

A Response
to
Durwood Foster's
"The Praxis Value of Unification Ontology"
by
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I.

Dr. Foster's paper appraises Unification Ontology in the context of the various prominent philosophical and religious traditions of East and West. This means two things. First, he takes Unification Ontology seriously. Second, he has an ecumenical mind which is commendable.

Even though, as will be shown later, his ecumenical approach misunderstands Unification Ontology at least twice or three times and regrettably ignores (or forgets to treat) the praxis value of "heart" unique to Unificationism, nevertheless overall he does justice to the praxis value of Unification Ontology in an ecumenical context. Also, his suggestions and critical questions about Unification Ontology, coming from his ecumenical concern, are legitimate.

Some words about the structure of the present response paper may be in order here. Section II will state how Foster appreciates the praxis value of Unification Ontology but will give my brief explanation of the praxis value of "heart" in Unification Ontology which he ignores (or forgets to treat). Section III will address his suggestions for further development of Unification Ontology in particular and Unification Thought in general. Section IV will address his critical questions about Unification Ontology.

The last section (Section V) will refer to where Dr. Foster misunderstands Unification Ontology but will conclude that in spite of this his ecumenical way of appraising it is very fair.

II.

Foster appreciates the praxis value of Unification Ontology by saying: that like the voluntarism of process thought and unlike the deterministic schools of Marxism, scientific rationalism, and traditional Christian theism, Unification Ontology genuinely presents "an ontology of responsible freedom," which even existentialism and deconstructionism have failed to accomplish (pp. 4-7); that in spite of its basically voluntaristic character Unification Ontology also recognizes "the actuality of sin and guilt," which process thought fails to see but which Reinhold Niebuhr and Neo-Orthodox theology properly acknowledge (pp. 8-9); that unlike most ontologies of East and West Unification Ontology brings history "front and center in the purview of being" (p. 9); that like Ernst Bloch's horizon of a transformative futurity Unification Ontology is "an ontology of hope" which promises the future restoration and fulfilment of freedom once lost (p. 10); that Unification Ontology might heal "the breach between objective scientism and faith," by suggesting to confirm God's attributes in the created world (p. 13); that it is "heir to a deep-seated historical consensus" when it regards man as the standard of creation (p. 14); that it "may well evince more praxis value for ecology than does orthodox Christianity," when it sees the Original Image reflected in every creature (pp. 15-16); that with its distinction between "image of existence" and "mode of

existence," similar to the Aristotelian distinction between "form" and "dynamis" and the Platonic distinction between "being" and "becoming", Unification Ontology sees both aspects of reality, thus having "a 'praxis value' of considerable moment" (pp. 16-17); that the same thing can be said about the Unification distinction between "individual truth body" and "connected body," which is the distinction between "individuation" and "participation" in the phraseology of Tillich (pp. 17-18); and that because of its use of the yan-yin theme, Unification Ontology has the virtue of bringing Oriental ontology prominently into the conversation (p. 20).

I think that all those points made by Foster are right. But any appraisal of the praxis value of Unification Ontology should not set aside the Unification doctrine of heart which has a very important practical implication. Heart as the "emotional impulse to obtain joy through love" (FUT 32) is the driving force of all human activities to actualize God's ideal. Without heart humans would not be really active or practical. Besides, heart is "irrepressible" (FUT 32), so that once humans restore it they are necessitated to be in the practical arena for the actualization of God's ideal in the universe. Unification Ontology holds that the entire universe is already permeated by the potentiality of this heart: "when God created the universe through the Logos, the motivation of creation was Heart and love" (FUT 105).

Heart is not exactly the same as the Christian notion of agape; heart not only seeks to love unconditionally first but also wants to obtain joy from the object made beautiful as a natural result of that unconditional love, whereas agape only seeks to

love unconditionally without needing to obtain joy from the object due to the subject's self-contained status. Thus heart involves a reciprocal and bilateral movement, whereas agape is essentially one-way and unilateral. The doctrine of heart, therefore, seems to have more practical applicability than the Christian doctrine of agape.

III.

At least three suggestions are made by Dr. Foster for further development of Unification Ontology in particular and Unification Thought in general. I think that they all coming from his ecumenical concern can be well taken. But let me address each of them.

His first suggestion is that the reason why Unification Thought basically exempts God and human being from its Ontology and limits the latter to all things should be more deeply explored in years to come as a "philosophically ecumenical" enterprise in which "all world traditions might be invited to engage in creative co-thinking" (pp. 2-3).

Let me respond to this, by saying that Unification Thought (1973), the first English textbook of Unification Thought, does not exempt God from Ontology, whereas two later ones, i.e., Explaining Unification Thought (1981) and Fundamentals of Unification Thought (1991), as is noticed by Foster, do so. (Note, however, that all the three textbooks are unanimous in treating human beings separately from Ontology.) Unification Thought gives the reason for its non-exemption of God from Ontology, by saying that all created beings are "patterned after" God (UT 11). Fundamentals gives the reason for its exemption of

God from Ontology, by stating that God and created beings are "not ... on the same level" (FUT 15). Whether God is exempted or not, it seems that a reasonable reason is given in Unification Thought. The task of Unificationists would be to more deeply explore the reason in either case in an ecumenical setting. In this sense Foster's suggestion is right.

A second suggestion he makes is that Unification Thought should develop a theory of the continuing development of nature by having dialogues with evolutionists, biologists, and physicists because it still has no recognition of it in spite of its wholesome commitment in principle to human history; and he even means to suggest that Unification Thought should devote "chapters to biology or cosmology" (pp. 11-13).

As a response to this, let me simply say that an increasing number of projects are under way, involving people in various disciplines to develop Unification theories in those disciplines including biology and physics.

Foster's third suggestion is that, given its understanding of nature as having space, time, and motion, Unification Ontology should develop a theory of natural evil as occasioned by space, time, and motion in line with "long standing Western and Eastern precedent for this thought" (p. 25).

This suggestion is fine, but it should be clearly noted that space, time, and motion themselves are not evil, even though they may be the occasion of evil. According to the Unification teaching, space, time, and motion are derivative from what it calls "the four position foundation" and whether they are good or

evil is determined by whether the four position foundation is centered on God's purpose or not (DP 50). They themselves are neither good nor evil. If you say that they themselves are evil, this would mean that you welcome Gnosticism or Manichaeism. It is commonly understood and should be reiterated here that so-called "metaphysical evil," which refers to spatio-temporal finitude, is not evil at all.

IV.

Foster raises a number of critical questions about Unification Ontology. Let me address these questions now.

First of all, is Unification Ontology "panentheistic" like process theology? (p. 6) A similar question is raised elsewhere: When Unification Ontology holds that every created being has the same attributes as those of the Original Image, can it be different from Spinoza's pantheism? (p. 15) My answer is that Unification Ontology is never pantheistic since it does not put created beings on the same level as God. It clearly distinguishes them from God when it maintains that God is beyond the created world of time and space (EUT 90-92). But Unification Ontology is panentheistic like process thought because it sees real resemblance between God and the created world (EUT 59-61).

Second, can the Unification appropriation of history overcome "the seduction of a kind of Hegelian pan-logism [which] might cloy the whole enterprise with a premature schematic sclerosis"? (p. 10) Let me answer this question, by saying that many of us in the Unification Movement live with something similar to Nicholas of Cusa's principle of docta ignorantia.

Third, what is the meaning of sungsang and hyungsang compared with some of the Western equivalents? (pp. 18-19) Well, in a nutshell, sungsang and hyungsang are not essentially "heterogenous," whereas the Western equivalents have heterogeneity in the pair. The Unification Thought explanation of this in some detail can be seen in EUT 22-26.

Fourth, why is it that the physical mind is referred to as sungsang at one point but as hyungsang at another in a confusing way? (p. 19) The answer is that the physical mind is sungsang as compared with the physical body but is hyungsang as compared with the spirit mind. This is not confusing.

Fifth, what happens to the yang-yin structure in the case of "heart"? (p. 21) Foster's own speculative answer that "it would have to be the unitary ground in which the antithesis of yang and yin is transcended as well as rooted" seems to be right.

Sixth, when Unification Ontology sees both yang and yin in man and both yang and yin in woman, would it adequately satisfy feminists? (p. 22) The answer is yes at least to some degree.

Seventh, isn't the doctrine of subject and object in Unification Ontology far too "dominance/submission" oriented? (p. 26) The answer is no. To be an individual truth body means to be a connected body at the same time. This means that to be a real subject requires to be in connection with another subject by being an object to that subject. There is this kind of dynamism in the subject-object relation. The impression of too much dominance/submission would come from any static view of the matter. Right order between subject and object would require right subjectivity

and right objectivity on the part of what is called subject and also on the part of what is called object.

V.

Foster misunderstands the voluntarism of Unificationism when he overly equates it with that of process thought. In Unification Thought, responsible freedom in the created order is attributed to the Creativity of God (EUT 41-43). But process thought attributes freedom in the world not to God but to the ultimate principle of Creativity which is metaphysically separate from God. In the process model, therefore, the power of God is very much weakened by the principle of Creativity and its embodiments in the world. In the Unification model, however, the power of God is basically still intact because freedom in the created order exists only under the umbrella of the Creativity of God. Thus Unification voluntarism is quite different from process voluntarism.

Professor Foster rather mistakenly attributes the motionless and formless character of God to the yin aspect of God (p. 21). That character of God should be attributed to his transcendence from the world of motion and form.

In spite of these improper understandings, Professor Foster's treatment of Unification Ontology is very fair in that he carefully and decently deals with it in comparison with the various schools of East and West.