

 [Reflections on yin-yang by Xin Li](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 27]

Dear all,

Today, I read a news report on 'AMS Space Experiment Sees Hints of Dark Matter Particles' at <http://www.nbcnews.com/science/space/ams-space-experiment-sees-hints-dark-matter-particles-n206411>

The notion of anti-matter, which is the opposite to the notion of matter (the ordinary 'matter' we laymen talk about), inspires me the following thinking on Yin-Yang vs. Hegel's dialectics.

I often debate with Peter P. Li whether Yin-Yang is better than Hegel's dialectic. While Peter thinks Yin-Yang is better, I often doubt such a claim. Peter often relies on an argument that 'matters in the world are not pure identifies and they can be divided into lower-level smaller particles FOREVER'. I used to refute such an argument by saying that 'the fact that scientists have not found the final smallest particle does not necessarily mean it cannot be found forever'. However, such a refutation is not powerful because Peter would say 'if such a so-called smallest particle is said to be found, I can guarantee you that one day it will be proved that particle is made of smaller lower-level particles again'. In fact, such a counter-argument is unfalsifiable.

However, the notion of anti-matter reminds me a fundamental problem in above debate. Both Peter and I were wrong in assuming the truthfulness or superiority of Yin-Yang depends on the question whether matter is unlimitedly dividable. In fact, dividability is not the key to this debate. We talk about Yin-Yang, if matter is yang, then its opposite yin should be anti-matter. We should examine how matter and anti-matter interact and to see if such interaction is in line with Yin-Yang philosophy or with Hegel's dialectic or Bohr's complementarity principle.

From Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antimatter>

In particle physics, antimatter is material composed of antiparticles, which have the same mass as particles of ordinary matter but have opposite charge and other particle properties such as lepton and baryon number. Encounters between particles and antiparticles lead to the annihilation of both, giving rise to varying proportions of high-energy photons (gamma rays), neutrinos, and lower-mass particle–antiparticle pairs.

Here, we read that the interaction between matter and anti-matter leads to the annihilation of both that gives rise to something else. This is very different from what Yin-Yang says yin and yang are mutually penetrated and coexisted. On the other hand, this seems to be quite similar to Hegel's dialectical process:

C Becoming

1. Unity of Being and Nothing "

"Pure Being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same. What is the truth is neither being nor

nothing, but that being — does not pass over but has passed over — into nothing, and nothing into being. But it is equally true that they are not undistinguished from each other, that, on the contrary, they are not the same, that they are absolutely distinct, and yet that they are unseparated and inseparable and that each immediately vanishes in its opposite. Their truth is therefore, this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: becoming, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself." (Hegel's Science of Logic: § 134)

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hl/hlbeing.htm>

My conclusion: we cannot say that Yin-Yang is better than Hegel's dialectic in describing the world.

Your comments are welcome!

Best, Xin

Xin Li

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

 [Comment by Anthony Marsella](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

See attached.

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Anthony J. Marsella, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

Show, by your actions, that you choose peace over war, freedom over oppression, voice over silence, service over self-interest, respect over advantage, courage over fear, cooperation over competition, action over passivity, diversity over uniformity, and justice over all.

Adapted from Bessie Anderson Stanley (1905): To laugh often and love much, To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, To appreciate beauty, To find the best in others, To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden path, or a redeemed social condition, To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded. [Monument inscription, Lincoln, Kansas. I found the quotation, as written, posted in a Quaker Meeting House. There are many versions -- the words differ, but the sentiment and wisdom are the same]

 [TRANSCEND As I AgeMarsella](#)

 [Comment by Louise Sundararajan](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Dear All,

I have two comments on Xin Li's recent post on the Chinese notion of Yin-Yang.

1. Difference does not mean superiority. Chinese Yin-Yang is different from Hegel's dialectics, as Peter Li has argued convincingly. But it is a good idea not to infer "better" from difference across cultures. Better for what? For A to be better than B, both A and B have to share the same ecological conditions, for instance the same cultural and historical background, let's call it C. Only then can we say that A serves the purposes of C better than B.

2. Often times, discussions on yin-yang tend to be at the level of semantics, for instance, does yin-yang stand for matter and anti-matter? I believe a structural analysis is more productive. Structurally speaking, the notion of yin-yang has two properties:

a. Pluralism to the last drop, or as Peter Li puts it, any term can always break down into two.

b. It's the relation between the terms, not the terms per se, that counts.

To illustrate this structural insight about yin-yang, I would like to share a passage I wrote recently about harmony.

First, pluralism. Difference and diversity are crucial to harmony. For instance, an association of diversity with growth, and uniformity with sterility, is found in the Kuo Yü, in which Shih Po is quoted as saying, "To ameliorate one thing with another is the meaning of harmony. The result is flourishing and growth, and thereby creatures coming into existence. But supposing uniformity is supplemented by uniformity, nothing new can be produced" (Fung, 1962, p. 107). This emphasis on diversity goes with the notion of harmony as an emergent order arising out of a temporary truce or synergy among competing cues. An apt analogy would be toss salad or stir fry (Sundararajan, 2010), in which the diverse ingredients contribute to the overall flavor of the whole by each retaining its uniqueness in taste and texture, as the Lushi chunqiu put it:

In combining your ingredients to achieve a harmony, you have to use the sweet, sour, bitter, acrid, and the salty, and you have to mix them in an appropriate sequence and proportion. Bringing the various ingredients together is an extremely subtle art in which each of them has its own expression. (Ames & Rosemont, 1998, pp. 257-258, emphasis added).

To ensure that the diverse sub-systems can coordinate without sacrificing their respective integrity, one needs strategies for the maintenance and restoration of balance, as evidenced by the importance given to "appropriate sequence and proportion" of things. When things grow out of proportion, the strong will overwhelm the weak, resulting in the winner take all phenomenon. It is important therefore to have strategies for the maintenance and restoration of balance, such that diverse sub-systems may be able to co-exist in peace, and be "nurtured together," as the Doctrine of the Mean puts it: "All things are nurtured together without their injuring one another. The courses of the seasons, and of the sun and moon, are pursued

without any collision among them” (zhong yong, ch. 30, Legge, p. 427, italics in original).

This brings us to the next point I want to make about yin and yang, namely it pertains to a dynamic interplay of opposing forces—fission and fusion, according to Tony Marsella. Or in the case of the Chinese notion of harmony, balance breakdown and balance maintenance/restoration. The dynamic interplay between balance breakdown and balance maintenance/restoration can be illustrated with a contemporary example. Xin Li (2014) proposed a business model based on the golden mean called Zhong Yong’s 4 stage process model: The four stages are: inclusion, selection, promotion, and transition: Inclusion means one should always include at least two contrary elements; selection refers to prioritizing some elements according to circumstances; promotion means promoting the other un-prioritized elements to prevent the potential crowding out of the un-prioritized by the prioritized; transition means shifting to new prioritizing when circumstances change. My structural analysis of this model is as follows:

1. Inclusion: A and its other, Not-A, are intentionally paired up to make a set. This helps to build a model of harmony as unity in diversity.
2. Selection: Balance breakdown by prioritizing one of the binary oppositions in the set, say, A.
3. Promotion: Balance restoration by neutralizing the difference made in (2), for instance promoting the un-prioritized element, Not-A.
4. Transition: If circumstances change, the shifting balance of A and Not-A can change accordingly.

Comments are welcome.

Louise

PS. Please feel free to forward this note to anyone you like.

 [Comment by Bond, Michael \[MM\]](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Brilliant and oh so sensible, Louise!

You might find Lun’s ch on harmony:

Lun, V. M.-C. (2012). Harmonizing the conflicting views about harmony in Chinese culture. In X.

Huang & M. H. Bond (Eds.), *The Handbook of Chinese Organizational Behavior: Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp.467-479). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing

supportive in an empirical way.

Here is another quote that we: Smith, P. B., Bond, M. H., & Kagitcibasi, C. (2006). *Understanding social psychology across cultures*. London: Sage

used as its final passage:

"Where harmony is fecund, sameness is barren. Things accommodating each other on equal terms is called blending in harmony, and in so doing they are able to flourish and grow, and other things are drawn to them. But when same is added to same, once it is used up, there is no more . . . There is no music in a single note, no decoration in a single item, no relish in a single taste." (Discourses of the States, China, 4th Century B.C.)

Something to complement your clear thinking perhaps...

michael

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"And take upon's the mystery of things,
as if we were God's spies."
Shakespeare, King Lear

Link to Department website: <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/bond>

my latest book: "Understanding social psychology across cultures" (2013):
<http://www.sagepub.in/books/Book240293>

Want to know more about social axioms? Visit: <http://personal.cityu.edu.hk/~mgkleung/sa.ht>

Latest book on social axioms:

<http://www.amazon.com/Psychological-Aspects-Social-Axioms-Understanding/dp/0387098097>

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the latest addition to the "Forbidden City" of Chinese psychology:

<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/Psychology/Clinical/?view=usa&ci=9780199541850>

Recent book on Chinese organizational behaviour, edited with my M&M colleague, Xu Huang:

http://www.eelgar.co.uk/bookentry_main.lasso?id=14417&breadcrumblink=&breadcrumb=&sub_values=&site_Bus_Man=&site_dev=&site_eco=&site_env_eco=&site_inn_tech=&site_int_pol=&site_law=&site_pub_soc=

 [TRANSCEND As I AgeMarsella](#)

 [Comment by Louise Sundararajan](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Thanks for the encouraging comments, Michael.

“Things accommodating each other on equal terms is called blending in harmony, and in so doing they are able to flourish and grow, and other things are drawn to them.”

Thanks for the quote. In fact, structurally speaking, there are two kinds of blending-- in one, differences diminish with repeated blending; in the other, diversity remains in spite of repeated blending. The first kind is called blending systems, the second kind, particulate systems (see attached figure)—the former is like an old couple that grow into Siamese twins; the later is like a bowl of salad that does not become a mush after repeated blending. Harmony can go either way, but the latter kind, characteristic of the particulate systems, is more complex in structure, and more productive in the sense that it does not lose information with repeated blending. Lun (2012) and others talked about optimal and suboptimal harmonies. Structural analysis, as suggested by the difference between blending and particulate systems, can shed some light on the difference between optimal and not so optimal harmonies.

Cheers,

Louise

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 [Comment by Xin Li](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Dear Louise,

The distinction between 2 types of harmony is very important. Chinese philosophy emphasizes on harmony, however, it seems to me the history of Chinese thought has taken the blending systems rather than particulate systems form of harmony.

Am I right here?

If this is the case, I would love to know why this is so. Does any of you have a clue?

Best,
Xin
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 [Comment by Anthony Marsella](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

The blending question is excellent, and Louise's response is brilliant. Sometimes $1 + 1 = 2$;

sometimes $1+1 = 3$. Sometimes $3+2 = 5$, Sometimes $3+3 = 6$, sometimes $3+3 = 7$.

It seems to me there are properties in life we seek to understand that require an understanding of emergent qualities, not simply linear or additive, but multiplicative and more. When someone asked me today how I was feeling, I said I am fine: I am in a state of constant fission and fusion. Are these not the states of the cosmos.

I am same - I am different - I am pushed to become - I have within me the capacity to adjust and/or remain, until such time boredom or depression come to alert me to the changes requiring new adjustment and/or adaptation. This is the concept of positive disintegration. The point, however, as Louise states so well, is the dynamics inherent in life. Harmony can never be forever. It is simply a state of being, to be experienced, and as we experience it, to find in it the opportunity to change -- to become. It is the issue of process and product being one.

As life forms, we have within us opportunities to constantly become, renew, resurrect, and grow in new ways. It is more than humanism -- it is the fact that we are first and foremost carriers of life -- lifeism.. This is an organismic, holistic view point and may not appeal to those who see "mankind as master."

Best wishes,
Tony
marsella@hawaii.edu

 [Comment by Louise Sundararajan](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Tony and All,

What a bonanza of ideas! I will respond to all the comments above. But right now I am going to focus on the reflections on emptiness. Thanks to Tony, this delightful blog on emptiness offers an intermission from our discussions on blending.

In addition to the 2 ways to approach emptiness, there is another way--found in Chinese painting, and in the recent development of a modern artist, Harold Cohen. Cohen's computer

program that paints is considered by many to be one of the most creative AI. What has all this got to do with emptiness and Chinese art? You will find the answer in my article on Cohen, attached.

Enjoy the intermission. And I will be back to comment on all the ideas in this post.

Louise

 [Cohens recent work](#)

 [Comment by Tony Marsella](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

I found the following story on the NPR iPhone App

2 Ways To Think About Nothing, One Mo' Time
by Robert Krulwich

NPR - September 28, 2014

This being my last weekend with this blog, I wanted to repost a story I wrote a few years ago that has continued to intrigue me

http://www.npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2014/09/28/351735981/2-ways-to-think-about-nothing-one-mo-time?sc=17&f=1001&utm_source=iosnewsapp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=app

 [Comment by Anthony J. Marsella](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

I enjoy these reflections on yin-yang and physics -- however, I wonder if they are missing something important as they try to discuss relationship and cause-effect:

How can we avoid the very accepted principles of creation of our universe as being something apart from life. At the moment of creation - big bang - whatever existed, in what ever form, became something else that still contained its original nature - something was - it changed form thru fission and fusion - these are the two critical principles - before yin-yang. What existed experienced fission (separation) and subsequently - immediately - fusion (connection).

Fission and fusion have proven to be undeniable across all forms of life (consider the big-bang) as life. fission and fusion of the universe is still in process and our lowly earth is simply one manifestation of this principle. This was of thing encompasses those of the religions - hindu, Buddhist, taoism, and Confucianism, etc.

Matter and non-matter (only a transformation process of fission an fusion) - dark energy and visible energy (only a transformation process of fission and fusion) - life and death (only a transformation of matter/energy to matter energy). That is what lifeism is all about!

 [Comment by Ann Marie Yamada](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

This is the most interesting discussion. It's helping me contemplate our interdisciplinary School.

Thank you for your insights.

AMY

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 [Comment by Richard Katz](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 28]

Hi Louise,

I keep thinking this latest discussion you are having about the particulate system of harmony has a strong connection with the synergy ideas I've discussed in my "Synergy, Healing and Empowerment" book. The existence and experience of synergy functions very much like the particulate systems form of harmony. Drawing on Indigenous teachings, the book explores practical applications and challenges of synergy in contemporary settings.

Katz, R., & Murphy-Shigematsu, S. (2012). Synergy, healing, and empowerment. Calgary, Canada: Brush Education.

With affection,

Dick Katz

 [Comment by Risa Permanadeli](#) by Louise S. [2014, Sep 29]

Dear Louise,

I wrote an article about Harmony related to Asian psyche. I hope this article can contribute to the latest discussion.

Warmly

Risa

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 [Psychospiritual Harmony](#)

 [Comment by Louise S.](#) by Louise S. [2014, Oct 05]

Dear All,

To continue our discussion on the blending versus particulate types of harmony, I attach the diagram again. If you need to refresh your memories, the discussion is posted on the Discussion page of the IP website: <http://www.indigenoupsych.org/>

let me try to answer the million dollar question of Xin Li:

> The distinction between 2 types of harmony is very important. Chinese philosophy emphasizes on harmony, however, it seems to me the history of Chinese thought has taken the blending systems rather than particulate systems form of harmony. I would love to know why this is so.<

But before I do that, I need to show why Tony's discussion on the Big Bang, and Richard Katz' synergistic community are also related to the question of harmony. This I can do if I make a confession: I cheated a bit when I wrote about harmony: "The dynamic interplay between balance breakdown and balance maintenance/restoration." Well, the technical terms are "symmetry breakdown and symmetry maintenance/restoration." I used the less precise term "balance" to avoid going into explanations for symmetry. But symmetry is necessary to go back to the cosmos, as Tony said we should, and high symmetry is also a hallmark of synergistic communities. So symmetry will be the thread here; and it all starts with the Big Bang.

The story of the Big Bang goes something like this: In the beginning there was a hot primordial soup in perfect symmetry, out of which the orderly known universe "freeze out" when the hot cosmic soup cools down. In lay terms, symmetry refers to an undifferentiated wholeness which dwindles through spontaneous symmetry breaking that gives rise to differences and differentiations, with the more differentiation, the more loss of symmetry. Bolender (2010) gives an example of symmetry breaking that's easy to understand: A drop of water, for instance, contains all possible patterns of a snowflake. This is an example of symmetry. From this plethora of possibilities, only one particular snowflake pattern emerges, when that drop of water freezes and all the other possible patterns for snowflakes are lost, this is symmetry breaking. When ice melts back to water, this is symmetry restoration.

Cast in the framework of symmetry, optimal harmony entails a dynamic interplay of symmetry breakdown and symmetry maintenance/restoration. Difference and diversity--made possible by differentiation which entails the process of symmetry breakdown--are crucial to optimal harmony. Thus just as uniformity renders harmony sterile, avoidance of difference is the cause behind many sub-optimal symmetry maintenance strategies, such as self-effacement as a means to maintain group "harmony"--a false harmony also noted by Risa Permanadeli. Optimal harmony, by contrast, consists of a dynamic interplay of differentiation (symmetry breakdown) and integration (symmetry recovery). The dynamics of optimal harmony can be examined in terms of cognitive complexity.

According to Triandis (2009), cognitive complexity is a matter of cultivation of the mind, not of speed of learning or execution of cognitive tasks. Cognitive complexity can be examined along three aspects: Discrimination (does the person see a number of shades of the concept?, e.g., different political parties), differentiation (does the person use many dimensions when discriminating among concepts? e.g., many dimensions for discriminating among political parties), and integration (does the person see many relationships among these dimensions?). It is well known that cognitive complexity deteriorates with anxiety. I think this answers in part Xin Li's question as to why sub-optimal harmony is so common in Chinese society. I would predict sub-optimal harmony, such as fitting in or maintaining status quo, to prevail where it is difficult for cognitive complexity to be sustained, such as in settings where there is high social pressure. On the other hand, I believe optimal harmony abounds in conflict free zones, such as in private life where one may pursue the art of cooking and self cultivation. Indeed, Chinese cooking is testimonial to the Chinese penchant for the particulate system, in which repeated combination of yin and yang does not ever end up with a bland blend, but instead becomes more and more creative and novel. The same can be said of the art of self cultivation. Let me give one example:

Consider the following description of Confucius as a moderate, well-balanced person, presumably resulting from a life long pursuit of harmony: "The Master was mild, and yet dignified; majestic, and yet not fierce; respectful, and yet easy" (Analects, 7/37, Legge, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 207).

This portrait of Confucius covers all the bases of cognitive complexity:

Discrimination--many shades of the notion of a harmonious personality as embodied by Confucius;

Differentiation--personality traits of Confucius are plotted along two opposed dimensions (vertical versus horizontal) of collectivism: awe-inspiring authority versus friendliness; austerity versus easy going; standing on ceremony versus being casual.

Integration--the dialectics of contrast and complementarity among all these different traits results in a very nuanced and complex personality of the Master.

Implications? Research on optimal and sub-optimal harmonies tends to focus on individual differences. Neglected are the contextual factors. Take a bowl of salad that celebrates a diversity of flavor and texture and put it in the pressure cooker, can you expect anything other than a mush?

In case I lost you, you may get some background reading on the connection between symmetry, thought, and culture:

Sundararajan, L. (2014). Indigenous psychology: Grounding science in culture, why and how? *The Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, special issue on Indigenous Psychology,

published online, DOI: 10.1111/jtsb.12054.

Thanks for the great questions.

Louise

 [Harmony-Figure 1](#)

 [Comment by James Jian-Min Sun](#) by Louise S. [2014, Oct 08]

Dear Louise,

Thanks for sharing with us the valuable idea and your new paper. They are so insightful and helpful.

Best,

James

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 [Comment by Paul TP Wong](#) by Louise S. [2014, Oct 08]

Hi Louise:

Thanks for your penetrating analysis. How would you apply your analysis to predict a resolution of the chaos and tension in Hong Kong?

Paul

www.drpaulwong.com

 [Comment by Peter Ping Li](#) by Louise S. [2014, Oct 08]

Dear Louise and Others:

It is highly helpful to focus on the diverse perspectives on harmony as a metaphor of cultural diversity.

I agree that the yin-yang perspective on harmony is very different from the view of blending system view, but I venture to argue that the yin-yang perspective on harmony is also different from the type of particulate system presented by Bolender (also Louise). The yin-yang perspective on harmony is a unique particulate system.

I have just added the yin-yang figure to Louise's original figure. See the attached.

See the attached for my APJM 2012 paper (awarded the annual best paper for 2012-2013 in APJM) on this issue. In particular, compare the figure of Bolender (also Louise) with the one I

presented on Page 867.

Peter

Peter Ping Li

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjtr20/1/1>

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[APJM indigenous 2012 with notes](#)



[Harmony Figures 1 and 2](#)