



**DISCUSSANT RESPONSE**

by

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to Betty Rogers Rubenstein's

**TOWARD A UNIFICATION AESTHETIC**

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Throughout history, artists have periodically assembled for the purpose of defining a collective philosophical understanding in regard to purpose, aesthetic, and style. In this century, artists affiliated with the Unification movement, all of whom wish to create a new culture including a true understanding of art, have such an aspiration in mind. It is our consensus that Unification Thought provides a philosophical foundation for such an objective to occur.

It is stated in Unification Thought that, in the context of the totality of culture, art is the most central of the various kinds of human activity.<sup>1</sup> And for that reason, therefore, "art is the essence of culture."<sup>2</sup> In the words of Reverend Moon:

We must create a God-centered cultural movement of artists. The world of the arts must exist in the world of God, as supreme and spiritual. With this depth, we must create a supreme and great artistic movement in order to inspire the people of the world to come back to God. My ultimate goal is to help the world in order to bring eternal peace on earth.<sup>3</sup>

The Divine Principle of Reverend Sun Myung Moon provides the basis for the theory of art as explained in Unification Thought.

Among the Divine-Principle foundation for a theory of art are most importantly the following: (1) God's purpose of creation and creativity, (2) joy and creation in resemblance, and (3) give-and-receive action.<sup>4</sup>

According to Unification Thought, an understanding of these three fundamental points is essential for an artist's true comprehension of art, both from the viewpoint of a creator and for that of an art appreciator. If one perceives the nature of God's creativity and his desire as the Original Creator to obtain joy in a give-and-receive relationship with the creation, it is possible for an artist to understand the original ideal of creation.

It is my opinion that a large number of artists have, at times, intuited a partial understanding of this relationship. For example, W. A. Mozart, who frequently expressed in words the process by which he created, concluded that only God really knew how he (Mozart) created.<sup>5</sup> Another example, one of visual imagery mentioned by Dr. Rubenstein, is Rembrandt, who in his painting of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, was surely intuitively aware of the power of give-and-receive action as expressed in the subjectively forceful energy of the readied knife of Abraham and the objectively passive Isaac. Such an

artistic representation of such action provides a highly communicative message to the art appreciator. It is not necessary for the creator or appreciator to know that this process by name (give-and-receive action) in order for the action to occur. Intuition, especially when one is speaking of art, is a large and important factor. That Unification Thought expresses through the use of language that give-and-receive action is inherently present in all creations, including mankind, is a clear and accurate communicator of this action to contemporary artists. In addition, Unification Thought, to my knowledge, is the only philosophy which expresses a complete knowledge of the process of creation.

Addressing Dr. Rubenstein's paper, I submit that the culture and developing aesthetic of the Unificationist movement, is both Godly and international, in that order, and not the other way around. In addition, it is timeless and eternal, not only for 20th-century Unificationists but for past and future generations as well. I suggest that the culture and developing aesthetic which we identify in the twentieth century as being Unificationist have in fact been in development since the beginning of human history. In Divine Principle terms this concept is described as the development of God's providence. I further suggest that what is mentioned in conclusion by Dr. Rubenstein about the beginning of a Unification aesthetic is in fact an aesthetic in development by numerous artists throughout the ages.

As stated, I am in agreement with Dr. Rubenstein that the Unification culture and aesthetic are international. However, just merely being international in a humanistic sense is not the goal expressed in Unification Thought or that understood by Unificationists. Reverend Moon commented that Unification artists should inspire mankind to come to God, for the simple reason that, "human depth is not enough."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps within the next century, there will be few places on earth where blood lines, cultures, styles, etc, are not international. Of what value will this great international culture be if does not understand it's purpose? When Reverend Moon visited Paris in 1971 he commented that all of the great museums of the "City of Lights" do not have as much value as one man who understands his purpose.<sup>7</sup>

Unification Thought quotes Tsutomu Mizushima as saying, " Form is actually the form of the content, and content is none other than the content of the form." This means that content and form should be united.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Rubenstein, mentions that ". . . problems of subject matter, what to paint, are distinct from Aesthetics - how to paint - how to produce Beauty - ."<sup>9</sup> In a discussion of content, "what to paint," and form, "how to paint," Unification Thought further asserts that these two aspects of creativity are in the relationship of sungsang and hyungsang.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the relationship is complementary. On the basis of such understanding, I feel that because the creative process is so dynamic, it is virtually impossible to consider one without the other, although they are distinct in concept. In both spatial and temporal art, reference to numbers is significant, both in content and form, especially in works which express religious content.<sup>11</sup> In a way, it can be said that the form is determined by the content and the content is determined by the form. Although I understand what Dr. Rubenstein is saying regarding the distinct problems of subject matter and aesthetics, I believe that, according to Unification Thought and my own artistic experience, they must be considered together as inextricably related entities.

Dr. Rubenstein in her well-described and numerous over-the-centuries references to the use of the circle as imagery, mentions the ICUS logo and Unification Church symbol as examples of such. Included in her presentation is the comment that, "One cannot find any specific Unificationist thought in the use of this symbol."<sup>12</sup> Contrarily, there are numerous Unification Thought references present in these and other Unificationist symbols. The circle is frequently used in Unificationist symbols. Perhaps what might not appear so obviously in the ICUS symbol (and others) is the give-and-receive action as part of the circle represented by broken arrow marks indicating motion and complementary action. Reverend Moon said that the Unification Church symbol and the One World Crusade symbol, which seem quite similar, are in the position of subject & object and masculine & feminine, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Their symbolic imagery reflects such. In reality, the two organizations did, in fact, relate in such a way: the Unification Church was in subject position and the One World Crusade was in the object position. I feel that the study of Unificationist symbols as imagery would alone provide for a paper of significant insight.

A characteristic which I feel will strongly influence the development of the Unification aesthetic is that the aesthetic will be developed on the foundation of the merit of the age. Both in content and form, two of many examples of Unificationist arts projects are presented below. Both are Godly, international, technically advanced and purposed for inspiring others to do God's will.

#### THE UNIVERSAL BALLET ACADEMY

The Universal Ballet Academy provides talented ballet students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in a Russian classical program which prepares them for careers as professional dancers. The training system is founded on 270 years of tradition as it evolved at the Maryinsky (Kirov) Theatre and the Vaganova Ballet Academy in St. Petersburg. The faculty at UBA is predominantly composed of ballet specialists from the former Soviet Union, hand-picked by the artistic director. Each one is highly

qualified to instruct the technique and aesthetic epitomized by The Kirov Ballet and its affiliated school, the Vaganova Academy.

The goal of most graduates of the Universal Ballet Academy is to audition for dance companies, nationally and internationally. The Academy also encourages moral development and academic achievement, and those students who choose to apply to colleges are equally well prepared. Both artistic and academic schedules at the Academy are rigorous. Additionally, students gain performing experience and the sense of self-discipline necessary to succeed in any profession. The international composition of the staff and student body offer the students a unique opportunity to achieve a global perspective through the medium of dance.

It is also the intention of The Universal Ballet Foundation, sponsor of the Academy, to found a new ballet company in the United States related in style and repertory to The Kirov Ballet. Universal Ballet Academy students would be invited to audition for this international company and also continue to fill the ranks of other ballet companies. The artistic goal of both Universal Ballet Academy and the future company is the preservation of the art of ballet as it has been practiced in Russia, as well as the future development of this fragile and demanding art form.

#### THE MANHATTAN CENTER STUDIOS, INC.

The Manhattan Center Studios in New York City houses one of the most sophisticated systems of sound technology in the United States. Recognized as a premiere facility in its field, organizations such as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera use this facility to record. The facility is also used by various rock-n-roll groups for the same purpose.

Under the guidance of Reverend Moon's eldest son, the facility produces a number of music materials which are made for the purpose of inspiring people of all generations to understand the nature of God, their creator.

In closing, Unificationist artists have their work cut out for them. However, I am sure that the participants of this committee would agree that Unificationist artists, as all artists, are always up for a good revolution.

1. Sang Hun Lee, *Fundamentals of Unification Thought*, (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1991), 255.
2. Ibid.
3. Reverend Sun Myung Moon; Unpublished recorded transcript from a conversation with artists, August 16, 1989.
4. Ibid, 256.
5. For a more detailed explanation, please read any of the various editions of Mozart's letters, especially the endearing and insightful "Dear Papa" letters to his father, Leopold.
6. From Reverend Sun Myung Moon's comments to a group of artists in New York City, August, 1987.
7. Later Recorded comments with then Unification Church of France President, Henri Blanchard, 1987, Paris.
8. Lee, "Fundamentals", 278.
9. Betty Rogers Rubenstein, "Toward a Unification Aesthetic," 1992, 5.
10. Lee, "Fundamentals", 278.
11. See Lee, "Fundamentals", 304-322.
12. Betty Rogers Rubenstein, "Toward a Unification Aesthetic", 1992, 4.
13. See speeches of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, July 1-4, 1974, Belvedere Training Center, Tarrytown, New York.