

Transcending Binary Opposition: Exploring the Path to Harmonious Coexistence of Humanity From a Philosophical Perspective

CUI Weicheng

Westlake University, Hangzhou, China

This paper analyzes binary opposition thinking, dominant in Western societies since ancient Greece, its prevalence in philosophy, international relations, etc. While it influenced science and technology, it also caused conflicts, hindering the sustainable development of humanity. The paper explores the “binary co-existence” philosophy from Eastern thought. It explains its basis, applications, and significance in overcoming global social issues currently encountered. This philosophy emphasizes mutual dependence of opposites, offering solutions to global challenges. The paper stresses the urgency of shifting from binary opposition to binary co-existence, crucial for resolving conflicts and promoting sustainable development. It discusses ways like education and media to achieve this for global harmony.

Keywords: binary opposition, binary co-existence, thinking paradigm, global challenges, sustainable development, transformation

Introduction

In the landscape of human thought, binary opposition thinking, deeply rooted in Western philosophical traditions, has long exerted a profound influence on our understanding of the world (Russell, 1945). Stemming from the ancient Greek philosophers’ division of the cosmic world, this mode of thinking has permeated diverse fields, acting as a double-edged sword. It has, on one hand, spurred intellectual growth and scientific progress, on the other hand, it has also led to a series of intractable problems such as the expansion of regional hot wars and the loss of control over the rise in the Earth’s temperature.

In Western philosophy, the seeds of binary opposition were sown as early as when Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle drew a demarcation line between the metaphysical and the physical in the cosmic world. During the Middle Ages, it evolved into the opposition between the divine realm and the secular world. Since Descartes in modern times, the oppositions in the field of epistemology, such as between gnoseology and agnosticism, causality and randomness, materialism and idealism, and theism and atheism, have become even more prominent. For example, the debate between Einstein and Bohr on quantum mechanics in the first half of the 20th century was essentially a philosophical debate on ontology and epistemology (Whitaker, 2006). This mode of thinking

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CUI Weicheng, Ph.D, Chair Professor, Research Center for Industries of the Future, Westlake University, Hangzhou, China.

has kept Western thought in a state of conflict for a long time. Although it has, to some extent, inspired vitality such as the scientific revolution, it has also given rise to frequent social problems like wars, revolutions, violence, and plunder, becoming a persistent ailment in Western society.

Today, the negative consequences of binary opposition thinking are becoming increasingly conspicuous. In the realm of international politics, geopolitical conflicts are on the rise. Countries often view international relations from a binary perspective of friend or foe, resulting in the recurrence of regional wars. The “Russia-Ukraine War” and the “Middle East Wars” are prime examples. These conflicts have brought immense pain and losses to human society, not only causing direct harm to the involved parties but also having far-reaching impacts on the global stage, undermining peace, stability, and sustainable development.

In the sphere of social thought, the collisions between different ideologies and values are intensifying. Extreme thoughts are on the rampage, and the disputes between the left and the right are incessant. This has led to the exacerbation of social contradictions, making it extremely difficult to reach a consensus. In academic research, binary opposition thinking has restricted scholars’ horizons, resulting in one-sided research outcomes that lack comprehensiveness and depth, failing to capture the complexity of real-world phenomena. The slow progress of consciousness studies may be partly attributed to this factor (Seth, 2018).

Facing such a predicament, it is extremely urgent to resolve the negative impacts of binary opposition thinking and explore a new philosophical path. This paper will deeply analyze the nature and roots of binary opposition thinking, compare the methods of different philosophical schools in resolving binary opposition, and combine the concept of binary co-existence in Eastern philosophy to attempt to put forward practical solutions. The aim is to provide philosophical solutions to the numerous problems faced by contemporary society.

Binary Opposition Thinking: A Critical Appraisal

Definition, Manifestation, and Origins

Binary classification, as a fundamental logical thinking mode, is a product of human self-awareness. This is determined by the unique discriminatory mind of living beings. Compared with other animals on Earth, humans have the strongest discriminatory mind. Due to this discriminatory mind, humans have given different names to various things they see and think of, thus giving birth to language and writing, which have greatly promoted the progress of human civilization. This is a very useful analytical method for us to understand complex systems. For example, in the first division, humans divide the entire universe into the self and the non-self. We can name the non-self as the external world or the nature, and the entire universe includes the self and the world. Then, using this method continuously, we give different names to each specific object in the external world, such as the Earth, the Moon, the Sun, plants, animals, minerals, etc. When it comes to humans, if we use this analytical method, we can divide other people into enemies and friends. However, when using such a binary logical analysis method to classify people, we often make too many enemies. To reduce the number of enemies, people have developed more refined ternary or multi-element logics. In ternary logic, we can divide other people into three categories: friends, neutral parties, and enemies. Finally, humans have developed continuous logic, also known as fuzzy logic (Zadeh, 1988), where the transition from friends to enemies is continuous, without a clear boundary between the two.

From the development process of this logical analysis method, all logical analysis methods are a classification of the objects that already exist in the world we observe, rather than revealing the origin of the

objects in the world. Thus, whether it is unary logic, binary logic, or multi-element logic, in essence, the origin of objects should not be involved. The so-called unary logic refers to the state where the human discriminatory mind has not been opened or the state where humans return to the closed state after opening it through cultivation, that is, the universe is viewed as a whole again, nameless and formless. If we want to discuss what exists in the universe, we must do so based on binary logic or multi-element logic, and only within the same logical system does the discussion make sense. In this way, we naturally realize that the definition of any concept is essentially the product of binary logic A and non-A. The establishment of Concept “A” depends on Concept “Non-A”. Therefore, the essence of the truth of the universe should be binary co-existence rather than binary opposition. Higher-order logics are just refinements of binary logic, all of which are different manifestations of the discriminatory mind.

Dividing things into two mutually opposing and mutually exclusive categories is an exclusive way of thinking of some philosophers. However, this way of philosophical thinking is already incomplete from the perspective of ontology (Cui, 2021). During the Axial Age, famous Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were the originators of famous idealist and materialist philosophers. In contrast, in ancient India and China in the East, whether it was Laozi’s Taoism, Confucius’ Confucianism, or Sakyamuni’s Buddhism, they were basically philosophies of binary co-existence (Capra, 1975). Given that modern science, which emerged in the 16th-century West, was also born during the debate between materialism and idealism, theism and atheism, we can say that modern science is a theory with incomplete ontology based on the philosophy of binary opposition, and it has many classic manifestations, for example, the opposition between materialism and idealism. Materialism firmly believes that matter is the only existence of the universe, with matter being primary and consciousness being a product of matter. Idealism, on the other hand, advocates that consciousness is primary and that matter depends on consciousness for its existence. This opposition runs through the entire development process of Western philosophy. Different philosophers, based on their own thinking and arguments, stand on either the materialist or idealist camps, continuously enriching and deepening the connotations and extensions of these two viewpoints.

The opposition between theism and atheism is also quite prominent. Theists uphold the existence of a god or supernatural power, believing that a god creates and dominates the world, and that human destiny and behavior are governed by the will of the god. Atheists, on the other hand, firmly deny the existence of a god, emphasizing that the world is natural and material, and that all phenomena can be explained through scientific methods and rational thinking (Descartes, 1968). This opposition is particularly prominent in the collision between religious beliefs and scientific belief, triggering countless debates and reflections. Currently, one of the biggest misunderstandings of atheists is the denial of the existence of non-material mind (or spirit, or soul) (Walach, 2019). This leads to an incomplete ontology. For example, it becomes difficult to define the difference between living and non-living things, and to distinguish between the two different states of a living being: being alive and being dead (Cui, 2021). This is the difficulty that classical mechanics encounters when explaining many phenomena of living beings (Cui, Li, & Pan, 2024).

Gnoseology and agnosticism are also typical manifestations of binary opposition. Gnoseologists have full confidence in human cognitive abilities, believing that with the continuous development of science and technology and rational thinking, humans can gradually understand and grasp the essence and laws of the world. Agnostics, however, express doubts about the boundaries of human cognition, believing that there are some

mysteries in the world that transcend human understanding, and that humans can never reach the ultimate truth of things. For agnostics who still engage in scientific research to find the laws of the world's operation, this behavior itself forms a paradox with their beliefs. We believe that believing that the world operates according to certain laws and that humans can, through joint efforts, understand these laws should be the common philosophical foundation of all scientific workers engaged in scientific research. However, it is evident that since the debate between Einstein and Bohr on this issue (Whitaker, 2006), the mainstream scientific community has not yet accepted this philosophical foundation.

In daily life, binary opposition thinking is also ubiquitous. People often simply divide things into opposing categories such as good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and always want to either eliminate or transform the opposite side to stand on their own side. For example, when evaluating a person, people tend to fall into the mindset of either good or bad, ignoring the complexity and multi-faceted nature of people. When looking at social phenomena, people also tend to judge them with simple opposing viewpoints, lacking comprehensive and in-depth analysis. Especially among many scientific and technological workers, there is never an awareness of the relativity of language and text, that is, the establishment of Concept "A" requires the accompaniment of Concept "Non-A". If humans always maintain this discriminatory mind, then the opposite side will exist eternally.

Influence on Philosophy, Society, and Global Challenges

In the development process of philosophy, binary opposition thinking is like a double-edged sword. It has both inspired the collision and innovation of ideas and brought about many intractable disputes. Different philosophical schools, based on the viewpoints of binary opposition, hold their own positions and engage in fierce debates, which has promoted the continuous evolution of philosophical thought. For example, the debate between materialism and idealism has prompted philosophers to deeply think about the relationship between matter and consciousness, and continuously improve their respective theoretical systems (Russell, 1945). The confrontation between gnoseology and agnosticism has also urged people to reflect on the boundaries of human cognitive abilities and knowledge, promoting the development of epistemology. However, such debates often reach a deadlock, making it difficult to reach a consensus, resulting in the fragmentation and opposition of philosophical thought.

In the real world, the negative impacts of binary opposition thinking are more obvious. It easily triggers conflicts and contradictions, making people fall into the extreme mindset of black-and-white thinking, and making it difficult to seek compromise and cooperation. On the international political stage, the "Russia-Ukraine War" is the bitter fruit of binary opposition thinking. Russia and Ukraine have serious differences on issues such as NATO's (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) eastward expansion. The forces behind both sides view each other with binary opposition thinking, regarding the other side as an absolute enemy, and both want to completely eliminate the other side, which has led to the continuous escalation of the situation. The war has brought heavy disasters to the people of the two countries, with countless families broken, heavy casualties, and severe damage to economic development.

The "Middle East Wars" are a typical case of long-term conflicts triggered by binary opposition thinking. There are deep-seated contradictions between Israel and Palestine and the surrounding Arab countries in terms of territory, religion, and ethnicity. Influenced by binary opposition thinking, both sides regard the other side as an irreconcilable enemy and have long been trapped in wars and conflicts. The conflict between Palestine and Israel has continuously escalated, and the people in the Gaza Strip are living in dire straits, with their basic right

to survival hardly guaranteed. Such long-term conflicts not only bring endless pain to the local people but also pose a serious threat to regional peace and stability, affecting the global political and economic pattern.

In the face of the severe situation of global climate change, with the continuous rise of the Earth's temperature, "carbon peaking and carbon neutrality" have become the key goals of the common efforts of all mankind. Achieving these goals is crucial for maintaining the stability of the Earth's ecosystem and ensuring the sustainable development of humanity. However, local hot wars can cause serious damage to the ecological environment in many aspects. Wars can lead to the destruction of a large number of infrastructure, the interruption of industrial production, and the excessive consumption and unrestrained emissions of energy. This not only sharply deteriorates the ecological environment in the local area but also has a negative impact on the atmosphere, soil, and water resources globally, disturbing the global ecological balance. This is likely to offset the huge efforts made by other regions to achieve the sustainable development of the Earth's ecology, making the goals of "carbon peaking and carbon neutrality" seem out of reach. Therefore, stopping local hot wars is an important prerequisite for promoting the sustainable development of the global ecology.

In daily social life, binary opposition thinking can also lead to tense interpersonal relationships and the intensification of social contradictions. On some social hot-button issues, people often have fierce debates due to different positions, which may even escalate into online violence and real-world conflicts. For example, during elections, family members may have verbal battles and even physical conflicts because they support different party candidates. This kind of black-and-white thinking makes it difficult for people to communicate and interact rationally, and they are unable to seek common interests and solutions, further exacerbating social division and opposition.

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, as expected, the leaders of various countries should have gathered to deeply discuss how to achieve the carbon emission targets set by the Paris Agreement in 2030 through cooperation. These targets are of great significance for alleviating global climate change and promoting sustainable development, and are related to the common interests of all mankind. However, the conference fell into a dilemma where the leaders of the two camps accused and scolded each other, and no substantive consensus was reached. This situation is precisely the serious consequence brought about by binary opposition thinking.

Binary opposition thinking seriously hinders the effective communication and cooperation among countries, making it difficult to form a joint force in addressing global challenges. To fundamentally solve such problems, it is necessary to explore a way out at the philosophical level. Arnold J. Toynbee, a famous British historian, highly valued Chinese culture and Buddhism in his book *Looking Ahead to the 21st Century*. He believes that the 21st century will be a century when the East plays a leading role, and Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, will have a profound impact on the future of humanity. He also mentions that Buddhism has the potential to bring spiritual transformation to humanity (Toynbee & Ikeda, 2007). The Confucian thought of China emphasizes concepts such as "harmony in diversity" and "benevolence", advocating harmonious co-existence on the basis of respecting differences, and focusing on the construction of individual moral cultivation and social harmonious order. Mahayana Buddhism adheres to the spirit of compassion and universal salvation, advocating to view all things in the world with tolerance and wisdom. The philosophical wisdom of tolerance, harmony, and symbiosis contained in both may provide profound inspiration for resolving binary opposition and promoting global cooperation, helping human society cope with various complex challenges and move towards a better future.

The “Binary Co-existence” Philosophy: A Promising Alternative

Philosophical Basis and Theoretical Support

The “binary co-existence” philosophy is deeply rooted in the profound understanding of the universe as a whole or a web in Eastern philosophy (Capra, 1996). Eastern philosophy has long perceived that the universe is an integrated whole, nameless, and formless. However, due to the discriminatory mind of humans and the awakening of self-awareness, people begin to make various distinctions. First, they distinguish between the self and the non-self, and then give various different names to the non-self. This analytical method was later summarized as the logical analysis method, among which binary logic is the smallest logical system used by humans. From binary logic, it can be found that to define the Concept “A”, at least the concept “non-A” is needed as a foil, such as yin and yang, good and bad, motion and rest, enemies and friends, etc.

Descartes’ mind-body dualism also provides important theoretical support for the “binary co-existence” philosophy (Descartes, 1968). Descartes believed that if the world is described as a material body (body) and non-material mind (mind), they must be two independent existences. Based on the ideas of Eastern philosophy and Descartes’ basic judgment of binary co-existence, Cui formally proposed the axiom of relative simultaneity in his new system theory: “There is no such thing as a perspective-independent existence. Every described existence is a relative existence since the concept of existence depends on other concepts, at least its opposite or complement” (Cui, 2021, p. 449). This means that the world we perceive is relative, and different concepts are interdependent, mutually opposing, and complementary.

In the tradition of Eastern philosophy, the theory of yin and yang is a typical manifestation of the “binary co-existence” philosophy. Yin and yang are mutually opposing, yet also interdependent and transformable. As stated in *Tao Te Ching*: “Being and non-being generate each other; difficult and easy complement each other; long and short contrast each other; high and low incline towards each other; sound and voice harmonize each other; front and back follow each other”. Heaven is yang, and earth is yin; the sun is yang, and the moon is yin; men are yang, and women are yin. The balance and harmony of yin and yang are the foundation for the stable development of things (Capra, 1975). Once the yin-yang balance is disrupted, various problems will arise. This thought emphasizes the mutual relationship between the two elements, rather than simple opposition.

In traditional Chinese medicine theory, the principle of yin-yang balance is one of the core concepts for understanding human health and diseases. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) regards the human body as a complex and organic system, and yin and yang are a high-level generalization of various physiological functions, organizational structures, and pathological changes in the human body. Yin and yang are not specific substances but represent two mutually opposing and related aspects of things. There are relationships of opposition and restraint, mutual root and mutual use, ebb and flow balance, and mutual transformation between yin and yang. Opposition and restraint mean that the two sides of yin and yang mutually oppose and restrain each other to maintain the relative stability of the human physiological state. For example, the yang qi in the human body can restrain the cold-congealing nature of yin qi, and yin qi can inhibit the over-hyperactivity of yang qi. If this restraining relationship is disrupted, a pathological state of excessive or deficient yin and yang will occur, leading to diseases. Mutual root and mutual use mean that the two sides of yin and yang are mutually dependent and mutually functional, with the existence of one side premised on the other. The warming function of yang qi requires the nourishment of yin qi to be guaranteed, and the tranquility function of yin qi also depends on the promotion of yang qi to function properly. Yin and yang are also in a state of continuous ebb and flow balance.

Under normal physiological conditions, yin and yang ebb and flow and maintain a dynamic balance, jointly maintaining human health. Under certain conditions, yin and yang can also transform into each other. Originally yang-natured things may transform into yin-natured things under certain circumstances, and vice versa. For example, in the development process of diseases, a cold syndrome may transform into a heat syndrome under certain conditions.

From the principle of yin-yang balance in traditional Chinese medicine, the advantages of the “binary co-existence” philosophy can be seen. The “binary co-existence” philosophy emphasizes the mutual dependence and mutual function of the opposing sides, just as yin and yang mutually restrain and mutually support each other to jointly maintain the stability of the system. This philosophical concept does not regard the opposing sides as absolute enemies but recognizes their indispensability in the whole, which is conducive to breaking the black-and-white binary opposition mindset. When solving practical problems, the “binary co-existence” philosophy can prompt people to view problems comprehensively and dialectically, respect differences, seek the balance point and cooperation space between the opposing sides, and avoid extremism. For example, in social relations, different viewpoints and interest groups can draw on this philosophy, understand and tolerate each other, and jointly promote the harmonious development of society. In international relations, countries can also uphold this concept, seek cooperation in competition, jointly address global challenges, and achieve common prosperity.

In Buddhist philosophy, the wisdom of “binary co-existence” is also contained (Laumakis, 2008). Buddhism believes that all things in the world are born from the combination of causes and conditions and have no absolute independent existence. The existence of things is relative and is defined in the inter-relationship with other things. The greatest contribution of Buddhism is the proposition that the discriminatory mind of humans is the root of the existence of all things, and enemies are generated in the mind rather than existing originally. Using external cultivation to eliminate enemies, this violent means will only increase the number of one’s enemies. Only when there are no enemies in one’s mind can one be invincible in the world. It especially emphasizes that love and tolerance are the fundamental methods to solve all contradictions and conflicts. Therefore, the practice of Buddhism is to cultivate the mind without discrimination. In *The Diamond Sutra*, there are these famous viewpoints: “No self-form, no other-form, no sentient-being form, no life-span form”, “All forms are illusory”, “If you see that all forms are not forms, then you see the Tathagata”. These viewpoints of Buddhism break the binary opposition mindset and guide people to view the world from a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective.

Practical Applications and Significance

The “binary co-existence” philosophy has two core ideas. First, the “body” with material attributes and the “mind” with non-material attributes of a person exist simultaneously (Laumakis, 2008). Since the body is subject to birth and death, the mind is eternal but in always changing. That is, the mind is the essence of each living being and its body is not. Although the mind is always in motion and change, it exists eternally. Each life of ours is just a change of body, just like changing an old dress for a new one. The efforts we make for the beauty of the Earth’s environment will be enjoyed by ourselves in the next life. Second, enemies are created in our minds. In the infinite long history, any two living beings may have been family members and relatives. Eliminating the physical body will only increase hatred and cannot truly solve the problem. Therefore, if we really want to solve the problem, we should give love and forgiveness to the other side as if they were our own children. In Buddhism, one is even willing to sacrifice one’s own body because he believed that his mind cannot be eliminated. Using this method

can fundamentally resolve hatred. If I did not owe you a life debt in my previous life, you would not come to claim my life in this life. In this way, the sacrifice of one's own life can be used to resolve eternal hatred in the future. With such a belief, various contradictions and conflicts among humans can be well resolved.

In the field of international relations, the "binary co-existence" philosophy provides new ideas for resolving international conflicts. Take the Israel-Palestine conflict as an example. For a long time, Israel and Palestine have had serious differences on issues such as territory and religion. Both sides adhere to the binary opposition mindset, and regard the other side as an enemy, resulting in the continuous escalation of the conflict and bringing great pain to the people of both sides. If both sides can apply the philosophical concept of "binary co-existence" and realize that in the next turn of their lives they may be born into families of other side, then they will respect each other's existence and interests, and seek ways of peaceful co-existence. If the two governments merge into one government, then permanent peace and stability in the region can be achieved.

In international politics, the relationships among countries are complex, full of interest conflicts and contradictions. The traditional binary opposition mindset often leads to confrontations and conflicts among countries, while the "binary co-existence" philosophy advocates that countries solve problems through dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit. The concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind" proposed by China is a vivid practice of the "binary co-existence" philosophy in international relations. This concept emphasizes the common interests and common responsibilities of humanity, and advocates that countries work hand in hand to jointly address global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and the epidemic. By building a community with a shared future for mankind, countries can achieve mutual benefit, win-win results, and common development, and avoid falling into the conflict situation of binary opposition. However, China has not clearly explained why humanity is a community with a shared future. Therefore, this concept has not yet become the mainstream belief in the international community. One of the main purposes of this paper is to clarify from a philosophical perspective why humanity is a community with a shared future. It is because the homeland of humanity is a common homeland, and the life of each person is eternal. I may be born into a Palestinian family in this life and into an Israeli family in the next life. Therefore, there is no need for us to regard other lives as absolute enemies. The damage you cause to the Earth now will definitely bring you punishment in the next life. Similarly, the efforts we make to improve the Earth's environment now can also be enjoyed by us in the next life.

In handling social contradictions, the "binary co-existence" philosophy also has important guiding significance. In society, there are various interest demands and contradictions among different groups, such as the gap between the rich and the poor, class contradictions, and ethnic contradictions. If we adopt the binary opposition mindset and regard different groups as opposing sides, it will only exacerbate the intensification of contradictions. The "binary co-existence" philosophy encourages people to respect the differences of different groups, seek common interests, and solve contradictions through negotiation, mediation, and other means. When handling labor-management disputes, through the negotiation and negotiation between the labor union and the enterprise, a solution acceptable to both sides can be reached, realizing the harmonious co-existence of the labor and management sides. The "binary co-existence" philosophy indicates that force is not the means to solve problems, and only negotiation and consultation are the ways to resolve contradictions. If the vast majority of people on Earth believe in this philosophy, then hot wars can completely disappear, and physical conflicts can be minimized.

Significance for Human Civilization

The “binary co-existence” philosophy has far-reaching significance for promoting the development of human civilization. It helps to break down the barriers between different civilizations and promote the exchange and integration of civilizations. In today’s era of globalization, the exchanges between different civilizations are becoming increasingly frequent, but there are also often conflicts and misunderstandings. The “binary co-existence” philosophy advocates respecting the differences of different civilizations, appreciating the advantages of other civilizations, and through dialogue and exchange, achieving mutual learning and common progress of civilizations. Taking the exchange between Chinese and Western cultures as an example, Western culture attaches importance to rational thinking and science and technology, while Eastern culture attaches importance to humanistic spirit and moral ethics. Through the concept of “binary co-existence”, both sides can learn from each other, draw on each other’s strengths to make up for their weaknesses, and jointly promote the development of human civilization.

The “binary co-existence” philosophy can also enhance the ethical and moral level of humanity. It emphasizes tolerance, understanding, and cooperation, guiding people to abandon self-centered behavior and pay attention to the interests of others and the overall interests of society. In a society that upholds the “binary co-existence” philosophy, people will respect the rights and dignity of others more, care for the disadvantaged groups, and actively participate in social welfare undertakings. The improvement of this moral concept helps to build a harmonious and beautiful society and promote the progress of human civilization.

Shifting From Binary Opposition to Binary Co-existence: Necessity and Approaches

The Urgency of the Thinking Shift

In the current era, the shift from binary opposition thinking to binary co-existence thinking is of utmost urgency. This transformation holds great significance for resolving current social contradictions and promoting human development.

In the realm of international politics, for a long time, when countries handle international relations, they often fall into the binary opposition mindset. Simplistically categorizing other countries as either allies or enemies, this black-and-white perspective has led to tension and instability in the international situation. During the “Cold War” period, the opposition between the capitalist camp led by the United States and the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union cast the world under the long-term shadow of nuclear war. The two sides engaged in intense confrontations in various fields such as politics, economy, and military, not only consuming a vast amount of resources but also posing a huge threat to world peace. This binary opposition mindset has made it extremely difficult for countries to seek common interests and achieve true cooperation and win-win results.

In the aspect of social thought, the collisions between different ideologies and values are becoming increasingly intense. In some countries, the disputes between the left and the right are incessant, resulting in severe social division. Different political factions attack each other, making it difficult to reach a consensus, which in turn hinders the effective implementation of national policies and social development. In some Western countries, the opposition between populism and elitism has intensified social contradictions, and the dissatisfaction of the public is on the rise, having a great negative impact on social stability and development.

In academic research, binary opposition thinking also restricts the horizons of scholars. In the field of philosophy, the long-standing debate between materialism and idealism has made scholars often confined to their own positions, making it difficult to understand philosophical issues from a more comprehensive perspective. In

sociological research, the opposition between structural-functionalism and conflict theory has led researchers to often only focus on one aspect when analyzing social phenomena, while ignoring other factors. This one-sided research method leads to the lack of comprehensiveness and depth in academic achievements, and fails to truly reveal the essence and laws of social phenomena.

The shift from binary opposition thinking to binary co-existence thinking can help us break this deadlock. It enables us to recognize that things are not absolutely opposed but can be mutually dependent and mutually reinforcing. In international relations, countries can cooperate to achieve common interests and jointly address global challenges such as climate change and terrorism. In the trend of social thought, different ideologies and values can communicate and learn from each other, jointly promoting social progress. In academic research, different theories and viewpoints can complement each other, promoting the development and innovation of academia.

Strategies for Achieving the Transformation

To achieve the shift from binary opposition thinking to binary co-existence thinking, multiple approaches are needed (Kuhn, 1962). Education plays a fundamental role in this process. First, it is necessary to start with the educational content. In the past, what we taught students were all monistic philosophies, either classical mechanics and relativity theory based on materialist philosophy or quantum mechanics based on idealist philosophy. They all emphasize that life has only one existence, and nothing exists after death. Both of these two philosophies are of binary opposition, and thus they cannot be coordinated and unified with each other. This is also the fundamental reason why the more developed science and technology become, the more contradictions and conflicts there are among humans.

Now, to prove that “binary co-existence” is the truth of the world’s operation, the most crucial issue is to provide scientific evidence to prove that human life does not have only one existence but multiple existences. If this evidence cannot be provided, then the theory of binary co-existence is merely a tool for moral enlightenment. For those who believe in science, such a theory is unacceptable. For this purpose, the American entrepreneur Robert T. Bigelow founded the Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies (BICS) in June 2020. In January 2021, the institute held a global essay competition aiming to find evidence for “the Survival of Human Consciousness after Permanent Bodily Death”. The competition offered substantial prizes, with the first-place prize being \$500,000, the second-place prize being \$300,000, and the third-place prize being \$150,000. Participants were required to submit a paper of at least 25,000 words to expound on this view. This competition attracted many researchers in the fields of neurology and psychology. Eventually, the institute selected 29 winning papers, and the relevant information can be found on their website (<https://www.bigelowinstitute.org/>). From these winning papers, we can see that there is already a lot of evidences for “the continuation of human consciousness after death”, but on the contrary, there is no scientific evidence for “the complete disappearance of human consciousness after death”. Since then, Bigelow has continued to fund many related projects to conduct in-depth research in this direction (Houran, 2022).

Secondly, educational methods also need to be changed. In school education, more attention should be paid to cultivating students’ multi-dimensional thinking abilities. The curriculum should be more diversified, covering knowledge from different cultures and different academic fields, so that students can understand the diversity and complexity of the world. In history teaching, not only should the history of one’s own country be taught, but also the history of other countries and regions in the world should be introduced, enabling students to recognize

the mutual influence and interaction among different countries and ethnic groups in the historical development process. In literature education, students should be guided to read literary works from different cultural backgrounds, experience the charm of different cultures, and cultivate their cultural tolerance awareness.

Thirdly, educational approaches need to be innovated. Heuristic and discussion-based teaching methods should be adopted to encourage students to think actively, express their opinions, and cultivate their critical thinking and innovation abilities. In the classroom, students can be organized to discuss some controversial issues, such as the relationship between environmental protection and economic development, and the impact of artificial intelligence on society. Through these discussions, students can learn to analyze problems from different perspectives, understand the rationality of different viewpoints, and gradually form a binary co-existence way of thinking.

Fourthly, cultural dissemination is equally crucial. Cultural workers should convey values of tolerance and harmony. Cultural carriers such as movies, TV dramas, and literary works can, through vivid stories and images, show the beautiful scenes of mutual understanding and tolerance among different individuals and different groups, guiding the audience and readers to establish correct values. The movie *Avatar* shows the process of humans and the Na'vi from conflict to reconciliation, conveying the concept that different races should respect each other and co-exist harmoniously. The literary work *The Kite Runner* tells the story of friendship and redemption between two teenagers from different classes, allowing readers to feel the beauty of human nature and the power of tolerance.

Fifthly, the media plays an important role in cultural dissemination. The media should report events objectively and comprehensively, avoiding one-sided and extreme views. When reporting international events, the media should analyze from multiple perspectives, present the whole picture of the events, let the public understand the positions and viewpoints of different countries and regions, and promote international mutual understanding and trust. In the era of social media, false information and extreme remarks can spread rapidly. The media should shoulder more social responsibilities, spread true and objective information, and guide the public to think rationally, avoiding being influenced by binary opposition thinking.

Conclusion

In the in-depth analysis of binary opposition thinking and the exploration of the “binary co-existence” philosophy, we have clearly recognized that although binary opposition thinking has left a profound mark on the development of philosophy and human cognition, the conflicts and contradictions it has brought have become increasingly prominent in the current era. It has become a significant factor hindering social progress and the harmonious development of humanity.

To completely solve this problem, it is necessary to replace the currently popular “binary opposition” philosophy with the Eastern “binary co-existence” philosophy. The “binary co-existence” philosophy, with its profound Eastern philosophical heritage and deep-seated insight into the relative existence of all things in the universe, points out a practical path for resolving binary opposition. It emphasizes the mutual dependence and complementarity of the opposing sides, and advocates an attitude of tolerance, understanding, and cooperation when looking at things. It provides a brand-new way of thinking and practical guidance for solving international conflicts, social contradictions, and other issues.

The shift from binary opposition to binary co-existence thinking is an inevitable requirement of the development of the times and the key to the sustainable development of humanity. We should attach great

importance to the value of the “binary co-existence” philosophy and, through various means such as education and cultural dissemination, actively promote the acceptance of this philosophical concept by more people in society, so that it can play a greater role in solving contemporary social problems. Only in this way can we break free from the shackles of binary opposition, achieve world peace and tranquility, and promote the continuous progress of human civilization. It is high time for the international community to embrace this new philosophical perspective and work together to build a more harmonious and sustainable world.

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