

# What is the Spirit? Some Physics of Spiritual Existence

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## 1. Introduction

The theme of the conference is dealing with the unity of the sciences. Unification thought has a role to play in unifying many different fields around a common purpose, but for me it is of particular importance for bringing together natural science and theology. Usually when we talk of religion and science in the same breath what first comes to mind is the ongoing creation-evolution debates. Discussions of intelligent design are currently the fashion in this field. However, for me, there is a more fundamental discontinuity between religion and natural science that divides the two more effectively than any discussion of purpose or intelligent intervention in the development of life. That discontinuity arises over understanding the nature of spiritual existence.

The western Christian philosophical tradition of spirit finds its roots in Plato's division of existing beings into form and matter.<sup>1</sup> In this view matter is the continuous material "stuff" of the being, and form is the intangible and non material idea or pattern of the being. For Plato the forms exist independently of material beings in their own realm. In human beings he equates form with mind and soul, and this equality has stuck. Since then the concept of spirit has been wedded to that of immaterial mind and is the common Western and Christian perception of spirit. The ontological consequences of this kind of immaterial existence are that spirit can have no spatial extension or quantity. Spirit is thus undetectable, indivisible, and, from the perspective of natural science, must be devoid of energy. This leads to a conception of the human being as a dualism of immaterial mind/spirit and material body. This association is so strong that denial of this dualism is commonly taken as a rejection of religion and labeled materialism.

Natural science is assumed by many (including prominent scientists) to be fundamentally materialistic, but it is actually methodologically materialistic rather than philosophically materialistic. This is a function of the fundamental assumptions of natural science and the operation of the scientific method.<sup>2</sup> In particular the scientific method requires both sound theoretical explanation combined with experimental verification that is independently repeatable. This requirement of both theory and experimental verification is the key to the power of scientific explanation, but it limits that explanation to things that can be observed either directly or indirectly from their effects on matter. This experimental verification makes natural science far better than theology or philosophy for examining

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1 Claude Perrotet, "Conceptual Roadblocks to an Understanding of Spiritual Reality in the Western Philosophical Tradition," in Unity of Sciences and Unification Thought: Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Unification Thought held in Moscow 27-30 November 2003.

2 David Burton, What is the Matter: Fundamental Concepts in Unification Thought, Particle Physics and the Book of Changes (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 2005) 11-20.

physical material existence, but what about spiritual existence? The traditional conception of spirit as immaterial mind devoid of energy makes it completely undetectable by any conceivable means, so in principle science cannot even begin to address this issue. It cannot completely deny this concept of spirit, but equally cannot hope to prove it either. So religion (Christianity) and science would seem to be hopelessly divided on this point.

Into this breach steps Divine Principle and Unification Thought, particularly, in this case, Divine Principle. In its structure of the human being, which we will examine below, Divine Principle proposes that there is a spiritual body. In traditional thought spirit and body are mutually exclusive terms. Body, by definition, implies extension in space, quantity, and divisibility; all of which traditionally mean material physical existence. By proposing a spiritual body Divine Principle is making a radical break from traditional thought that redefines what we mean by spirit, but in the process it provides the seeds for bridging the ontological gap between religion and natural science. What follows is some reflection on this point and a proposal for the nature of spiritual existence that resolves some of the conceptual problems that result from applying a concept of body to spiritual existence.

## 2. Spiritual Existence

According to the Divine Principle the created cosmos consists of a spiritual realm and a physical realm created after the pattern of the human being.<sup>3</sup> The structure of human beings then consists of a spiritual self and a physical self, where both the spiritual self and physical self have elements of mind and body.<sup>4</sup> This gives us a fundamental structure of four components to human existence; spirit mind, physical mind, spirit body and physical body. As shown above the idea of a spirit body is significantly different to traditional Western thought that limits bodily manifestation, and its attributes of quantity, divisibility and extension in space, to the physical realm. However *Divine Principle* is quite serious about the notion of a spiritual body, even ascribing to it five spiritual senses with which to perceive an embodied spiritual realm. After this basic description of the structure of the human being Divine Principle does not subsequently develop the concepts or explain what is meant by the spirit body and how it exists.

The situation in Unification Thought is even less clear cut. This is because Unification Thought deals with physical existence and God. It does not directly address spiritual existence. Ontology is limited to the nature of God's existence and the physical realm, whereas spirit is only dealt with in the context of epistemological concepts. Nevertheless *Essentials of Unification Thought* has this basic description of the human being:

There are four kinds of sungsang and hyungsang in human nature. First each human being is a substantial image integrating all things. We contain in our sungsang and hyungsang not only the sungsang-hyungsang elements of the animal kingdom, plant kingdom, and mineral kingdom, but also the sungsang-hyungsang elements unique to human beings, namely the spirit mind and the spirit body. Second each person is a being of united mind and body. And fourth, each human being is a being with a dual mind consisting of a spirit mind and a physical mind.<sup>5</sup>

3 Exposition of the Divine Principle (Seoul: Sung Hwa Publishing Co., 1996) 45.

4 Ibid. 47 - 51.

5 Sang Hun Lee, Essentials of Unification Thought (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 1992) 93. Interestingly in the

In this passage *sungsang* and *hyungsang* refer to the fundamental ontological characteristics applicable to existing all beings. These terms, sometimes translated as internal character and external form respectively, most essentially refer to the mind and body relationship in a human being.<sup>6</sup> However, as this passage indicates, a human being can be viewed from several different, but related perspectives, all under the general categories of *sungsang* and *hyungsang* relationship. The most important of these are different perspectives on the four-fold structure. So we can view a human being from the perspective of mind and body or from the perspective of spirit self and physical self.

This passage also shows that the term spirit body does appear in Unification Thought, but Unification Thought as a whole does not embrace the idea and essentially does not address it. Rather the fundamental structure presented by Lee seems to embody the traditional western pattern.<sup>7</sup> In this view *sungsang* and *hyungsang*, as mind (consciousness perhaps) and body, are seen as two different substances. *Sungsang* is considered to be immaterial mind and *hyungsang* material body just as in western thought's conception of spirit and matter.<sup>8</sup> The structure of the human being then reduces to the traditional two-fold structure of mind and body where mind derives from the relationship of the spirit mind and physical mind. For Lee the spirit mind is derived from the higher functioning of intellect, emotion, and will in the human mind, and is what comprises the spiritual part of a person.

In the human mind the faculties of intellect, emotion and will of both the spirit mind and the physical mind are unified, and intellect, emotion, and will are also unified. This union of intellect, emotion, and will is called the “spiritual apperception”. Their spiritual apperception is what makes humans spiritual beings...<sup>9</sup>

He does not address how we are to consider the existence of the spirit body. Again this is because Unification Thought as it currently exists does not deal directly with spiritual existence. Recognizing that Unification Thought does not address the spiritual realm Rev. Moon has asked that a chapter on it be added to Unification Thought.

A number people have begun to take up the challenge and a few articles have been published. Andrew Wilson has made some interesting contributions in this area. In a paper entitled “*Research into the Ontology of Spirit World and Spirit Persons in Unification Thought*”<sup>10</sup> he lays out a set of characteristics of existence in the spirit universe culled from the spiritual testimony of diverse sources. The full text of these characteristics taken from his article appear in Appendix 1. This set of characteristics is a particularly useful set of guidelines as they reflect the common elements of the perception of spiritual existence derived from direct spiritual experience of people from differing

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newer and more comprehensive New Essentials of Unification Thought the reference to the spirit body has been dropped from the equivalent passage.

6 Divine Principle 17.

7 In the New Essentials of Unification Thought spirit body is mentioned only once in the chapters on the Original Image, Ontology, Human Nature, and Epistemology.

8 Sang Hun Lee, New Essentials of Unification Thought (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute, 2005) 34. In this text Lee clarifies what had not been explicitly stated in previous texts; namely that he regards *sungsang* and *hyungsang* as two substances. This is true even for the Original Image, but in the Original Image they are seen as deriving from a single unified source.

9 *Ibid.* 90.

10 Andrew Wilson, “Research into the Ontology of Spirit World and Spirit Persons in Unification Thought,” Journal of Unification Studies 5 (2003): 145-174.

religious traditions. They are not tied to one particular theological perspective. Distilling his set of ten characteristics even further leads us to two general statements of spiritual existence that are of particular relevance to this work. First is that spiritual existence is an embodied existence. Human beings in the spirit universe look and act much as we do physically, and there are senses comparable to the five physical senses with which to perceive the spiritual universe. Wilson also quotes a text that ascribes matter to spiritual existence, but does not go quite that far in his own writing. The second general statement concerns the role of mind, where the environment itself, animals, plants, some forms of communication, travel and even the appearance of a spirit person derive from thought or consciousness. Wilson says, for example, “Flowers and trees do not grow from seeds, but are made by spirits who are trained in the art of their production.”

These two general statements, however, are not completely mutually compatible. The second statement, revolving around thought and consciousness, is compatible with the traditional Western view of spirit as immaterial mind. However, it contains elements that are difficult to reconcile with an embodied existence (see below). Combining both statements into a coherent picture of spiritual existence is not straightforward, but I believe lies at the heart of understanding ontology from the Unification perspective. In particular what is needed is an understanding of what an embodied spiritual existence means.

### **3. Spiritual Body and Energy**

As an initial approach let us take the concept of a spiritual body at face value. This means that the attributes of bodies, spatial extension, quantity and divisibility, need to also be applied to spiritual existence. In other words we are led to postulate the existence of matter in the spiritual realm, as Wilson's work alludes to. It is therefore possible to be a materialist and believe in spirit, or deny mind and body dualism but still be religious. Philosophically this has one extremely important consequence, namely that the equating of spirit with immaterial mind, locked in for more than two thousand years, is broken. This basic paradigm shift allows us to more freely evaluate the four-fold structure found in Divine Principle and the understanding that mind and body (sungsang and hyungsang) are found in both the spiritual and the physical realms. Since Unification Thought itself primarily adopts the traditional notions of spirit and matter it does mean that the descriptions of sungsang and hyungsang found in Unification Thought need to be reevaluated and developed from this new perspective.

This conceptual change also has important consequences for the ontological gap between science and theology. In suggesting a material aspect to spiritual existence we are getting to things that can potentially be observed experimentally, and thus in principle, though maybe not yet in practice, place investigation of the spirit realm legitimately under natural science. This closes, or at least bridges, the current ontological chasm between natural science and religion. It also allows us to extend the scientific understandings of material existence, developed throughout the history of natural science, to spiritual existence.

One of the key developments of natural science is the concept of energy. In a paper presented at the fifteenth ICUS conference Bent Elbek<sup>11</sup> demonstrates how energy is a unifying concept centrally

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<sup>11</sup> Bent Elbek, “The Evolution of the Concept of Energy and its Role in Systems of Increasing Complexity,” in Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences held in Washington D.C. 27-30 November 1986. Reproduced in Burton, What is the Matter 115-140.

present in all scientific theories. Energy is not a fundamental assumption of science or a necessary result from the operation of the scientific method, but has emerged as a central concept in the continually developing theories. Elbek traces its development from the initial description in mechanics through thermodynamics and on into the modern theories of relativity and quantum mechanics. Its ubiquitous presence in scientific explanation leads to the inescapable conclusion that energy is a fundamental requirement of material existence. Many would take it one step further and argue that is a fundamental requirement of any type of existence and consequently that an absence of energy equates to an absence of being. It is from here that the materialism charges leveled against natural science originate.

One aspect of energy that is also constant throughout all this scientific explanation is that it is impossible to pin down exactly what energy is. Elbek points out that we have a multitude of equations describing energy in terms of something else. Thus kinetic energy is calculated from the mass and velocity of a particle, potential energy from the position of a particle in a field, heat is a statistical measure of the kinetic energy of the matter particles in a material, even radiational energy is the energy of particles of light, called photons. We also understand, often in great detail, how one form of energy is converted into another, but we cannot define it as a “something” that exists. What we do know is that in all of its forms energy is always associated with, or is a property of, or actually is, material particles of some kind. The closest to a definition of energy derives from mechanics and is taught to beginning physics students. Here energy is defined simply as a “capacity to do work.” What is usually unstated but implied is that this “capacity” is associated with, or actually is, some material body or particle.

Natural science is clear, however, about one thing that energy is not. That is it is not a substance in its own right. Energy has no existence or meaning independent of the material body or particle that it can be calculated for. Since the time of Einstein's famous equation  $E = mc^2$  natural science has also understood that mass<sup>12</sup> and energy are equivalent and interchangeable. Therefore it is perfectly acceptable to say that matter *is* energy, or, just as importantly, that energy *is* matter. What we cannot do is to treat energy as a substance and say matter is *made from* energy. This is a subtle twist that erroneously implies that energy has some kind of prior existence independent of the material particles it is associated with. Scientifically there can be no immaterial energy that is somehow molded into matter much like the prime matter of ancient philosophy being shaped by a form. This type of thinking combined with a belief in the spirit world leads to nonsensical (from a natural science viewpoint) concepts such as assigning vibrational levels to energy prior to its association with particles or matter, and then considering the spirit realm to somehow have energy of a higher “vibrational level.” Treating energy as a substance in this and related ways by contemporary spiritual thought misappropriates the concept of energy.

Since material existence implies energy, adopting a spirit body with an associated material component compels us to extend the conception of energy to include the spiritual realm. However we must be careful to maintain the scientific perspective that does not treat it as a substance. Thus we cannot say energy in the spirit realm has a higher vibration or somehow is of a finer grade than that in

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12 Mass is a measure of the amount of matter. Yet, for example, most of the mass of a proton or neutron does not come from the mass of their constituent quarks, but rather from the kinetic and potential energy of the interactions between the quarks mediated by the strong nuclear interaction.

the physical realm. In a sense energy is just energy period, whatever form it takes. What this accomplishes is to allow us to carry over into a conception of the spirit realm all the same scientific ideas developed about energy from the physical realm. The first conclusion is that this energy must be associated with, or is, some kind of particle or particles, and those particles are probably of a different type to those currently known to science.

Secondly we should expect there to be some observable consequences for the physical realm. Since energy and mass are equivalent, energy in the spirit realm will have a mass equivalence and we should expect as a minimum to see some gravitational effects in the physical realm. Although science does not yet explicitly recognize any such effects there are still some profound mysteries about the physical universe that remain to be solved. In particular normal matter that we commonly know only comprises about 5% of the energy density in the observable universe. The other 95% is divided between dark energy and dark matter. The word dark is used because physicists do not know what they are although they can indirectly observe their effects. Dark energy is responsible for an accelerating expansion of the physical universe. It is currently thought to account for 70% of the energy in the universe. Dark matter is required from the observed clumpiness of the universe and the observed motions of galaxies. It accounts for about 25% of the energy in the universe.

It is conceivable that large scale cosmological effects of a spirit realm show up in these unknown constituents whose effects may be observed on normal matter. Dark matter has been studied the most of these two and for me is particularly interesting for this topic. Its distribution in the universe can be mapped by inference from the observed motions of stars, galaxies and galaxy clusters. In particular each galaxy is thought to be embedded in an “halo” or sphere of dark matter with filaments connecting galaxies and galactic clusters to give a large scale “web” connecting all the matter in the universe. There are several theories about the nature of dark matter, but the most generally accepted is that it consists of some unknown type of particles that only interact with normal matter through gravity. Though by no means constituting a proof of a spirit realm the existence of dark matter demonstrates that there is room in the scientific world view for a spirit realm that involves energy and particles.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Problems of Mind and Matter

Some of the fundamental understandings of energy are embodied in the laws of thermodynamics. These laws apply to all of physical existence, including living organisms. Now if we assume a spirit body and therefore a material/energetic component to spiritual existence there is no reason to doubt that these fundamental understandings of energy should also apply. Let us review briefly the first two laws.

The first law deals with the conservation of energy and states that energy can be converted to one form or another, but cannot be created or destroyed. Consequently in a closed system, one that is energetically isolated, there must be a fixed amount of energy. Whether the universe is a closed system or not is an open question, but many assume that it is and therefore that there is a fixed amount of energy in the universe. Given sufficient input of energy the equivalence of mass and energy tells us that even material particles can be created. This happens in large accelerators where streams of particles are

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<sup>13</sup> String theory also offers an interesting alternative explanation where there are two (or more) three dimensional universes separated by a small distance in a fourth spatial dimension. In this description the particles in each universe are fixed to that universe with the exception of gravitational particles (gravitons). Dark matter then would be the gravitational effects of matter in a nearby universe. String theory as yet has no experimental confirmation however.

accelerated to near the speed of light and smashed into each other. In the collisions the kinetic energy of the colliding particles is converted into a host of other particles.

The second law states that the entropy of the universe spontaneously tends to increase. Entropy is a measure of how much of the energy of a system is not available for conversion into work.<sup>14</sup> Thermodynamics is a statistical mechanics, so that although the universe as a whole tends to greater entropy, in local pockets this can be reversed if there is an input of energy from outside. Thus on earth energy from the sun allows living systems of great complexity to emerge and develop as part of an interconnected web that transforms and moves energy. This is allowed as long as the increase in entropy of the sun compensates for the decrease in entropy on earth. Living beings are also continually doing work in performing actions, growth, and maintaining their existence, thus they require an ongoing intake of energy in order to maintain their life. However the total amount of energy in the universe remains the same and entropy as a whole increases. This second law is also pretty much the only way natural science can offer an explanation for the apparent directionality of time. These laws govern the transformation of energy and its conversion into work and apply universally, including now to an energetic spirit realm.

Up to this point we have been dealing primarily with the first of the general statements of spiritual existence distilled from Wilson's work concerning its embodied nature. This has led us through a logical chain of body implying matter implying energy implying some kind of elementary particles, and the application of scientific laws relating to energy, to a type of material spiritual existence. Now we are moving on to a consideration of the second statement that involves the role of mind or consciousness. In those points dealing with the role of mind the bodily expression of spiritual existence becomes somewhat plastic and appears to be molded by mind. Thus human thought can immediately induce movement or materialize things such as to create plants and animals, the appearance of a spirit person can change, and even the environment depends on projections of human consciousness. Let us look at a flower for example. It has no spiritual existence outside of human consciousness. Plants and trees do not propagate through seeds in the spiritual realm, so our flower must be consciously created through the action of a human mind. Yet it then does have life and a bodily existence. The flower can be picked, but does not subsequently die and decompose as it would in the physical realm, but rather just fades away and disappears. The descriptions presented by Wilson suggest that the flower is not just created out of the "stuff" around it, like molding clay. Rather the body of the flower appears and disappears, out of or into thin "air" through the action of mind.

Our straightforward adoption of bodily existence in the spirit realm runs into trouble with this second general statement of spiritual existence. Application of the first law and the equivalence of mass and energy suggests that enormous amounts of energy would be needed to create an embodied flower, and then be released when the flower fades away.<sup>15</sup> This would be true even if the particles associated with spirit existence were of very low energy (low mass). The energy requirements would be so large as to be improbable. Nuclear explosions, for example, liberate large amounts of energy, but they only convert a small fraction of the mass of the atom into kinetic energy of the resulting particles. To create,

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<sup>14</sup> Entropy is more commonly described as a measure of the disorder in a system, but since we are dealing with energy this definition seemed more appropriate. Work at its simplest is force multiplied by the distance the force acts through.

<sup>15</sup> Since we are talking about energy this is a simplification that does not address the issue that particles are actually created as particle-antiparticle pairs. Consideration of this aspect of particle physics actually makes the situation worse for our initial suggestion of a taking bodily existence in the spirit realm at face value.

or annihilate, the amount of matter in a flower involves energies far above those found in nuclear explosions. Rather than fade away quietly the spiritual flower should explode with enormous force if it disappears.

Other aspects of mental involvement in spiritual existence that Wilson mentions also run afoul of the first law. The kind of environmental transformation described, or bodily transportation by thought all involve improbable amounts of energy for an existence that involves energy and particles. The second law too is challenged by this type of existence. Life in the physical realm reflects a local decrease in entropy allowed by the input of energy from the sun. That energy is transferred through the food chain eventually to human beings who both eat and drink in order to maintain their life and the relatively low entropy of an organized bodily existence. With energy and particles in spiritual existence the spiritual body itself and the mental ordering of the environment would also reflect a huge decrease in entropy. How then can we account for the overall increase in entropy required by the second law? From the perspective of thermodynamics the two general statements of spiritual existence distilled from Wilson's points do not seem to be mutually compatible. An embodied spiritual existence would appear to conflict with the plasticity of spiritual existence with respect to human thought.

## 5. Redefining Spiritual Body

### 5.1. Wilson's Monostratic Model

From a consideration of energy associated with spiritual existence we end up with some conceptual difficulties in accounting for all the points of spiritual existence that Wilson compiles. We could of course invoke God to resolve the energetic problems, but I think a more likely and fruitful approach is to redefine what we mean by bodily existence in a spiritual sense. Wilson too acknowledges this same tension between bodily existence and mental phenomena in the spirit universe, and in order to resolve the issue he takes exactly this path. He redefines what we mean by body. He does this by suggesting that spiritual existence is monostratic.<sup>16</sup> That is it does not have the layers of structure that we find in physical bodily existence.

Producing a flower in the physical realm requires many layers, both from an evolutionary perspective through time, and from a structural perspective in the moment. Structurally a flower is composed of layers of elementary particles, atoms, molecules, cells etc. If we pick that flower in the physical realm its cells no longer receive the input of energy (nutrients) they need and they die. Subsequently the flower slowly decays through the action of microbes and oxidation. The energy and matter of its existence is recycled and transformed into something else as the form that was the flower decomposes. This is possible because of the layered nature of its original existence, such that death of the flower does not also result in the loss of all the lower levels of organization of matter within it. On the other hand a monostratic spiritual existence would behave very differently. The flower would come into existence at once. Its body would not be made of existing spiritual materials and there would not be levels of elementary particles and atoms comprising the matter of the flower. Consequently when the flower is picked and it “dies” there are no lower levels of material organization to remain and the flower will just disappear as a whole, as a reverse process of how it was made. This is an ingenious solution to the problem, but is not without conceptual difficulties in its own right. Let us first look to see how this redefines the concept of body.

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<sup>16</sup> Wilson, “Ontology,” 152.

The normal concept of body in the physical realm involves spatial extension, divisibility, and quantity. Quantity, or the amount of the “stuff”, from a modern perspective means mass and its equivalent, energy. This in turn implies some kind of material particles as we have seen. A monostratic conception of body will of necessity still involve spatial extension, so spatial extension is included in an embodied spiritual existence unchanged. The next attribute, divisibility, is lost in this monostratic concept of body. Divisibility requires the layered structure of physical existence. For something to be divisible there must be parts to divide into that can maintain their own existence, and if there are such parts the existence is not monostratic. Consequently the monostratic flower ceases to exist when it is divided by picking and it simply fades away. This attribute of divisibility is thus completely different for the conception of a monostratic body, and is the key to the successful part of redefining body in spiritual existence that Wilson accomplishes with this model. It is the third attribute of quantity that is the most problematic area for this monostratic view. The question is what is the “stuff” of the body?

In addressing the “stuff” of a monostratic spiritual body the first point to address is does it have quantity? If we answer no then we are almost back at the beginning with spiritual existence as completely immaterial and non-energetic (and undetectable), but with spatial extension added. In this case the ontological divide between science and religion remains firmly in place. If we answer yes, as Wilson's work also seems to do, the body must involve energy. Though this answer is preferable, associating energy with monostratic embodiment leads to conceptual problems. In particular there are two significant problems that we have already touched on above. The first is that we again run up against the laws of thermodynamics with an apparent creation and destruction of energy, or the requirement of improbably large amounts of energy, in the creation and destruction of the spiritual flower. The second relates to dealing with energy as a substance. Embodied flowers, not to mention human spirits, are relatively complicated. Wilson suggests that the complication in monostratic existence is found in the logos for the flower (or the human being).<sup>17</sup> However, since there are no layers of elementary particles or atoms in monostratic existence that complicated logos must be patterned directly into something. If we have quantity (energy) then the only way to do this is to regard energy as a substance that can receive form, yet we have already shown that we cannot view energy in this way.

Wilson's proposal therefore runs up against the same kind of arguments that prevented us from adopting the simple conception of body derived from physical existence. The problem is not in Wilson's logic, but rather in his implicitly adopting mind-body dualism. As shown elsewhere<sup>18</sup> Unification Thought's fundamental structure of sungsang and hyungsang is derived from the concepts of form and matter found in ancient Greek philosophy. Where Logos corresponds to Platonic form and Original Hyungsang to a continuous prime matter. In that work I show how this continuous nature of Greek philosophy is not compatible with the discrete nature of existence derived from atomic theory and quantum mechanics. Now we can see that the Greek philosophy is also not fully compatible with scientific notions of energy and thermodynamics.

## 5.2. Spirit as Virtual Reality

What is needed is a new definition of body as applied to spiritual existence that is compatible

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17 Wilson, “Ontology,” 153.

18 Burton, What is the Matter 38-51.

with Wilson's ten points, natural science, and is rooted in Unification Thought. The first starting point is the observation that conscious perception in the physical realm does not always reflect the ontological reality underlying that perception. Take for example watching a movie. What we perceive as continuous motion on the screen is actually just a succession of still images, our perception is very different from what is actually taking place. Wilson's points undoubtedly reflect perception of the spirit realm, but they do not necessarily reflect its ontological reality. The other starting point is that to build the bridge to natural science we need a theory that can potentially be observed. That is we should retain the notion of some kind of particles and energy associated with spiritual existence. The question then becomes how can we redefine what we mean by spiritual body and be consistent with perception and some kind of material component to spiritual existence.

The answer I believe derives from an understanding of mind that can be developed from Unification Thought. In my previous work<sup>19</sup> I proposed a model for mind (sungsang) that does not deal with it as a separate substance in the way that philosophy derived from Greek thought does. The model was developed from the two stage structure of the Original Image, and suggests mind exists as an inner four-position foundation consisting of the relationship between inner functional and informational aspects. Moreover that relationship is patterned onto the material structure of the brain and body so cannot have independent immaterial existence. In a sense mind and body together are one substance not two.

Now in Unification Thought there is a very interesting concept termed cosmic consciousness it is variously described as sungsang of the universe, a life field, or a field of consciousness.<sup>20</sup> However it is not well defined and receives scant attention in the texts despite being of fundamental importance to existence. All cognition, for example, is said to begin from protoconsciousness at the cellular level which in turn is itself derived from cosmic consciousness. Lee, of course, deals with cosmic consciousness as a separate substance, but if we apply the two stage pattern briefly described here then we can regard cosmic consciousness as an inner four position foundation patterned onto the material particles of the universe. That is the universe as a whole has some kind of mind associated with it that is one substance with the material particles of the universe. For me the observed pattern of dark matter in the universe connecting all normal matter in a three dimensional web is particularly suggestive of this possibility.

Given this view of the universe then the spirit realm becomes more like a computer simulated virtual reality or particularly vivid mental imagery within the cosmic mind that is then functioning in part somewhat like an enormous computer. The human spirit would be more akin to a self aware program or conscious memory within the inner sungsang and inner hyungsang of the cosmic mind that is also capable of reprogramming the local virtual environment. In other words the perception of spirit body is illusory resulting from the mental image, program, or memory, in the inner hyungsang of the cosmic mind rather than existing as a substantial thing with independent existence. Consequently the definition of body derived from physical existence will not directly apply. However the virtual reality itself, in fact the cosmic mind as a whole, is rooted in patterns of information laid down on material particles just as our physical mind is rooted in patterns in the material stuff of the brain. At first glance this may seem like some idea straight out of science fiction, but it resolves many of the conceptual

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19 Ibid. 43-48.

20 Lee, New Essentials 129-130, 162, and 431.

problems in existing ideas about the nature of spirit.

First, the proposal does not deal with mind as completely immaterial and devoid of energy. There is potentially something to be experimentally confirmed as our scientific understanding of the universe and mind develop. So the ontological gap between science and religion can potentially be bridged by a theory derived from Unification Thought, which was one of the original intents of the work. Secondly the proposal is consistent with the two general statements of spiritual existence distilled from Wilson's ten points without contradicting scientific theories of energy and thermodynamics. We have redefined an embodied spiritual existence to mean a conscious perception of bodily existence within a kind of virtual realm that does not exist independently of matter. Also by dealing with spirit as a virtual reality we do not run into energetic problems resulting from the observed plasticity of the spiritual environment. The energy requirements to create the mental image of a flower for example are real, and would have to be accounted for, but are insignificant in comparison to the extravagant energy requirements needed to create some kind of material body for the flower. This proposal would also account for other aspects of spiritual existence reported by Wilson such as the lack of necessity to eat or drink, an inability to reproduce, an apparent immortality, angels, or even travel at the speed of thought.

Additionally the proposal embraces Wilson's monostratic model if we relocate the monostratic nature of spiritual beings to the inner four position foundation of the cosmic mind rather than as an outer substantial existence. Finally, and interestingly enough, the proposal supports Unification Thought's current division of spirit and matter. Although Unification Thought does not deal with spiritual existence, where spirit is mentioned it is dealt with in terms of epistemological concepts, whereas ontology is limited to material existence and God. The proposed model allows us to retain the notion of spirit as mental phenomena, it just does not regard mind and matter as separate substances and extends mental phenomena to include the whole cosmos.

## 6. Conclusion

The original thrust of this work was to demonstrate how the gulf between natural science and religion could be bridged by adding a conception of spirit body and associated material component to an embodied spiritual existence. The intention was to move away from equating spirit with mind. Unexpectedly the simple conception of a spirit body could not be reconciled with reported perception of spiritual existence. If we accept Wilson's ten points we are led almost full circle, coming back to a conception of spirit that once again revolves around mind. However it is a very different concept of mind. The ontological problem between religion and science stems from the immaterial and consequently non energetic notions of spirit and mind derived from Greek philosophy the end result of which is the idea of mind and body dualism. Discarding this dualism allows a conception of mind to be derived from the structure of Unification Thought that shows that mind and body are inseparable aspects of one existence.

With this as a theoretical starting point and combining the two stage structure with the concept of cosmic consciousness led to the proposed model. Admittedly this would require physics beyond what we currently know about the physical universe, but dark matter and dark energy show that our current understanding is incomplete. Setting out to redefine body for spiritual existence the end result rather redefines mind and leaves the traditional understanding of body intact and firmly welded to

material existence. Mind rather becomes a material mind involving matter and energy, just as in the physical human being, and the spirit realm then becomes the thought processes of a universal mind that Unification Thought terms cosmic consciousness. The spirit realm is thus a virtual reality comparable to mental images or a computer simulated virtual environment, and the embodied spiritual existence reported from spiritual experience becomes a perception of bodily existence comparable to our perception of bodily existence while dreaming. Nevertheless human spirits would have fully conscious participation in this virtual world even to the point of consciously affecting their virtual surroundings.

The final question to address is the relationship between this cosmic mind and God. Unification Thought hints that cosmic consciousness is in fact God's consciousness.<sup>21</sup> From the perspective of the structure of the thought this is probably the simplest thing to do, but from a theological perspective this would be tending toward pantheism. This would be especially true of the two stage model of existence used here, where mind and body are not two separate substances. Theologically we deal with both spiritual and physical realms as created realms. Cosmic consciousness should therefore be a created object to God, especially if it is one substance with material particles, and God should stand outside of both spiritual and physical existence.

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21 Ibid. 431.

## Appendix 1: Andrew Wilson's Ten Characteristics of Spiritual Existence

1. There is continuity between the physical world and the spirit world. People in the spirit world live as embodied forms and carry on all major life activities. Thus Swedenborg wrote,

Man after death is as much a man as he was before, so much so as to be unaware that he is not still in the former world. He has sight, hearing and speech as in the former world. He lies down, sleeps and awakes, as in the former world. He eats and drinks as in the former world. He enjoys marriage delight as in the former world. In a world, he is a man in each and every respect.

2. Energy in the spirit world flows directly from God, shining as the sun of love to illuminate and govern. This is quite different from the physical world where the energy to sustain life comes from physical substances - sunlight, air, water and soil. Rev. Moon teaches that while physical life is nourished by the earth, air and water of the physical world, "in the spirit world, people live and breathe centered on love." He also said, "the air in the spirit world is not the air we have on earth; instead it is love." Thus Dr. Lee found that God's power directly controls the angels, whose "organizations, systems and activities connect directly to the power switch of God's heart." It follows that a spirit's position is crucially dependent on how closely he or she resonates with God's love.
3. Spiritualist testimonies frequently describe the spirit world to be a world of thought, where things happen as fast as thought, where communication occurs through thought, and where directing one's thoughts can immediately induce movement or the materialization of things.
4. Unlike the physical world, where a being's outward form is largely fixed by its material structure, regardless of its mental disposition, in the spirit world form is far more plastic, reflecting of the spirit's inward character. Angels can change their appearance and size at will, according to Dr. Lee. When aged people arrive in a middle realm in the spirit world, they take on the form that they had in the prime of life. As evil spirits resurrect, their appearance becomes more recognizably human.
5. Despite this variability in form, human beings and angels exist for eternity, rooted in their unchanging essence. A spirit in hell can be killed over and over again, but it never dies.
6. The spirit body that forms an envelope around the spirit may be of various levels of denseness, according to the realm in which the spirit exists. Earth-bound spirits are clothed in an astral body, which is quite dense compared to the rarefied bodies of spirits in the higher planes of the spirit world.

Astrals... are the intermediate degree of materiality between the gross matter of earth and the more etherealized matter of the spirit world, and we talk of a soul clothed in its astral envelope to express that earth-bound condition in which it is too refined or immaterial for earth existence, and too grossly clad to ascend into the spirit world of the higher spheres.

In general, the spirit body is composed of elements fitting for the realm in which it dwells. There seems to be a correlation between the spirit body and the surroundings environment, to the point that one can say that a spirit's form extends into its environment: its clothes, its house,

its surrounding land. In the lower realms, the spirit's body and surroundings together act as a prison, trapping the person. When a spirit resurrects to a higher realm it leaves behind its old body, which, lacking an animating soul, decays into the atoms of that realm. Then it takes on a new body.

7. Unlike the physical world, there is no multiplication in the spirit world. But such is also true of thought, which while it can create multitudes of images and communicate with other minds, cannot thereby multiply itself. Multiplication requires the interaction of yang and yin energies in physical form: yet yang and yin do not seem to operate among the angels (the spirit world prior to the perfections of humans who fulfill the four-position foundation). Flowers and trees do not grow from seeds, but are made by spirits who are trained in the art of their production.
8. Human beings are co-creators of the environment in the spirit world. It is governed by the quality of and conditions made during earthly life. Thus Divine Principle speaks of vitality elements, generated by one's deeds, as food for the growth of the spirit. Rev. Moon teaches that our life on earth determines the "house" in which we live in the spirit world, and likewise numerous spiritual testimonies describe the realms of heaven and hell as projections of the essences of the human spirits who dwell there.
9. Animals, plants and inanimate objects exist, not eternally, but only insofar as there are humans who treasure them. When in the spirit world one eats a ripe plum, the juice that runs down just disappears. According to Borgia,

If you find you no longer need or desire a thing it will simply fade away to all appearances, just evaporate before your eyes. But it is not lost; it will return to the source from which it came. If we didn't want this house and all its contents, it would vanish, and there would be nothing to see but the ground it stood upon.

The trees, flowers and other objects that beautify the environment of the spirit world are created for the people who live there. The animals and birds that roam about the land are likewise connected to its human inhabitants, who are their lords.

10. Spiritualists testify that spirit world is divided into various realms, arranged in concentric circles "above" and "below" the earth – an analogy, since the actual disposition of space is beyond the customary three dimensions. However, this is only a consequence of the Fall. In the course of time, when restoration is complete and all people are restored to perfection, all the lower spheres will have dissolved and the spirit world will be united as one great circle of heaven.