

# THE HARTSHORNIAN WAY: ON SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF DUALISM

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## บทคัดย่อ

วิธีคิดแบบตะวันตกนั้นถูกครอบงำด้วยกฎของอริสโตเติล ที่ว่าด้วยการกีดกันตัวเลือกกลางออกไป ถึงแม้ว่าเฮเกลจะพยายามสร้างการเปลี่ยนแปลงครั้งใหญ่สำหรับวิธีคิดแบบตะวันตกโดยใช้ตรรกะเชิงวิภาษวิธี แต่ทว่าตรรกะแบบอริสโตเติล หรือที่เรียกว่าแบบ “อย่างใดอย่างหนึ่ง” ก็ยังคงหลอนโลกตะวันตกมาโดยตลอด อย่างไรก็ตามหากคำนึงถึงแง่มุมทางด้านญาณวิทยาตรรกะแบบเฮเกลก็ยังไม่ชัดเจนนักในการนำมาใช้แก้ปัญหาทวินิยม อาจกล่าวได้ว่าชาร์ลส์ ฮาร์ทส์ฮอร์น ต่างหากที่ เป็นผู้แก้ปัญหาทวินิยมในโลกตะวันตกได้ประสบความสำเร็จ บทความนี้จะสาธิตวิธีซึ่งผู้เขียนขอเรียกว่า “วิธีแบบฮาร์ทส์ฮอร์น” ให้เห็นว่าเป็นทางเดียวเท่านั้นที่จะทำให้ความจริงที่ตรงกันข้ามเป็นที่ยอมรับและนำมารวมกันได้เป็นผลสำเร็จ

## Abstract

The Western way of thinking has been dominated by the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle. Even though Hegel tried to create a revolution for Western thought through his dialectical logic, the Aristotelian logic or the either/or logic still haunts the Western world. However, Hegelian logic is not so clear in terms of epistemology to solve the problem of dualism. It is Charles Hartshorne who could be said to have successfully solved the problem of dualism in the West. This paper will demonstrate what the author calls “the Hartshornian Way” and argues that only through this way, truths of the opposites can be recognized and combined together successfully.

## I. Introduction

Dualism has played an important role in the Western thought. Although we often attribute this problem to Descartes who contributed a lot to the duality between mind and body in his epistemic system, the problem of duality, in fact, is as old as other metaphysical problems going back to ancient Greek philosophy.

As a matter of fact, it is normal for human beings everywhere, no matter from the East or the West, to learn and see things according to contrasts or opposites. Contrasts are pervasive in the world around us, or as Hartshorne says, “Contrast is found not only throughout life but throughout nature as discovered by science”.<sup>1</sup> It might be said that the fundamental difference between Western and Eastern people is that while Western mind stops at duality, the Eastern mind strives to transcend duality to reach unity. In other words, the Western people tend toward the duality of reality whereas the Eastern people tend toward the unity of reality.

Religion has been one of the powerful historical forces shaping our thought. Religion influences the way of life of most peoples in the world, even now in this age of science and globalization. Some thinkers in the past predicted that there would be no more major religions in the world by the twentieth century, and that science would have replaced them. It is true that many people in the West have turned their backs to religion and become unbelievers since the Enlightenment, or as Ian Barbour puts it,

For many centuries in the West, the Christian story of creation and salvation provided a cosmic setting in which individual life had significance. It allowed people to come to terms with guilt, finitude, and death. It provided a total way of life, and it encouraged personal transformation and reorientation. Since the Enlightenment, the Christian story has had diminishing effectiveness for many people, partly because it has seemed inconsistent with the understanding of the world in modern science. Similar changes have been occurring in other cultures.<sup>2</sup>

However, we have found that these predictions were wrong. Throughout the twentieth century people still respected and followed their religions, especially during and after the First and the Second World Wars. In the twenty-first century Christianity and all other religions are still very much alive, and science has not succeeded in replacing them.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it seems that more and more people are believers in religions. This is evidence of how religion is essentially significant to life.

Religion affects not only the way of life but also the way of thinking. Turning to the West, we will find that “The Western theological tradition, in all its evident diversity, rests upon a polar or, more precisely, a dyadic foundation. Though consistently monotheistic, Christian theology is repeatedly inscribed in binary terms. The history of religious thought in the West can be read as a pendular movement between seemingly exclusive and evident opposites”.<sup>4</sup> In his book *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (1984) Mark C. Taylor lists the following opposites as examples.

God	World
Eternity	Time
Being	Becoming
Rest	Movement
Permanence	Change
Presence	Absence
One	Many
Sacred	Profane
Order	Chaos
Meaning	Absurdity
Life	Death
Infinite	Finite
Transcendent	Immanent
Identity	Difference
Affirmation	Negation
Truth	Error
Reality	Illusion
Certainty	Uncertainty
Clarity	Confusion
Sanity	Madness

Light	Darkness
Vision	Blindness
Invisibl	Visible
Spiri	Body
Spiritual	Carnal
Mind	Matter
Good	Evil
Innocence	Guilt
Purity	Stain
Proper	Improper
Centered	Eccentric
First	Second
Original	Imitation
Natural	Monstrous
Purposeful	Purposeless
Honesty	Duplicity
Height	Depth
Depth	Surface
Interiority	Exteriority
Speech	Writing
Seriousness	Play

A question may be raised, “Why does the Western theological tradition rest upon this polar or dyadic foundation?” An answer may be that it is based on a polar foundation because it has been influenced by Aristotelian logic.

## **II. Aristotelian Logic**

Logic has a long history. Logic in the West is more than 2,500 years old. Philosophers in Western civilization who made contributions to logic include Pythagoras, Zeno of Elea, and Plato. However, it was Aristotle who made the greatest contribution to logic. In fact, he is considered the father of formal logic. His formal logic is based on three laws: the law of identity, the law of the excluded middle, and the law of non-contradiction.

Later philosophers and logicians who made contributions to logic include Boole, Venn, Frege, Russell, Whitehead, and Gödel. But although logic is subject to change and development like other subjects, all Western logicians have followed the Aristotelian three laws of logic. Of course, Hartshorne is no exception.

Among these three laws which one is the most fundamental? I think the most fundamental one is the law of the excluded middle. Why so? Because we can transform the other two laws into the law of the excluded middle. Let us see the following proofs.

1.  $p \rightarrow p$       The Law of Identity
2.  $\sim p \vee p$       1, Material Implication, Replacement Rule
3.  $p \vee \sim p$       2, Commutation, Replacement Rule  
Q.E.D.

1.  $\sim (p \bullet \sim p)$       The Law of Non-contradiction
2.  $\sim p \vee \sim \sim p$       1, De Morgan, Replacement Rule
3.  $\sim p \vee p$       2, Double Negation, Replacement Rule
4.  $p \vee \sim p$       3, Commutation, Replacement Rule  
Q.E.D.

The law of the excluded middle leaves no room for an intermediate between opposites or contradictories, or as Aristotle puts it,

...there cannot be an intermediate between contradictories, but of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate. This is clear, in the first place, if we define what the true and the false are. To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be.<sup>5</sup>

From the above quotation we can deduce that the law of the

excluded middle has no room or space for “both/and” and “neither/nor”. People who follow this law in their way of thinking are forced to choose only either of the two opposites. We can illustrate this through the following examples.

Example 1: The chili is either green or red.

According to the law of the excluded middle, if the statement “The chili is green” is true, then its opposite or contrastive “The chili is red” must be false. There is no space for “The chili is both green and red” and “The chili is neither green nor red”. In fact, the same chili can be both green and red in its different parts at the same time. It can also be neither green nor red, for example, white or brown at a particular time. It can have different colors at different times.

Example 2: Light is either composed of particles or waves.

According to the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle, “Light is composed of particles” and “Light is composed of waves” cannot be true together or false together. If “Light is composed of particles” is true, then “Light is composed of waves” must be false, and vice versa. In fact, some physicists hold either position. Still, others also hold that light is composed of both particles and waves. Someday perhaps some physicists may hold that light is composed of neither particles nor waves because all actual entities are subject to change at all times.

The above two examples demonstrate that Aristotelian logic has its own limits. What I am saying here is not that Aristotelian law of the excluded middle is invalid. I am just saying that this law is true only within its own system or context. It is not always true in the absolute sense.

People who adopt the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle as fundamental in their way of thinking will be trapped in the game of dualism. If they do not recognize its limits, they will and could not be able to transcend dualism.

### III. Hegelian Logic

In the West it was Hegel who first recognized the limits of Aristotelian logic. Thus he proposed Dialectical logic instead. For Hegel, the whole of reality is a historical process. The dialectic is something that is realized in the actual process of history. In other words, dialectic logic implies that form and content always go together. Logic is not just a matter of form separate from content, which is how Aristotelian logic is interpreted. Hegel says, "...the maxim of Identity... Everything is identical with itself,  $A = A$ : and, negatively,  $A$  cannot at the same time be  $A$  and not  $A$ . This maxim, instead of being a true law of thought, is nothing but the law of abstract understanding".<sup>6</sup> In order to understand Dialectic logic clearly, Peter Singer summarizes Hegel's basic ideas as follows:

1. Reality is a historical process.
2. The way this process changes is dialectical.
3. This dialectical process of change has a specific goal.
4. This goal is a conflict-free society.
5. Until that goal is reached we are condemned to remain in one form or another of alienation.<sup>7</sup>

The dialectic is composed of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Unlike Aristotelian logic, the dialectic contends that  $A$  and not  $A$  can be true together, or as Brent puts it,

A dialectical process is a process that... We begin by starting our thesis, and about such a statement or thesis we might assume with Aristotle's law of identity that what it says it is, it says it is, that it cannot be both affirmed and denied (non-contradiction), and that it must either be so or not be so (excluded middle). But to make such a claim in the real world of human experience... does not yield knowledge that conforms to such fixed structures. Any such initial statement (thesis) will be contradicted (antithesis) and... no such contradiction is itself ever final. As such, Hegel's concept of emerging truth breaks Aristotle's

law of the excluded middle and claims that in so doing the inadequacy of that law to explain the facts of how the epistemic subject acquires true knowledge. For these syntheses that arise in both the development of the world and in the development of man's understanding of it, show that neither thesis nor antithesis is finally true, but rather that both are in a certain way true. The 'middle' that Aristotle wished to 'exclude' is seen to be the essential core of reality itself.<sup>8</sup>

Example 1: Dialectic

Thesis:	Water
Antithesis:	Fire
Synthesis:	Steam

Example 2: Dialectic

Thesis:	Coffee
Antithesis:	Tea
Synthesis:	Coffee mixed with tea <sup>9</sup>

From the above two examples we can see that Hegelian logic can solve the problem of dualism in the ontological dimension. It obviously tells us about the way things are. Ontology deals with mode of existence, non-existence, and actuality. Hegelian logic works well with the development of the world and its objects. However, in the epistemological dimension Hegelian logic is not that much of a help for developing our understanding of the world and its objects in form of propositions. Let us consider the following proposition.

Tea is different from coffee.

According to Aristotelian logic, the opposite of the above proposition is "Tea is not different from coffee" or "Tea is similar to coffee". And according to the law of the excluded middle, if "Tea is different from coffee" is true, then its opposite must be false, and vice versa. On the contrary, according to Hegelian logic, "Tea is different from coffee" and its opposite can be true together. The question to be raised here is why

Hegelian logic seems to be silent on this problem at the epistemological level.

#### **IV. Hartshornian Way**

It was Charles Hartshorne who helps us solve the above question. Hartshorne was born in Kittanning, Pennsylvania on June 5, 1897, and died on October 10, 2000. David Ray Griffin says, “He (Hartshorne) was clearly one of the major philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>10</sup> John B. Cobb considers Hartshorne the Einstein of religious thought. After reading his works and understanding his ideas, I absolutely agree with Griffin and Cobb. Hartshorne is most famous as a process philosopher. He wrote more than 20 books and 100 articles in his lifetime.

Hartshorne was a scholar who made great contributions to the modal proof of the abstract aspect (pole) of God based on the second form of St. Anselm’s ontological argument and the concept of the concrete aspect (pole) of God who is dynamic and creative. Some may know him as a philosopher who brought philosophical insights to an empirical field through his first book *The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation*. Some people may even know him as a very distinguished ornithologist through his book *Born to Sing*. Still others may know him as a devout vegetarian who did not own an automobile, preferring to ride a bicycle, and supporting feminism, abortion rights and higher taxes. In this paper I will try to show another face of Hartshorne, namely, a great contributor to logic.

For Hartshorne, extremism is always wrong. Let us consider the following three statements.

- (a) There is nothing in the world.
- (b) There is everything in the world.
- (c) There is something in the world.

It is obvious that the first two statements (a) and (b) are wrong because they are extreme. The third statement (c) is correct because some things do exist, and some things do not exist in the world.

Dealing with the nature of God, Hartshorne argues that both classical theism and pantheism go wrong because they are extreme. Hartshorne considers his position as neo-classical theism or panentheism which is in the middle way between classical theism and pantheism. Let us consider the following three statements.

- (1) God is relative in all aspects. (Pantheism)
- (2) God is relative in some aspect. (Panentheism)
- (3) God is relative in no aspects. (Classical Theism)

The words “all aspects” and “no aspects” imply extremism. Thus Hartshorne rejects (1) and (3), and he prefers (2). In his own words, Hartshorne says,

If ‘pantheism’ is a historically and etymologically appropriate term for the view that deity is the all of relative or interdependent items, with nothing wholly independent or in any clear sense nonrelative, then ‘panentheism’ is an appropriate term for the view that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items. Traditional theism or deism makes God solely independent or noninclusive. Thus there are logically the three views: (1) God is merely the cosmos, in all aspects inseparable from the sum or system of dependent things or effects; (2) He is both this system and something independent of it; (3) He is not the system, but is in all aspects independent. The second view is panentheism. The first view includes any doctrine which, like Spinoza’s, asserts that there is a premise from which all acts are implied conclusions.<sup>11</sup>

Now if we turn to the word “absolute”, we can play the same game as follows:

- (1) God is absolute in all aspects. (Classical Theism)

- (2) God is absolute in some aspect. (Panentheism)
- (3) God is absolute in no aspects. (Pantheism)

Thus for Hartshorne, God is both relative in some aspect and absolute in another aspect. This is the main thesis of panentheism or neo-classical theism which takes a middle way. From this game proposed by Hartshorne, we can solve the problem Hegelian logic does not answer at the epistemological level. Let us now turn to the proposition “Tea is different from coffee” and its opposite “Tea is not different from coffee” or “Tea is similar to coffee”. How can we make the two opposites true together according to Dialectical logic? We can make both of them true through the Hartshornian way. Let us start with the propositions containing the word “different”.

- (1) Tea is different from coffee in all aspects.
- (2) Tea is different from coffee in some aspect.
- (3) Tea is different from coffee in no aspects.

From the above three proposition it is obvious that the propositions (1) and (3) are wrong because they are extreme. The proposition (2) is correct. Now let us turn to the propositions containing the word “similar”.

- (1) Tea is similar to coffee in all aspects.
- (2) Tea is similar to coffee in some aspect.
- (3) Tea is similar to coffee in no aspects.

Similarly, the propositions (1) and (3) are obviously wrong while the proposition (2) is true. Therefore, with the Hartshornian way, we can make Hegelian logic clear at the epistemological level as follows:

- Thesis: Tea is different from coffee in some aspect.  
(True)
- Antithesis: Tea is similar to coffee in some aspect.  
(True)
- Synthesis: Tea is both different and similar to coffee in

some aspects. (True)

## V. Conclusion

The world today is filled with many conflicts and dualisms. We are tempted to use logic to solve these problems. But to follow Aristotelian logic or the Western theological tradition without recognizing their limits is not of much help. The Hartshornian way may be a more appropriate way to settle disputes, solving conflicts and transcending dualisms of many kinds. The Hartshornian way can give space to all the opposites. Let us see the serious fight between egalitarian liberalism and multiculturalism as an example. The main thesis of egalitarian liberalism is “Everybody is just like us”, while that of multiculturalism is “Everybody is just different from us”. For Aristotle, the two theses are opposite, and they cannot be both correct according to the law of the excluded middle. However, the Hartshornian way can help solve the problem as follows:

Everybody is just like us in some aspect. (True)

Everybody is just different from us in some aspect.  
(True)

Everybody is both similar and different from us in  
some aspects. (True)

If egalitarian libertarians insist that “Everybody is just like us in all aspects” and multiculturalists insist that “Everybody is just different from us in all aspects”, then we can see that both groups are wrong.

Even though Hartshorne himself was not aware that his methodology could solve these epistemological problems of Aristotelian and Hegelian logic, I would like to credit him with this, and call this solution “The Hartshornian Way”.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Hartshorne, Charles 1971. *Reality as Social Process*. New York: Hafner

Publishing Company, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Barbour, Ian G. 1990. *Religion and Science*. HarperSanFrancisco: An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, p. XIII.

<sup>3</sup>Except for those who believe that science and religion are always in conflict. Some of these people have chosen to take side with science while others with religion. However, Ian Barbour divides 4 ways of relating science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Many people including theologians take the last three ways as their alternatives. “Those who are of the opinion that science and religion share common admirable purposes, or at least are on speaking terms, affirm that each enterprise possesses a rational-factual and a normative or valuing component. Both contribute to a fully satisfying understanding of the world and our place in it. Others, however, are of a different opinion. They sharply demarcate the methods and goals of science and religion, assigning special functions to each so as to assure their mutual independence. On the one hand, the challenge is to avoid reducing one enterprise to the other - science to religion in the form of natural theology or religion to science as an antiquated approach to explaining natural phenomena. On the other hand, the challenge is to avoid complete compartmentalization by assigning matters of the heart to religion and matters of the head to science where each has nothing to contribute to each other”. See James E. Huchingson, 1993. *Religion and the Natural Sciences*, Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, Mark C. “Erring: A Postmodern A/theology” in Lawrence E. Cahoon 1996. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p.p. 516-7.

<sup>5</sup>Aristotle. “Metaphysics” in Jonathan Barnes, ed., 1984. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, vol. two, p. 1597.

<sup>6</sup>Hegel. “Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences”, translated by W. Wallace in Jacob Loewenberg, ed., 1929. *Hegel Selections*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup>See a series of television programs transmitted by the BBC in 1987. See also Magee, Brian 1987. *The Great Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy* (Based on the BBC Television Series), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 205. Marx followed and took over all Hegel’s basic ideas. The difference is just that for Hegel the process of historical development is spiritual whereas for Marx this process is purely material.

<sup>8</sup>Brent, Allen 1983. *Philosophy and Educational Foundations*. London: George Allen & Unwin, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup>Hegelian logic is close to the way of thinking of the Eastern peoples because it is inclusive. All forms of the Eastern logic are holistic because Eastern thought tends to be inclusive whereas Western thought tends to be exclusive. At the epistemological dimension the Nyāya logic is the logic of integration between induction and deduction. At the ontological dimension the Taoist logic is the logic of complementarity while the Buddhist logic is the logic of detachment. In order to

see the difference among these types of logic, we may use “tea and coffee” as examples. If a waiter asks, “Tea or coffee?”, then what an answer would be. An Aristotelian may say, “Tea” or “Coffee”, but not both. A Hegelian would say, “Both tea and coffee in the same cup”. A Taoist will say, “Both tea and coffee in two different cups”. The answer from a Buddhist may vary. It may be “Tea”, “Coffee”, “Both tea and coffee in the same cup”, “Both tea and coffee in different cups”, “One tenth of tea and nine tenths of coffee in the same cup”, or even “Neither”.

<sup>10</sup>See *The New York Times on Friday*, October 13, 2000, p. C15.

<sup>11</sup>Hartshorne, Charles 1976. *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 89-90.