

# Thăng Nghĩa: A Unified philosophical System

**Question:** How does Thăng Nghĩa synthesize diverse philosophical traditions into a unified system?

**Answer:** Thăng Nghĩa, as articulated by Lý Đông A and explained by Phạm Oanh, is presented as a grand synthesis ("Tập đại thành") of human thought and philosophical traditions from across East and West, and from ancient times to the present. It aims to unify diverse ideas into a comprehensive system for understanding humanity and society.

Here's how Thăng Nghĩa synthesizes these diverse traditions:

- Integration of Global Philosophical Heritage:
  - It draws heavily from Vietnamese Philosophy (Việt Triết) while reflecting the essence of human thought from various civilizations.
  - It incorporates ancient wisdom such as Dịch Lý, Khổng (Confucius), Lão (Laozi), and Western classical philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
  - Crucially, it includes meticulous scientific and philosophical analyses from modern Western thinkers like Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Marx.
  - Religious and spiritual insights from Chúa (Christ/Christianity) and Phật (Buddhism) are also incorporated, particularly regarding ethics and the concept of "Mạt pháp" (decline of dharma).
  - It even reviews and critiques other major ideologies, such as China's Tri-Dânism (Tam Dân), seeking to perfect them.
- Synthesis of Tâm (Mind/Spirit), Sinh (Life/Biology), and Vật (Matter/Physics):
  - Lý Đông A advocates for understanding and developing Tâm lý (Psychology), Vật lý (Physics), and Sinh lý (Biology) simultaneously. These are considered "fundamental elements" or "functions" of the universe and human consciousness.
  - The core of this synthesis is Biện Chứng Duy Dân (Duy Dân Dialectics), which combines the principles of Duy Tâm (Idealism), Duy Vật (Materialism), and Duy Sinh (Life-oriented/Survival). It aims for a "tung hợp" (unified integration) rather than contradiction or opposition.

- This dialectic is described as "toàn trình, toàn diện và toàn thể" (holistic, comprehensive, and complete), reflecting the unity of these three dimensions of life.

- Reconciling Contradictory Philosophical Stances:

- Thăng Nghĩa addresses the historical conflict between Idealism (Duy Tâm) and Materialism (Duy Vật), asserting that history tends towards a "tổng hợp" conclusion rather than perpetual contradiction.

- It seeks to bridge the gap between "subjective absolute truths" (emphasized by moral philosophers like Kant, Khổng, Lão, Chúa, Phật) and "objective relative truths" (derived from science, championed by Marx). It recognizes Kant's role in saving the law of causality and the value of reason.

- It aims to unify the three levels of truth: Nhiên (Nature), Nhân (Human), and Dân (People/Community), and the continuous transformation between them.

- A Unified View of Human Nature and Society (Nhất Tính Nhân Loại):

- Lý Đông A posits that humanity has a "Nhất Tính" (single nature) across all cultures and historical periods, meaning there's no fundamental distinction between material and spiritual civilization, or Eastern and Western cultures.

- This "universal" foundation is then adapted and specialized into distinct national cultures.

- The concept of "Tam Nhân" (Three Human Aspects) – Nhân bản (Humanism), Nhân chủ (Human Sovereignty), and Nhân tính (Human Nature) – serves as a fundamental framework, embodying the history and ideals of humanity. These principles are considered crucial for guiding humanity and for achieving freedom and equality.

- Ethical and Practical Application:

- Thăng Nghĩa is not merely theoretical; it is a practical philosophy for "Kiến Quốc" (nation-building) and "Quản Lý Điều Hành" (management). It seeks to apply these unified principles to all aspects of human life, from social organization to law, education, politics, economics, and military affairs.

- It contrasts with systems (like Marxism or unbridled capitalism) that Lý Đông A sees as incomplete or "phi nhân" (inhumane) because they prioritize economics or power over the full spectrum of human psychology and morality. For example, he criticizes capitalism's focus on desire and ambition as driving forces, which he considers a "Phi Nhân" philosophy, leading to limitations on democracy and potentially reducing people to "Nô tài" (laborers/slaves).

- It emphasizes the importance of "Nuôi Tâm" (cultivating the mind/heart) to foster "Thiên tài" (geniuses) with great moral character and foresight, rather than just "Nhân tài" (talented people) driven by self-interest or "Nô tài" (unthinking laborers).

- The ethical principles of Kant, particularly his Categorical Imperatives (like treating oneself and others as ends, not means), are central to Thăng Nghĩa's moral framework and are seen as increasingly vital in modern times.

In essence, Thăng Nghĩa presents itself as the "key to the treasury of human thought", offering a holistic and dynamic framework (Biện Chứng Duy Dân) that synthesizes the strengths of idealism, materialism, and life-oriented philosophies while addressing their shortcomings. It aims to provide a path for human evolution towards a state of "Nhân Đạo Ổn Định" (Humanitarian Stability) by fostering enlightened individuals and a harmonious society.

How does Lý Đông A explain power?

Lý Đông A, through Thăng Nghĩa, offers a profound explanation of power, moving beyond conventional understandings to reveal its true nature, origin, and optimal application within a unified societal system.

Here's how Lý Đông A explains power:

- The Nature and Origin of Power:

- Lý Đông A asserts that power is not something seized or usurped, but rather it is voluntarily exchanged or even given away. This act of giving away power, however, leads to a loss of self-mastery and freedom for those who relinquish it.

- The ultimate goal of power is presented as a dichotomy: it can either lead to imperial domination or to self-mastery and freedom.

- Absolute sovereignty is manifested as the will of the people, referred to as the "General Will" or "Popular Will".

- Requirements for Power:

- For power to be effective and legitimate, Lý Đông A states that it requires three fundamental elements from individuals: obedience (Lý trí - reason), peace of mind (Tĩnh cảm - emotion), and support (Ý chí - will). These correspond to the three spheres of human cognition.

- Thăng Nghĩa's Approach to Power:

- In contrast to systems that emphasize the seizure or division of power, Thăng Nghĩa advocates for the socialization of power, rather than its centralization (Tập quyền).
- A core tenet of Thăng Nghĩa is to eliminate the boundaries between the ruler and the ruled.
- Thăng Nghĩa operates on the principle of "Quyền lý," which ensures that authority (Quyền) is tightly coupled with responsibility (Trách nhiệm) for the effectiveness, efficiency, and utility of any given task. This means that whoever undertakes a job has the necessary executive authority and responsibility for its outcome. This discourages vying for power simply for its own sake, as it is inextricably linked to accountability.
- This is implemented through the "Tam Phân" system: division of labor (Phân công), division of benefits (Phân lợi), and division of destiny/duty (Phân mệnh). This detailed and transparent system is part of Thăng Nghĩa's "Philosophy of Work," which is rooted in management science.
- Consequently, Thăng Nghĩa does not involve the division of power (Phân Quyền) or the struggle for power (Tranh Quyền).
- Critique of Other Philosophical Views on Power:
  - Lý Đông A criticizes systems (like materialism) that aim to reform society solely through economic means and political power, noting that such approaches have historically led to violence and death. He argues that these systems are "inhumane" because they disregard human psychology and biology, treating people as "senseless iron and salt," ultimately leading to a "slaughterhouse".
  - He views the struggle for power and personal gain as a natural consequence of capitalism or individualism, which he deems a "philosophy of inhumanity" (Triết Lý Phi Nhân) because it bases its economic drivers on human desire and ambition without considering psychological and moral aspects. This, in his view, limits democracy and can turn people into "laborers/slaves" for material desires and power.
  - He contrasts the use of power as a "weapon for private gain or factional interests" with the collaborative and responsible approach of Thăng Nghĩa.
  - Lý Đông A also views politics fundamentally as "Tâm Thuật" (the art of the mind/heart), aimed at fostering harmonious coexistence through discussion and agreement, rather than through force. Conflicts between individuals and groups related to power are seen as integral to the political process of dividing and using power.