



DISCUSSANT RESPONSE

by

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to John Kelsay's

ETHICS IN UNIFICATION THOUGHT: FAMILY VALUES

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A Response to Dr. John Kelsay's essay
ETHICS IN UNIFICATION THOUGHT: FAMILY VALUES

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John Kelsay has written a thoughtful and constructive paper which provides not only a careful exposition of Ethics in Unification Thought, but a helpful, critical analysis of the points of tension between UT and "the broader philosophical tradition." Kelsay focuses his critical analysis around three questions: 1) the question of norms that ought to govern relationships within the family; 2) the question of how the relationships between family and other social/political institutions are to be understood; 3) the question of the universality of UT's family norm. I will respond to several of the issues which Kelsay raises in relation to these questions.

General Introductory Comment

As a general comment, I would say that what Kelsay has done is to speak to UT from the perspective of one who stands in the tradition of contemporary ethical theory. Thus, I would suggest that he raises issues not necessarily from the point of view of advocacy (of constructivism), but from the point of view of a scholar who feels that, if UT wishes to present its ideas successfully in a western, largely-secular, philosophical environment, then UT needs to address questions which are of concern to that community. What characterizes this academic

community that Kelsay refers to, the "constructivists"--- feminists, pragmatists, and contractarians---is the notion that norms are historically constructed; there is no absolute moral law corresponding to a natural law. Morality, then, is closer to sociology or anthropology than to physics or geometry. Constructivists, moreover, it might be said, are concerned more with equality, freedom of the individual, and the elimination of injustice (often understood as the misuse of power or authority) than with the articulation and advocacy of substantive practices, e.g., the monogamous, heterosexual, child-raising family, thought by UT to be representative of the good. In fact, for constructivists any preference of a substantive practice---for example, a father sitting at the head of the table---must first be run through a gauntlet of checks to ensure its not being in violation of some principle of equality or justice. The only exception to this rule would be when a community which prefers a particular practice, for example a man-headed household, engages only voluntarily (assuming informed consent (of the woman)) and without seeking to impose that practice on the larger society. In this sense, what can be called communitarian practices are acceptable, even though a particular community's claims about the ultimate value of its practices will not be well-received outside the walls of the community.

Kelsay recognizes the UT has more affinity with Aristotelians, Thomists and Hegelians than with contemporary anti-foundationalists. But contemporary anti-foundationalists

are the power establishment, leaving Aristotelians and Thomists marginalized. In this sense UT would also seem to have marginalization as its permanent state too. To avoid marginalization, Kelsay seems to suggest, one chooses either to accommodate the idiom and norms of the constructivists, thereby risking the loss of UT's uniqueness, or one affirms more assertively the uniqueness, especially the religious uniqueness of the community out of which UT emerges; this latter option, which Kelsay seems to prefer, however, also leads to marginalization.

I. On the Norm of Familial Relationships: Love Without Justice?

A. Kelsay points out on pages 5-7 that while divisional love is clearly the central norm of family relationships in UT, there remains a need for some more discussion of the question of how love is to be substantially manifested in ordered relationships. More precisely, Kelsay questions whether UT's appeal to the norm of love must be linked necessarily to a hierarchial notion of husband and wife roles. Kelsay points out that in contemporary ethics there is a great deal of suspicion of the idea that traditional roles of husband and wife are given or natural; contemporary "constructivists" argue that the social roles that have emerged in the family are neither given nor natural, but historically constructed, usually "in accord with the power needs of particular men and women." (7) In effect, contemporary ethics has concerned itself with promoting equality

and rights, fearing that the norm of love linked with a "constructed" view of social roles (for husbands and wives) fails to protect the rights and integrity of persons.

Response to IA: Perhaps it is all a question of balance. Both Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich wrote at great length on the interplay of love, power and justice. This trinity of forces, when unified, form the basis for the highest achievement of each. It is true that UT does not specifically outline a theory of the rights and duties of family members. Moreover, there is something in UT that is averse to the preference which the tradition of liberal individualism gives to rights issues. FUT (p. 241) tells us that "excessive emphasis on equal rights between men and women has created a situation in which positions of subject and object between husband and wife have been lost," thus leading to family breakdown.

This position is held not because of disrespect for human rights, I believe, but from the sense that, in an ironic way, the human rights tradition seeks justice without regard for love. Families, however, are not bound together by justice, but by the regard and respect that flows naturally from love. Once love is lost, justice only seeks to pick up the pieces. A love which is unjust is an oxymoron, and nothing UT would affirm.

In my opinion, the preoccupation with rights and equality is precisely proportional to the decline of justice that comes with an absence of love. Modern societies presume that love, like self-interest, exists as a kind of natural, biological potential.

The order of love is of no consequence so long as there is no violation of rights, i.e., so long as love relationships of any kind are contractual and consensual. In this way, love becomes private and justice becomes public. But the public realm, ungoverned by love, comes to be characterized by an upward spiral of the preoccupation with justice. If the family becomes invaded, colonized by a similar kind of preoccupation, the family will also become loveless and will dissolve. The pursuit of justice without love, can often be an alibi for greed, meanness, resentment or wanton hostility.

B. On page 9 Kelsay raises the issue of whether UT's norm for the woman's objective position in the family is compatible with a theory that women can take leading positions in business, politics and society. Kelsay counsels UT to "emphasize the dynamic nature of familial order," even though this revision would "sacrifice some of the clarity of the depiction of the roles of husband and wife."(9)

Response to IB: Most Unificationists recognize that there exists a gap between the conceptual clarity of UT theory and the actual reality and practice of Unificationist individuals and families. Practice, at times, defies theory. There are wives who are much more capable than their husbands, and who have superior judgement, skill, training, etc. In such a situation the grid of subject-object theory cannot be forced without appreciation for actual reality. In this sense the dynamic

nature of familial order is a practical reality that must be respected. The subject-object theory, however, does serve as a guiding principle.

In terms of the question of leadership, in UT the primary characteristic of a good leader is "object consciousness." That is, only a leader who is a good object to God or to some higher superior is a good subject. Thus, according to this logic, a good wife would make an ideal leader.

In FUT we read that efforts to establish equality have been generally unsuccessful. Only when "God's love is actualized" will true equality and fraternity emerge and "exploitation and discrimination will completely vanish."(p. 242)

C. Kelsay also worries on p. 10 that UT's ethics which aims to articulate the norms for the Kingdom of God, omits questions of how to deal with the interim, the fallen world.

Response to IC: This is an accurate comment for the most part. UT does emphasize the absolute ideal. In this sense the Ethics chapter clearly reflects the messianic and eschatological perspective of Unificationism; that is, at the present time in history God's absolute truth has been clearly revealed. For Unificationists, in some sense, the interim is over, and we live in the Last Days.

Having said that, I should also add, that one needs to turn to the chapter on History---for example, the discussion of the laws of Creation and Restoration---to find the context for the

chapter on Ethics. Perhaps more attention should be paid to the Ethics of Restoration in future UT publications, thereby linking the apparent utopianism of the Ethics chapter with the realism of the History chapter.

II. On the Relationship Between Family and Society/State

A. Kelsay states on page 10 that while contemporary ethics emphasizes the way in which family "reflects broader social and political patterns", UT emphasizes the primacy and centrality of the family as the basis for these broader social and political patterns.

Response to IIA: This is exactly right. UT affirms individual responsibility as the basis for society. But individuals are not understood apart from family. In this sense the family is not a place of retreat or a "haven in a heartless world." The family is the place of basic empowerment, empowerment of personality, virtue, disposition, attitude, etc. While Marxists argued that economic factors were the most essential in shaping individuals, families and societies, UT argues that individuals and families, i.e., morality and ethics (according to the UT definition of those terms) are the basis of society. This is not to discount interaction; however, most theories of interaction acknowledge relative degrees of importance to the parties interacting. I believe that any psychological or social theory which fails to comprehend the primacy of the family is not only impoverished, but distorts

reality.

B. On page 12 Kelsay questions once again whether UT's account contains "provisions for the interim," e.g., guidelines for protection against abuses of authority.

Response to IIB: UT Ethics does largely take for granted the idea that the norm of love includes goodness, and that goodness entails certain ideals of equality, peace and freedom. In some sense UT (FUT 240-242) recognizes the work of the Enlightenment and social movements dedicated to rights and equality as providential and reflective of God-given, original human aspirations. The emphasis on external equality of wealth or respect (without adequate attention being given to merit), however, is criticized; instead equality of love and personality is asserted as the ideal. While this may seem to be a question-begging move, it nevertheless deserves serious reflection: what do we prefer, equality or fulfillment?

There is no question that the family has been a place of suffering, misery and oppression for many people for centuries. This is completely consistent with UT's account of fallen history and the family being the real center of the fallen world. UT envisions a restored family which is guided by religious principles that counsel against authoritarianism.

C. Kelsay also questions (page 12) the claim made in UT that the virtues appropriate to family life and the virtues

appropriate to political life are the same.

Response to IIC: While it is correct that a good father is not necessarily a good statesman or businessman, in the technical sense of the term, UT does argue (FUT 238-239) that the basic dispositions of a good father (or mother) are essential to the character of a good politician or businessman.

D. Finally, Kelsay counsels UT on page 13 of his paper to underscore the interactive nature of relations between family and society; to make his point he refers on page 14-15 to the recent debate in the USA generated by Vice-President Dan Quayle's comments about the undesirability of single parent families.

Response to IID: While UT ontology asserts that there is interaction on all levels of reality, it does not assert the equality of all factors in any interaction. For example, one can emphasize social forces over individual forces. Still to de-emphasize individual responsibility or moral responsibility because of economic conditions is a dangerous slope to slide on. UT (FUT 237) emphasizes family over other social forces and I believe this assertion can be defended empirically. This is not to deny the force and influence of economic factors.

To diagnose group problems in terms of economic factors is not unreasonable. Economic factors do affect psychology and sociology; but these factors need not be decisive. They can be decisive, however, if the prevailing ideology conditions people to believe that change only comes about once a benefactor alters

economic conditions. Cross-cultural studies reveal that poor immigrants, or even pariah groups, can move from poverty to prosperity; most often, when the prosperity is the result of legal business activity, there is a high correlation between prosperity and family stability.

III. Family, Nature and Convention

A. Kelsay points out (page 21) that our world reveals a great diversity of family models. There exists "polygamy, notions of tribes as 'collective families,' societies that legitimate homosexuality" which "all constitute a challenge to the notion that the heterosexual, monogamous family constitutes the ideal arrangement for all humanity." (21) Constructivists see the family as instrumental, not ontological. Can UT's claim for the family being universal be substantiated?

Response to IIIA: The descriptive account of reality is not and ought not always be determinative of the normative account of reality; ethics is not sociology. The numerical pervasiveness of racism and ethnocentrism need not lead one to conclude that it is best to accept either.

UT clearly bases its family ethics on an ontological foundation, not a sociological or social-anthropological one. However, in UT the ontological and the instrumental are inter-related. This is a purposive universe, teleological ordered toward goodness and joy. Thus the family is not only understood as given, but as for the sake of fulfillment.

B. On page 22 Kelsay counsels UT to affirm more directly the religious and narrative roots of its philosophical vision; to point less to its philosophical system than to the religious teachings and practices within its community.

Response to IIIB: Kelsay's insight here is important. UT really is rooted in a particular religious tradition (FUT 234-235). It is not the result of abstract reasoning. At its foundation is a claim of new revelation and a community of believers who commit their lives to practicing and furthering that revelation. However, I am not sure that this requires UT to abandon its philosophical enterprise altogether. UT is a philosophical rendering of Rev. Moon's revelation. UT has no power aside from the power and truthfulness of Rev. Moon's teaching. Christian thought throughout the ages, both theological and philosophical, has emerged on the basis of a revelation presented in a few pages of an ancient text. Of course, Christian philosophy is largely out of favor among, or radically revised by contemporary constructivists. Christianity has always been in tension with "the world." The same is true of UT.

I suspect that Kelsay is pushing UT to adopt what I would call a more communitarian perspective. I think here especially of the work of Stanley Hauerwas. This option moves in a more clearly sectarian direction; one which tends to accept a kind of (Wittgensteinian) language-game relativism. That is, theological discourse has no public credibility (evidenced by such horrid and

socially oppressive acts as polite prayers at graduation exercises), but it is respected or tolerated when kept private, and when its claims are restricted. The Divine Principle does make universal claims, and therefore it seeks to present itself in a more universal manner.

As I have said in the past, I very much appreciate John Kelsay's thoughtful probing. He works kindly but substantively and generates the kind of thinking that fertilizes the minds of UT thinkers.