

CHAPTER III

KING BHUMIBHOL'S MODEL, GLOBALIZATION AND COMMON VALUES

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It is widely known that Thailand and some other countries in Asia have experienced difficulties since 1997. The economic crisis, or as some people call it: "The Tom Yum Koong Disease" caused a lot of people and businesses to go bankrupt. A Thai banker once said, "There are no more business tycoons in Thailand today. We just have yesterday tycoons." Many people blamed one another. Some said that the government was the main cause of the problems. Others blamed the business people who had borrowed too much in running their businesses. Others blamed corrupt politicians, corrupt government employees and corrupt business executives. Others blamed George Soros and hedge fund managers. Others blamed all the Thais who consumed more than what they could produce. Others blamed themselves and committed suicide. Others blamed WTO and free-trade policies. Still, others blamed the educational system of the country. Certainly, many people blamed capitalism, globalization and Western values. With regard to globalization, we may divide Thai people who are concerned about it into three main groups:

1. Those who totally adopt it.
2. Those who totally reject it, and
3. Those who partly adopt and reject it.

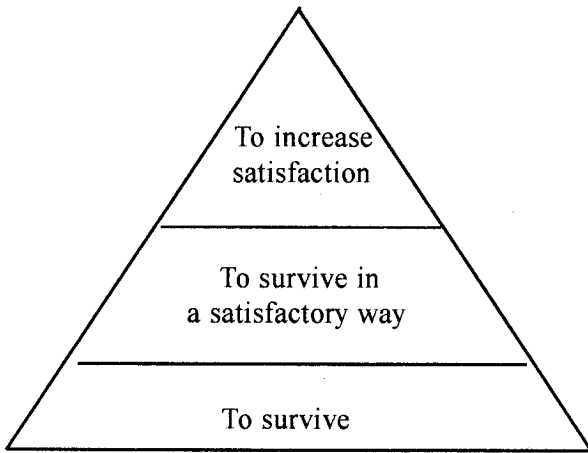
In this paper I will try to demonstrate that His Majesty the King's Model falls into the third category.

KING BHUMIBHOL'S MODEL AND WHITEHEAD'S ART OF LIVING

According to Whitehead, the art of life may be divided into three stages as follows (Birch, 1998:289) :

1. To be alive.
2. To be alive in a satisfactory way.
3. To acquire an increase in satisfaction.

In other words, we may analyze Whitehead's art of living into three steps: To survive first, then to survive in a satisfactory way, and lastly to increase satisfaction. This may be shown in the following schema.



Some people may think that Maslow's hierarchy of needs corresponds to Whitehead's art of living,¹ but I would disagree. It seems to me that what is lacking in Maslow's model is spirituality². Even though Maslow's model includes physical, psychological, social and intellectual needs, it has no room for the needs of religion and spirituality. For Maslow's humanistic psychology, love or social needs imply only *eros* and *philia*, but not *agape*. And a man of self-actualization implies merely a worldly successful able person, not a saint or an arahant. In short, Maslow's model implies only science while Whitehead's model includes both science and religion. Thus for Whitehead "to be alive in a satisfactory way" requires both science and religion. Whitehead sees the limits of science. Science alone cannot deal with all human experience and all dimensions of life. He once wrote:

Science can find no aim on nature: Science can find

no creativity in nature; it finds more rules of succession. These negations are true of natural science. They are inherent in its methodology. The reason for this blindness in physical science lies in the fact that such science deals with half the evidence provided by human experience. It divides the seamless coat, or to change the metaphor into a happier form, it examines the coat, which is superficial, and neglects the body that is fundamental³.

However, to recognize the limits of science is not the same as to neglect it. Whitehead never rejects or resists science. Instead, he welcomes science the same way as he does religion. A main task of philosophy is to enable science to make friends with religion. As he said, "Philosophy... attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought" (Whitehead, 1978:15).

His Majesty King Bhumibhol has established and developed his "New Theory" since 1988⁴. The new theory has been designed for Thai people especially Thai farmers who are the majority of the country. However, the ideas in the theory can be applied by all people. His Majesty the King's model of the new theory could be divided into three main stages as below:

1. To become self-reliant and self-sufficient.
2. To strengthen their communities in all dimensions through getting together in groups or cooperatives.
3. To get ready for contacting the external world, which is outside their communities, for the better quality of life.

From these three stages, we may interpret as: First to survive, secondly to survive in a satisfactory way, and thirdly to increase satisfaction. Like Whitehead's model, His Majesty's model includes wisdom, appropriate technology and spirituality. All steps are based on wisdom, practical knowledge and Dhamma. The model is established for local contexts. The emphasis on the local may lead to the misunderstanding that this model is anti-globalization. In fact, His Majesty's model, if I am not mistaken, is neither anti-globalization nor pro-globalization. On the one hand, it is not anti-

globalization in the sense that it has no room for globalization and that it restricts itself to locality only. The King's model is not any form of absolute conservatism. On the other hand, it is not pro-globalization in the sense that it always adopts, supports and defends all forms of globalization without critical reflection. His model is as holistic as Whitehead's. And like Whitehead's model, it strives for the higher quality of life.

GLOBALIZATION AND POSTMODERNITY

In 1848 Marx wrote in his book *Communist Manifesto*, "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism." In 1983 Portoghesi cited *Le Monde* "A spectre is roaming through Europe: the Postmodern" (See Docherty, 1993:1). At this moment we cannot deny that the words "Globalization" and "Postmodernity" are heard in almost every part of the world. Thailand is no exception. It is no exaggeration to say that we hear the word "Globalization" everywhere in Thailand through mass media while the word "Postmodernity" is discussed only among a few groups of people in this country. What are globalization and postmodernity? It seems to me that it is quite difficult to define each word with a single meaning, especially the word "postmodernity." Cahoone is right when he wrote:

Certainly the term 'postmodern,' like any slogan widely used, has been attached to so many different kinds of intellectual, social, and artistic phenomena that it can be subjected to easy ridicule as hopelessly ambiguous or empty. This shows only that it is a mistake to seek a single, essential meaning applicable to all the term's instances (Cahoone, 1996:1).

The term 'globalization' seems to be less problematic in its definitions. One clear definition of globalization is given by Apel. He wrote:

Globalization in our day has become a key word for a process that is primarily concerning an international expansion of economy, or more precisely, a systemic intertwining of financial capitalism and communication technology that seems to exceed any control by

the nation state and hence by social policy so far (Apel, 2000:137).

Concerning with globalization, Kung draws the picture of the new millennium as follows:

1. The use of atomic power can be for “peaceful or military ends.”

2. The development of communication technologies gives “excessive information that individuals no longer cope with because they are completely disoriented.”

3. The development of a world stock exchange and a world money market is “beyond the control of any authority.”

4. The development of gene technology “threatens to lead to monstrous manipulations of human beings and their heredity.”

5. The development of medical technology “raises questions about the implantation and treatment of embryos in accord with human dignity, and also about dying and actively helping people to die in accord with human dignity.”

6. The gap between the rich North and the poor South is so much enlarged that “... the impoverishment and indebtedness of the Third and Fourth Worlds... in the 1980s rose from 400 to 1,300 billion dollars” (Kung, 1992:409-10).

From the picture given by Kung, globalization, if we do not know how to deal with it properly, seems to:

1. Be extremely dangerous.
2. Be beyond the control of any authority.
3. Affect, more or less, directly and indirectly all individuals and the whole world.

To deal with globalization appropriately, what we urgently need is a preventive ethics. Kung wrote:

Previously, ethics has usually come too late, in so far as it is reflection on the morality of human behavior. Too often people have asked what we may do only after we have been able to do it. But for the future the decisive thing is that we should know what we may do before we can do it and do indeed do it. Eth-

ics, although it is always conditioned by a particular period and society, should therefore not just be reflection on crises; those who constantly look in the mirror at the way along which they have come will miss the way forward. By means of prognoses of crises which take worst cases into account (as H. Jonas argues), ethics should be a prophylactic for crises. Leading ethicists now agree that we need a preventive ethics (Kung: 409).

It seems to me that globalization is based on modernity. Globalization is a process whose progress and development is based on at least three major modern revolutions: the scientific and technological revolution of the 17th century, the socio-political revolution of the 18th century, and the industrial revolution of the 19th century.

Now let us turn to postmodernity. If postmodernity, as some people may say, is identical with or the same as globalization, then postmodernity is not something detached from modernity. In this sense, postmodernity is nothing but ultra-modernity or excessive modernity. In other words, modernity is still an unfinished project as Habermas put it:

The project of modernity, formulated in the eighteenth century by the Enlightenment *philosophies*, consists of a relentless development of the objectivating sciences, the universalistic bases of morality and law, and autonomous art in accordance with their internal logic but at the same time a release of the cognitive potentials thus accumulated from their esoteric high forms and their utilization in praxis; that is, in the rational organization of living conditions and social relations. Proponents of the Enlightenment like Condorcet still held the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would further not only the control of the forces of nature but also the understanding of self and world, moral progress, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness (Habermas, 1992: 162-3).

If proponents of the Enlightenment or modernity holds that globalization and postmodernity are identical, then their argument may be shown as below:

Globalization is developed from modernity.

Postmodernity is globalization.

Therefore, postmodernity is developed from modernity.

If postmodernity is globalization, then it will follow that postmodernity is developed from modernity. Certainly, not all people would accept that postmodernity is developed from modernity. For these people, postmodernity is anti-modernity. Therefore, they simply deny that postmodernity and globalization are identical. They may assert that we should not try to understand postmodernity in terms of globalization. For them, premodernity and modernity are recommended if we want to inquire into the nature of postmodernity. Habermas classifies people dealing with the problem of postmodernity into three groups: the antimodernism of the Young Conservatives, the premodernism of the Old Conservatives, and the postmodernism of the New Conservatives. He wrote:

The Young Conservatives appropriate the fundamental experience of aesthetic modernity, namely the revelation of a decentered subjectivity emancipated from the constraints of cognition and purposefulness and from the imperatives of labour and utility and use it to escape from the modern world. They base an implacable antimodernism on a modernist attitude... In France this line extends from George Bataille through Foucault to Derrida. Over all of them, of course, hovers the spirit of Nietzsche, resurrected in the 1970s.

The Old Conservatives do not allow themselves to be contaminated by cultural modernity. They observe the disintegration of substantive reason, the differentiation of science, morality, and art, and the modern understanding of the world and its merely procedural rationality with suspicion and advocate (and here Max Weber discerned a regression to material rationality) a return to positions prior to modernity. New-Aristotelianism in particular has enjoyed a certain success... Along this line, which emanates from Leo Strauss, one finds interesting works by Hans Jonas and Robert Spaemann, for example.

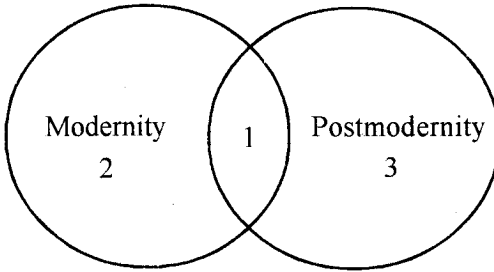
The New Conservatives take the most affirmative position on the accomplishments of modernity. They welcome the development of modern science as long as it oversteps its own sphere only to further technical progress, capitalistic growth, and rational administration (Habermas: 168).

As mentioned before, to understand postmodernity seems to be more difficult than to understand globalization because there are more different opinions and more controversies on the nature of postmodernity. However, among different models of describing the nature of postmodernity, I would agree with Kung's model. Kung makes it clear that postmodernity is neither contra-modernity nor ultra-modernity. Postmodernity, according to Kung, takes "modernity up into what transcends and replaces it." He argues:

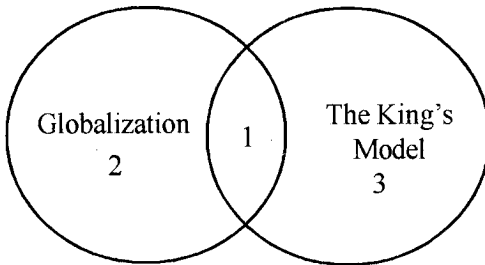
Postmodernity... cannot be content with a radical pluralism or relativism which in fact are characteristics of the disintegration of late modernity. Randomness, colourfulness, the mixing-up of all and everything, the anarchy of trends of thought and styles, the methodological 'anything goes,' the moral 'all is permissible': this and similar phenomena cannot be the signature of the postmodern period...

However, postmodernity cannot aim at a uniform interpretation of the world in which we live. Nor can wholeness in the sense of totality and integrity and some premodern church integralism, or a 'essentialism or 'Neoaristotelianism' in philosophy', be hallmarks of the postmodern period either... Postmodernity in the sense developed above strives for a new basic consensus of integrative, humane convictions in a new world constellation towards which democratic pluralistic society is inexorably directed if it is to survive" (Kung: 413-4).

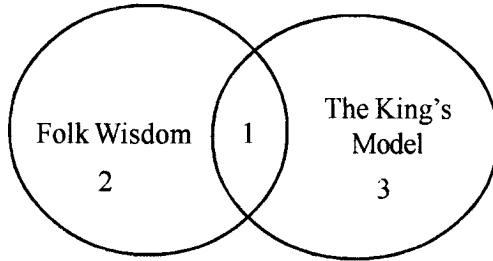
In order to clearly see the relationship between postmodernity and modernity according to Kung's model, we can put it into the following diagram.



From the above diagram, modernity (1) is “to be affirmed in its humane content”; modernity (2) is “to be denied in its inhuman limits”; and modernity (1) is “to be transcended in a new, differentiated, pluralistic and holistic synthesis” (1)+(3). Similarly, if we turn to the relationship between King Bhumibhol’s model and globalization, we will see the same result as follows:



Globalization (1) is to be affirmed in its constructive humane values such as freedom, pluralism, respect, and so forth; globalization (2) is to be denied in its destructive inhuman characteristics such as materialism, hedonism, consumerism, and so on; and globalization (1) is to be transcended in a new holistic synthesis (1)+(3). Similarly, we can use this schema to demonstrate the relationship between the King’s model and folk wisdom or low technology (premodernity) as follows:



From the above schema, we may say that folk wisdom or low technology (1) is to be confirmed in its helpful values, that folk wisdom (2) is to be rejected in its obsolete inappropriate values, and that folk wisdom (1) is to be transcended in a new holistic synthesis (1)+(3). In this sense we may conclude that the King's model is neither contra-globalization nor ultra-globalization, and that it is neither anti-locality nor ultra-locality.

COMMON VALUES AND MULTICULTURALISM

In our day the term "multiculturalism" is also often heard. In fact, the term is used in various contexts. It follows that the meanings of "multiculturalism" are many. People may use the term for their different purposes. Some people contrast the term to "monoculturalism" or "biculturalism." Others use it in connection with "culture" and "subculture". Some talk about it in terms of "cultural relativism" and "cultural pluralism". Others relate it to "intercultural" and "cross-cultural education." Yet for others it is used with "the politics of recognition". In education "multiculturalism" is used to refer to their educational reform movement that intends to equalize educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their different racial and ethnic groups (Siegel, 1999:387-8). Hoopes and Pusch wrote:

Multicultural education is a structured process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. Ideally, it encourages people to see different cultures as a source of learning and to respect diversity in the local, national and international environment. It stresses cultural ethnic and racial, in ad-

dition to, linguistic differences. It is often broadened to include socio-economic differences (urban, rural, age/youth, worker/middle class), professional differences (doctor/nurse), sex and religious differences. Multicultural education refers first to building an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, and understanding that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another; secondly, to acquiring those skills in analysis and communication that help one function effectively in multicultural environments (Hoopes and Push, 1981:4).

Though there appear to be many meanings and uses of multiculturalism, there are at least two things in common. First, all uses of multiculturalism imply diversity. This fact often misleads some people because it makes them think that there is no place for unity in multiculturalism. Secondly, all uses of multiculturalism imply particularity or individuality. This fact also leads some people to a belief that there is no room for universality or commonality if we adopt the ideal of multiculturalism. In summary, for some people, multiculturalism cannot and do not go together with unity and universality, so it may harm the society and the world at large.

How can multiculturalism get along well with unity and universality? Before answering this question, we need to reply first why we should value multiculturalism. Siegel's answer is clear when he says:

If we ask why we should embrace multiculturalism - why we should think that students with diverse cultural backgrounds should have equal educational opportunities; why students should (at a minimum) not be penalized for their cultural identities and commitments; and, more generally, why cultural differences ought to be acknowledged, valued and respected rather than denied, trivialized, ignored or decried, or the members of minority cultures oppressed by the hegemonic dominant culture — the answer given by advocates of multiculturalism is straightforward; it is *morally* required that we treat students with justice and respect, in ways which do not demean, marginalize, or silence them; and education which provides such opportunities ... is the

only sort of education which meets this requirement ... the justification of multiculturalism, in education and in general, is at bottom moral... (Siegel, 1999: 389).

Can we value cultural diversity and simultaneously embrace unity and universality? The answer can be positive if we define "universality" as "something applicable to all." There are two senses of "universality": ontological and phenomenal. Ontologically speaking, Nature is One. This One is "something given and surely applicable to all." Cultures are diverse, but Nature is One. All cultures are in Nature. In this sense, it follows that *diversity is in unity*. Phenomenally speaking, particular cultures have their own ideals and values. In other words, all ideals and values are born in particular cultures. Some ideals and values, despite their birth in particular cultures, are applicable to all cultures while others are not. All ideals and values that are applicable to all cultures can be considered as universal. All cultures that contain these ideals and values have unity in that they share "something applicable to all." In this sense, we may say that *unity is in diversity*. Hence Siegel is right when he says:

While as a matter of fact cultures do not converge on a universally held set of ideals, it is nevertheless the case that some ideals are universal in the strong sense that they are applicable to all cultures, even to those cultures which do not recognize them as such. To say they are universal is not to say they are from God or from Nowhere, but only that they transcend individual cultures in that they are legitimately applicable, and have force, not only beyond the bounds of the particular cultures in which they are acknowledged, but beyond all such cultural boundaries (Siegel: 4.7-8).

If some ideals and values are universal in that they are applicable to all cultures, we can harmonize multiculturalism with unity and universality. To adopt universal ideals and values in this sense is not to lose a cultural identity. For example, Thailand can still keep its own identity as such even though it uses modern science which was born in the West. Similarly, America will never lose its identity although it uses the Buddhist way of meditation which was born in the East and applicable to all cultures. Turning to the King's

model, we will find that it has no problem with common values in the sense mentioned above.

BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU AND HANS KUNG

What surprises me is that the two great scholars, namely, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Professor Kung, seem to share a similar attitude towards “global ethics” in the sense that they do not deny common values even though they have different backgrounds and are from different parts of the world. In general, both Buddhadasa and Kung search for minimal values which are common to all religions, cultures and civilizations. We should not misinterpret them as trying to establish a new universal religion. Kung wrote, “... precisely as a theologian, my intention here is not to develop a terrifying apocalyptic scenario demonstrating our arrogance about our capabilities and then go on where possible to bring in the Christian religion or even the Christian churches as saviours from all ills”(Kung: 410). Professor Kung just focuses on a “necessary minimum of common values, standards and basic attitudes.” To reach this goal, Kung seems to bracket his own faith as Apel put it:

For the Catholic theologian Kung this position seems to mean that he himself must be prepared to bracket the dogmatic presuppositions of his religious belief and that he can suppose that all religious and philosophical positions can and must do the same with all of their presuppositions” (Apel: 144).

Buddhadasa, on the other hand, has three missions in his life (Buddhadasa, 1985:3):

1. To see people study and reach the heart of their own religions.
2. To see people study and understand other religions.
3. To see people get together and join hands in weging war against materialism, consumerism, and sensual defilements.

Buddhadasa tries to transcend all the differences among religions and reach “global ethics” through Dhamma language. Human languages make people see only diversity or multiplicity, but

Dhamma language makes them see commonality in different religions and cultures. Buddhadasa himself sees that all religions share the same end, means and result. The end of all religions is to be saved from suffering, the means of all is to destroy selfishness and the result is rescue from suffering (Buddhadasa: 41-42).

CONCLUSION

Each culture possesses its own heritage. Cultural heritage is socially transmitted from one generation to another. Ideals and values are among this transmitted heritage. They are born in particular cultures. However, when they are applicable to other cultures, we can consider them universal as proposed by Siegel. Multiculturalism should be one of the universal ideals in the age of globalization because it promotes equal opportunities for all people - regardless of their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Simultaneously, the models as proposed by Whitehead, the King and Kung are also appropriate in this day because they can provide room for common values and globalization which is inevitable (no matter we like it or not).

Thailand is a country with its own cultural identities. Among our cultural heritage are the royal institution, religious pluralism and the family institution. Throughout its history, Thailand has never lacked scholars and wise persons. Among those wise people is King Bhumibhol the present king of Thailand. He is a great king who has always worked hard and cared for his people. The problem is merely whether or not Thai people learn how to listen to him, reflect on what he has taught and put those teachings into practice in their everyday lives.

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NOTES

¹ Maslow established that needs are in a rough hierarchy from lower-order needs to higher-order ones. These needs include physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization needs. See Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

² Another problem with Maslow's model is the wrong order of needs. I do not think that love comes after the first two needs as Maslow describes. Love always comes first. We are from love and always need it. It is obvious that even embryos and babies need love. According to the Christian model, love is both *alpha* and *omega*.

³ Quoted by Charles Birch, "Processing Towards Life" in *Process Studies*, Vol. 27/3-4, p.289, 1998

⁴ See more details in the King's annual speeches given to Thai people especially from 1988-1998.

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