



On Balance

Androgyny is a much simplified example of a basic principle by which people of many cultures harmonize their lives and societies with the ever-changing flow of the universe. That principle is balance—the seeking or giving of the ingredient most necessary to counter the dominant direction of life at any point—to nudge the ever-swinging pendulum of our personalities or societies from a path of increasing stagnation or decay back towards the center of new and vital life.

The *I Ching* tells us that everything carries within it the seed for its own downfall—at its moment of greatest splendor

its very success is preparing a way for the emergence of a new and balancing force. The greater the dominance of any one thing, the greater becomes the power of its opposite. The dominant force has transformed the world into balance with its own nature, and only a markedly different nature has the power to unbalance and bring change into that world.

This principle of a dynamic flow of balance becomes manifest even in the way people of countries such as Vietnam or China seek their leaders—seeking a person whose personality, whose nature, whose whole being echoes the forces they feel necessary to counter and bring back to balance the forces dominant in their society at that particular time.

Frances Fitzgerald speaks of this in *Fire in the Lake* (\$2.25 from Vintage Books, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022 (p. 40):

“At the beginning of the first Indochina war Paul Mus asked an old friend of his, a Vietnamese intellectual, whether he supported the Emperor Bao Dai or Ho Chi Minh. “Ho Chi Minh,” said the intellectual. “Ho Chi Minh because he is pointed, whereas Bao Dai is circular like a drop of water. Like water, he will rot everything he touches. What we want is pointed fire and flames like Ho Chi Minh.” As Mus explained, the traditional Vietnamese, like so many peasant people, saw history not as a straight-line progression but as an organic cycle of growth, fruition, and decay; for them these seasonal changes were associated with textures and pictures—the images as old as China itself. In times of prosperity and stability the empire appeared circular—the image of water and fecundity, or a time when, in the words of the great Vietnamese poet, Nguyen Du, “The emperor’s virtues spread like rain over all the land, penetrating deeply into the hearts of men.” Inevitably times would change: rich and secure, the dynasty would isolate itself from the people and grow corrupt—the image of degeneration, the stagnant pool. Then revolution would come—the cleansing fire to burn away the rot of the old order. At such times the Vietnamese would look for a leader who, in his absolute rectitude, his puritanical discipline, would lead the community back to the strength and vigor of its youth. And it was this picture that the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong presented to the Vietnamese of the twentieth century.” —TF