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THE PROBLEMS OF EXISTENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS:
LOVE, RELATIONALITY, AND THE PATH WITH HEART

by

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I. Principled Humanity and the Concept of Heart

It is appropriate in this setting that we begin with an ancient Greek proverb: "The loving heart is always young." For while Lee's recent book, Explaining Unification Thought,¹ discusses a number of fundamental, technical issues in ontology, aesthetics, epistemology, logic, and axiology, a cornerstone of this text--in my judgment--is its treatment of "heart."² When discussing these theories of human nature and potential, of origins and divine character, Lee returns again and again to the notion of heart. We hope in this essay to examine the position and role of this notion in Lee's thought and to compare that treatment with related concepts in alternative philosophical and theological visions that have similar concerns.

In the Introduction to Explaining Unification Thought, Lee points out:

In every age, both in the Occident and in the Orient, people have searched for a thought to solve their problems--political, economic, educational, familial, and so on. Quite obviously, however, these problems have not been solved at the roots, although valiant stop-gap efforts have been made. . . . Man will always seek a solution to his problems, in order to realize peace, happiness, and well-being. It is important, though, to analyze the problems themselves--not just their manifestations. In Unification Thought, the first problem is that of "existence," and the second concerns how all existing beings interrelate, i.e., the problem of "relationships."³

¹ Sang Hun Lee (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1981).

² Admittedly, I may be drawn to Lee's consideration of this topic by my own agenda of late, an agenda shaped by my students' request to study--within the context of an academic curriculum--the notions of "wholeness," "heart," and "love." As one reads the literature of Tillich, Fromm, Wieman, and others on these notions, one ponders the possibility that a serious consideration of these issues may raise questions which are at once the most complex and the most simple of human life. See, for example, Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952); Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); Henry Nelson Wieman, Creative Freedom: Vocation of Liberal Religion, edited by W. Creighton Peden and Larry E. Axel (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982).

³ p. xxiii.

It is Lee's contention, then, that every problem can be classified under these two sets, that of "existence" and that of "relationships." Furthermore, Lee contends: "The fact that no thought has ever actually solved mankind's problems indicates to us that these two problems have not been solved."⁴ Given this situation, Lee traces its cause to a condition of "fallenness." That is, societal problems have been caused by "non-principled" man. He concludes: " . . . the solution to the problems, then, is to change non-principled man into principled man."⁵ And in a crucial paragraph, Lee anticipates the important question which this line of reasoning raises: "What do we mean by principled man? The Unification Principle, quoting the Bible, says that man is created in the image of God. We must, therefore, understand the Original Image, in order to understand correctly what the principled existence and relationships of man should be, even in the levels of family, society, nation, and world."⁶

In this manner, Lee brings his discussion of the questions of existence and relationships to a consideration of the "image of God" or "Original Image." The presentation of the Unification Principle or the question of principled humanity and existence, for Lee, entails an analysis of what we might mean when we use the crucial phrase, "divine character." And it is this analysis, as we shall see, which brings the notion of "heart" to the fore.

For Lee, then, principled humanity is humanity that embodies (in

⁴ pp. xxiii-xxiv.

⁵ p. xxiv.

⁶ Ibid.

its nature and its relationships) divine image, divine character. Among the aspects of divine character are Heart, Logos, and creativity. "Heart," according to Lee, is that "which lies deeper than intellect, emotion, and will."⁷ For Unification Thought, Heart is defined as "the emotional impulse to seek joy through love."⁸ Lee claims that humankind has heart (being created in the "Image of God"); that is, humankind has "the emotional impulse to seek joy through love." This impulse can refer both to the capacity of loving (as a subject) and of being loved (as an object). Lee points out that the kind of love at issue here is not "mundane love (self-centered love), but true love."⁹ And Lee echoes the Unificationist axiom that "the kind of joy that is obtained through mundane love is relative and temporary, while the kind of joy that is obtained through God-centered love is absolute and eternal."¹⁰ Relationality through true love, then, seems to be the answer to the problem of existence. But most people (living in an "unprincipled" state) do not realize this truth. Instead, Lee claims: "Fallen man, however, is not aware that true joy can be obtained through love, or he has an illusion that it can be obtained through material things, power, knowledge, and so on."¹¹ It is the great mistake of humankind that people try to find joy in pursuits and goals that can only offer relative (or mundane) joy. Too often, humankind chooses the measurable as

⁷ p. 21.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

the only legitimate sphere, as the only realm worthy of effort and devotion. "The only thing that counts is the countable." "If it doesn't make dollars, it doesn't make sense." As an alternative vision, Lee suggests: "to center on Heart means to give spiritual values priority, valuing physical life subordinately."¹² Regrettably, "fallen man . . . does not know how to obtain true joy. He is not aware that there is true joy only in true love, and he seeks joy through wealth, power, fame, mundane love, and so on."¹³ As a corrective, Unification Thought at its best suggests that all endeavors--research, science, scholarship, commerce, etc.--should be pursued with heart, that is, within the orientation of love toward those with whom we are related. Only then can our impulse for joy be truly satisfied. Lee sees this orientation as central to his whole project, for he concludes his section:

Among the original human characteristics I have explained, the most essential one is "a being with heart" or "a being with love." Man exists to love others--that is, to love his family, neighbors, society, nation, world, and God. Philosophers thus far have advocated various views of man, such as homo sapiens (intellectual man), homo faber (technical man), homo religiosus (religious man), homo economicus (economic man), homo liberalis (liberal man), social animal, and tool-making animal. Unification Thought, however, regards man as homo amoris, which means "man of love," or "man for loving."¹⁴

II. The Fundamental Questions: Heart, Love, and Relationality

I am sympathetic to Lee's concerns and Lee's approach here, for Lee raises the fundamental questions concerning the proper orientation of

¹² Ibid., p. 106n.

¹³ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

our lives. In drawing our attention to the centrality of heart and to the role of love and relationality in legitimizing our life activities, this book highlights a key to what might be termed true spirituality or authenticity in human existence. And in lifting this issue to full attention, Lee is raising concerns which transcend boundaries between cultures, philosophies, and particular religions. For it is not just the great philosophic seers and the spiritual teachers of the high religious traditions who have sought to draw our genuine attention to these matters.

Look, for example, at The Teachings of Don Juan,¹⁵ where Carlos Castaneda records the musings and wisdom of a Yaqui Indian sorcerer. Upon being asked for advice one day, the old Indian teacher talked about paths of life, and he talked about heart.

"Anything is one of a million paths. Therefore you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any conditions. To have such clarity you must lead a disciplined life. Only then will you know that any path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question. This question is one that only a very old man asks. My benefactor told me about it once when I was young, and my blood was too vigorous for me to understand it. Now I do understand it. I will tell you what it is: Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush, or into the bush. In my own life I could say I have traversed long, long paths, but I am not anywhere. My benefactor's question has meaning now. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life."¹⁶

¹⁵ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 76.

More than a year later, Castaneda asked don Juan, "But how do you know when a path has no heart?" The following exchange took place:

"Before you embark on it you ask the question: Does this path have a heart? If the answer is no, you will know it, and then you must choose another path."

"But how will I know for sure whether a path has a heart or not?"

"Anybody would know that. The trouble is nobody asks the question; and when a man finally realizes that he has taken a path without a heart, the path is ready to kill him. At that point very few men can stop to deliberate, and leave the path."

"How should I proceed to ask the question properly, don Juan?"

"Just ask it."

"I mean, is there a proper method, so I would not lie to myself and believe the answer is yes when it really is no?"

"Why would you lie?"

"Perhaps because at the moment the path is pleasant and enjoyable."

"That is nonsense. A path without a heart is never enjoyable. You have to work hard even to take it. On the other hand, a path with heart is easy; it does not make you work at liking it."¹⁷

The path with heart, the principled human being, seeking joy through love. I suggest that don Juan's question is the right question. And we may learn to ask it more readily and more properly if we augment Lee's analysis with that of a humanistic psychologist and that of modern biblical exegesis. Toward that end, I wish to direct our attention, albeit briefly, to Erich Fromm's work on mature love (a concept remarkably similar to that on which Lee's presentation is founded) and to Phyllis Tribble's exegesis of one of the Genesis creation narratives (a mythic corpus which grounds Lee's work on divine image and original human nature).¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁸ I shall rely here primarily on Fromm's classic work, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper & Row, 1956) and Phyllis Tribble's more recent work, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

III. Separation and Mature Love

In a section entitled, "Love, the Answer to the Problem of Human Existence,"¹⁹ Fromm argues that separation is the great problem of human existence. "The experience of separateness arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety."²⁰ To overcome this separateness, says Fromm, is the deepest need and highest goal of a person's life. Indeed, "man--of all ages and cultures--is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one's own individual life and find at-onement."²¹ Presumably, the question is the same for the professional philosopher as for the mechanic and the homemaker, for the person in the Orient and in the Occident, for urban man and rural man, for Sang Hun Lee and don Juan and Erich Fromm and for the writer of the Genesis narrative.

While the basic question is the same, a number of different answers have been given. In fact, Fromm sees the history of religion and philosophy as the history of these answers. And while the answers have varied, they are not innumerable. Indeed, once minor differences are passed over, the answers are relatively few in number.

Fromm explores the three ultimately unsatisfactory kinds of answers that have been given to the problem of escaping separateness. The first of these is the attempt through orgiastic states. These experiences can be drug-induced, or they can come through a ritual experience of a group.

¹⁹ Fromm, The Art of Loving, pp. 7-38.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

²¹ Ibid., p. 9.

Sexual orgasm can produce this state as well. In any case, in this kind of solution a transitory state of exaltation is attained, "the world outside disappears, and with it the feeling of separateness from it."²² In this way a momentary fusion is attained. But the major problem with this answer is that it is momentary, transitory. It provides only a fleeting escape from the anxiety of separateness. As Fromm writes, "While they try to escape from separateness by taking refuge in alcohol or drugs, they feel all the more separate after the orgiastic experience is over, and thus are driven to take recourse to it with increasing frequency and intensity."²³ So also, with attempts through sexual orgasm: for many, "it becomes a desperate attempt to escape the anxiety engendered by separateness, and it results in an ever-increasing sense of separateness, since the sexual act without love never bridges the gap between two human beings, except momentarily."²⁴ In sum, while attempts to overcome separateness through orgiastic union are intense, they are, however, only transitory and periodical. Consequently, they are ultimately unsatisfactory.

A second solution is the answer of conformity. Modern people often try to escape the frightening experience of individuality by simply conforming to the herd or the group. If union through customs, practices, and beliefs can be achieved, then separateness apparently dissolves. However, too often, in modern society, we seek sameness rather than equality, identicalness rather than community. Consequently, herd conformity is not

²² Ibid., p. 11.

²³ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁴ Ibid.

a genuine answer to the problem. Dominated by routine and shallowness, it only addresses the issue on a surface level.

A third way of achieving union that has been proposed is through creative activity and productive work. In this way, a person can unite oneself with the material of one's craft and, therefore, with one's world. This, of course, applies only to work in which the product is genuinely the product of one's creative activity, not merely the result of an assembly-line process in which the worker is a mere appendage. But more significantly, Fromm notes, "the unity achieved in productive work is not interpersonal"²⁵ and, therefore, does not provide a satisfactory answer to the problem.

The only fully satisfactory answer to the problem of existence, for Fromm, is that of mature love. This can give true interpersonal fusion; it can relate people genuinely to one another and to the foundations of being itself. An analysis of mature love (an analysis we shall not belabor here) forms the substance of the remainder of Fromm's book. He notes that in mature love the integrity of the individuality is preserved, while the act of potently loving the other is emphasized. This kind of love (which is characterized by care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge) "is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness."²⁶ When Lee writes of "heart" and when Fromm writes of "mature love," the agenda, it seems

²⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

to me, are very much the same. Fromm lacks the theistic imagery, but both authors are attending to the question which don Juan claims is the crucial one of life.

IV. The Image of God

To return directly to Lee's analysis of the problems of existence and relationships, we recall that the notion, "image of God," from the Genesis myth, plays a central role in the development of Lee's presentation of Original Image. What does this phrase mean? Does it lead us to considerations of heart as Lee defines it--"the emotional impulse to seek joy through love"? And does this approach connect with our concern for relationships through love?

Here our investigation can be aided by recent exegetical work of the biblical scholar, Phyllis Trible. In the narrative of creation found in Genesis 1, we read: "And God created humankind in his image, in the image of God created he him;" (verse 27). According to the text, humankind is the only creature made "in the image of God." The other creatures are brought into existence without any reference to imaging. Indeed, only for the creation of humankind is there divine deliberation beforehand. In verse 26, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness." So, given that it is only humankind that is created in this manner, we need to ask: "What does it mean to be created in the image of God?" Over the centuries, commentators have reflected on the biblical writer's intent here. They have suggested that to be created "in the image of God" is to be created with a "soul," or with self-reflective consciousness, or with unique intellectual capacity, or will, or wisdom. Exegesis of this phrase

has resulted in countless debates about how humankind is unique, about what distinguishes humanity from all other animals. Is it the soul? Is it the thumb? Is it the large brain? What do we mean: "created in the image of God"?

Can we look directly to the text for an answer? In verse 26, we read: "And God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness'." Then in verse 27: "And God created humankind in his image, 'in the image of God created he him;'" The next words (the concluding words) of verse 27, as if to answer our puzzle, conclude: "male and female created he them." So, according to the suggestion of the text, what does it mean to be created in the image of God? It means to be created male and female. Humankind (the only species created in the image of God) is the only creature for whom sexuality (diversity) is designated in its creation. It is the only creature for whom inclusiveness amidst variety, that is, relationality, is of concern. After chapter 1, we go through several chapters of the Genesis account before we encounter again the phraseology of divine likeness. The next time the phrase appears is in chapter 5, verse 1: "When God created humankind, he created him in the likeness of God;" and as if to answer our question, the sentence concludes (verse 2): "male and female created he them."

Is there then something unique about humankind's nature and existence and about the problem of that existence? Yes, the biblical mythos suggests that it is in relationality that our existence is founded and justified. This is relationality in the midst of diversity, interpersonal fusion in the context of being created male and female, the embodiment of heart in the context of divine image. We point out with Lee, then, that for human being the

problem of "existence" and the problem of "relationships" are, in fact, inextricably linked. In fact, the one grounds the other, and vice versa. It cannot be otherwise for a being created "in the image of God." Therefore, we must ask of every potential path: Is it the path with heart?