanity's "given," myopic notion of time and space, we do in fact see what can be called top or bottom, active or passive, black or white, "male" traits and "female" traits; but we ignore the vast continuum within which the polarities reside. Reductions like this are like blinders on a horse, however; revealing our own lack of context and perspective, not reality. And although we have been told the opposite is true for centuries, the point of life actually is not to subjugate some parts of the whole and proclaim one part "winner" (as some still want us to do). In the long run, for any of us to survive the whole system needs to "win."

All systems contain both active (yang) and passive (yin) elements within a whole continuum and

never only one or the other. There is no such thing as day without night, change without sameness, male without female (even within an individual), even life without death. As the double helix illustrates, there is a vast continuum between any two extremes that flows one into the other and "never fully separate." What is necessary is balance.

THE ORGANIC BALANCE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

To illustrate how even the social world seems drawn to conform to this universal pattern, I'll use the yin yang model, again, because like DNA and even the mobile, as opposed to the teeter totter, it better illustrates complex, life-like dynamics. Through the symbol we can plainly see the extremes and also that there is a whole continuum in-between; the black and the white but also the entire color wheel.

The aim of the pictures which follow is to suggest that Western societies (and in various ways all world cultures) have grown increasingly 'out of balance' for generations. Our lives became out of balance, in short, because "yang" (action side) aspects had more survival value when our ancestors were slaying dragons and settling the West. However, like time and Esher's ants, human needs march on.

The ability of human beings to change directions mid-history and re-orient (some would say co-create) our own social evolution may be the universe's most ingenious fail-safe mechanism. Just in the nick of time it seems, humans appear to be noticing that survival now depends on re-valuing the yin, realizing the continuum, and re-balancing the whole.

As most of us typically visualize balance, it looks like **Figure 1**. The image is of one whole cut into two equal parts.

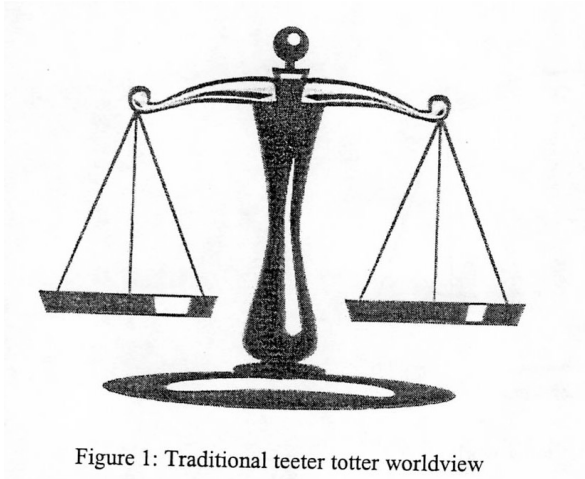


Figure 1: Traditional teeter totter worldview

Based on **Figure 1**, a balanced system would look like **Figure 2**, with the so-called halves put together.

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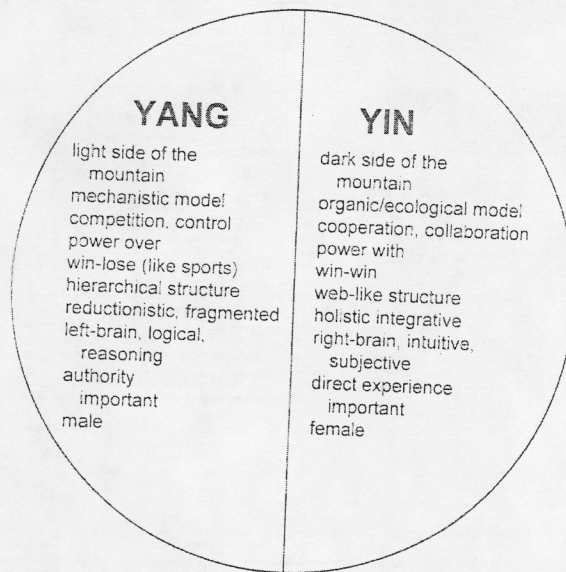


Figure 2: One whole system

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Of course these illustrations are static while life itself is in constant, asymmetrical but patterned, motion -- as the 5,000 year old yin yang model in **Figure 3** illustrates.

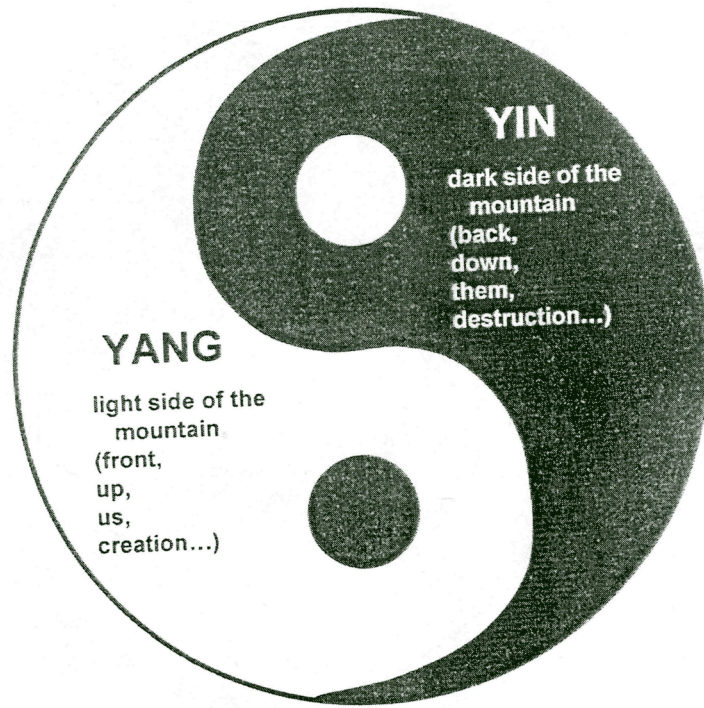


Figure 3: Organic model represented by yin yang illustration

As mentioned, we in the West have been taught to think of the world in dualities like the ones listed within the two halves of the illustrated whole; and, in fact, our linear, Western vision of the world has led to many remarkable insights - like notions of freedom, individual worth and the scientific method! However, we generally assume even our most admirable thoughts exist apart from an inclusive continuum: *either* free *or* not free, individual *or* community, for example, when actually there are endless combinations in-between.

In every part of our lives, from perceptions to ethics to laws, we have come to associate one half of the world with yang side traits and the other half of the world with yin side traits - as though they could exist in isolation. And, at this point in human social development, we have evolved languages that practically force us into extremist assumptions based on this totter-totter conceptual model.

For example, brain research tells us the left lobe of the brain (controlling the right half of the body) is associated with linear, sequential thinking; it is more analytical, rational, logical... The right lobe of the brain (controlling the left half of our body) is more intuitive, holistic, simultaneous, visual, creative... But we tend to overlook that they exist within one brain. It is easy to see how the value assigned to yin and yang traits transfers into our social world when we realize how strongly formal education (as well as all informal, culture learning) has emphasized the yang aspects and devalued the yin aspects. Children used to be punished for using the yin-side, left hand; we shake hands with the right; the groom stands on the right, etc.

The language of a hot academic topic, "leadership styles" illustrates this very well. The yang side is linked with action:

aggressive, independent, unemotional, objective, dominant, competitive, logical/rational, adventurousness, self-confident, ambitious, worldly, act as a leader, assertive, analytical, decisive -- as well as with masculinity and males.

On the other hand (no doubt the left), the yin side is associated with passivity:

emotional, sensitive, expressive, tactful, security-oriented, nurturing, tender, cooperative, intuitive, independent, sympathetic, warm, the opposite of all of the yang characteristics listed above -- and with femininity and with women. (Park, 1996. Park argues for more androgynous, balanced styles, by the way..)

Among all assorted delineations of yin and yang by various disciplines and professions, yin identifies the "dark side of the mountain," an ecological worldview, cooperation and collaboration, power "with" others, win/win problem solving, right brain(left side), integration, female-- and lesser.

In all of them, yang identifies the "light side of the mountain," a mechanistic worldview, a hierarchical, win/lose model of interaction, power "over" others, left brain (right side), authorities, male -- and superior.

Physicists and philosophers refer to this division as "old paradigm" (Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes, a mechanistic explanation for the world) and "new paradigm" (Albert Einstein, the new physicists, an organic view of the world), wherein the old over-emphasizes yang and the new seeks greater balance.

The point is, the "old" idea -- that the world is split into two halves with yang as the superior half - has been around a long, long time in human terms. It is built into our thinking and society at every level and in every instance we have failed to attend to the fact that all of the parts live within one interdependent, interconnected whole that needs constant re-balancing to survive (see Capra, 1984).

My conviction is that our individual and collective mission for the next few decades must be to consciously choose to improve the balance within our individual personalities, our power structure, our cultures, and our environment. Although all manner of creativity and "extremes" also exist within the continuum and are necessary in moderation, we need to evolve beyond an either-or worldview that tells us

in every instance competition is better than collaboration, male is better than female, rational thinking is better than intuition, "we" are better than "them."

The dangerous truth is that because of generations of over-emphasis on and over-valuing of yang side attributes -- our world has come to look something like **Figure 4**. If the world were a gyroscope we would be headed for spin out!

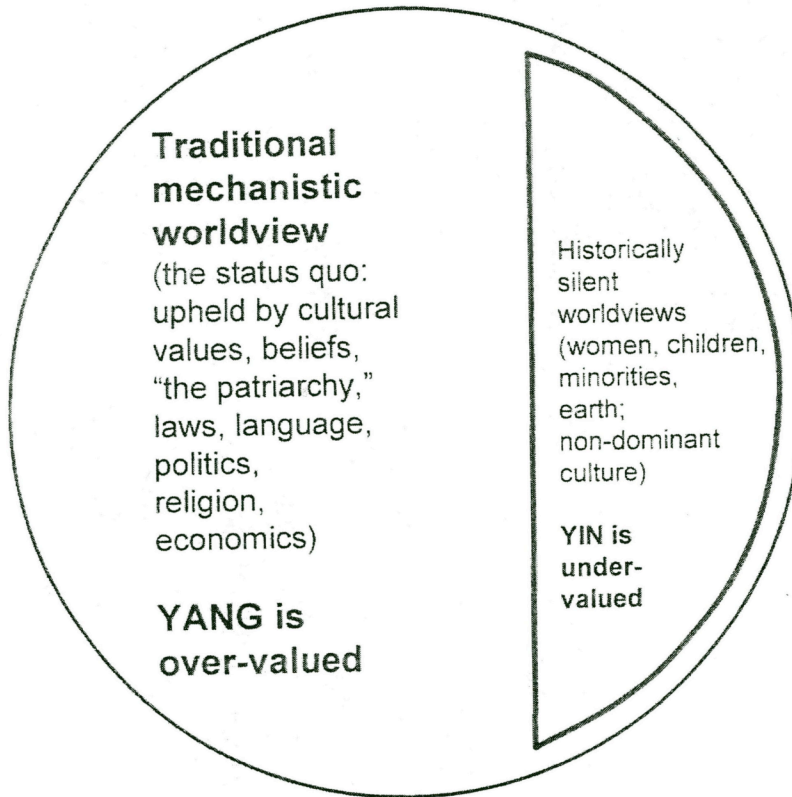


Figure 4: A world out of balance ('koyaanisqatsi,' to the Hopi)

Figure 4: A world out of balance ('koyaanisqatsi,' to the American Indians)

It is because of an historical imbalance of power on the yang side that our heavily yang-oriented opinion leaders have been able to overlook problems caused by extreme de-valuing of yin side attributes. In fact, traits that define the yang side *at the expense* of the yin side define success and characterize the status quo in our world today whether exhibited by males or females. And those who obtained power over others by applying yang traits think it would be best if they just kept it. The result, however, is a world that has become dangerously out of kilter -- for example, in the direction of exclusivity instead of integration, individual over community; and so forth.

The everyday significance of appreciating that life is an all-inclusive whole that needs to fluctuate between yin and yang is enormous. Instead of striving for and rewarding only or mostly yang-associated traits we need to acknowledge that human beings contain within ourselves and our societies both active and passive attributes and all variations in-between -- and learn to value more of our options. Going back to the human body-universe analogy, for example: how is ignoring a gangrenous wound on our little finger different from ignoring poverty and injustice in Afghanistan or Appalachia? How is over-valuing the competitive drive when an athlete cheats by using steroids different from tilting toward insider trading and other extreme win-lose tactics on Wall Street? And, in fact, how might over-valuing our heart or lungs at the expense of our lymph system be different from over-valuing American culture at the expense of Tibetan culture?

The eventual result of imbalance will be system failure, every time.

Serendipitously, at the same historical moment when this imbalance has begun destroying individual mental health, devastating the environment, causing continual violence and war - any one of which will lead inevitably to personal and global system failure -- curiously but, in fact, as the organic, yin yang model would predict, various counterbalancing forces have begun to be heard.

Figure 5 illustrates this (although, within the context of these drawing, movement actually would come from re-adjustment of the small circle of yin within the yang and visa versa).

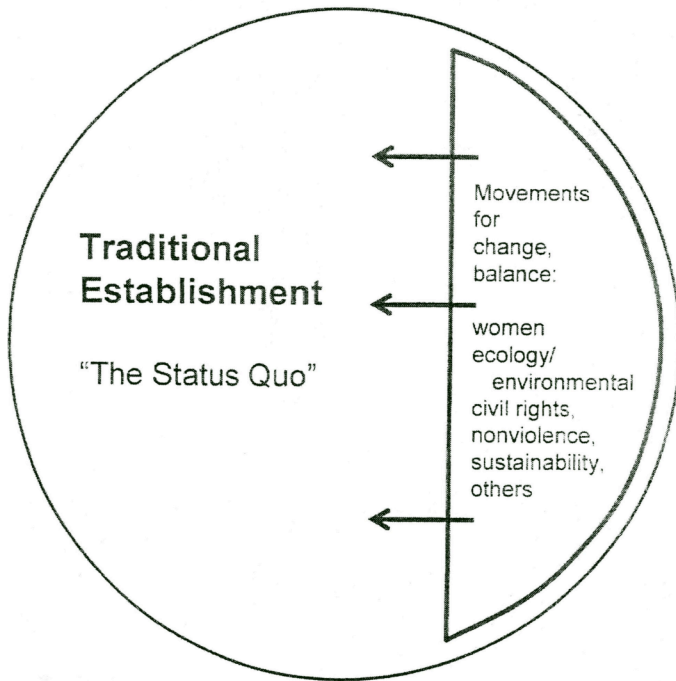


Figure 5: Social movement toward better balance in the system

Figure 5: Social movement toward better balance in the system

How this movement toward rebalancing began is a mystery. Is it a miracle or is it a fail-safe processes built into the human brain? Perhaps when a critical mass of individuals became healthy enough within themselves to recognize the need for balance, they began pushing society to become better balanced, as well. Like blackbirds gathering into that identifiable pattern as they go south for winter and like specific thoughts forming within our brains, groups of seemingly independent people and ideas coalesced into a series of social "movements." When the small groups began to grow they became visible to all of us.

"HEALING THE SPLIT"

Ideas presented here are not new, but I am bringing them up once again for several reasons. One, as Andre Gide once said, " Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again." (Gaylin, 1978) Two, I have noticed that many of these movements have gained so much strength in such a short time that people born in the last 30 years may not even realize they are living in the midst of a massive re-education project that will have as great a consequence as the agricultural and industrial revolutions! And, three, individuals and groups may be strengthened by realizing they stand on common ground with others in a comprehensive framework. At present, even many people working within social change movements behave as though they live in an either-or world; and too many of them are as vulnerable to fragmented and extremist thinking as are the traditionalists and conservatives who resist them.

I would like to make the case that the women's movement, ecology movement, civil rights movement, nonviolence movement, and other social change movements can be seen as parts of this largely unconscious force pushing us to bring greater balance to our world by re-valuing the so-called yin elements in our lives and world. All of these movements can be examined within the context of the yin yang re-balancing concept. Choosing several examples at random:

* Since over half of the world's population is female, it makes sense that feminism would be the first major social force in history that emerged to demand re-examination of humanity's blind acceptance of a world biased toward (male-associated) yang traits. Through any lens male dominance just wasn't fair. However, the "women's movement" is much more than a call for women's equality. Feminists who understand balance do not want to trade extremist yin for extremist yang or eliminate the genders. Feminists who understand balance value both yang and yin - within ourselves, our societies and our world. Ultimately, the women's movement insists on the survival necessity of bringing better balance to the system.

* The ecologist's admonition, "you can't do just one thing" is an axiom for the interconnectedness and interdependence of the whole global system. The organic balance-based ecology organizations and

environmental movement are working desperately to bring public attention to the fact that humanity needs to collaborate with the natural environment (a yin trait which would serve to integrate) rather than always putting perceived human needs above it (a yang trait based on hierarchy and either-or). We don't need to go "back" to the agrarian societies of yester-year or dismiss technological or other advances for balance to be gained. The point of organic balance within a continuum is to recognize and act on the enormous range of options between extremes.

* Fair trade, living wage, worker cooperative movements and similar economic movements function at an even more subtle level to bring better balance to the world by emphasizing the survival necessity of diversity -- among peoples, among types of food we eat, among types of labor we pay for or energy we use -- and, also, by "bringing up the bottom rung" of the human economic spectrum so that more members of the population continuum may participate in a full life. Public education and participatory democracy movements are working to re-balance the world by attempting to "wire more and more people into the system" through more (yin-like horizontal rather than *only* yang-like hierarchical) power sharing.

* A new argument about alternative energy going on in my windy state illustrates the confusion caused by innovations and individuals that appear progressive but still are working from the either-or paradigm. Most ecologically-astute Kansans realize alternative power is important and they want to use the locally-sustainable, renewable wind as an energy source. When "wind farm" companies approached them at first they were delighted. It became apparent, however, that the companies continue to apply yang-exclusive corporate methodologies, that are both unecological and under the control of a few wealthy owners even though they suggest changes that appear on the surface to be examples of the ecological, rebalancing movement.

By looking at this dilemma through the lens of the organizing principle suggested in this article, we know to ask for more alternatives! The real choice is not between *either* corporate wind factories *or* no wind power at all. Similarly, we don't have to choose between either corporate hogs or no bacon; or, indeed, between either corporate capitalism or no capitalism. There is a range of possibilities within both time (this works now but it might not work tomorrow) and through space (wind might be locally sustainable but water power would work better in other areas).

*"Be a man!" or "Be more lady-like!" are culturally-enforced admonitions many people receive at some point and cringe because it makes us feel lesser. It is supposed to! These are blatant expressions of dualistic thinking on a personal level; and they parallel subtle and insidious messages everywhere in our world that remind us to maintain the status quo. Since "yang" traits are rewarded in these systems that "yang" built; and since "yin" traits are ascribed to women, otherly-masculine males, children, the earth and "others," guess who gets to retain power-over everyone when the directive is observed? Our lives are filled with stereotypes which function to keep individuals (all of whom contain both yang and yin within) from finding better personal balance and, thus, less likely to question the status quo, including the socio-

economic system.

The new "redefining masculinity" movement and the women's movement among others focus on issues of intrapersonal imbalance and the social, cultural, policy inequities that maintain it. Extreme and extremist opposition to women in sports, stay-at-home fathers, gay rights, and even androgyny, for example, are fighting the tide of change from dysfunctional dualistic people to much more healthy holistic humans.

* The growing nonviolence movement participates in re-balancing at the personal, community and global levels. Resolution of life's conflicts actually is not limited to *only* "fight or flight," and we do not have to reconcile all discord with only win or lose, as we've been taught. There are multiple personal and social behaviors in-between extremes that can help us manage inevitable human conflict and other natural disorder.

When a "critical mass" of yin begins to re-balance the system -- through trial and error and the asymmetrical dynamics and short- and long-term cycles of the seemingly separate pieces -- then our world will be a much healthier place. Particular traits and whole movements will disappear into acceptability -- and inevitably there will be fluctuation between yin and yang throughout the spectrum of possibilities, forever.

Somewhere in the collective being of the universal system there must be a force like gravity, that pulls us to "heal the split" between different parts of ourselves, between person and person, between the conscious and the unconscious, between spirit and substance, and on and on. (Morris, 1989) Whatever the force, it shows us over and over that within any system, "If one suffers we all suffer together and if we survive it will only be if we do it together."

So, how can we reach a "critical mass" of people who could help re-balance the system and insure our survival? That has been the guiding question of my career.

PART TWO: OVERLAYING THE ORGANIC MODEL ON A CAREER

Most readers will know the story of the "Hundredth Monkey." While feeding sweet potatoes to monkeys on a Japanese island, researchers discovered an amazing thing about the adoption of new ideas. They taught some monkeys how to prepare the potatoes in a new way and, at some point, all of a sudden, *all* of the monkeys in the tribe began exhibiting the behavior -- without being taught (Keyes, 1984).

The Hundredth Monkey thesis is that when an idea reaches some certain level of awareness and acceptance, it spreads seemingly by itself. We call it "reaching critical mass," and think of it as "an idea whose time has come."

In the complex world of people, where we are members of one global "tribe," whether we like it or not, (regardless of what one thinks about the original story), I would argue that the 'hundredth monkey' phenomena applies. As individuals, what we do impacts the whole system because, for one thing, we never

know when we are the "hundredth monkey." However, and importantly, as conscious human beings living in community with the rest of the planet, we also have the opportunity and responsibility to decide which ideas we want to adopt and thus how we want to guide our social evolution.

Further, the people who live in democracies and want an idea turned into policy must be presented with the idea in a large enough number that they, in turn, can elect representatives who share their views.

The question that has motivated my own career for the past 30 years (and my challenge to other progressive thinkers and social activists) has been a version of the slogan, "what if they had a war and nobody came?" It is, how can we create a sustainable, peaceful and just world if nobody has the conceptual tools to envision it?

In other words, who among us is working to expose the organizing principle based on holism, interdependence and balance to the tide-turning "99," which actually translates into millions of global citizens?

Most people have bet their lives on the status quo and may not believe it is in their best interest to acquire a more holistic perspective. Yet, a critical mass of global citizens will have to adopt a more holistic and organically balanced -- as opposed to a fragmented and dualistic -- worldview if we are to build a framework for safer decision making. I sometimes think of this work as "applied poetry," because of the way it can change one's customary ways of seeing and open new areas of individual awareness - if we can get people to listen!

At some time in the late 1960s, after seeing photos of the Earth in space and experiencing the sobering reality of nuclear drift and other lessons in holism and connectedness from that famous Butterfly's Wing (who flaps in Brazil and causes a breeze in my backyard), it dawned on many of us that we seem to have been cursed and blessed to be alive at a time in the history of the universe when a global, cultural transformation is taking place all around us.

As mentioned, the emerging ideas (which have ancient roots) describe our evolution from a mechanistic to a holistic worldview and are loosely referred to as the "new paradigm." The underlying aim of the newer model is to fit the world with something like trifocal 3-D eyeglasses so a majority of us can begin to see a little farther and stop tripping over our feet all of the time. The essential perspective is that the Earth, along with its inhabitants, will not be safe until we learn to view it in all its glorious diversity as an interconnected and interdependent whole.

My career has been guided by the notion that at least some of us who want these ideas to reach critical mass need to help make them accessible. It seemed to me that the information-education needs in today's world demanded an approach befitting a global information age but that none of our established institutions, including schools, media (even the new electronic technologies), churches, or family seemed to have noticed there is a new job to do.

THINKING GLOBALLY: MEDIA ANTHROPOLOGY

From some combination of reasons not entirely clear to me, I began developing a "way" to reach people -- a discipline, a profession -- which came to be called "media anthropology." Its general purpose is to "inform global citizens" about the existence of this holistic, "anthropological perspective."

At first, I studied anthropology because I love the patterns it reveals and the connections it enables us to see. Anthropology showed me the necessity both for our uniqueness and our common humanity. I was liberated by the alternative ways of seeing and being in the world that it brought to light. It was the only subject matter I could find that seemed (at that point in my life) to have no dogmatic boundaries. Problem was, I wanted to apply what I was learning out in the real world, and anthropologists (with few exceptions) not only had no interest in public education, too many anthropologists were and still are caught up in the old worldview, like everyone else. So I took up journalism and mass communication.

Journalism, I reasoned, at least had an ethic of informing and educating the "general public," and had developed the channels and methodologies to do it. Once again, however, journalists (again, with a few exceptions) had no notion of the value of whole system context and analysis. So, during this period, I tried to find a language to talk to journalists about holism and balance and came up with the idea, mentioned elsewhere, of "adding a W for the whole" to the "who-what-when-where-why" questioning framework of journalism. (Allen, *Journalism Educator*, 1987) The strategy was to systematize a way of making more context and perspective available to the general public (i.e. to all of us). I chose journalism because journalism supplies the information which gives most of us the only news and views we ever get about ourselves and our place in the world and, although it doesn't tell us "what to think," it does set our intellectual and political agendas and boundaries. "We're bombarded with information," I argued to reluctant professors. "What we need is a framework on which to hang the seemingly disconnected details."

In the early 70s, as a few academics in my neck of the woods began realizing the necessity for "interdisciplinary" perspectives, I was able to combine ideas from anthropology, journalism, public education, and even from futurism, new physics and the mystical traditions (although I didn't tell them that part) into a doctorate. (Allen, 1980)

Some of my academic research was designed to discover whether readers would have an interest in media content which had the potential to share anthropological perspectives. (Allen, *Journalism Quarterly*, 1975). This ambition flew in the face of the journalism profession's insistence at that time that "no one cares about international or intercultural news" or any of those "holistic points of view," whatever they are, thank you very much.

It is chilling, following September 11, 2001, to remember that the journalistic label for this presumed lack of public interest in the rest of the globe was "Afghanistanism."

I became fascinated by the structure of imperialism and abuses of power which kept in tact the

polarizing either-or (us vs. them, yin vs. yang) world when I did media anthropological research on international/intercultural news flow in the Pacific Islands and realized that what islanders were told about the world and visa versa still followed colonial trade routes. Later, I would learn about the direct parallels between power imbalances on the international level and power imbalances in all other interactions, including interpersonal relationships. "Oppression is oppression" and, in the same way, "abuse of power is abuse of power," whether perpetrated by a nation, boss, corporation, one's own "alter ego," or an abusive husband.

In the early years of the Information Age, it seemed like mass communication and the new electronic media including the internet would make alternative choices and perspectives so wide-spread and accessible that the domination and withholding of power by the few would become as outdated as gold bullion. Although that potential still exists, as we know, powerful people just keep finding new ways to salvage the extremist worldview that maintains the status quo.

I tried applying some of the ideas that would replace polarizing notions with more contextual ones by writing what I hoped were "perspective building" newspaper columns, by editing a small multicultural newspaper, by being a student of culture and social change. I worked in Washington for a U.S. Senator for a time, imagining that a large political "megaphone" for these ideas would expedite the work. I quickly gave up on that idea, for myself; however I continue to believe some of us have to work within the established political arena - along side our grassroots-level colleagues, media and any other allies we can find.

One fundamental ingredient of a better balanced human world has to be more widespread participation in decision making. Following that, if the voting public is going to be well enough informed and educated to make wise choices about our shared futures in the crucial years ahead, we need a much better informed and educated general public.

As futurist Alvin Toffler said, we need to "wire more people into the system" (Toffler, 1975) And, as forefather Thomas Jefferson said, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with some discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion." (Fulbright, 1979)

One result of my media anthropology fetish was the book, *Media Anthropology: Informing Global Citizens* (Allen, ed., 1994.) It includes a foreword by Mary Catherine Bateson (daughter of two of anthropology's most well-known public-interest and holistic-thinking anthropologists, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson), which was nice symmetry. In this book, I and some like-minded anthropologists presented ideas about how we might create a subdiscipline for both anthropology and the communications professions designed to reach the general public with a more holistic way of seeing the world.

I want to stress: 1) by media anthropology, I mean sharing holistic perspectives that are available from anthropology with the broadest possible, 'media,' audience, not teaching the content of anthropology,

per se, or "preaching" a limited or limiting dogma "through" the media; 2) creativity and "extremes" (even ones we may not like) also exist on the continuum within any whole; 3) organic balance is in constant fluctuation - never a static state. The goal is to make people aware of the organic organizing principle so -- one at a time, as we are ready -- we can use it to help us make better sense of all the other information coming our way. I thought and still do think that providing access to this kind of whole-system perspective (and "crap detector") is *sine qua non* to motivating global citizens to make peaceful, just and sustainable choices about our futures.

ACTING LOCALLY, ACTING NOW: A CAMPAIGN FOR NONVIOLENCE

Professionally, I have earned my living as director of a university Women's Center for the past several years. The traditional role for such women's offices has been to "clean up the mess" of violence against women, after the fact; attend to victim safety and health care; provide therapy and legal options for (mostly) women in crisis from abuse. At some point, it began to dawn on me that my work actually reflected someone's definition of insanity, by "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." By agreeing to confine ourselves to prescribed, traditional responses to violence - i.e. the therapy model for victims and the legal model for the violators -- and only to attend to violence after the fact -- we were never going to "get ahead" of the violence or change the system that generates it.

On this small scale, we once again were ignoring holistic context, falling into the reductionist conceptual trap by individualizing a community problem, and ignoring the continuum of problems and solutions.

We needed *both* to help the sufferer *and* to attend to the suffering at its complex source. We needed to attend to cultural imbalances; to challenge norms surrounding violence; to use the force of "people power" (as we have little else) to demand resistance to institutional and individual abuses power that exist within the status quo; and to begin the step by step, ongoing activity of finding better balance in the system. In this case, that meant resisting injustice by cultivating active nonviolence on our campus.

When I realized the first 10 years of the new millennium had been named the "Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence" by the U.N. it was an epiphany! I realized global "peace and justice" language readily translated into the local language of "safety and equity," and that talking about local violence issues in the vocabulary of nonviolence gave us some advantages: a gender-neutral, non-threatening language that could help us to deal with perpetrators as well as attract male allies; a whole world of tactics and tools from the nonviolence movement that teach us ways to practice nonviolence and "get ahead" of violence; a way to confront system-wide imbalances of power (injustice) that are precursors to violence and which many of us believe is the only real way to end violence; and a holistic instead of either-or organizing framework for thinking about the whole state of affairs.

At first working at a Women's Center in a small town seemed a far cry from practicing

anthropology. However, my concrete, real-world problem -- to address violence against women on our campus-- suddenly looked like a microcosm for the whole issue of rebalancing power and culture. (Allen, Association of Feminist Anthropology, 2001.) If my need to solve campus violence was the "mother of invention" that led me to look at nonviolence as a methodology, then "oppression" was the grandmother. There is a direct parallel between "if you want peace, work for justice" at the global level and "if you want safety, work for equality and fairness" at the local level. "Justice and equality" are not static end-states; they are attainable only through the asymmetrical ebb and flow of organic balance.

"DON'T AGONIZE, ORGANIZE"

After years of noticing that crime on campus did not lessen despite the best efforts of women trying to help other women be more safe, by thinking holistically, we are beginning to ask better questions. We are reframing our thinking about violence. One question we hope to answer is: Can we begin to address the whole continuum of violence on our campus (withholding information, subtle and blatant discrimination, harassment, bullying, economic disparity, lack of political voice, assault and rape) by applying the concepts, tactics and tools of the nonviolence movement?

I see the Campaign for Nonviolence or CNV, as it has come to be called on my campus, as a local experiment in how to inform people and invite them to look at a serious public health problem within this "whole," if small, system - from the ground up, by building community and creating new expectations; by attending to personal, interpersonal and community factors; by making our work sustainable.

The motto of the CNV is, Nonviolence begins with You/Me," the wording of which was a beginning strategy for introducing people to interconnectedness and interdependence within the system. We are asking people to look at violence in the context of culture; to go beyond only "fight or flight" responses to violence and to consider the continuum of violent acts and to be open to a range of ways to counter them.

We are trying to move people's concept of violence beyond the accepted notion that violence is the victim's personal problem -- an individual anomaly in an otherwise peaceful community -- and move toward understanding violence as a system-wide public health problem that can be addressed by applying many methodologies. We are asking the whole community to assume its response-ability for violence by practicing and expecting nonviolence throughout the system.

CONNECTING THE CNV TO OTHER PROGRESSIVE WORK

Our small campaign for nonviolence connects to the organic rebalancing movement by reflecting the evolution in our thinking from the reductionist, extremist, dualistic view (fight or flight, individual or community) to the dynamically-balanced, holistic view. We are learning to acknowledge all of the personal

and cultural interconnections that actually are involved when a coed is raped by her date, a gay man is assaulted on the street, a staff person is discriminated against, an employee is harassed - or any other act on the continuum of violence and abuse of power that occurs on college campuses.

We are working to expose violence as an issue of power; and we are working toward a better balance of power in this community: more horizontal and less hierarchical. We are working to *underlay* a web-like network of "people" power beneath the established institutional hierarchy so we can assume some control and responsibility for our own environment. We are learning to look to one another to be part of the solution to the endemic problems and to empower individuals-together with the ability to respond.

We will know when we are making a difference in this local re-balancing act in ways beyond a lower crime rate (which will take awhile). We will see less winking and turning a blind eye to the precursors to violence; less denial that date rape occurs; less willed naiveté about who is perpetuating most of the violence; more authority figures and opinion leaders speaking out against abuse of power and for nonviolent "community principles" by standing with us and declaring that "nonviolence begins with me"; more nonviolence (and peace studies) content integrated into the curriculum; more non-traditional people hired in more well-paying and powerful positions; more economic parity; compliance with re-balancing policies like affirmative action and Title IX; and, eventually, we will hear fewer harassment and discrimination complaints, see lower crime statistics; and find more people wanting to work and study in our "safe and fair" community.

CONCLUSION

Using organic balance as an organizing principle creates common ground and a shared language among progressive social movements as they attempt to redress imbalances in our selves, our society and our world in multiple ways. Some groups work on the power imbalance between the rich and the poor, some between men and women, some between the earth and the humans. It may help us to think of this work in the context of "healing the split" between polarities and honoring the whole continuum of possibilities in our world.