



DISCUSSANT RESPONSE

by

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to Frank R. Harrison's

REFLECTIONS ON UNIFICATION EPISTEMOLOGY

The Eighteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Seoul, Korea August 23-26, 1991

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Response to "Reflections on Unification Epistemology"

by Frank R. Harrison III

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Professor Harrison has clearly studied Unification Epistemology seriously, and his paper does an excellent job of presenting the main features of the theory. This is in spite of the difficulties he mentions, with which I can only sympathize!

His conclusion, however, that Chapter 4 of Explaining Unification Thought¹ is not successful in presenting a viable epistemology, I can at most only partially agree with. Dr. Harrison humbly admits that some of his reasons for this conclusion may, however, be based on an incomplete understanding of Unification Epistemology. In this paper I shall attempt to clarify those points which led Dr. Harrison to his conclusion.

I. Difficulties in Criticizing Unification Epistemology

A. The synoptic view

I can only agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Harrison's observation that,

to ask someone to comment on a particular chapter of EUT is to invite that person to assimilate and comment on the whole of Professor Lee's inclusive philosophical view!

Perhaps because of his awareness of this point, Dr. Harrison is able to understand and express so many of the main features of the theory.

B. What is epistemology?

In order to answer this "seemingly innocent question," I referred to The Oxford Companion to the Mind. There, epistemology is defined as:

The branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. One of the oldest of philosophical debates concerns the origin of human knowledge.²

And, in the section on knowledge, it states that:

Philosophers have generally, if not invariably, held that to know that something is the case entails a true belief that that thing is the case.³

Thus, epistemology should be concerned with the origin and truth of human knowledge.

However, Dr. Harrison notes that different philosophers, and he mentions Descartes, Hume, Kant and Wittgenstein, all have different approaches to the study of epistemology. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the success of a particular epistemology. Furthermore, he notes that Unification Epistemology not only takes yet another different approach, but also attempts to unite the diverse approaches.

Although Dr. Harrison sees this as a difficulty in criticizing Unification Epistemology, I would suggest that since the diverse approaches cannot be reconciled within their own frameworks, and none of them has succeeded completely, it is necessary to take a different approach in order to solve their problems. To be a viable epistemology, it should nonetheless answer the questions raised above concerning the origin and truth of human knowledge. Unification Epistemology, in addressing the questions of the origin

of cognition, the object of cognition and the method of cognition, answers these questions. And, coming from a different starting point, seeks to present a more complete epistemology, which encompasses the strengths of previous efforts while overcoming their weaknesses. It is the success or failure of this effort that must be assessed.

II. Overview of Unification Epistemology

As I already mentioned, Dr. Harrison presents a clear account of many of the main features of Unification Epistemology. Here, I would like to briefly review these points presented according to the three questions: the origin of cognition, the object of cognition and the method of cognition.

The origin of cognition: Unification Epistemology stresses the importance of both experience and reason in cognition, uniting empiricism and rationalism.

The object of cognition: Unification Epistemology unites realism, insisting on the existence of objects in the external world, and idealism, asserting the existence in the mind of ideas resembling all things.

The method of cognition: Unification Epistemology is based on give-and-take in two stages - outer give-and-take consists of reflection of the content and form of the object on the mind of the subject (sense-image); inner give-and-take consists of collation (comparison) of the sensory content and form of the object with prototypes in the mind of the subject. This can be seen as unity between the Dialectical method (copy theory) where the content and

form of the object are reflected in the subject, and Kant's Transcendental method of applying a priori forms in the subject to the sense-impressions from the object.

Thus, it appears that Unification Epistemology is successful in its attempt to unite diverse views and present a more complete epistemology. Here let me make an important point: Unification Epistemology was not developed by extracting the good features of existing views and combining them; it was derived from the Unification Principle.⁴ The Unification Principle itself is a revelation from God received by Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Thus, "Explaining Unification Thought is the systematic arrangement of these truth"⁵ received by Rev. Moon, and developed under his guidance by Dr. Sang Hun Lee.

In terms of uniting diverse views, Unification Epistemology succeeds in offering a comprehensive theory. In terms of the questions of the origin and truth of human knowledge, the origin of cognition has already been described as the unified operation between experience and judgment carried out through the function of reason. Unification Epistemology begins from the position that there is a necessary relationship between human beings and all things. Since human beings and all things are in the relationship of subject and object, we can know all things perfectly.ⁱ Therefore, Unification Epistemology provides answers to both epistemological issues.

III. Evaluation of Unification Epistemology

A. Prototypes

I believe Dr. Harrison can agree that Unification Epistemology presents a view which purports to solve longstanding epistemological questions. However, it is when Dr. Harrison ventures to clarify the nature of prototypes that I feel he parts company with Unification Thought. He suggests (p.14) that

. . . prototypes are to be viewed as the 'hardwiring' of the complete nervous system of the human body. . . . Interrelated clusters of cells, themselves each structured, and each cluster being related to many more clusters, form Professor Lee's prototypes.

While I can understand how he came to such a position, from the description of "Priority and Development of Prototypes"⁷ in Explaining Unification Thought, nonetheless I submit that this is the key point in which he is mistaken in his understanding of Unification Epistemology. And, as he recognizes, the concept of prototypes is crucial to the theory.

Dr. Harrison's suggestion that prototypes are "neural clusters" causes him great difficulty. For, understandably, he finds it hard to understand how a part of the brain can be compared with a sense-image in the mind. However, prototypes are not part of the brain. While Explaining Unification Thought does indeed say that we have prototypes because we have a physical body,⁸ it also says that prototypes are "formed on the basis of the physical body."⁹ Prototypes are referred to as "internal images,"¹⁰ which

consist of images of content and images of form within the subject. Images of content are the images of cells, tissues, and organs in the subject's body; they are formed in the subconscious of the subject through the

integration of protoimages. Images of form are the reflected images of the existing forms of cells, tissues, and organs of the subject's body, in the subconscious."¹¹

Thus, prototypes are not the neural clusters themselves, but rather are images in the mind, which may be stored in neural clusters in the same way that memories are stored.

B. Sense-Images

Dr. Harrison notes that philosophers have never agreed on what "sense-impressions" are. He also appears to reject the need for them altogether. However, he does not offer an alternative process of perception. Unfortunately, I do not think the concept is as empty as he would like it to be. While agreeing that we perceive trees, not sense-images of trees, still it is known that our sensory organs are stimulated by contact with external objects and that those sensations are transmitted to various parts of the brain for interpretation by the mind. It is clearly not a tree in the brain that is being interpreted, rather I would prefer to call it a sense-image of a tree.

C. Collation of Prototypes and Sense-Images

Dr. Harrison finds the concept of collation of prototypes and sense-images difficult to accept, since he regards prototypes as part of the brain and sense-images as part of the mind. From the above discussion it appears, however, that both are actually images in the mind, with a relationship to the brain.

The processes by which information from an object is translated into sensory impulses which are then translated into an image, are called "the encoding of an idea" and "the ideation of a

code,"¹² respectively. These same processes are involved in the storage and retrieval of memories, and also prototypes. The collation by the mind of two mental images formed by the same process, one of the external object and the other the prototype in the mind of the subject, does not seem so implausible.

D. Mind and Brain

According to Explaining Unification Thought, mind and brain are different, yet "mental activities come about through the give-and-take action between mind and brain."¹³ This seems to cause Dr. Harrison some difficulty, so he suggests that Dr. Lee give an explicit and unambiguous definition of them. In The End of Communism, Dr. Lee does present a clearer account of mind and brain and their interaction:

The origin of the universe is a being in which the ultimate causes of both spirit and matter are united. In other words, the two attributes (the dual characteristics of Original Sung Sang and Original Hyung Sang) of the Absolute Being are manifested as the Sung Sang and Hyung Sang of created beings; and in the case of man, they become mind and body (or spirit and matter). . . . neither is the mind a product of brain cells nor are brain cells a product of the mind. The two of them are related in such a way that the mind is the subject and the brain cells are the object.¹⁴

In other words, mind and brain are different, yet the origin of both is in God, the harmonized being of Sung Sang and Hyung Sang. Mind is the manifestation of God's Sung Sang, and brain the manifestation of God's Hyung Sang. Thus, they have a basis for interaction, since Sung Sang and Hyung Sang relate as subject and object. The theory of interaction between mind and brain which exist as two different entities is not unique to Unification

Thought. For example, Sir John Eccles presents a dualist-interactionist model, in which he proposes that:

. . . the experiences of the self-conscious mind have a relationship with neural events in the liaison brain, there being a relationship of interaction, giving a degree of correspondence, but not an identity.¹⁵

Further, according to Explaining Unification Thought:

. . . Sung Sang and Hyung Sang are as inseparable as two sides of a coin. The three stages of cognition - perception, understanding, and reasoning - have been explained by Kant and others as purely mental phenomena. In the Unification Thought view, however, mental processes are necessarily accompanied by physiological processes (especially cerebral processes). Accordingly, cognition is not a purely mental phenomenon, but is a complex phenomenon of both mental and material (cerebral, nervous) processes.¹⁶

Because of this view, Dr. Lee is concerned to show that the findings of neurophysiology are in accord with Unification Epistemology. Although Dr. Harrison appears to find this irrelevant to philosophy, surely it is important that a philosophical theory not be incompatible with empirical findings? Dr. Lee is reassured by the evidence, and it is perhaps worth noting that empirical scientists themselves suggest that all mental phenomena are accompanied by physiological processes, although we have not yet identified them all.¹⁷

IV. The Status of Unification Epistemology

A. Is Unification Epistemology a philosophy?

Dr. Harrison observes that Unification Epistemology consists of an explanation of the act of cognition, rather than an explication of the concept of cognition. Thus, he sees Unification Epistemology as having a "quasi-scientific" status rather than that

of a philosophy. Perhaps because I belong to what can be considered the "quasi-scientific" discipline of psychology, I do not find myself troubled by this accusation!

B. Is Unification Epistemology a science?

Dr. Harrison reminds us that a scientific hypothesis must be stated in such a way that it could be falsified, or predictions derived from it could be false. While this argument of Popper's may be valid, nonetheless there is some value to confirmations of the hypothesis and the ability of the hypothesis to explain previous findings. Eccles, in presenting the dualist-interactionist hypothesis in the book he co-authored with Karl Popper, claims that the "hypothesis belongs to science because it is based on empirical data and is objectively testable," and he is optimistic since the hypothesis "has the recommendation of its great explanatory power" and "is not refuted by any existing knowledge."¹⁸

In the same way, perhaps, we can share Dr. Lee's optimism concerning the theory of the dual essentialities of Sung Sang and Hyung Sang, when he claims that scientific findings confirm and are explained by this theory.¹⁹

C. The Relationship between Philosophy and Science

I am somewhat dismayed that Dr. Harrison (p.21) submits that not only findings in empirical science have no bearing on confirming or falsifying Unification Epistemology, but that it cannot be useful in directing particular scientific research. In my paper at the symposium held in Tokyo²⁰ last year, I suggested

that Unification Epistemology will do very well as a foundation for Developmental Psychology, and is in accord with many of the findings to date. However, again this may be just one "quasi-science" supporting another!

Dr. Harrison's position, however, has more general application than to Unification Epistemology alone. He states that "philosophy is not an empirical science, nor substantiated by any evidence from the empirical sciences" (p.18). He is willing to admit that others may disagree with this position. I would just like to comment that Dr. Lee and his Unificationist supporters are not alone in taking a different view. For example, Howard Gardner, in his book "The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution," states:

I see the invention of cognitive science as a wonderful stimulus for philosophy, on the one hand, and philosophy as an indispensable hand-maiden for the empirical scientists, on the other. Philosophy enables us to define fundamental cognitive scientific questions in a coherent way, and assures the proper integration of work in disparate fields. But, by the same token, philosophy must attend assiduously to empirical findings in order to avoid becoming a barren discipline or one irrelevant to scientific work.¹¹

D. The applicability of Unification Epistemology

As a final comment, I am very happy to note that Dr. Harrison believes that Unification Epistemology has a great deal to offer to those who accept the Unification Principle, and also to those who accept only some parts of the Principle. I sincerely hope that all those who accept even only parts of the Principle will benefit from study of Unification Epistemology, and that we may all share in the fruits of that work.

End Notes

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3. The Oxford Companion to the Mind, s.v. "Knowledge: Naturalistic Analyses," by D.M. Armstrong.
4. Explaining Unification Thought, p.144, 145.
5. Sang Hun Lee, The New Cultural Revolution and Unification Thought (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1987), p.17.
6. Sang Hun Lee, The End of Communism, (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1985), p.227.
7. Explaining Unification Thought, p.156-7.
8. Explaining Unification Thought, p.156.
9. Explaining Unification Thought, p.156.
10. The End of Communism, p.216; Explaining Unification Thought, p.160.
11. Explaining Unification Thought, p.152.
12. The End of Communism, p.222-3.
13. Explaining Unification Thought, p.170.
14. The End of Communism, p.66-67.
15. Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles, The Self and Its Brain, (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977), p.361.
16. Explaining Unification Thought, p.158.
17. The Self and Its Brain; Richard M. Restak, The Brain, (New York: Warner Books, 1979).
18. The Self and Its Brain, p.374-5.
19. Sang Hun Lee, "The Proof of God's Existence," unpublished manuscript, 1990.

20. Jennifer P. Tanabe, "Developmental Psychology: The Need for a New Epistemological Foundation," in The Establishment of a New Culture and Unification Thought, Proceedings of the Seventh International Symposium on Unification Thought (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1991), p.361-85.

21. Howard Gardner, The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution, (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p.88.