

Unification Thought and the Ground of Ethics

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I

Recently (May, 2002) I published a book in Japanese called *Yoku Ikiru (Living a Good Life)* bearing the subtitle *Ningen-gaku no Kiso to Rinri no Konkyo (Establishing "Humanology" and the Ground of Ethics)*, the main title borrowed from Plato's famous dictum in *Crito*: "Not life, but a Good life."

In this book I tried to expound systematically my long-brewed philosophical scheme since my forerunning book *Ishiki no Saihen (The Restructuring of Consciousness, 1992)*. It might be said that my secret aim in writing this book was to pave the way for Unification Thought to be accepted by as many people as possible. I do not mean that I introduced or even referred to Unification Thought in this book, but I tried to condition people, as it were, so that Unification Thought may be amenable to them, for people may guard against such a system of thought as strongly dogmatic, and therefore dubious, even if they are not particularly against Unification Church.

I thought it best to start by asking the fundamental question "What is man?" because, if there wasn't some basic agreement about your own self among all of us, including materialists, our supposed antagonists, no argument could be started. As you know, Unification Thought starts with the assumption that there must be some divine origin for the present world to exist. But people in general, no doubt most Japanese, are not conditioned to such a way of thinking apparently because of the materialistic education to which they have been exposed.

So what is required of us is to disprove materialism and the materialistic view of the human being which, though prevailing among them, are apparently unfelt as such. Unification Thought does refute materialism, but that argument is not placed at the beginning of the book. The general assumption of the people today, including intellectuals and academics, is strongly materialistic, but they usually are not aware of it, which makes the matter worse. They are reluctant to admit there is any other way of looking at the reality of the world, because they are simply unable to think any other

way. So there's the rub for us to handle first.

There is absolute need to wake people because most people today are half-asleep or paralytic philosophically, though they are very much active and intelligent in technical ways. It is surprising that philosophy, the most fundamental and most intimate question to us, should be thought most irrelevant to us. This inability to ask philosophical questions is itself a symptom of the materialistic climate of our age.

II

We will need some strategy, then, to cope with this general mentality of our age. This general assumption, because it is unconscious, is most difficult to tackle. I adopted a strategy of showing a parallelism between the reality we are given and a work of art. Both the world we live in and a work of art, say, a piece of poetry, are something that has to be interpreted, that is to say, something that could not have a meaning without our interpretation. They are nothing without us, without our participation in the mind of the maker. Neither of them is given to us as a construction significant in itself.

This analogy is certainly used in Unification Thought, but it has a deeper significance and greater utility than is stated in it. I insist that what I say ought to be accepted even by materialists. For the idea of the *maker* can either be the Creator or an impersonal, mechanical agent, since our world, including ourselves, is somehow made. And in the idea of *interpretation* can be included the mechanistic-scientific interpretation of our world. Only the materialist must concede that the mechanistic-scientific interpretation of the world is not *the* interpretation but *one* interpretation.

The world we are given and live in is comparable to a work of art in that both are hierarchical living structures, that is to say, they are multi-leveled with the most material (inanimate, physical) bottom going up to less material and more spiritual (animate, metaphysical) levels of existence until at the uppermost level one purely spiritual entity (creative force) must be supposed. Both the universe as a whole and a work of art (a poem, for example) are such multi-leveled hierarchical structures.

This hierarchical structure of being—what A. O. Lovejoy once called “the Great Chain of Being”—is what I explained in detail in both my former and latest books as being common to all that can be said to be living—not merely biologically but in the broad sense of the word. So this analogy between a work of art and the universe is also analogy,

most typically, between a work of art and the human being as the highest spiritual form of life, aptly called microcosm, the miniature representation of the universe.

Once this analogy can be established, it should be one step to persuading materialistically biased people of the existence of the spiritual levels of being, that some things can exist without occupying physical space. No one, I suppose, dares to deny the existent level of a poem or a piece of music as a non-material, spiritual form of being. Everyone will agree that a poem or a piece of music is composed of body and spirit, that is to say, its more physical, visible levels and its more spiritual, invisible, intangible levels of being.

What is more, works of art are not something aloft and apart from their appreciators. They vary in their meaning according to the empathic ability of those who enjoy them. They even could not exist if there were no one to care for them. The same thing can be said about the universe, the reality into which we are born to live and die. If we are utterly mechanical-minded, the universe will show us only its mechanical side. And just as a poem cannot be reduced to its component elements, mere assemblage of words, letters or ink spots, though they are themselves essential for the poem to exist, so the universe cannot either be reduced to its component elementary materials, those objects for physical sciences, though they are in no way unimportant.

My book is an exposition of my own scheme of philosophy, but at the same time, is intended to make it easier for prejudiced people to accept Unification Thought. Central to this Thought is the insistence that the world is a compound entity of body and spirit, denying both materialism and spiritualism in their exclusive forms. I hope I could make it easier for anyone to get into Unification Thought by proposing the structural similarity between a work of art and the universe itself. This structural similarity or parallelism should naturally lead people to the idea of the Creator at the spiritual end of the hierarchy, since no work of art exists without its author, the artist.

All things that can be said to be “living” are more or less structurally similar, but this similarity is most manifest between the human being and a work of art, because we are a spiritual being with our physical base embedded in the animal, plant, and material levels of being. If we die we are reduced to inanimate matter in no time. Conversely, to create the human being has required cosmic time. This shows that the human being is microcosm of the universe not only spatially but also historically. The analogy holds in

that creation needs in either case a tremendous effort of a spiritual creator, and is not a mere mechanical adding up of the component elements.

If we can convince materialists—mostly unconscious materialists—of the validity of this analogy, we may hope to persuade them that the human being is not the mere product of chance and natural selection which most people believe to be unshakable, though they will probably be hard put if pressed for further explanation. At least they should stop conceiving themselves as a mere adding up of molecules or cells, or a mere end product of the ‘primordial soup’. They should also recognize the folly of explaining the higher, spiritual levels of their own being, of which they will not deny the existence, *from below*, that is, in terms of the mechanical workings of the lower levels. This, of course, is not to deny the significance of ‘life sciences’ such as molecular biology.

There are still plenty of Darwinians, accounting for the incorrigibly materialistic climate of our time. Worse still, some of those who interpret life as machine are warlike as exemplified by Richard Dawkins, who seems to be considerably influential. But Darwinians may well be warlike as far as the greater part of us keep adhering to a certain fundamental assumption without questioning it at all. Their challenging question “How else do you dare to explain it?” may well be a rightful question on this assumption. From this we are led to a deeper ontological question.

III

What is life? This time-honored question is now more worth asking than ever, because we are in the habit of answering it from the unconsciously assumed materialistic point of view. When we are asked “What is diamond?” we usually answer (if we know) it is carbon, because we are trained to think analytically and to believe that analysis can lead us to the heart of the matter. But does this apply to life? Most life-scientists think it does, as far as I know, and people in the street follow in the wake of specialists because they are laymen and laymen are not qualified to say anything in regard to such a “difficult” matter.

But the question “What is life?” is really a philosophical question before it is scientists’. Fundamentally considered, life is not something that can be objectified: we cannot say we *have* life, because we *are* life, or part of life. Our being prior to our life is nonsense. We simply cannot say what life is. We can only say through investigation what it is that makes life possible physically. It is only the physical side of life that is scientifically

known, not the whole of it. Stated otherwise, physical matter is only a necessary condition for life and not the sufficient condition.

This leads us to the fundamental question: What is the ontological basis of this reality we are given? Is it matter or is it life? Does matter exist prior to life, or does life exist prior to matter? Life is something invisible, but something that does exist, without, however, occupying space in order to exist. This question of ontological precedence must be a strict either-or question, there being no middle or eclectic choices. This is a matter that must first be confirmed and agreed on by everybody.

Then, for the sake of fairness to the materialists, I have proposed the following statement for anyone either to take or to reject:

Seeing precedes/preceded the eye.

This sentence simply and symbolically states what may be called the mystery of our universe. Materialists should choose the reversed statement: The eye precedes/preceded seeing. I have taken the strategy of leaving the reader to choose between these two statements and not forcing either of them. I made a point that either statement is a mystery, being against our common reason and beyond our power to judge, so that this is a matter of the choice of hypotheses, not of truths, and that the comparative value of a hypothesis lies in its capacity, that is, how much it can explain with how simple a principle.

IV

This leads us on to the problem of evolution, because evolution is really the problem of ontological precedence. Does life come from matter? Or does life exist, has life existed, prior to all? Any theory of evolution cannot evade this philosophical choice before it proceeds with its theorizing. And it must be pointed out that Darwinism makes nothing of this choice as if such a thing didn't exist. Darwinians are generally so warlike simply because they cannot or will not think of any other choice than *matter precedes life*.

The unquestioned assumption of Darwinian materialism that life somehow comes out of matter shall not go free unquestioned. Why not assume, instead, that life has existed from the beginning, only at first invisibly, then visibly as primitive life forms, then gradually as higher life forms? If this assumption is to be spurned as a mystery, then we shall have to accept the greater mystery that life comes out of matter, which is more gruesome than mysterious.

I do not say what hypothesis to choose, but I do say we should choose better hypothesis. What, then, is life as considered as prior to all, existing from the beginning as potentiality, since life itself is invisible? Consider the symbolic formula I have proposed: Seeing precedes/preceded the eye. Our common sense may tell us: How, without the eye, is seeing possible? But then with an equal right we can ask: How can the eye appear without the will to see?

So long as we are not fool enough to be doped by such a nonsensical explanation as 'blind machinework' or 'pure chance', we will have to think of life as inseparable from mind, as life-mind, so to say, mind being ontologically prior to the brain. If we once posit such a thing as 'life-mind' as pre-existent to all, then everyone of us will be led inevitably to the idea of God—God, the Creator and the Creative Force. In Unification Thought this is called 'protoconsciousness' and discussed together with 'protoimage' as follows:

As explained before, protoconsciousness is the cosmic consciousness which has permeated the cells and tissues of living things, that is to say, it is life; and protoimage is the image reflected on the protoconsciousness, which is a film of consciousness. Protoconsciousness is a purposeful consciousness, and protoimage is nothing but information. ¹

What, then, is this always-already-existing life or life-mind? Evidently it is something with a self-realizing will, with some purpose, with a design. It is something that grows, generates and creates with creative will. From this point of view the notion of evolution has to be redefined. Instead of the conventional notion of it as increasing biological complexity and functional refinement, it must be viewed as the development of the cosmic mind, just as a baby's awareness is enlarged, refined, brightened as it grows older. Evolution is the process of the cosmic life-mind getting to its increased awareness, its wider awakening. Growing complexity of physical systems is only a means to make this possible.

Now, what does it mean for the cosmic life-mind to grow more wide-awake? It is not enough to say that it grows more intelligent, though humans are no doubt more intelligent than animals or reptiles. Evidently it means growing less self-centered, just as an infant grows less self-centered towards its childhood and then adulthood.

Language itself, which first appeared with the advent of humans, well represents this escape from self-centeredness, since there is no such thing as self-centered or subjective language. Nor is there any such thing as a subjective science or subjective mathematics, while animal instinct may be called a subjective language.

Buddhist training is a training to escape from your dark, subjective, self-centered world toward a higher, brighter, more wide-awake, objective world, as exemplified by the fact that *Buddha* means 'one who is wide-awake'. The point to make here is that Buddhist training is a training in unison with the trend of the cosmic evolution. It is the cosmic life-mind itself which is trying to get less self-centered and toward greater wakefulness *through* higher forms of life and finally humans. The age when reptiles called dinosaurs reigned over the earth, for instance, can be interpreted as the age when the cosmic life-mind was only half awake. Higher religions of the world seem to have known that humans were originally intended to be more wide-awake than they actually are, that they somehow have lapsed from their original state.

I think it is a matter to be deeply considered that our efforts to raise ourselves are the efforts of the universe itself. When we endeavor for higher goals we are endeavoring in unison with the cosmic life, that is to say, with God. To raise ourselves is to become less self-centered, however difficult it may be to us. Only so understood, can the life of man have a full meaning. It is not just to get more intelligent or wealthier, nor even more civilized in the conventional use of the word. And it must be stressed again and again that from the choice of the materialistic hypothesis, the meaning of our life, the purpose of our endeavors, can never be drawn. All troubles of our time arise solely from our inability to show a definite direction in which to go.

V

The concept of ethics or morality will not come to its full meaning until we have understood that it is inherent in the cosmic will and that we are participating in the cosmic effort. We cannot invent the purpose or meaning of our existence on our own account. All this means that it is absolutely necessary to somehow revalue and revive the Aristotelian teleological outlook on the world, which is the outlook of Unification Thought, too.

We moderns are accustomed to think as modern sciences do, and are apt to regard such a thing as teleology as nonsense of the past time, but it must be known that the

teleological view of the world does not at all contradict the modern mechanistic view. For teleology can include mechanism without affecting it in any way, but not vice versa, because the former is the more comprehensive (*i.e.* holistic) understanding of the universe, while the latter must be exclusive and hostile to teleology, or to any other suggestion disharmonious with itself. This is equal to saying life can include matter in it, but that matter cannot include life.

Though most scientists today are by nature disdainful of teleology, there are some enlightened scientists who support, or have come to support, teleology in the very name of science. In his Foreword to Barrow and Tipler's *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* physicist John Wheeler writes:

The philosopher of old was right! Meaning is important, is even central. It is not only that man is adapted to the universe. The universe is adapted to man. Imagine a universe in which one or another of the fundamental dimensionless constants of physics is altered by a few percent one way or the other? Man could never come into being in such a universe. That is the central point of the anthropic principle. According to this principle, a life-giving factor lies at the center of the whole machinery and design of the world.²

The so-called Anthropic Principle, which says that constants of physics from the very beginning of Big Bang have all been 'fine-tuned' so as to produce humans together with the environments fittest for them, has not yet drawn proper attention that it deserves. But this is a most revolutionary finding of our time because it implies a revolution in philosophy: the revival of teleology, that "a life-giving factor lies at the center of the whole machinery and design of the world."

The choice I have proposed between life-mind and matter as more basic to the world is now inevitable to us. However grudgingly, scientists should now stop being materialists, the folly of being scornful of the idea of God or of the idea of life-mind as ontologically pre-existent. If they stop it, there may be some hope of revolution in the unconscious philosophy of our time which is now desperately needed.

In his enlightening book *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God*, physicist Hugh Ross observes:

In my conversations with those who do research on the characteristics of the universe, and in all my readings of articles or books on the subject, not one person denies the conclusion that somehow the cosmos has been crafted to make it a fit habitat for life. Astronomers by nature tend to be independent and iconoclastic. If an opportunity for disagreement exists, they will seize it. But on the issue of the fine tuning or careful crafting of the cosmos, the evidence is so compelling that I have yet to hear of any dissent. ...

Much more is going on, however, than mere talk by astronomers about the design of the cosmos for life support. Words such as *somebody fine-tuned nature*, *superintellect*, *monkeyed*, *overwhelming design*, *miraculous*, *hand of God*, *ultimate purpose*, *God's mind*, *exquisite order*, *very delicate balance*, *exceedingly ingenious*, *supernatural Agency*, *supernatural plan*, *tailor-made*, *Supreme Being*, and *providentially crafted* obviously apply to a Person. Beyond just establishing that the Creator is a Person, the findings about design provide some evidence of what that Person is like.³

The discovery here claimed that not only “the Creator is a Person” but “what that Person is like” has been known, strongly reminds us of Unification Thought, since it is a teaching through and through about “what that Person is like.”

VI

We are drawn back to the old and ever new questions: “What is life? What is man? What is man to do? How is he to live?” What is needed today, and urgently needed, is just a Copernican revolution in our assumptions, an unbiased examination of the accepted hypotheses. Ethics must be grounded upon a proper interpretation of the human being. The proper interpretation of man must be grounded upon a proper interpretation of life. And the interpretation of life is the question of philosophical choice, not the question of positivist reasoning. All depends on what hypothesis we choose in the first place, ‘Seeing precedes the eye’ or ‘The eye precedes seeing’, that is, the choice of ontological priority. And it finally comes to the question: What hypothesis can better explain the greater extent of our reality by a more strongly unifying principle?

The sophisticated mind of the modern man cannot accept ‘truths’ proposed as such. So strategically let us call the materialist hypothesis a poor, less workable hypothesis, not exactly a false one. Now it must be noted that this poor hypothesis concerning the universe and the human being can never, in any way, produce any guiding principle for

our conduct. For a whole nation to be indifferent to this philosophical choice would be a crime, though people usually don't feel that way. This is apparent in the expressly materialist countries like North Korea and Red China, where Government must provide their special moral standards, because there can be no moral standards there unless forced from without.

Ethics must be religious in the sense that it must be grounded on the religious interpretation of the human being. In non-religious communities like Japan ethics might exist and function to some extent, but it is destined to go bankrupt sooner or later, as is all too apparent in recent years. By 'non-religious' I mean 'too shallow to have philosophy' or 'spiritually under-developed'. Ethics is the social standards of what to do and how to live, and it is the principle of conduct not only of the individual but of the state itself. It should be the most basic guiding principle for both the individual and the state. Naturally, it will not properly function where people as a whole have never asked such a question as "What is man? and where do I come from?" as if it were below their dignity to ask, as if whatever may smack of religion must be deliberately shoved outside their concern.

The sense of responsibility *as a human being* will never grow up in a non-religious country, although the sense of responsibility of those in responsible positions may grow up even to an unusual degree. Where the human being is interpreted, however unconsciously, as simply a natural product of the natural process, the idea of responsibility can only be in regard to other fellow beings. Where, on the other hand, the human being is interpreted as embedded in the cosmic life-mind, as inseparable from some supreme, purposeful being, people's idea of responsibility will be, first and foremost, in regard to that supreme being which lives in the depth of their minds.

The cosmic life-mind, moreover, is something growing. For anything to grow is to have some end in view, to have something to realize. What, then, was in view, when the cosmic life-mind, in the cosmic growth, first realized 'free will' in us humans? Since before its emergence there had only been instinct, and consequently no such thing as ethics (animals have no good and evil), the emergence of 'free will' necessarily presupposes responsibility as a human being, namely, ethics. And this 'free will' bound up with responsibility must be of vital importance to us humans. We are intended to control ourselves, to make ourselves our own masters, to be in a position nearer to the Creator than animals. We are born with ethics *input* deep inside us.

Such an understanding of ourselves is deduced only from the proper choice of the first alternative hypotheses. From the other ontological choice, the materialistic hypothesis, should follow just the opposite picture of man: a Satanic or depreciative picture of ourselves, and ethics imposed on us from outside and therefore repulsive. The motive for the battle between two camps, right and left, or conservative and liberal, as seen in Japan as well as America today, should all be traced back to this first question of the alternative ontological hypotheses. Otherwise, all argument would be in vain, the points of dispute unclear, and no one really would know what it is he is insisting.

This is just where Unification Thought helps us with a clear vision, though I am not particularly introducing or following it literally. For instance, except from this point of view, the full significance of forbearance would never be known. Forbearance is one of the greatest virtues required of man, and nobody is expected to depreciate it. In passing, Forbearance, along with Truthfulness and Beneficence, is counted to be one of the three great virtues of man in the now underground Chinese religious order *Falun Gong* (法輪功).

However, unless the meaning of forbearance is drawn from *our* cosmological picture, we cannot understand why it is so important to us, or even whether it is important or not. No doubt, this is an issue that has caused a great confusion among us. Conservatives usually insist on forbearance, but they do not know why, unless it is a traditional virtue. Liberals are usually doubtful of its importance, and some among them are explicitly against it. But they also do not know why they are against it, only that they do not see why they should keep to tradition and limit desires.

Our hypothesis has been: that the universe is in the process of awakening or evolution as cosmic life-mind, not as physical mechanics, that it is the process of getting less and less self-centered, and that it finally has realized itself or is realizing itself *through* the human being. Therefore, that this great cosmic direction is *input* to us humans as ethics, or our responsibility to ourselves and to others, or our responsibility of overcoming our more self-centered side and developing our more selfless side. Forbearance as a virtue acquires its full significance only when it is viewed in this perspective. Forbearance, if it had no end in view, would be beyond forbearance.

The sense of ethics, or the sense of direction of your life, can arise only when you have a sense of being rooted in something greater than yourself which also has a direction. From this the true idea of God and love will be naturally deduced as the central fact to our being. To get out of a self-centered domain of being into a more selfless, objective domain of being means nothing but the realization of love, or at least, movement toward the realization of love. This love is not human-centered love but divine and absolute love, in the sense that it is the reflection in us of the absolute cosmic movement. The idea of love must be founded on the proper interpretation of the universe. Otherwise, it would be utilized for any end you liked, as is actually utilized today everywhere even by materialists and atheists. All confusion of the present-day world derives from a shallow understanding of the universe.

It is most poignantly apparent in the issue of sexual morality. If love is interpreted as something self-sufficient within the human level, any sexual behavior short of rape will be permitted in the name of love. It is understandable that materialists and atheists must promote unlimited sexual freedom, because their original interpretational choice compels them to take the opposite interpretation of love from ours, that is, human-centered or even *me*-centered idea of love. All we should do, therefore, would not be so much to seek to refute them in the name of truth as to remind them how poor a hypothesis they have chosen unconsciously. Theirs and ours are alike hypotheses, yes, but which do you prefer as more workable, as more capable?

It is in respect to sexual issue that the consideration of evolution as that of life-mind helps us to clarify our tangled thoughts. Why are we humans alone free from the mating season, while other animals are fettered to it? Is that because we tried and made ourselves free to enjoy ourselves more than animals, for selfish reasons? No. We don't make ourselves. We are created, and we are created free from the mating season and *therefore* as sexually responsible both individually and socially. Animals are not held responsible because they are not free. This, and no other, is the origin of sexual morality.

This point of view is made explicit in Unification Thought. Not only that. Unification Thought teaches as its central dogma that the division of male and female (*Yang* and *Yin*) is something pre-existent in the universe as a nature of God. Also it teaches that this divine characteristic is embodied in the human married couple, giving them a holy, inviolable nature. Except from such a point of view the sexual issues, now the most urgent all over the world, could not be solved. Unconscious Darwinians of today may

have a vague idea that the division of sex somehow came into existence in the process of evolution. But they should recognize that this idea is not only against our reason but it throws our society into a limitless moral degradation.

Lastly, to confess honestly, I was not very much impressed when I first received a lecture on Unification Thought from the late Dr. Sang Hun Lee about fifteen years ago. But with time and with my improved understanding, it has revealed its value more and more to me, till now I am convinced that nothing but the world-wide reception of Unification Thought can solve those serious problems that we face everywhere today. My book is one attempt I propose to make the reception easier.

Notes

- (1) *Essentials of Unification Thought: The Head-Wing Thought* (Unification Thought Institute, 1992) p. 339.
- (2) John D. Barrow & Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford University Press, 1986) p. vii.
- (3) Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* (NavPress, 2001) pp. 160–61.