

Illustrations and Analogies For Explaining the "Two And Only Two Feelings" Argument

Post by "Cassius" of May 21, 2026 at 8:04 AM

Here's another list culled from asking for "all or nothing" propositions:

Quote

People often recognize certain situations as "all or nothing" because they intuitively understand that partial fulfillment defeats the thing itself. The categories differ, but the underlying structure is: either the condition is met, or it is not.

Examples:

- **Being alive** — One is alive or dead. People do not ordinarily think of "partly alive" as a meaningful condition.
- **Pregnancy** — In everyday usage, someone is either pregnant or not pregnant. People often use this as a classic example of a binary condition.
- **Crossing a finish line** — Either you crossed it or you did not. Finishing "90% of a marathon" is still not completing it.
- **Passing a legal age threshold** — You are either 18, 21, etc., or you are not. A person one day short does not usually receive partial recognition.
- **Marriage status** — In law, one is generally married or unmarried. Emotional commitment can vary, but legal status is treated as binary.
- **A light switch being on or off** — At the practical level, people think in terms of "the light is on" or "the light is off," even if electrical realities are more nuanced.
- **Winning a game with a specific condition** — In games like checkmate in chess, once the condition is met, the result is decisive.
- **A door being locked** — If a lock fails to engage, it is not considered "mostly locked." Security often works in all-or-nothing terms.
- **Virginity or first occurrence events** — Many people think of "first time" events as categorical. Either it happened or it did not.
- **A password being correct** — One wrong character and access fails. Computer systems often operate on binary thresholds.
- **Passing through airport security with a boarding pass** — Either you are authorized and admitted, or you are not.
- **Signing a contract** — Until signed, the agreement is often treated as incomplete; after signing, it becomes operative.
- **Trust after a perceived betrayal** — In personal life people sometimes *treat* trust as all-or-nothing ("I trust him" / "I do not trust him"), even though trust in

reality may exist in degrees.

- **Loyalty in war or politics** — People often frame allegiance as binary: either one is “with us” or “against us.”
- **Death in fiction and drama** — Characters often say things like “You cannot be a little dead,” precisely because people naturally recognize some categories as absolute.

Some of these are truly binary by definition; others are socially or psychologically treated as binary even though, upon closer analysis, they may admit degrees. That distinction itself is often philosophically important.