

**REPLY TO JOERG SALAQUARDA'S PAPER ON
NIETZSCHE AND FINALITY**

by

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DISCUSSION PAPER

on

Joerg Salaquarda's
NIETZSCHE'S STRICTURES AGAINST PHILOSOPHICAL FINALITY

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Professor Salaquarda's paper raises explicitly and also hints at a large number of important philosophical and other issues. For this reason, I consider it to be a paper of great importance. Since there are many issues that deserve comment, perhaps the best reply I can make is to list a number of points in response.

1. Since I am not a Nietzsche scholar, I will assume that Professor Salaquarda has presented Nietzsche accurately. But why has he made this presentation? He seems to agree with Nietzsche's view (largely anyway), and gives it in order to express his agreement with it and with the philosophical assumptions implicit in it.

2. Professor Salaquarda quotes (with seeming tacit approval) Nietzsche's claims that the notions or ideas of (a) development or evolution, (b) truth, (c) logical identity, (d) a thing-in-itself, (e) will, and (f) an atom are really "but fictitious of our human minds, brought forth by philosophers...." But is this so? If we accept Hume's or Kant's philosophy as sound, then perhaps so. But we do not need to accept their philosophy; there are excellent reasons, in fact, to suppose that they were mistaken (concerning the points that would lead to the truth of Nietzsche's assertions). Is the mind arbitrary when it operates by "taking out ... something for some time of the continuous flux of becoming and regards it as a 'thing'"? I think not. There are natural kinds or things or

groupings, or what Kant called "systematic unities" (although he denied their existence). Experiential evidence can be and is found for the actual reality of such unities. Another way of saying this is that there is both good evidence as well as strong arguments that realism is true.¹

3. Nothing necessarily follows from the existence of all kinds of pluralism, relativism and disagreement. We should not be misled into concluding, on the basis of confusion, disagreement or ignorance about some topic, that there is no such thing as truth concerning the matter at hand, or that truth cannot be discovered or that it is unattainable. Facts about what people or groups of people hold concerning P are not logically connected with the truth of either P or not P, unless, of course, P is a statement about opinions, or a statement about what people or societies do in fact believe or hold. P, considered as a statement about what is the case or what is true, may be true even if no one knows or believes it. P may be true even if everyone believes, is convinced of, and has excellent evidence for not P. Since quite a few people, even thoughtful philosophers, make the error of assuming or asserting that there is a connection between the existence of relativism and pluralism and the question of whether the propositions in question are true or false, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves about this error. (These considerations also serve as the foundation of a refutation of sociological and psychological theories of truth.²)

4. The facts of pluralism and disagreement do not necessarily require or lend support to an attitude of nihilism. Some of the greatest developments in human thought and culture have been made by people who refused to accept the prevailing cultural, philosophical or religious pluralism and disagreement as

normative, but who argued, instead, for an objective, discoverable, and normative truth, whether or not this truth conformed to received or accepted opinions, or whether anyone else was willing to agree with it. One example is Socrates's and/or Plato's rejection of the Sophists' relativism and skepticism in favor of a moral, epistemological and metaphysical absolutism. Another example is the claim, made in the Old Testament by such Hebrew prophets as Moses, Elijah and Daniel, that the cult of Jahweh represented the true God and that the cults of competing gods were false. A third example is that of Jesus. If the New Testament record is accurate, a central aspect of Jesus's teaching, and the ground of much of his appeal, was the authority of his teaching, based not so much on received opinion and tradition, as on his rejection of those parts of it that he found offensive or inaccurate and his claim to be introducing a new and superior view based on the will of his Father in Heaven. The Gospels assert or imply that Jesus believed that the truth he claimed to present was objective, discoverable or ascertainable, and non-occult.

5. Professor Salaquarda's paper seems ambivalent about whether he wishes to warn us on the basis of historical observations about the bad consequences of belief that a person or a group has the truth, or whether he intends these historical reflections to show that such a quest for a global ideology should not be attempted at all. He says, "History teaches us that all efforts to bring about systematic unification of a group of human beings ... have failed up to now." He suggests that when persons who developed a new unifying doctrine had the power to implement it, then they became unreliable or even betrayed their original insights. He says that, "...nobody treats his erring neighbor worse than

[the person] who is convinced to know, and possess the truth."

Those claims are mistaken, or at least the implications that they are presented as suggesting are mistaken, for at least two reasons. First, I doubt that it has always been the case, in every historical instance, that this alleged failure, betrayal, or mistreatment has existed. I think that the history of modern Japan provides a counterexample. It seems to me that General MacArthur's rule in postwar Japan was both a highly successful and a laudatory attempt to bring about unity and a new order in a society. This was done by someone (MacArthur) who believed that he possessed a better or "truer" view than that which had prevailed before his appearance, who had the power to implement his insights, who did not betray those insights, and whose treatment of the vanquished Japanese was exemplary. Second, even if all historical examples to date were such as to support Professor Salaquarda's allegations, this would not show that the evils he mentions would always have to accompany such efforts in the future.

6. We can perhaps agree that tolerance is, both abstractly and in most practical situations, a commendable and desirable attitude, and that we should all acknowledge that we do not have, as Professor Salaquarda says, "full possession of all the truth...." This point, however, may be used to lead to unacceptable or wrong conclusions, and I do not think Professor Salaquarda has been clear enough about this. Should Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who knew quite well that he was not in full possession of all the truth, have therefore tolerated Hitlerism in his homeland rather than return there to fight against it and ultimately to suffer martyrdom? Considerations such as this show, I believe,

that some truths (even though partial and not final) are sufficiently accurate and powerful that the people who hold to them have the task of fighting against some other views which are false in such a way as to be evils.

Most of us will no doubt also agree that, ideally, this fight should be a spiritual or ideological one. Given the existence of evils such as the one Bonhoeffer faced, however, I think we would be grossly mistaken were we to think other than that the fight may sometimes require different (i.e. physical) weapons. I do not agree with the view that there are no differences worth fighting about, and I think this fight sometimes requires weapons and violence. I do not agree with the self-justification of the terrorist who recently declared: "One man's floor is another man's ceiling," and I think we should arrest and imprison (or even execute) the terrorist. Is it not reasonable to conclude that the world would likely be a much better place today had Kerensky had the foresight to have Lenin executed sometime before October, 1917?³

The general point here is this: although tolerance is to be accepted and promoted in usual circumstances, a reasonable global ideology will need to declare, I believe, that some opinions and actions are not to be tolerated because they are of surpassing evil. It is certainly good counsel to urge caution and tentativeness, and to remind us that we do not possess all the truth. But I do not see that we need full possession of all the truth in order, in some cases, to make a determination that something is evil or intolerable. As the late Senator Everett Dirksen noted, "You don't need to be an ichthyologist to know when fish smells."

7. The major philosophical point at issue in Professor Salaquarda's paper rests on a confusion about finality and knowledge. None of our knowledge is final; all knowledge is subject to further criticism and modification. The fact that none of our knowledge is final does not mean, however, that we do not possess sufficient knowledge to act. In all cases, we act on the basis of the knowledge at hand. But, whether we recognize this or not, we always face the possibility that we may learn that the knowledge on which we are acting will be shown to be mistaken. When we discover a mistake, then we may need to modify our action. But if finality were required for action, then no action at all would ever be possible because there is no final knowledge.

We can also express this philosophical point in this way: there has been in Western thought a confusion between knowledge and certainty. The philosophical tradition has tended to hold that to know P implies that P is certain and/or that P is justifiable. But that is not so; there is no final authority, final certainty or final justification. All our knowledge is tentative and conjectural; it is, in Karl Popper's apt analogy, like piles driven into a swamp. We drive down the piles until they become sturdy enough to support the edifice we erect on them. But the piles never reach bedrock because they are always subject to being driven further down if we find that they begin to totter.⁴

Unification, therefore, does not require finalism. All that is required is a view or ideology that is sufficient for the task at hand. (See #9 below.)

8. It is not true that all cultures and traditions are of equal value or importance. (Neither Nietzsche nor Professor Salaquarda would disagree with

this, but some of their arguments tend toward undermining this assertion.) We can and should make important distinctions and determinations, I believe, about the relative merits of different views and different cultures (between what I will call a large or great culture and a small or a less significant culture) on the basis of the degree of universality of the culture, the technology that the culture supports, the spiritual development inherent in the culture, the ability of the culture to satisfy human wants and needs, the diversity and the degree of development of cultural artifacts (architecture, music, dance, theater, literature, laws, agriculture, machines, etc.), the freedom and impetus the culture gives to individual human development, and so on. I mean these distinctions to be both descriptive (distinctions of size and import) as well as normative (one culture is better than another). We can make these distinctions, I believe, without thereby necessarily succumbing to cultural chauvinism or cultural imperialism, and without claiming that minor or lower-ranking cultures are without value or do not deserve study and consideration. We may indeed find that "minor" cultures are superior in some ways to "major" cultures such as Western culture.

We can say, with a certain amount of oversimplification, that Euro-American culture is or represents an amalgamation of Judaeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman culture, and that this is now under widespread attack from Communist-block culture and the cultures of the so-called Third World. Because Euro-American culture is examined so much in the media, in publications, and in institutions such as schools, churches and governments, the failings and weaknesses of this culture have become clear, perceptible, widely known and appreciated, and much excoriated. This has tended to lead to a breakdown of self-confidence and a

growth of self-criticism on the part of those who are the best representatives of and beneficiaries of that culture. But when comparing Western culture (considered en bloc) with the cultures of the rest of the world, we should be at least as ruthless and as quick in our criticism of those other cultures as we are in criticizing Western culture. This is especially important in consideration of attempts to develop a global culture or ideology.

I wish to argue that Christianity and Christian culture (again, considered en bloc), are in many ways superior to any other competing alternative. Christianity -- according to the reports of the teaching of Jesus as given in the Gospels, and reports of the teaching and practice of the Apostles, especially Paul, in the New Testament -- is non-racist, non-sexist (or at least less so than competing alternatives), non-nationalist, non-tribal, forgiving of enemies, required to hold to an ethic of love rather than to an ethic of hatred and revenge, compassionate, concerned with the will of God rather than the acclaim of humanity, opposed to tyranny, opposed to the demonic, and opposed to economic injustice and inequity. Christianity (along with Judaism) also asserts that history is meaningful and that it is directed toward a future in which goodness will prevail and the evil of the present world will be overthrown. To that end, it directs people to work to overcome evil in their lives and their families and communities, so that they may participate in the future good world. In addition, Christianity has an anthropology that asserts that humans are both physical and spiritual, and that, in the order of creation, both the physical and the spiritual dimensions are good because they originate from God.

These observations about Christianity are somewhat tendentious and

elementary and are based on an idealized Christianity that does not represent any particular branch or unit of Christianity. I do think, however, that it is possible to extract something of an "essence" of Christianity -- a forest, if you please, that is neither dependent on nor restricted to the shape or health of any particular tree or trees -- and hold that up as our object of investigation. There are very many attacks on Christianity today, based partly on the admitted failure of Christianity in practice to live up to those ideals mentioned above, partly on attacks on Christianity from other cultures and religions, and partly on attacks against religion in general from those who oppose religion altogether. In light of these attacks, it is useful to remind ourselves about just what is at stake in the confrontation of Christianity with opposing cultures and religions. (It is worth noting, in light of Professor Salaquarda's efforts, that Nietzsche's work is inconceivable except against the background of Christian religion and Christian thought!) The ethical and political values that underlie what is best in Western culture (which is, I would argue, nearly always better than what prevails in non-Christian cultures), and, indeed, what is best in the world altogether, are, for the most part, based on Christian ideals and values.

For these reasons, I think we do ourselves and the world a disservice if we permit the undermining of Christian culture and Christian ideology, and I think that what is best from Christian culture and ideology can and should form the foundation or starting-point of a global ideology.

This last claim is vague, of course, and allows an enormous "escape hatch" through the qualification 'what is best.' I think that the problem of filling in or closing this "escape hatch" is not insoluble. For one thing, there is already a

great deal of general knowledge and agreement about 'what is best.' For another thing, our conclusions about any of these matters are always subject to further study and revision.

My general claim here may be put this way: I mean to suggest that Christianity and Christian culture is, of all the received cultures, the best place to look in order to find a foundation from which we might develop a global ideology. I also mean to suggest that development of a global ideology is neither an impossible nor a necessarily dangerous undertaking.

9. Since Unificationism is the philosophy of the Founder of this Conference, I would like to comment on it in this connection of a search for a global ideology.⁵ I am not convinced that Unificationism claims finality for itself, but if it does, then I think that Unificationism is mistaken on that particular point. In any case, Unificationism can be the foundation for a global ideology without being final or claiming finality for itself. The issue of finality is, for this discussion, a red-herring; there is no such thing as finality. What is at issue is not whether an ideology or culture or conceptual scheme is final, but whether it is of sufficient scope, power, appeal, truth, value, and so on, to accomplish the task of providing a global ideology and culture. (See #7 above.)

The development of a global ideology requires a common purpose and certain common assumptions, in the same way as, for example, scientific discovery requires that a common purpose and certain common assumptions be shared by a scientific community. Scientific discovery does occur, and the scientific community is, in some important respects, highly unified. Yet scientific

discovery is also highly variable and never final. At its best, both the process of scientific discovery and the scientific community are open, tolerant, humane, and generous (although we know well enough that, in practice, they are quite often the opposite of these things). It seems to me that Unification theory wishes to assert that a similar procedure is possible for mankind as a whole, in the development of a unified world and in the development of a global ideology.

10. We should also note that the ego is not just a dogma, and there is excellent evidence for the existence of the personal self and the empirical ego (not just Kant's transcendental ego). Among other things, there is empirical evidence for the self in the personal experience of acting and of having oneself exercise influence on other existences. In other words, practical action confirms or provides empirical evidence for the existence of the ego, especially in loving and being loved by another.

Unification theory, as I understand it, claims that love (i.e. reciprocal interaction between two persons) is the basic interaction of the universe. In this interaction, the existence of both persons or selves is experienced by both participants. If there is a universe of persons or selves, and if these selves all wish to love and be loved (as Unification theory claims) and this desire is the strongest or basic or most fundamental force in the Universe, then the principle of love and the greatest and widest expression of love can serve (or must serve, as Unification theory claims) as the basis of a global unification ideology and practice. Unification theory claims that ideologies, religions, world views, and cultures can be ranked on the basis of their expression of love between God and humans, and of true love (as opposed to false or demonic love)

between humans and other humans. On this basis, it claims that Christianity is the highest or most advanced religion because it makes the greatest connection between God and humans, but it also claims that something greater than Christianity must come (on the foundation of Christianity), in order to make a closer or more direct relation between God and humans than what Christianity has been able to achieve, and in order to effect unity within a divided Christianity and unity between Christianity and all the other of the world's religions. Unificationism claims that all the other religions and cultures of the world have value, and that the new view or ideology will succeed in bringing together all the preceding views and cultures into the new ideology and culture.

Whether Unificationism will succeed in this remains to be seen. But it can succeed in this without claiming finality, just as a new scientific theory can supersede an old one if the new one is perceived as better and as answering more questions or handling more or different data, without that new theory's being a final one. Scope, power, value, and degree of truthfulness, rather than finality, are what is at issue, and an ideology that supercedes others in these things will serve to unify over competitors that are inferior because they lack those qualities.

NOTES

1. Realism has been defended by many philosophers as well as many scientists. One philosopher who has defended it is Karl R. Popper. See his Realism and the Aim of Science, from the Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery, ed. by W.W. Bartley, III (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983). Chapter 1, section 8 of this work contains a discussion and reply to Hume's philosophy by Popper on the point at issue here.

2. Karl Popper has been particularly vehement and forceful (and, I think, convincing and sound) in his rejection of sociological and psychological theories of truth. See, among many of his writings, "Normal Science and its Dangers," in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 51-58, esp. pp. 55-58.

3. On the question of why Kerensky did not have Lenin executed, see Paul Johnson, Modern Times (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), chap. 2, note 51, p. 739.

4. Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 111. W.W. Bartley, III, along with other followers of Popper, has also emphasized the fallability of all our knowledge. See W.W. Bartley, III, The Retreat to Commitment (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 2nd ed., 1984).

5. I am using 'Unificationism' here as a name for the ideology taught by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his followers, and written in books such as Divine Principle

(Washington, D.C.: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973), and Explaining Unification Thought (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1981). In my usage here, the capitalized term thus refers to a specific doctrine, while the uncapitalized term is used generically. I think my text is clear enough that there should not be confusion between the two usages.