

Prudence Phillips
ENGW 105-06
Professor Boylan
23rd February 2018
Essay 1

The Binary

By definition, binary is referred to as a system by which each group and sub-group is perpetually divided into two, the one with a positive and the other with a negative character, till individuals (or genera) are reached. Our society is full of binary expectations. You're expected to be either this or that. There isn't allowed to be any in-betweens. This is the way the Chinese philosophy Yin-Yang symbol seemed to me too when I first began researching on it.

My interest in the Yin and Yang came about when my best friend gave me a necklace with one half of the symbol on it. I didn't exactly start researching on it then. I only started doing the research when I began journal three. I felt the paper was not accomplished enough so I decided to dig deeper into the meaning and significance of the ancient symbol. When I started researching this symbol, I found that indeed most of its definitions were stuck two meaning one of two things. There was the generally accepted interpretation of dark and light, there was one of male and female¹ and there was one with described it as love and hate. Other less recognized definitions include: shady side and sunny side, positive and negative, sun and

¹ Read more <https://www.keen.com/articles/love/yin-meets-yang>

moon and also, heaven and earth. If you consider all of these different representations of Yin Yang, you would see that everyone one of them supposedly has two sides to it, the soft and gentle side, and the aggressive side. I previously believed that this was how it was supposed to be. Just two ways to anything, right? Wrong. Like I said before, society expected to be either this or that right? I mean are we supposed to be either the good guy or the bad guy? Or something even more natural like male or female? In actual sense, yes. All of these and more are expected of us. But then, it becomes our job to break free from the stereotypes assigned to us and show society there's much more than the usual binary beliefs. You may be thinking how it is that I came to such an absurd conclusion. Well, it was obviously during my research. While I casually surfed through the net, I came across one peculiar definition of the Yin and Yang symbol that was significantly different from the others². Instead of the usual two sides to a coin relationship, this particular definition had five parts to it. The five parts referred to the five elements: Fire, Water, Wood, Earth and Metal. Although the prominent representation of Yin and Yang were the elements Fire and Water, what was striking about this particular definition was that it had not only fire and water, but three other elements in its diagram. It showed how though fire and water were the prevalent elements, they were very closely interconnected with all the other elements.

² Full excerpt can be found on Wikipedia via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Xing

Their interconnection was shown as thus: water has the ability to overpower fire, but at the same time it is necessary for the creation of wood in form of plants. Wood can overpower earth (I believe this happens when trees cover the entire land surface), but it is easily destroyed by fire. Fire also only has power over metal, it easily melts it at high temperatures and itself is stronger than wood. It is what is used in the making of most objects used to cut down trees. So, as you can see, all these elements interrelate with each other in the most unique ways even though they are birthed from the single pair of fire and water.

The reason I just took you through this brief description of one of the Yin and Yang histories is because I want to prove that we are not supposed to be accustomed to the tiny little box of binary thinking society has thrown at us. So far, we have actually come a long way in society. Considering one of the definitions of the symbol I came across which is Male and Female, we can duly observe that society has more or less come to accept that a person does not have to be born male to be a man, or female to be a woman. We are now allowed to choose who we want to be, and we have science to help us follow that path. We can even choose not to be either and no kind of judgment will be placed on us. We would all still be connected together as one human race. This is the kind of open mindedness members of our society need to have concerning all issues, not just gender or race or sexual orientation. A peculiar example of something else I feel needs to stop being seen in the light of the binary is

the color magenta³. I know this seems like a very strange thing to cite as an example, but I like this color so much because of its uniqueness. At first glance, some people would say the color is pink, but others will argue that it is purple. I argue that it is both, and a lot more in between too. For starters, the color purple is gotten from mixing the colors blue and red which are considered primary colors, and pink is also gotten from mixing a few colors too. So how can this color be perceived to just be pink or purple. It is blue. It is red. It is a lot of things going on. I feel that the same goes for many other colors and other more pressing issues in the society. So, there should be no reason why things should be looked at in one way, or even two ways. There should be multiple instances to anything and everything. Or what do you think?

³ To get a full view of this color visit <https://www.ledr.com/colours/magenta.htm>

Bibliography

Kochmer, Casey and Jewelie Kochmer. "What is Yin Yang?" *Personal Tao: Taoist articles*. 22

February 2018 <<https://personaltao.com/taoism/>>

Albright, Lauren. "Yin meets Yang." *Articles at KEEN.com*. 22 February 2018

<<https://www.keen.com/articles/love/yin-meets-yang>>

Chaitanyaiimc. "Yin and Yang – Balance in Relationships." *Towards better life*. 22 August 2015.

22 February 2018 <<https://chaitanyaiimc.wordpress.com/2015/08/22/yin-and-yang-balance-in-relationships/>>