

A Response to
John Kelsay's Paper "Unification Methodology"

by
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Professor John Kelsay's paper seriously deals with Unification Methodology to show a strong challenge to it. The challenge is such that it makes Unificationists such as myself stop and reassess the claim of Unification Thought. I deeply appreciate the paper therefore.

Kelsay has two main problems with Unification Methodology. His first problem concerns the "foundationalism" of Unification Methodology. He quarrels with the foundationalist assertions of Unification Thought that all phenomena occur and can be explained only through the give-and-take law, and that Unification Methodology, based on this law, is "a unique and universally true methodology" from whose perspective all other methodologies are only partial and imperfect. In order to justify his quarrel and show his anti-foundationalist opinion that no philosophy can claim its absoluteness, Kelsay brings forth the skeptic relativism of Rorty and the historical relativism of Troeltsch.

The second major problem Kelsay has involves what is called the "experimental" character of Unification Thought. According to him, some Unificationists hold in a pragmatic way that Unification Thought is a grand experiment led by a charismatic Founder, and that if it is performed, it will build harmony at all the levels of the world. Kelsay believes that although this experimental view can escape the above problem of foundationalism, it is still very problematic because it makes us wonder

why we have to choose this experiment by Unificationism and why not other experiments such as Protestant Christianity, ethical humanism, and even the post-philosophical relativism of Rorty.

Before addressing these two major complaints, let me answer a very basic question raised by Kelsay prior to them. The question is about the definition of Unification Methodology, and it is: What does it mean to think in give-and-take terms? The question is so basic that my answer to it will eventually find itself addressing Kelsay's two major complaints also.

To think in give-and-take terms means to apply the general category of the give-and-take law to particular beings or phenomena for our understanding of them. Reversely, it also means to reach the give-and-take law by observing particular beings. (The former may look like a method of deduction, while the latter may seem to be inductive.) In either case, Unification Methodology involves the general law of give-and-take action in relationship to particular beings. To involve a general category either as a premise for understanding particular things or as a conclusion drawn from observing them is what we humans usually do. When we see a stranger from America, for example, we usually try to understand him either by applying to him human categories such as American citizenship and Western upbringing or by drawing a conclusion about his character from his various observable behaviors. I don't think Dr. Kelsay will deny that this is what we all usually do. Philosophers from Heraclitus to Husserl, dealt with in the eleventh chapter (Methodology) in Explaining Unification Thought, are no exceptions. They all have their own respective general methodological

principles, whether deductively, inductively, or both, in relationship to particular things or phenomena we see in the world. This is the case even with skeptics such as Hume. In the case of Unification Methodology, the most general methodological principle is none other than the give-and-take law.

This very common thing which we all do, however, involves a serious danger. It is the danger of dogmatism, unfortunately. Once we find a methodologically workable general category, we most likely dogmatize it as if it were the only right thing from whose perspective all other views are only partial and imperfect. Paradoxically, we dogmatize it because we are not truly confident of it. Psychologists have proved that our not being confident and secure paradoxically makes us dogmatic, tenacious, and narrow-minded. Thus, throughout history there have been conflicts and controversies among various schools of thought. I must admit as a Unificationist that it is easy for me to be dogmatic about the give-and-take law which I believe to be the most workable general principle. (It is because I may not be truly confident of it yet.) If this is so, Kelsay's first major complaint which concerns the foundationalism of Unification Methodology would obtain. But, as will be mentioned later, there is a good way to overcome dogmatism. I think that Unificationists such as myself have practiced the way quite a bit. I believe that Dr, Lee, author of Explaining Unification Thought, practiced it to such a degree that the book is far from being dogmatic. So, the best way to address Dr. Kelsay's first problem is by showing what that way to overcome dogmatism is.

At this point, however, let me just generally show that

historically there have arisen two different types of responses to the above-mentioned unfortunate situation of dogmatism. One type is anti-foundationalist, coming from thinkers such as Rorty and Troeitsch, while the other can be called "reformed foundationalism," involving thinkers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Paul Tillich. The first type, rejecting dogmatism, also vehemently rejects foundationalism and suggests relativism and pluralism. By contrast, the second type, while rejecting dogmatism, believes that there can be a healthy, reformed foundationalism free from dogmatism.

It is clear that Kelsay's first major complaint is in the step of the first type. But I wonder if he is aware of the second type, to which Unification Thought basically belongs. If he is aware of it, he would have to radically tone down his first complaint about Unification Methodology. If he is not aware of or ignores the second type, just sticking to the first, then he might have to be blamed for being dogmatic. For I feel that when Rorty rejects foundationalism and strongly asserts that relativism is the only option, he sounds dogmatic.

Let me now explain something more about the second type coming from people such as Whitehead and Tillich. Thinkers of this type are keenly aware of the problem of dogmatism, but they never abandon the project of foundationalist philosophy because of this. They believe that we can reform foundationalism by not dogmatizing any methodologically workable general category, i.e., by not idolizing it. To them, idolatry is a serious problem. Idolatry usually makes the object of idolatry even more important than God. Therefore, even though we may use the name of God to

say that our methodology is a God-centered one, nevertheless (or even because of that) we are most likely still idolizing it and the real God is put aside. God is thus alienated from us, so that we feel insecure. In order to make up for the feeling of insecurity, we stick to our methodology even more idolatrously than before. Thus we become more dogmatic, stiff-necked, and inflexible in the absence of the spirit of God. This problem was sharply pointed out by Whitehead as the "fallacy of dogmatism" and acutely criticized by Tillich's "Protestant Principle." According to them, however, idolatry and dogmatism can be overcome if we make sure that a methodologically workable general category is not an abstract idea detached from the concrete level of human existence. For when we idolize and dogmatize the general category, this means paradoxically that we actually alienate it from us as an abstract idea, that we ourselves are not embodiments of it, and that we are not really confident of it. So, if we confidently know that it is embodied as part of human existence, we will no longer idolize it. In such a situation, God will abide within us.

This way to overcome dogmatism has a very important philosophical implication which can help to establish a healthy, reformed foundationalism. It is the doctrine of the unity of universal categories and particular existents in the presence of God. Whitehead expresses it as the blurring of the traditional sharp distinction between universals and particulars coupled with his unique doctrine of the presence of God. Tillich means it when he says that Christ Jesus, "ultimately concerned," constituted the unity of universal and particulars within himself.

Unification Thought expresses it in its succinct definition of an individual truth body: "When a being does contain the aspects of universal image and individual image, we call it an Individual Truth Body."¹ The Unification Thought view on this is substantially discussed especially in the first two chapters ("Theory of the Original Image" and "Ontology") of Explaining Unification Thought. So, I will not repeat it here. What is pretty clear is that we don't have to be anti-foundationalist unlike Kelsay thinks we have to be, and that we can establish a renewed foundationalism free from dogmatism through the above philosophical implication. I believe that this addresses Dr. Kelsay's concern that "maintaining Unificationism's tendencies toward 'foundationalism' requires that the philosophical work begun in Explaining Unification Thought be further developed" (p. 2). At this point, I would like to introduce Wolfhart Pannenberg's report in his fairly recent book, Metaphysics and the Idea of God, that in recent years a growing number of voices have been calling for a renewal of foundationalism over against anti-foundationalist or anti-metaphysical movements such as the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle and the existentialism of Nietzsche and Heidegger.² According to Pannenberg, thinkers with these new voices include Nicolai Hartmann, Wolfgang Cramer, and Dieter Henrich in Germany; Samuel Alexander in England; process thinkers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne in the United States; and transcendental Thomists such as Marechal, Rahner, Lotz, and Coreth. I gather that this trend will become greater and stronger from now.

Besides the above philosophical implication, there is

another important implication in our way to overcome dogmatism with the option of reformed foundationalism. This other implication is a practical one, and it is that we should make efforts to embody our general category in order to avoid alienating it from us as an abstract idea. We ourselves should be real incarnations of what we believe to be the most workable general category. Thus philosophers should live up to what they believe, not just intellectually speaking about it. In the case of Unification Thought, when Unificationists say that the give-and-take law is methodologically the most workable category, they should be real embodiments of the law at the same time. The essence of the give-and-take law is what Rev. Moon often calls "true love" because it means to teach love in the sense of seeking first to give to others. So, Unificationists are expected to be embodiments of true love in order to avoid dogmatism. Rev. Moon himself has been practicing love, while at the same time teaching it theoretically. To him, there is no separation between theory and practice. It seems that Professor Kelsay separates theory and practice, so that he illegitimately raises his first main problem with Unification Methodology, complaining of its foundationalism. If there is no separation of theory and practice, this kind of problem wouldn't have to be raised anyway. Kelsay's separation of theory and practice has also led him illegitimately to separate his second problem from the first. The second problem separately involves the experimental or practical character of Unification Thought, while the first deals with its foundationalist character. But because there is no separation of theory and practice, to address the first means to address the second. So,

I will not spend any more space to address the second problem. Here, let me just answer Kelsay's question about the relationship between philosophy and revelation in Unificationism, raised at the end of his paper. He asks why Unificationists need to have a philosophical system called Unification Thought or Unification Methodology if their experimental activities are simply based on the revelation of a charismatic Founder. Kelsay goes on to ask: "What, exactly, is the purpose of Unification methodology? For whom is it developed?" (p. 20) It seems that by asking this question he attempts to nullify the whole project of Unification Thought. It is an exciting challenge, indeed, and I appreciate it. But, let me say that this kind of question is illegitimate because it is again based on the separation of theory and practice.

But a question still remains. After dogmatism and idolatry are successfully overcome in all foundationalist schools by not alienating general categories from the concrete level of human existence, how can Unificationists say that the give-and-take law of Unificationism is methodologically the most viable general category? Isn't it the kind of thing which all (reformed) foundationalist schools would still claim about themselves after the problem of dogmatism is resolved? Well, let me answer the question by saying that in the absence of dogmatism all people, whatever general category they may have, would become sincerely humble, and that the humility of this kind is an indication of love and service for others, which is the essence of the give-and-take law. This means that any general category, once it is embodied in the actual level of human existence, will not be

dogmatized but rather serve to make us humble, so that it will be a pointer to the give-and-take law of Unification Thought.

Endnotes

¹Explaining Unification Thought (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1981), p. 45.

²Metaphysics and the Idea of God, tr. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 3-5.