

# PROCESS THOUGHT AND HARMONY

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## I. Preamble

Eastern civilizations, or to be specific, Eastern religions always teach us to allow rooms for diversity and plurality. They do this through two different dimensions: “logic of thinking” and “way of life.” In other words, these religions train us both theoretical and practical dimensions. Theoretically, Eastern civilizations adopt “the logic of holism” as the correct way of thinking. Practically, Eastern civilizations propose “the way of integration” which does not separate or exclude between opposites, such as: end and means, theory and practice, truth and error, etc. Thus through “this logic of holism” and “this way of integration,” Eastern people who have adopted these principles in their life and thought are usually more tolerant of differences, and therefore better able to reach peace and harmony. In this paper I will try to demonstrate that in the West process thought is very similar, if not identical, to the Eastern logic of holism and the Eastern way of integration. This implies that process thought also could help people seek and discover peace and harmony in the world.

## II. Introduction

The spectre, which is haunting the world now is that of globalization. Some people may like this spectre while others may dislike it. For those who do not like it, they will react against it by demonstrating whenever they have the opportunity. Whether we like it or not, however, it seems that we cannot escape it. Therefore, whether we live in the East or in the West, we cannot avoid globalization. A suitable question to inquire into is how we can live our life with in the face of globalization rather than whether we can escape from the spectre of globalization.

In the world of academics there are different spectres roaming at different times. One of the specters, which are roaming around presently is that of postmodernism. Even though the word “postmodern” seems to be ambiguous and may mean different things to different people, more and more intellectuals from various fields like to use the word to label their ideas and standpoints. We may inquire into the different usages of the word “postmodern” in Europe from 1870s to the present time. The popularity of postmodernity, however, especially in Europe, seems to be in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1848 in his book *Communist Manifesto* Marx wrote, “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism.” In 1983 it appeared in the newspaper *Le Monde*, “A spectre is roaming through Europe: the

Postmodern.” Thailand is no exception now. Many Thai intellectuals in different areas have been haunted by the spectre of the postmodern. Like in other countries, some people like it while others react against it despite its ambiguity.

Lawrence Cahoon gives some observation that philosophical opinion regarding the postmodern family may be divided into three main connotations: (1) the final escape from the legacy of modern European thought, authoritarianism, colonialism, racism, and domination; (2) the attempt of the left-wing intellectuals to destroy Western civilization; and (3) a collection of hermeneutically obscure writers who really talk about nothing at all. Cahoon comments, “All three reactions are misguided. 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.”<sup>1</sup> Even though the usages of the term “postmodern” are various, however, Cahoon points out that there are at least three common characteristics: (1) a recognition of pluralism in the world that modern or modernist thought sought to refuse to admit; (2) a new focus on representation or cultural signs as occupying a dominant position in social life; and (3) an acceptance of play and fictionalization in cultural fields that earlier sought a realist truth.<sup>2</sup>

David Klemm seeks to understand “the postmodern” in a different way. While Cahoon prefers deconstruction, Klemm uses hermeneutics to reach understanding. He says, “Whether we look at non-Western or Western traditions, we see otherness. In response, we attempt to understand; to transform the strange into the familiar, to allow the familiar to be transformed by the strange. Although difficult, understanding is not impossible, for a ‘human’ face appears in every case.”<sup>3</sup> He further says, “By ‘hermeneutics,’ I mean the theoretical interest that focuses on the process of understanding meaning in signs and symbols. Interest in hermeneutics arises when we recognize a meaning in human expression and communication that beckons us to understanding and withholds the abundance of its sense.”<sup>4</sup> Klemm proposes three paradigms of thought and experience: premodern (or traditional, pre-critical), modern (critical), and postmodern (postcritical). He isolates the following features in each paradigm: (1) the central figure of the type; (2) the picture of the world that accompanies the type; (3) the system of images, practices, and thought that unfolds around the central figure; and (4) the fundamental relation of the self to the world characterizing the type. His analysis may be summarized in the following diagram.

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence E. Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Cahoon, *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> David E. Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry, Volume I: The Interpretation of Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> David Klemm *ibid.*, p. 2.

	The Premodern	The Modern	The Postmodern
1. The Central Figure	Manifestation of the Sacred	Rational Self-assertion	Dialogue
2. The Picture of the World	Sacred Cosmos	Infinite Universe	No Image of the Whole of Things
3. The System of Thought	System of Myth	Epistemology	Hermeneutics and Edifying
4. The Relation of Self and the World	Openness to the Sacred Power	Subject - Object Split	Inseparability between Subject and Object

Both Cahoon and Klemm's analyses, more or less, help us to understand "the postmodern." Here I would like to define "the postmodern" as reactions to the status quo or current states and situations. Let me call society "Jerusalem." Thus the current society is "Current Jerusalem." If we are satisfied with "Current Jerusalem," then we will have no postmodern reactions. In other words, postmodern reactions arise if and only if we are not pleased with "Current Jerusalem." If we are happy with the modern society, we will never doubt its achievements. This means that we will never react to the society with which we are satisfied. Habermas is right when he comments,

"Neither Hegel nor his direct disciples on the Left or Right ever wanted to call into question the achievements of modernity from which the modern age drew its pride and self-consciousness. Above all the modern age stood under the sign of subjective freedom. This was realized in society as the space secured by civil law for the rational pursuit of one's own interests; in the state as the in principle equal rights to participation in the formation of political will; in the private sphere, as ethical autonomy and self-realization; finally, in the public sphere related to this private realm, as the formative process that takes place by means of the appropriation of a culture that has become reflective."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 83.

If people have reactions against the status quo then they will look for some solution. Three approaches will be discussed in the next section.

### III. Three Types of Postmodern Reactions

When we cannot find happiness in “Current Jerusalem,” some people may try to seek happiness or satisfaction in “Old Jerusalem.” These people believe that history can and will repeat itself. Thus what these people hold as “postmodern” is actually “premodern.” Therefore, it is not unusual for a theologian like Bernard Iddings Bell call the recognition of the secular modernism and a return to religion “postmodern.”<sup>6</sup> In the Eastern world Confucius was one of those who believe that we can discover the way to happiness from the past. What is interesting is that what is considered as postmodern in a society may be considered as premodern in the other as David Hall puts it, “In defense of my somewhat exotic thesis I want to call attention to the evidence for thinking that Confucianism and philosophical Taoism share something like the problematic of Postmodernism insofar as it is shaped by the desire to find a means of thinking difference. In its strongest and most paradoxical form my argument amounts to the claim that classical China is in a very real sense ‘postmodern’.”<sup>7</sup>

While some people react against the status quo and seek happiness from “Old Jerusalem,” others try to seek happiness from “New Jerusalem.” These people believe that we will never be able to find out happiness from the past, we will reach happiness only in the future. The past has already gone, and history does not and will not repeat itself. Therefore, if we cannot find out satisfaction in the present and in the past, then there is only one way open to us: the future as David Bohm puts it, “I suggest that if we are to survive in a meaningful way in the face of this disintegration of the overall world order, a truly creative movement to a new kind of wholeness is needed, a movement that must ultimately give rise to a new order, in the consciousness of both the individual and society. This order will have to be as different from the modern order as was the modern from the medieval order. We cannot go back to a premodern order. A postmodern world must come into being before the modern world destroys itself so thoroughly that little can be done for a long time to come.”<sup>8</sup>

The third kind of postmodern reactions is different from the first two. Even though these people are not satisfied with “Current Jerusalem” as the first two groups are, they discover that not all things in “Current Jerusalem” are bad. Similarly, when they turn to “Old Jerusalem,” they also discover that not all values

<sup>6</sup> See Lawrence Cahoon, *Op.cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> David Hall, “Modern China and the Postmodern West” in Lawrence E. Cahoon, ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), p. 701.

<sup>8</sup> David Bohm, “Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World” in Charles Jencks, ed., *The Post-Modern Reader* (London: Academy Editions, 1992), p. 384.

are obsolete. Many values and beliefs from both “old” and “current” Jerusalem are still appropriate. And when they turn to “New Jerusalem” in the future, they can imagine some values that may be proper for the present time. Therefore, their model is a mixture of the values and beliefs from three Jerusalem’s. David Ray Griffin says, “A new worldview does seem to be emerging in our time. This worldview can be called ‘postmodern’, in that it preserves many modern beliefs, values, and practices but places them in a larger framework, in which many premodern truths and values can be recovered.”<sup>9</sup> To see this integration or combination clearly, Hans Küng collects some values and beliefs from the modern and postmodern world. He says, “The specific values of industrial modernity – diligence (industry), rationality, order, thoroughness, punctuality, sobriety, achievement, efficiency – are not just to be done away with but to be reinterpreted in a new constellation and combined with the new values of postmodernity: with imagination, sensitivity, emotion, warmth, tenderness, humanity. So it is not a matter of repudiations and condemnations, but of counterbalances, counter-plans, counter-directions and counter-movements.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus we may see that, whether we like it or not, we cannot escape from one form or another of postmodern reactions if we are not satisfied with the status quo. Thus we may say that in our time the spectre of the postmodern is roaming throughout the world like the spectre of globalization. When we reflect upon the three models of postmodernity, however, we will see the difference. The logic that influences and governs the first two models is the Aristotelian Law of the Excluded Middle.<sup>11</sup> We may see their arguments in a simple form as follows:

The first model of postmodern reactions argues:

Either Current Jerusalem or Old Jerusalem  
Not Current Jerusalem

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Therefore, Old Jerusalem

The second model of postmodern reaction argues:

Either Current Jerusalem or New Jerusalem  
Not Current Jerusalem

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Therefore, New Jerusalem

<sup>9</sup> David Ray Griffin, “Creativity and Postmodern Religion” in Charles Jencks, ed., *ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Küng, “Why We Need a Global Ethic” in Charles Jencks, ed., *ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>11</sup> There are two other Aristotelian laws: the Law of Identity and the Law of Non-Contradiction. However, these two laws can be proved and reduced into the Law of the Excluded Middle. In logic there are ten kinds of reference rules: (1) Modus Ponens, (2) Modus Tollens, (3) Hypothetical Syllogism, (4) Disjunctive Syllogism, (5) Constructive Dilemma, (6) Destructive Dilemma, (7) Simplification, (8) Conjunction, (9) Addition, and (10) Necessity. All these reference rules are Under the Law of the Excluded Middle.

When we turn to the third model, we can see that this is not determined and controlled by the law of the excluded middle. This model gets along well with process thought whereas the first two models get along well with Western philosophy in general. When we read philosophers like Hume and Kant, we often see their arguments in the form of Disjunctive Syllogism which is under the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle. At present analytic philosophers always use (Aristotelian) logic as their tool; therefore they cannot escape from the influence of the law of the excluded middle. Process philosophers who are the minority in the Western world of philosophy use the logic of holism in their way of thinking which looks similar to the logic of Eastern civilizations.

#### IV. The Logic of Holism

Religion has proved to be one of the most powerful forces in the history of mankind. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the time when science was booming it was forecast by some people that there would be no room or space for religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their forecast was based on the logic of the excluded middle, which could be shown as follows:

Either Science or Religion  
Not Religion  
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Therefore, Science

Now we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we discover that their forecast were wrong. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century religion was still alive despite progresses in science and technology. Even though less people become religious persons and quite a few seminaries and convents are closed especially in Europe, religions still survive everywhere. In fact, God is not dead, but a philosopher who said this is already dead. We are at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we can feel the significance, vivacity, and power of existing religions.

In fact, religion determines us in the same way as a game determines players. Religion forms us both theoretically and practically. In other words, religion, like other cultural factors, affects our way of thinking. Since Eastern and Western religions are different, Eastern and Western people have different ways of thinking. While Eastern religions make Eastern people tend toward unity in reality, Western religions make Western people tend toward duality in reality. Western religions and the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle make Western people “exclusive or analytic-minded” whereas Eastern religions make Eastern people “inclusive or synthetic-minded.”

From the history of Western philosophy, however, we have found that it was Hegel who tried to make a “revolution” in the way of thinking of the Western people. Hegel tried to turn away from “either...or” to “both...and” logic. His logic of dialectic could be shown as follows:

White  
 Black  
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 Therefore, Gray

A question may be raised: why was such a revolution not successful in Western civilization? I think that there are at least three main reasons why such a revolution failed. First, the influence of Western religions and of the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle has been in the “blood” of Western people. It is so powerful that it is very difficult for them to throw that kind of logic away from their minds in the same way as “Old ways die hard.” Second, Western religions always exalt individual will. Since Hegelian dialectic seems to downgrade individual will, it is hard for Western people to adopt it. Third, the Enlightenment spirit has been still haunting the West. What I mean by “enlightenment” is the same thing as Kant’s concept of maturity. In other words, the spirit of “Sapere aude” is still in the minds of Western people. Hence even though Hegelian logic seems to help develop reason to its peak, Western people would not adopt it because it seems to destroy liberalism and inevitably leads to totalitarianism. Therefore, it is not surprising when a philosopher such as Habermas considers modernity as an incomplete project in our time because he believes that the spirit of enlightenment is still alive and never dead for Western civilization.

Then a question may be raised whether process logic is similar to Hegelian logic. Some people may say yes, but some say no. I belong to the second group. Hegelian logic is the logic of synthesis whereas process logic is the logic of holism. Process logic seems to be similar to Taoist logic which may be called the logic of complementarity. To see the difference, the schema of the logic of complementarity is shown as follows:

White  
 Black  
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 Therefore, both White and Black

In *Tao Te Ching* Lao Tzu said,

Everyone understands that which makes 'beauty' beautiful,  
And thus the concept of ugliness arises;  
Everyone understands that which makes 'goodness' good,  
And thus the concept of badness arrives.  
Hence, being and non-being give birth to each other;  
Difficult and easy complete each other;  
Long and short form each other;  
High and low lean on each other;  
Sound and echo are harmonious with each other;  
And, before and after follow each other.<sup>12</sup>

The first statement talks about the co-relation or co-existence between beauty and ugliness whereas the second one talks about the correlation between goodness and ugliness. What Lao Tzu means is that if we have the concepts of "beauty" and "goodness", then the concepts of "ugliness" and "badness" necessarily arise. The passage which follows these two statements on the relationship between antithetical concepts includes six examples of this relationship. If the way of thinking of process philosophers is similar to that of Lao Tzu, then it can avoid all the problems that confront Hegelian logic.

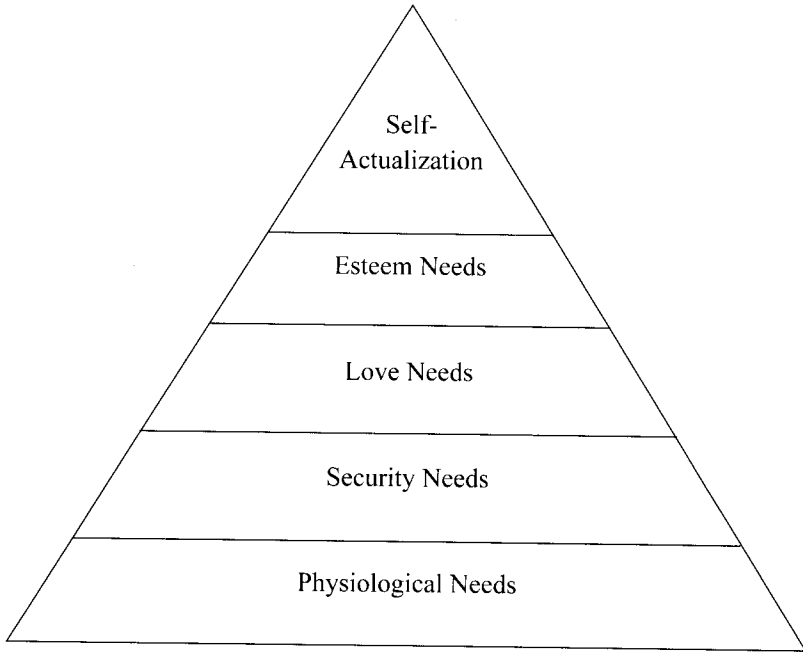
## V. The Way of Integration

In fact, logical thought (*logos*) cannot be separated from the way of practice (*praxis*). To paraphrase Aristotle, we can separate thought and action only in our thought, and not in our existence in the same way as form and matter are necessary to a thing. We normally act according to what we believe. So here we can recognize the way of thought and the way of practice as complementary dimensions. If we adopt the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle in our thought, then we will follow the way of exclusion in our practice. On the contrary, if we welcome the logic of complementarity or holism in our thought, we will follow the way of harmony and integration in our practice. To demonstrate this theory, let us consider and contrast the ideas of two different scholars: Maslow and Whitehead. As we well know,

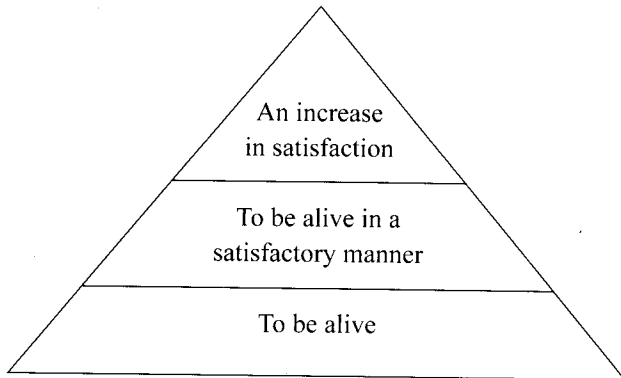
<sup>12</sup> Ch'en Ku-ying, *Lao Tzu: Texts, Notes, and Comments*, translated by Rhett Y.W. Young and Roger T. Ames (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1977), p. 58.



Maslow, a psychologist, proposes his well-known hierarchy of needs which might be shown as follows:



Whitehead, a process philosopher, proposes the art of living which may be shown as follows:



At first glance, Whitehead's model looks naïve and simple. In fact, it is more profound and more comprehensive than that of Maslow's. Maslow was a humanist psychologist. What is missing in his model is spirituality. Even though he talks about love in his model, what he means by love is not *agape* in a religious sense. The logic he uses is that of the excluded middle.

Either Science or Religion

Not Religion

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Therefore, Science

Therefore, Maslow's way remains limited to a scientific way. For Maslow, a person should and can develop physically, intellectually, psychologically, and socially. When we turn to Whitehead, we can see him as a philosopher of integration like Einstein who attempts to link space and time. Einstein said,

"...even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other, nevertheless there exist between the two strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Though religion may be that which determines the goal, it has, nevertheless, learned from science, in the broadest sense, what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals it has set up. But science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with aspirations toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion...I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."<sup>13</sup>

The way that Whitehead follows may be shown as follows:

Religion

Science

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Therefore, both Religion and Science

As actual entities we are familiar with integration as Whitehead puts it, "The actual entity is seen as a process; there is a growth from phase to phase; there are processes of integration and of reintegration."<sup>14</sup> According to Whitehead, a person should and can develop not only physically, intellectually, psychologically, and socially, but also spiritually.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion" in James E. Huchingson, ed., *Religion and the Natural Sciences* (Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1993), p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 283.

## VI. Harmony

Harmony has played an important role in both life and nature. What is harmony? Hartshorne says,

“It would probably be agreed that it is a kind of relation between things such that though they are felt to be different from each other, they are yet felt to be not merely different. Otherness is not the only relation between them. In fact, it seems that the very opposite of otherness is also involved. In analogous color harmony, the basis of the harmony is clearly the fact that the different hues are all variations of one general color, such as the variations of green in foliage.”<sup>15</sup>

As a matter of fact, there is no case of harmony that is a clear exception to the principle of likeness in difference or similarity in the midst of contrast. According to Hartshorne, there are only two ways of failing to achieve harmony: (1) by too little contrast (insipidity, monotony), and (2) by too little similarity (discord, incoherence, and chaos).<sup>16</sup>

We may divide relations between things into three main groups: (1) the relation between one and many, (2) the relation between two opposite things, and (3) the relation between one thing and itself. The first one deals with the problem of one and many which is one of the oldest metaphysical problems. How can we solve the problem of the one and the many? I think that we cannot solve this problem by the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle, but with the logic of holism the problem can be solved in two ways: one in many and many in one. On the one hand, one in many is similar to unity in diversity. Ontologically speaking, we can always discover one in many. For example, in Whiteheadian term, creativity is in all actual entities. On the other hand, many in one is similar to diversity in unity. Phenomenologically speaking, we can also see many societies or cultures coexisting in one and the same world.

The second kind of relation to be considered is the relation between two opposite things. Here I would like to discuss the relation between science and religion. Talking about the ways of relating science and religion, Barbour divides them into 4 main kinds: (a) conflict, (b) independence, (c) dialogue, and (d) integration.<sup>17</sup> No. (a) implies disharmony whereas no. (b) implies separation. Both (a) and (b) follow the law of the excluded middle. Between science and religion, it is a matter of either/or, not both/and. Maslow's model correspond to this kind of logic. Thus it has no room for religion and spirituality. When turning to nos. (c) and (d), we will find that they follow the logic of holism. Both (c) and (d)

<sup>15</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> See Charles Hartshorne, *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> See Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), pp. 77-105.

can include both science and religion. The difference between (c) and (d) is just different in degree. It is obvious that the logic of holism or complementarity promotes dialogue and integration. Whitehead's model adopts the logic of holism; therefore, it promotes dialogue and integration. Thus both science and religion are in harmony and integration according to Whitehead's model.

The third kind of relation to be considered is one actual entity and its own self. This kind of relation deals with actuality and potentiality. Life has three dimensions: past, present, and future. The past dimension was actual and fixed whereas the future dimension is potential and uncertain. The present life is something between the fixed past and the uncertain future dimension. Each individual life needs harmony within its own self. If we conflict with our own selves, we will never be peaceful and happy.

## VII. Conclusion

The present world is filled with a variety of serious problems: economic, social, moral, political, and ecological. To solve these problems, we need to have appropriate attitudes, proper viewpoints, and appropriate ways of thinking. The either/or logic is not wrong, but we need to recognize its limits. To solve the problems of chaos, disharmony, and conflict, it seems to me that the logic of both/and works better in the sense that it can help overcome all kinds of discriminations such as the discrimination between Jews and gentiles, Christians and pagans, and Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus instead of

Either us or them

Not them

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Therefore, us

We should follow the following pattern:

Them

Us

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Therefore, both them and us