Triad Philosophy: An Initiative Idea for Merging Western and Eastern Thoughts

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The core of triad philosophy consists of triad ontology, triad epistemology, and triad axiology based on triad logic. The triad ontology is characterized by objective knowledge (Li), objective matter (Ch’i), and subjective spirit (Hs’in); triad epistemology by experiencing, studying, and thinking; and triad axiology by honesty, charity, and forgiveness. The idea could merge Western and Eastern thoughts into one philosophical system.

Keywords: triad philosophy, triad ontology, triad epistemology, triad axiology

Introduction

Contemporary people need a contemporary philosophy in which Western and Eastern good philosophical ideas can be melted together for processing all things in the world. Synthesizing Western, Chinese, and Eastern thought, the author introduces the triad philosophy based on triad logic.

In triad logic, there exist triad operators (+, *, R) and three values (1, 0, -1). Their value table fits an extended Lukasiewicz $L_3$ (Lukasiewicz, 1930) system shown as follows.

|   | 1 | 0 | -1 |
|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  |
| -1| 1 | 0 | -1 |

This is a non-symmetric ternary logic.

On the basis of the above value table, the following logic laws can be set up (Eldon, 2000).

The Exchange Law

$A + B = B + A \quad A \ast B = B \ast A \quad ARB = BRA$

The Combination Law

$(A + B) + C = A + (B + C) \quad (A \ast B) \ast C = A \ast (B \ast C)$

The Distribution Law

$A \ast (B + C) = (A \ast B) + (A \ast C) \quad AR(B + C) = (ARB) \ast (ARC)$

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1 Here, Kant’s philosophy, Popper’s philosophy, philosophy of I Ching and Buddhism are particularly considered.

2 Lukasiewicz logic used values 0, 1, 2.
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\[
AR(B \ast C) = (ARB) + (ARC)
\]

Based on the logic system, sentences will be classified as positive sentences (true value, 1), indefinite sentences (no value, 0), and negative sentences (false value, -1) in language. And triad philosophy can be developed based on triad language logic.

**Triad Ontology**

**Category Origin**

The concept Onto(s), which comes from Western philosophy, means the essence(s) of existing things. In Western philosophy, there are objective knowledge, which means the idea of Li (rightness) in Chinese philosophy or the idea of Brahman in Indian philosophy; objective matter, which means the idea of Ch’i (vapor) in Chinese philosophy or the idea of Maya in Indian philosophy; and subjective spirit, which means the idea of Hs’in (mind) in Chinese philosophy or the idea of Atman in Indian philosophy. Referring to Popper’s idea (Popper, 1972) of objective matter (World 1), subjective spirit (World 2), and objective knowledge (World 3), the author can set up triad ontology as follows.

**Structure Construction**

Synthesizing objective knowledge (rightness, Brahman), objective matter (vapor, Maya), and subjective spirit (mind, Atman) in Western, Chinese, and Indian philosophy, triad ontology is constructed as in Figure 1.

![Triad ontology](image)

*Figure 1. Triad ontology.*

Referring to onto-hermeneutics (Cheng, 1996), Li in Chinese Philosophy and Brahman in Indian philosophy can be interpreted as objective knowledge in Western philosophy, so are Ch’i and Maya as objective matter and Hs’in and Atman as subjective spirit. Figure 1 means that objective knowledge (rightness, Brahman), objective matter (vapor, Maya), and subjective spirit (mind, Atman) exist at the same time.

**Function Development**

Considering the relations in triad ontology, there is Figure 2 for reference.

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3 Differentiating from Popper’s philosophy, here objective knowledge, objective matter, and subjective spirit constructed a triad structure.
This is an idea from the relations of five elements in Chinese philosophy.

Triad methodology, or the triad thinking pattern, can be introduced by triad ontology. The triad method is a system method in which there are three main groups or elements. The three groups or elements construct a triad relation as in Figure 3.

In this system, Group A includes foundation/basis element(s), Group B includes motivation/power element(s), and Group C contains regulation/adjustment element(s).

Every triad method system or subsystem may be dominated by three main elements. When a system is controlled by three elements A, B, C, the system may be called a one-order triad system. And when A is divided as A1, A2, A3, B as B1, B2, B3, and C as C1, C2, C3, the system that contains nine elements may be called a two-order triad system. See Figure 4.
Generally, a system which consists of $m$ elements may be called $(n - 1) + \frac{m}{3^n}$ order triad system, when $m \in [1, 3]$, $n = 1$; when $m \in [4, 9]$, $n = 2$; and when $m \in [10, 27]$, $n = 3$.

In Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein, 1974), the basic philosophic problem is the relation of said and shown. And in Triad philosophy, it is a triad relation.

**Triad Epistemology**

**Category Origin**

The generation and development of knowledge must be a process. At the beginning, knowledge came from experiencing. After people concluded some principles or rules from experiences, they could think based on the principles or rules and get knowledge. When knowledge was accumulated and organized into a system, people could get knowledge through learning or studying.

**Structure Construction**

There are three sources of knowledge, i.e., experiencing (acting), thinking (pondering), and studying (learning), which construct triad epistemology as Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Triad epistemology.](image)

Considering Kant’s philosophy (Kant, 1929), experiencing, thinking, and studying may undergo the process of “perception -> understanding -> reason”. Combining Kant’s epistemological line with Chinese “nine squares” as a “cognition frame” for memory, triad epistemology can be shown as Figure 6.

![Figure 6. Cognition frame.](image)

The numbers express the importance order. The larger the number is, the more important is the kind of knowledge that contributes to modern knowledge.
There are some examples for explaining the above order.
A. Examples of reason-thinking (Order 9):
   A1. Euler’s formula: \( \exp(iz) = \cos z + i \sin z \).
   A2. Newton’s gravity law: \( F = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{r^2} \).
   A3. Knowledge is power.
B. Examples of perception-experiencing (Order 8):
   B1. All that glitters is not gold.
   B2. A rolling stone gathers no moss.
   B3. Rome was not built in a day.
C. Examples of understanding-studying (Order 7):
   C1. 0 + 1 = 1, 1 + 1 = 2, ... 9 + 1 = 10, 10 + 1 = 11, ... 99 + 1 = 100...
   C2. 0 x 1 = 0, 1 x 1 = 1, ... 2 x 2 = 4, 2 x 3 = 6, ... 9 x 9 = 81...
   C3. One day equals 24 hours and one hour equals 60 minutes.

**Function Development**

Human knowledge can be induced by perception, understanding, and reason on the basis of nature, society, and mankind. At the beginning, knowledge came from experiencing with perception, and literature, arts, and natural philosophy were produced. Then natural, social sciences and humanities were introduced based on thinking and studying with understanding and reason. Step by step, physics became the core of natural sciences, economics of social sciences, and philosophy of humanities.

Now, the author can conclude three principles and three laws as the core of human knowledge.

**Principle I (Cycle Principle):** There are a lot of cycles in the world. This is the basis of existing things. The Cycle Principle is expressed as the chemical periodic table, TCA cycle, economic cycle, and other periodic phenomena.

**Principle II (Harmony Principle):** All parts of the world relate to each other. This is the adjustment for existing things. The Harmony Principle is expressed as symmetry, poetic rhyme, music harmonics, and other harmonic phenomena.

**Principle III (Optimization Principle):** Optimization is the direction for development in the world. This is the power of existing things. The Optimization Principle can be expressed as the least action law, maximum profit and minimum cost rules, and other optimum phenomena.

**Law 1:** Substance never vanishes. That is the foundation of objective matter.
**Law 2:** Spirit never dies away. That is the foundation of subjective spirit.
**Law 3:** Logic never confuses. That is the foundation of objective knowledge.

The three principles and three laws set up the basis of the world and construct the framework of contemporary knowledge.

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4 If a contemporary philosophy cannot explain contemporary knowledge, it is untenable.
Triad Axiology

Category Origin
In Western philosophy, truth, goodness, and beauty are keywords for axiology. And in Chinese and Eastern philosophy, honesty, charity, and forgiveness are strengthened. Honesty reflects the true; charity means the good; and forgiveness shows the beauty. So, honesty (the true), charity (the good), and forgiveness (the beauty) construct the triad axiology.\(^5\)

Structure Construction
In triad axiology, the triad relation is in Figure 7.

![Figure 7. Triad axiology.](image)

Triad axiology means that we should generally be charitable to everyone as a condition of maintaining basic ecological balance and people should forgive other people, and should be sincere in society.

Function Development
An ideal humanity or personality is the unity of charity, forgiveness, and honesty. The author thinks that humanity has a complex multi-level inner structure, which contains physiological, psychological, and philosophical levels. It is a two-order triad system. See also Figure 8.

![Figure 8. Structure of humanity.](image)

In this system, charity (goodness) is the dynamic source of kindness, volition, and imagination, which construct the psychological level. So are forgiveness (beauty) of consciousness, love, emotion for the physiological level and honesty (truth) of perception, reason, and understanding for the philosophical level. The

\(^5\) In my view, mass axiology means ethics and personal axiology expresses the outlook of life.
triad outlook of life derives from the structure of humanity.

Logic, science, and law result from reason. Courage, willpower, and war are caused by volition. And joy, anger, anxiety, fear (terror), and the arts come from emotion. At the physiological level, volition is motivation; at the psychological level, love is primary; and at the philosophical level, reason is power. Humanity may mainly be a Trinity of volition, love and reason. Certainly, we cannot ignore other natures, for example, there will be no hope without imagination.

Paying attention to kindness and developing reason are necessary paths for training an ideal personality.

The moral levels will adapt to the social civilization and economic levels. In the future, people can choose a suitable outlook on life based on their conditions. There are three standards for choice:

1. High standard (The sage view of life): Charity for everything and forgiveness for everyone. He is glad to help others and to act for society. He will say: “I like to be charitable to the world, to forgive all people and to be honest in society”.

2. Middle standard (The gentleman’s view of life): Keep goodness in mind and be upright in action. He is peaceful and modest. He will say: “I will keep charity and forgiveness for good people, and honesty in society”.

3. Low standard (The masses view of life): Do not destroy social safety. He dislikes helping others. But he does not hurt others either. He will say: “I am charitable only to myself, forgiveness is only for my friends; but I am honest in society”.

If most people can get to the middle standard in a society, the social morality will be good. Even the low standard will lead to peace and quietness. The base is to keep “honesty in society”.

The author thinks that agricultural civilization, industrial civilization, and knowledge (information) civilization will coexist in the future world. The triad civilization (society) will need triad axiology.

Conclusion

Triad ontology, triad epistemology, and triad axiology construct the main framework of triad philosophy. In triad ontology, the main elements are objective knowledge (rightness, Brahman), objective matter (vapor, Maya), and subjective spirit (mind, Atman). In triad epistemology, the main elements are experiencing (acting), thinking (pondering), and studying (learning). And in triad axiology, the main elements are honesty (truth), charity (goodness), and forgiveness (beauty).

This is an outline of triad philosophy. Deeper researches into triad ontology, triad epistemology, and triad axiology will be separately studied. The triad philosophy could provide a reference system for merging Western and Eastern thoughts, as well as sciences and humanities.

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