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HUMAN NATURE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: REFLECTIONS ON FUNDAMENTALS OF UNIFICATION THOUGHT

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Abstract

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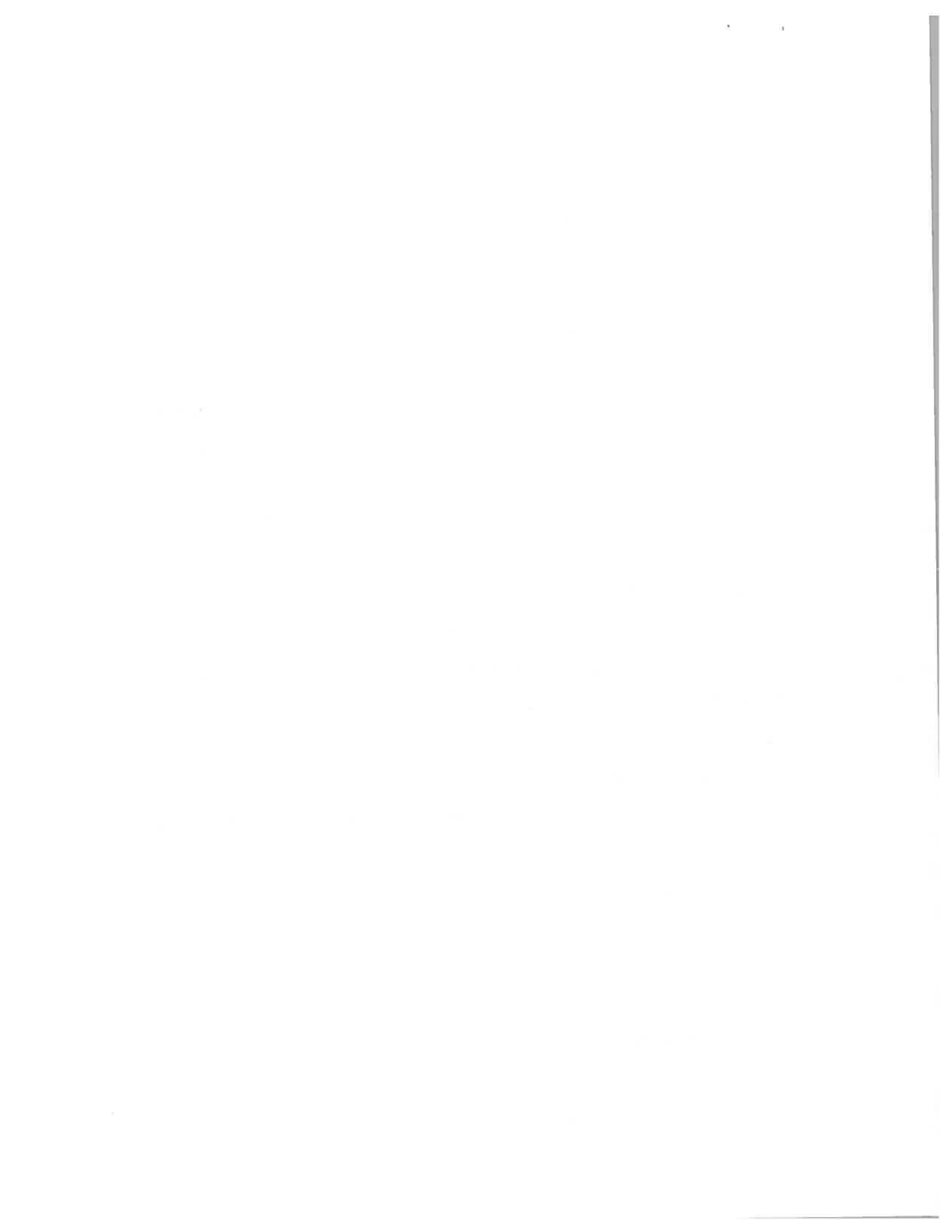
Unification Thought offers a distinctive and detailed theory about human nature. Stressing that our present existence is fallen and that we do not live as God planned, it describes what God intended human life to be and how a restoration of Original Human Nature can occur. This outlook raises a large practical question. To paraphrase Marx, granting that Unification Thought interprets the world, to what extent will or can the world be changed so that Original Human Nature is recovered and restored as Unification Thought claims it ought to be? To explore that question, this paper considers two dimensions of human history: individualism, first, and then the Holocaust.

These aspects of history reveal dark sides of human life. Unification Thought underscores such darkness by stressing humankind's fallen condition. But the detail of the darkness may not be given its due in that theoretical approach. Arguably such detail reveals historical realities so devastating and future propensities so entrenched that they undermine the credibility of Unification claims about the restoration of Original Human Nature. How Unification Thought responds to those dilemmas will affect not only the movement's theory but its practice as well.



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> People, I just want to say . . . can we all get along? Can we all get along? . . . We're all stuck here for a while. Let's try to work it out.
>
> Rodney King, May 1, 1992

Periodic earthquakes rock Southern California. In that region where I make my home, residents are warned about "the big one." Its catastrophic impact will show how frail human plans can be when confronted by nature's awesome power. So it is not quite true that earthquakes take one by surprise--although they always do. Most people who live in geological fault zones know that their ways of life, indeed even their lives themselves, are vulnerable. They also recognize that earthquakes, unlike tornados and hurricanes, are not storms that pass through and go on their way. Earthquakes bring aftershocks that can also be foreshocks. With a storm one can eventually say, "It's gone." Earthquakes defy such relief.

Depending on where you are when an earthquake hits, it can produce a sharp jolt and thunder-clapping noise, or lower level rumblings and what feels like a rolling of the earth. Measured

by clock time, the earth's shocks happen quickly. Nevertheless they seem long, because their effects produce disorienting feelings of helplessness. Fortunately, those moments usually pass. Life tries again to go on as "normal."

Just as earthquakes come in different magnitudes, they may manifest themselves in varied ways. Not all of the temblors are geological. At least metaphorically, their characteristics and effects fit "earthquakes" that are social and political as well. A "big one" of that kind struck Southern California on Wednesday, April 29, 1992. On that date, four Los Angeles police officers won acquittals in their trial for the beating of an African-American named Rodney King.

The Rodney King quake had foreshocks. One of them occurred on the night of March 3, 1991. After a high-speed chase, King was apprehended by Los Angeles policemen. What ensued was witnessed by a man named George Holliday, who happened to be in the area with his videotape recorder. In an 81-second clip that surely has been seen by more people than any other piece of amateur film making, Holliday captured a scene that was to create the jolts and rumbles of a major riot little more than a year later. Writhing on the ground during that March night, King was kicked, stunned, and struck with nightsticks fifty-six times. Once it was made public, George Holliday's videotaped evidence required official investigation.

Charges were pressed against the white officers, but a jury of their peers--ten whites, one Asian, one Hispanic--found them

innocent. Within hours of the verdict's announcement, disbelief turned into rage as protesters, mostly but not by any means all black, took to the streets. Burning, looting, the beating of Reginald Denny (broadcast live by a television station's airborne camera crew)--mayhem and death ripped a social fabric that was already frayed by racism, flawed by a sour economy, and fragmented by gang wars. To restore uneasy order, National Guard troops had to augment a Los Angeles police force that was ill-led by Chief Daryl Gates and overwhelmed by the spreading lawlessness.

On multiple fronts, the quake of the King verdict and the ensuing riot produced aftershocks of devastating disillusionment. Korean students on my campus, for example, feared for the lives of their Los Angeles families as animosity flared between African-Americans and Korean-Americans.[1] "We've got to start all over in our assumptions about ourselves," I heard one woman say at a public meeting. Her comment, she explained, was prompted when a white friend of hers--someone she previously could not have imagined doing such things--joined the looters. Rodney King summed up the dilemma on May 1 when he appeared on Friday afternoon television. His voice quaking with frustrated emotion, he made a plaintive plea: "People, I just want to say . . . can we all get along? Can we all get along?"

The individuals and communities that comprise Los Angeles speak many languages. They do so--literally and symbolically--because their expectations and memories, their joys and sorrows,

their senses of justice and fairness, are so diverse that understanding is rendered difficult if not impossible. In that regard, Los Angeles is a sign of the times. The social and political quakes that have shaken its life portend upheavals for every American city. Thus, Rodney King's question is the right one, but not only for the United States. His question is the right one for people everywhere in the world.

In the summer of 1992, I hope and trust that I am not alone among Southern California scholars in saying that it is difficult to read or write anything without the troubles of Los Angeles being on my mind. I have used Los Angeles as a point of departure on this occasion because the context of Rodney King's question, as well as the question itself, points toward the heart of issues concerning human nature in theory and practice. Those issues, in turn, can direct attention usefully toward fundamentals of Unification Thought as well.

As Sang Hun Lee, the author of Fundamentals of Unification Thought, suggests persuasively, the history of philosophy and religion can be read as a narrative. Its story is about the human quest to overcome disappointment about the world as it actually is and to realize instead a truly ideal condition. The ending of this story has not yet been written. Thus far, however, the existing chapters are riddled with failures that spell tragedy.

Philosophical and religious perspectives envision in different ways the forms that the idealized human realization

might take. For some thinkers and traditions, the transformation is largely personal; for others, it is mainly political. Most visions, however, stress a combination of the two. Unification Thought, an example of the latter kind, joins long-standing philosophical and religious company in holding that such yearning suggests the importance of recovering or restoring something that once existed but that has been marred, if not lost. It also joins long-standing philosophical and religious company in believing that the recovery or restoration is not something that human energy alone can accomplish. The human predicament is one that requires God's rescue. Human initiative plays a strong part in this process, indeed one that is indispensable, but the principles that make recovery and restoration possible are divine as well as human.

According to Unification Thought, the world's philosophical and religious traditions, whatever their differences, have at least this much in common: Thus far, all of them, in Lee's words, "have been unsuccessful in actually liberating humankind."[2] Unification Thought affirms that much of the reason for that lack of success involves an inadequate understanding about what needs to be recovered and restored. Specifically, questions about the nature of human existence, especially its original nature, have not been answered adequately. But, it is claimed, that inadequacy has been corrected because "the Reverend Sun Myung Moon has trod his

entire life course trying to provide fundamental solutions to such unresolved questions in human history."[3]

In agreement with major strands of classical Christian theology, Unification Thought affirms that human beings have been "created in the image of God, but due to the fall of the first human ancestors, they have become separated from God."[4] Original Human Nature, Unification Thought contends, is what needs to be recovered and restored. Reverend Moon and his followers believe, moreover, that their movement understands what that Original Human Nature is and how progress toward its recovery and restoration can best be made.

One aspect of Unification Thought makes these identifications by contrasting itself with philosophies that split essence from existence. Ordinarily such a distinction entails that the true nature of a particular or kind of being, what distinguishes it from other things, may also be distinguished from its actual existence. For Unification Thought, humanity's fallen condition involves such a bifurcation. But that division is not found in Original Human Nature, and humankind's chief need is to be restored to that original perfection.

Unification Thought's perspective is that God originally created a unified human being whose essence and existence are one. For this reason, much of Unification's view about human nature develops in opposition to the philosophical tradition of existentialism. Unification Thought acknowledges that

existentialism is diverse and at times insightful. Nevertheless, according to Unification Thought, existentialism's varied and even conflicting emphases on individual subjectivity (Kierkegaard), the "death of God" (Nietzsche), "boundary situations" that bring people close to God and yet frustrate communion with God (Jaspers), "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger), and the precedence of existence over essence (Sartre) add up to a perspective in which human existence is characterized by alienation that leaves it more split and divided than it needs to be.

Claiming to provide the clarity about Original Human Nature that existential philosophies lack, Unification Thought's insight about what needs to be restored underscores that "human beings, originally, are beings with Divine Image, beings with Divine Character, and beings with Position."[5] Lee's Fundamentals of Unification Thought unpacks that claim in detail.[6] Suffice it to say here that included in the most important elements of the needed restoration are proper give-and-receive relationships among the several aspects of sungsang and hyungsang in human nature. These aspects, which have their analogues and correlates in God, encompass the multi-faceted spiritual and physical dimensions of our lives. In Original Human Nature these dimensions are perfectly integrated in a functional wholeness where all the relationships are properly ordered. That proper order reflects the love of God, which is the fundamentally governing divine principle, both in the sense that it is God's

love that accounts for creation and salvation and in the sense that being human fully depends on loving one another as well as God.

In contrast to theories that take knowing or making to be the most important attributes of human nature, Unification Thought says that "Heart" (or Shimjong) is the most essential characteristic.[7] A "being with Heart" is one dedicated to the practice of love. Reflecting God, whose character is to love, human beings are created out of love, and they are intended to seek joy through love as well. Moving in God's creation, love brings forth life and its distinctive accents--in human form--on individuality, freedom, reason, and creativity.

Love entails give-and-receive, a factor that gives Unification Thought a distinctively relational and social quality, which manifests itself particularly in an emphasis on family. True, Unification Thought claims that "human individuality is so precious that it should be respected absolutely."[8] But Unification Thought also understands that individuality is relational and social, a point that Western philosophy and religion, unfortunately, have often underplayed.

Relationships between man and woman and the proper union between them are especially crucial in the Unification movement. Specifically, as Sang Hun Lee explains, "the unity of husband and wife signifies the completion of the creation of the universe. . . . Human beings were created to be rulers of dominion over all things, but neither man alone nor woman alone can become ruler of

dominion. Only by being perfected as a couple, that is, as husband and wife, can they become rulers over creation. Only then will the creation of the universe be completed."[9] By being human as God intends, man and woman are indispensable for the family relationships that make the entire cosmos essentially an expression of God's parental love. Fulfillment of that indispensable role, however, depends on the maintenance of a proper relationship between God and human being.

Unification Thought is distinctive in its detailed, holistic views about divine and human existence. Its interpretation of these elements stresses that human life ought to be dynamic, loving, well-ordered, and even hierarchically structured, too. If many earlier theories have said similar things, although not in exactly the same way, Unification Thought's persistence on family relationships in thinking about human nature gives its outlook a vital appeal in times when social dislocations, including dysfunctional family life, characterize human existence so much. Yet, paradoxically, the strengths of Unification Thought on these scores leave a large practical question on the table.

To state the question by paraphrasing Marx, granting that Unification Thought interprets the world, to what extent will or can the world be changed so that Original Human Nature is recovered and restored as Unification Thought claims it ought to be? To explore that question, consider two dimensions of human

history that can make one wonder: individualism, first, and then the Holocaust.

These aspects of human history are chosen not primarily to suggest that they are related, although they have connections, but because they reveal dark sides that shake human life. Unification Thought underscores such darkness by stressing humankind's fallen condition. But the detail of the darkness may not be given its due in that theoretical approach. Arguably that detail reveals historical realities so devastating and future propensities so entrenched that they pose a fundamental dilemma for Unification Thought: Is it credible to think that the restoration of Original Human Nature is fully possible in history or, for that matter, in any other conceivable dimension of reality?

Not everyone agrees, of course, about the conditions of credibility and when they are met. Nevertheless many religious movements have to confront some version of the dilemma identified above. Its difficulties seem particularly acute for Unification Thought, especially when connections between theory and practice are at stake, because few, if any, of Unification's themes have greater practical importance than its teachings about the restoration of Original Human Nature. In fundamental ways the difficulties involve public policy and social practice, for just to the extent that Unification Thought's claims about Original Human Nature and its restoration are found to be credible only by a relatively small number of people, the question becomes, "What

is to be done?" Let that question complement Rodney King's "Can we all get along?" as we think briefly about individualism American-style.

Inspired by the Declaration of Independence--"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"--and empowered by the Constitution's "Bill of Rights," those first ten amendments whose protections include freedom of speech and religious practice as well as "due process of law" and "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms," American life emphasizes individuals and individualism. The impact of such thinking was only beginning to be felt when the first United States census was taken in 1790 during George Washington's initial term as the nation's first president. Counting the country's individuals, its simple categories included only free white males aged sixteen or more, free white males under sixteen (to calculate how many men might be available for military duty), free white females, all other free persons (including Native Americans who paid taxes), and slaves. The tally registered the American population at about 3.9 million, including some 750,000 slaves.[10]

Two centuries later, the 1990 census has been contested, particularly by municipal and state officials who argued that the figures skipped people in urban areas, the poor, and minorities. The count may be off by a figure larger than the total American

population in 1790. Nonetheless, in 1990 American individuals--most of them implicit, if not explicit, advocates of individualism--numbered about 250 million.

Washington's 1796 "Farewell Address" stressed the homogeneity of the American people. Problematic then, that claim is even more so as the nation's third century gets under way. American society has become so culturally diverse that its "melting pot" image, which was supposed to make diversity manageable, now lacks credibility. The 1990 census showed, for example, that 11.7 percent of the nation's people are African-American, 8 percent are Latino, and 3.6 percent are Asian. The percentage of whites in the population dropped to 76.7 percent from a figure of 79.6 percent a decade ago. In addition, by the year 2000 more than fifty major cities in the United States are likely to have a majority population of minorities. By the middle of the twenty-first century, when those born in the 1990s will approach their sixties, the typical resident of the United States will trace ancestry not to white Europe but to almost anywhere else--Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific Islands, or Arabia, to mention only a few of the possibilities.

Languages tell a similar story. The number of people in the United States whose usual language is other than English rose from 28 million in 1976 to 34.7 million in 1990 and will probably reach 39.5 million by 2000. In Los Angeles, which is more a sociological microcosm for the nation than the Muncie, Indiana, that used to be preferred, no less than ninety foreign languages

can be heard in the public schools. Spanish will be increasingly important in the United States, but the presence of Asian languages is rising as well.

Significantly, the country's population is also aging. In 1990 one in five Americans was at least fifty-five and one in eight was at least sixty-five. By the year 2000, twenty-five percent of the nation's people--about fifty-one million of them--will be over sixty-five.

Young or old, whether in 1790 or in 1990, the individuals who dwell in the United States often stress that they have individual rights. They act accordingly. Such circumstances make the Constitution's hopes for domestic tranquillity hard to fulfill, for as Abraham Lincoln observed during the Civil War, Americans "all declare for liberty, but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing."[11]

American individuals have been deeply touched by individualism. Typically that concept stresses the separateness of one human being from another, the inviolability of basic rights, and the responsibility and initiative that each person must take--the self-help that each person must provide--on his or her own behalf. Where such convictions lead from one generation to the next is problematic. Individually or collectively, however, it is unlikely that Americans will set their individualism aside.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman and philosopher whose 1830s tour of the country resulted in the classic called

Democracy in America, observed that a "limitless continent" promised opportunity and general prosperity that could blend with Americans' love of equality and liberty to yield favorable outcomes for the pursuit of happiness. Tocqueville envisioned Americans "preparing the triumphal progress of civilization across the wilderness," but at times he also had second thoughts.[12] They often focused on individualism.

Among the first to use the concept, Tocqueville understood individualism to be of "democratic origin," and early on he questioned a basic American belief, namely, that individualism is a virtue. Democracy fosters equality, Tocqueville believed, and leads everyone to find their beliefs in themselves. This tendency, in turn, "disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends." Damming "the spring of public virtues," leaving "the greater society to look after itself," individualism, he thought, does not have far to go before it merges in egoism or narcissism--"a passionate and exaggerated love of self," Tocqueville called it, "which leads a man to think of all things in terms of himself and to prefer himself to all."[13]

Tocqueville's worries about individualism centered on the negative implications it had for a healthy democratic society. He knew that individualism did include many assets--self-reliance, personal initiative, and self-help to name but three. He even believed that Americans had succeeded in mitigating the worst effects of individualism by using their liberty to

cultivate political institutions and voluntary associations, especially including religious ones, "so that there should be an infinite number of occasions for the citizens to act together and so that every day they should feel that they depended on one another."[14] But Tocqueville never completely quieted his uneasiness that American individualism might eventually prove to be an ironic asset that would turn American ground into wasteland.

Observers who chart American democracy in the late twentieth century often amplify Tocqueville's nineteenth-century worries.[15] Many of the earthquaking faults of contemporary life in the United States can be traced to senses of individualism and self-interest so badly understood that they lead Americans to care much more for individual wealth than for the commonwealth. Nor are these dilemmas confined within the borders of the United States. Individualism American-style has its counterparts in other nations, too.

Unification Thought is anything but oblivious to such trends. As Sang Hun Lee puts the point in the language of Unification Thought, "subject consciousness has become too strong. Taking little notice of the rights of others, people assert their own rights excessively, which results in unavoidable conflicts among them."[16] Suggesting that the contemporary world is a "spiritual wilderness," Lee argues that the need is to resurrect "object consciousness" and "invite God to return to our midst."[17] Object consciousness stresses loyalty and service to

others and especially to God. It is, says Lee, "the essential element of ethics."[18]

All of this theory sounds excellent, and there are those who put such teachings into practice with amazing grace, but the Unification view of history, at least as stated by Lee, remains overly simple, not to say naive, when it claims that "the good side will induce the evil side naturally to surrender and will restore the evil side to the good side, and eventually will save all humankind."[19] At least in the United States, the difficulty is that the sentiments of individualism are not likely to provide a very warm reception for teachings about the restoration of Original Human Nature. Many Americans may long intensely for restoration, but that yearning is far more likely to focus on economic prosperity, national prominence, and neighborhoods free of crime and drugs. Even those concerns are fueled not by "object consciousness" but by consumer driven self-interest. Thus, wrongheaded though they may be, most Americans are not likely to care very much about Original Human Nature--they are wedded too dearly to their present individualism for that.

How intransigent are the dark sides of individualism in the United States and elsewhere? What is the likelihood that they will or even can be induced to surrender? Rodney King's plea only--only?--asked people to "get along" and to "try to work it out." It moved people, but as Rodney King spoke, Los Angeles also felt desperation, dismay, and no more than tentative, guarded hope at best. Frankly, it is hard to imagine that King

or anyone in that city--riot-torn and smoldering--will find much interest in, let alone an affirmative response to, a question that asks, "Can we all restore Original Human Nature?" True, "getting along" and "working it out" may involve the latter aim, but Rodney King's goals are much more modest, and even they seem to be as daunting as they are essential. The issue, then, is whether Unification Thought's idealism about human nature is well founded. Can the it be sufficiently practiced to make the movement's theory more, not less, credible?

"In the true ideal world," writes Sang Hun Lee, "all humankind must be happy. Through the Unification view of history, that is guaranteed."[20] History involves enough earth-quaking catastrophes to make that claim as dubious as it is hopeful. To consider further how those shocks might impact Unification Thought's aspirations for human nature, consider some details about the Holocaust--Nazi Germany's planned total destruction of the Jewish people, the actual murder of nearly six million of them, and the annihilation of millions of non-Jewish victims who were also caught in what the German's called the "Final Solution."

In April 1991, a major symposium honored one of the University of Vermont's retiring faculty members. It paid tribute to an extraordinary professor of political science. His research--including especially a monumental book called <u>The Destruction of the European Jews</u>--arguably has made Raul Hilberg the world's preeminent scholar of the Holocaust. Among the many

distinguished persons who honored Hilberg was the brilliant and unrelenting filmmaker, Claude Lanzmann, whose epic Shoah is a cinematic counterpart to Hilberg's monumental writing. Hilberg plays an important part in Lanzmann's film. In a segment on the Warsaw ghetto, for example, he discusses the dilemmas faced by Adam Czerniakow, the man who headed the Jewish Council in that place. Czerniakow documented his role in the diary he kept until he took his own life on July 23, 1942, the day after the Germans began to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto by deporting its Jewish population to Treblinka. Hilberg knows the details of Czerniakow's life because he helped to translate and edit the Czerniakow diary, which survived the "Final Solution."

In another segment of Lanzmann's Shoah, Hilberg studies a different kind of document: Fahrplananordnung 587. This railroad timetable scheduled death traffic. Conservative estimates indicate that Fahrplananordnung 587, which outlines a few days in late September 1942, engineered some ten thousand Jews to Treblinka's gas chambers.

Raul Hilberg has spent his life detailing how such things happened. Thus, in his first appearance in the Lanzmann film, he observes that, "In all of my work, I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers; and I have preferred to address these things which are minutiae or details in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt a picture which, if not an

explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired."[21]

Hilberg's opening statement in Shoah warns about "big questions," the kind philosophers and theologians love to ask--and answer. He does not deny that the Holocaust raises them--first and foremost "Why?" Contrary to much human expectation, however, the fact that a question can be asked does not mean than it can be answered well, if at all, particularly when the questions are "big." So Hilberg concentrates on details instead. Those minutiae, however, are much more than minutiae. Their particularity speaks volumes and forms a terribly vast description. So full of life distorted and wasted, its accumulated detail makes the "big" questions less easy and simple to raise but all the more important, too.

Put into perspective by work like Hilberg's, the "big questions" become the right questions. Commanding the respect they deserve, that respect enjoins suspicion about "answers" that are small--inadequate for the facts they encompass. That same respect also focuses awareness that the big questions raised by history's particularity nonetheless need to be kept alive. For the political scientist's detail and the historian's minutiae, far from silencing the big questions, ought to intensify wonder about them. Otherwise we repress feeling too much and deny ourselves insights that can only be deepened by asking the right questions.

Note that insight and answer, at least as used here, are not identical terms. For the fact that a question does not lead to an answer, as the word 'answer' is conventionally understood, does not mean that the question is not right. To the contrary, especially when they are grounded in and provoked by work like Hilberg's, questions are often as "right" as they are "big" just because they do not have conventional answers but instead produce awareness and understanding that can come in no other way than through inquiry and reflection, meditation and musing about them. The French thinker Maurice Blanchot wrestles with such points in a Holocaust-related book called The Writing of the Disaster. Sometimes, he says, "there is a question and yet no doubt; there is a question, but no desire for an answer; there is a question, and nothing that can be said, but just this nothing, to say." To that dark saying, he later adds that, "The question concerning the disaster is a part of the disaster: it is not an interrogation, but a prayer, an entreaty, a call for help. The disaster appeals to the disaster that the idea of salvation, of redemption might not yet be affirmed, and might, drifting debris, sustain fear."[22]

Prayers, entreaties, calls for help--writing the disaster before she lost her life at Auschwitz in 1943, a superb German Jewish poet named Gertrud Kolmar penned lines that said, "The murderers are loose! They search the world / All through the night, oh God, all through the night!"[23] She called her poem "Murder." Kolmar wrote more than she knew, but she was right.

The murderers were loose, and of all the places where that was true none was worse than Auschwitz. Even the Nazis said so.

Consider, for example, the experience of Dr. Johann Paul Kremer. A man in his late fifties with doctorates in biology and medicine, this professor of anatomy at the University of Münster had joined the Nazi party in 1929 and the SS in 1935. Kremer kept a diary. It reports that on August 29, 1942, he received orders that sent him to Auschwitz, where he would spend the next three months replacing a surgeon who was said to be ill.

Arriving from Prague on August 30, Kremer took a room in the SS hotel that was situated near the town railway station in Oswiecim. His diary notes the poor climate--hot, humid weather, over 80 degrees in the shade. It remarks that there were "innumerable flies" in the area but also describes the good food he enjoyed.

The latter note rings ironically because Kremer's research specialty involved hunger. So, in addition to selecting who would live and who would die as transports arrived at Auschwitz and beyond presiding over the gassing of prisoners as well--both of these were tasks that Nazi policy required physicians to do--he would use his time to study, as he later put it, "the changes developing in the human organism as the result of starvation.[24] Interpreted pragmatically, this description meant that on numerous occasions Kremer would interview starving inmates before they died or were put to death by lethal injection. Then he

would immediately remove organs from the corpses and examine them.

Apparently disregarding what he had done in 1942, Kremer would use some of his 1945 diary entries to chastise Allied pilots for inhumanity in bombing Germany, Meanwhile, Kremer had hardly been alone in doing "research" on Auschwitz prisoners. Scores of Nazi scientists and pharmaceutical firms took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the vast prisoner population.

Within a week of Kremer's Auschwitz arrival he was deeply involved in the camp's life and death. His diary's shorthand for September 5, 1942, tells the story in two brief sentences: "This noon was present at a special action in the women's camp ("Moslems")--the most horrible of all horrors. Hschf. Thilo, military surgeon, is right when he said today to me we were located here in 'anus mundi.'"[25]

Holocaust scholar Walter Laqueur translates anus mundi as "the asshole of the world." Such description fits what Kremer saw on that September day in 1942, for the "special action" he mentions had been the gassing of some eight hundred women prisoners. During a war crimes interrogation in 1947, Kremer elaborated on that experience. Hideous though it is, his voice of experience needs to be heard:

> Particularly unpleasant had been the action of gassing emaciated women from the women's camp. Such individuals were generally called "Muselmänner" ("Moslems"). I remember taking part in the gassing of

> such women in daylight. I am unable to state how numerous that group had been. When I came to the bunker they sat clothed on the ground. As the clothes were in fact worn out camp clothes they were not let into the undressing barracks but undressed in the open. I could deduce from the behavior of these women that they realized what was awaiting them. They begged the SS men to be allowed to live, they wept, but all of them were driven to the gas chamber and gassed. Being an anatomist I had seen many horrors, had to do with corpses, but what I then saw was not to be compared with anything seen ever before. It was under the influence of these impressions that I had noted in my diary, under the date of September 5, 1942: "The most horrible of all horrors. _Hauptsturmführer_ Thilo . . . was right saying today to me that we were located here in '_anus mundi_.'" I had used this expression because I could not imagine anything more sickening and more horrible.[26]

The analogy between Auschwitz and "the asshole of the world" was anything but weakened by Kremer's report that he did not always find Auschwitz experience horrible. "We had baked pike," he wrote in his diary on September 23, 1942, "as much of it as we wanted, real coffee, excellent beer and sandwiches."[27] On October 31, 1942, he observed that Auschwitz had experienced "very beautiful autumn weather for the last 14 days, so that

every day one has the opportunity of sun-bathing in the garden of the Waffen SS club house. Even the clear nights have been relatively mild."

It is a massive understatement to note that such observations are not ones that any prisoner who entered Auschwitz would have been likely to make. Edith P., a Jewish survivor who calls Auschwitz "hell on earth," remembers it this way instead:

> The days. Let me tell you about the days. We got up at three o'clock in the morning to work, and by 4:00 or 4:30 in the summers the sun was up. I swear to you, the sun was not bright. The sun was red, or it was black to me. . . . The sun was never life to me. It was destruction. It was never beautiful. We almost forgot what life was all about.[28]

What is life all about? In the darkness of anus mundi--it led Edith P. to ask, "Is there such a thing as love?"[29]--can the answer be what Fundamentals of Unification Thought proclaims, namely, that "in the true ideal world all humankind must be happy. Through the Unification view of history, that is guaranteed."[30] What about Dr. Kremer's victims? What about Dr. Kremer himself? Has Original Human Nature been restored to them? Will it be--can it be--unless memory is erased? And if memory is erased, what happens to truth? Could it be that idealistic hopes for a full restoration of perfection are not merely delayed or left in openended suspense but that history itself has scarred them permanently and compromised them forever--even for God?

Such questions are not merely theoretical. What one believes and says about them will affect other forms of action, too.

Unification Thought stresses that the capacity to give and receive love is the most essential human characteristic. At his or her best, its teaching holds, "the human being is a 'being with Heart.'"[31] Anus mundi is only part of the world. But it is a part, and all too much history shows the world to be a Heartless place. Vera Laska, a Holocaust survivor, had that point in mind when she once suggested that "in Auschwitz God, finding it impossible to cope, went on an extended vacation, as if replaced by a sign: 'For the duration, this office is closed.'"[32]

The greatest asset of Unification Thought is not its theory but its practice. Unification Thought will be at its best not when it labors its detailed theory about Original Human Nature, but, more simply, when it underscores that the need is to live "with Heart" in a world whose Heartlessness led to anus mundi. Some theory, of course, or at least some interpretation of experience, is needed to encourage people to live "with Heart." But the questions are: What kind, how much, and when does theory interfere with practice?

Theory could interfere with practice if Unification Thought insists too much on its views about human nature--or on refining the fundamentals of Unification Thought until they are precisely "correct"--instead of figuring out how to respond to Rodney King's "Can we all get along?" when the circumstances are likely

to match no theory of human nature perfectly anyway. Fortunately, at least as I have observed the practice of the Unification movement, its theoretical concerns, important though they are, remain in a healthy give-and-receive relationship to Unification's emphasis on service for others. The impact of such service remains the best warrant that any religious movement is likely to get for itself in a fault-lined world whose history includes "earthquakes." They will keep us wondering not only how but whether we can all get along and trying--imperfectly--to work it out since we are indeed all stuck here for a while.

Notes

1. Strained for some time, relations between the African-American and Korean communities in Los Angeles were strongly exacerbated by the Latasha Harlins case. On March 16, 1991, less than two weeks after the Rodney King beating, a security camera at the Korean-owned Empire Liquor Market Deli recorded the fatal shooting of the fifteen-year-old black girl. Accused of stealing orange juice, Harlins had been shot in the back as she left the store. Eight months later, on November 15, 1991, Compton Superior Court Judge Joyce A. Karlin sentenced Harlins' killer, Soon Ja Du, to five years' probation.
2. Sang Hun Lee, Fundamentals of Unification Thought (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1991), 112.
3. Ibid., 113.

4. Ibid., 113.

5. Ibid., 133.

6. Ibid., 109-53.

7. Ibid., 133-34.

8. Ibid., 30.

9. Ibid., 116.

10. Much of the census data cited in this essay is taken from The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1991 (New York: Pharos Books, 1990), 549-62.

11. See Lincoln's Baltimore Maryland speech on April 18, 1864, which is excerpted in The Political Thought of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Richard N. Current (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 329.

12. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. J. P. Mayer and trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1969), 279-80.

13. See ibid., 506-508, for the quotations from Tocqueville in this paragraph.

14. Ibid., 511.

15. See, for example, Robert N. Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and The Good Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); Daniel Kemmis, Community and the Politics of Place (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992).

16. Lee, Fundamentals of Unification Thought, 132.

17. Ibid., 132.

18. Ibid., 128.

19. Ibid., 337.

20. Ibid., 337.

21. See Claude Lanzmann, Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 70.

22. Maurice Blanchot, The Writing of the Disaster, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 9, 13.

23. Gertrud Kolmar, Dark Soliloquy: The Selected Poems of Gertrud Kolmar, trans. Henry A. Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 99.

24. See "Diary of Johann Paul Kremer," KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS: Höss, Broad, Kremer, ed. Jadwiga Bezwinska and Danuta Czech and trans. Krystyna Michalik (New York: Howard Fertig, 1984), 221. I am indebted to Walter Laqueur for several references to Kremer and for other details about Auschwitz. See his Foreword to Danuta Czech, Auschwitz Chronicle 1939-1945, trans. Barbara Harshav, Martha Humphries, and Stephen Shearier (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), xv-xxi.

25. "The Diary of Johann Paul Kremer," KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS, 215.

26. Ibid., 215. The Muselmänner to whom Kremer refers were walking skeletons who were beyond recovery because of acute starvation and psychic exhaustion.

27. Ibid., 220.

28. Edith P., as she is identified by Lawrence L. Langer, is one of the many women who has given her oral history to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies established at Yale University in 1982. The quotation is from Lawrence L. Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 105.

29. Ibid., 55.

30. Lee, Fundamentals of Unification Thought, 337.

31. Ibid., 134.

32. Vera Laska, ed., "Epilogue," Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust: The Voices of Eyewitnesses (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 299.