

On Being and Consciousness

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The scientific methodology for uncovering knowledge relating to the world around us – let us call it "external truth" – is a familiar one. A thesis is posited. Experiments are conducted exhaustively until the thesis is either proven or disproved.

The discovery of "internal truth" follows a parallel course.

We absorb some statement or teaching. Internally our mind validates the statement against accumulated experiences. When the statement

accords with our experiences, the lights go on, so to speak, and the new-found truth then becomes part of our personal knowledge base and operating reality. The statement can encompass something as simple as a mother's instruction to a child such as: "Don't touch, it's hot," to a philosophical maxim like, "What you give out, comes back."



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As sentient beings, we all have experiences. Through study, exposure to the thoughts of others or an inspiration from a higher source, we are able to order our experiences in a meaningful way.

Sometimes we ingest knowledge prior to having had the experience. When the experience later takes place, we may encounter an "Ah, now I understand what the speaker meant" moment. At other times, we may have experiences that lie dormant until revealed. Those moments are more of the "Somehow I've always felt that was the case" variety. Either way, it's not just a matter of knowing; we also need to "know that we know" for that knowledge to be incorporated into our being.

While scientific knowledge, or external truth, is largely validated and monitored by the scientific community, internal truths can only be validated by each of us as individuals. Nonetheless, there is no shortage of religions, philosophies and political movements, each peddling their own views of the world and each eager to help people make sense of their life experiences.

The problem people encounter is that all these teachings, especially those which form the basis of the world's religions, mix inner truths with half-truths and even with teachings that are completely unverifiable or plainly false. The teachings of the Unification Movement are no exception.

It's an observable fact that if an institution or accredited teacher reveals valuable knowledge to a person that stimulates the inner self, the recipient is much more likely to indiscriminately accept other teachings from the same source. When we imbibe a set of teachings in its entirety, some parts will genuinely enhance our being, while other parts just get incorporated as beliefs or opinions.

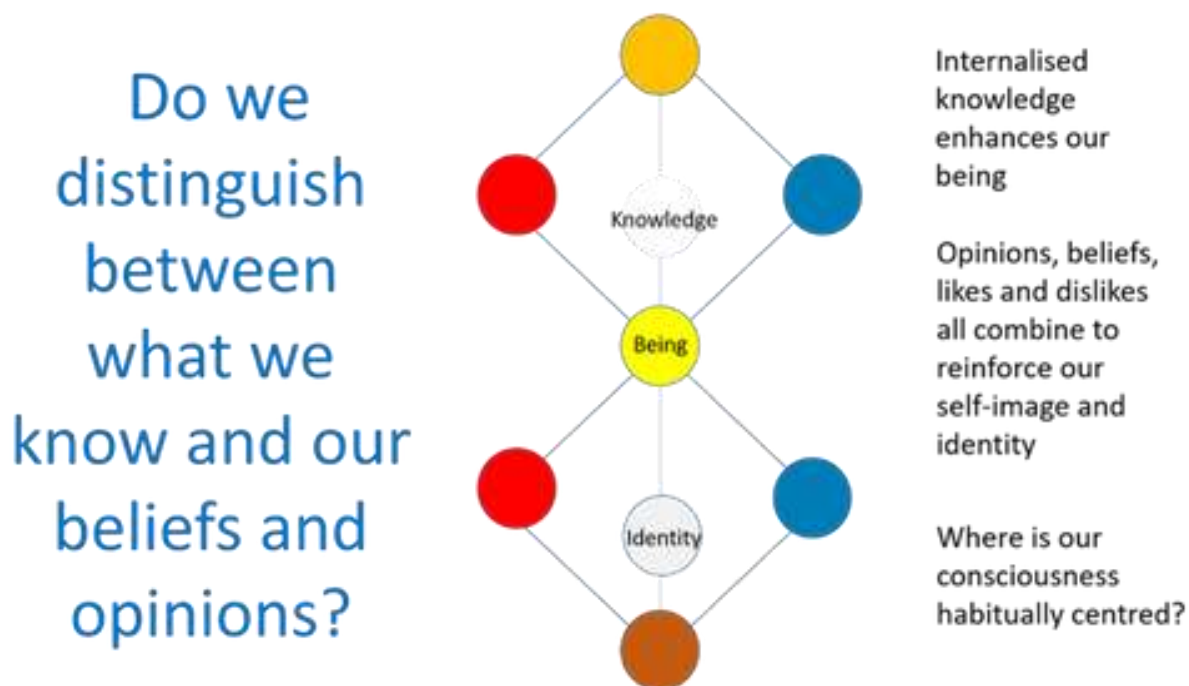
The more we reiterate our beliefs and opinions, the more these become part of our identity. In our day to day actions and interactions with others, we rarely draw a conscious distinction between our being or true self (which grows with the crystallization of knowledge) and our identity (shaped through the accumulation of opinions, beliefs, preferences and habitual modes of thought). All manifestations are presented as "I."

Why is this relevant and why should we want to distinguish between our being and our identity?

On observing the diagram below, those who have studied the Divine Principle may well see two four position foundations. If we call the gold disk at the top the "Crown," a circle through which God's presence enters the creation, and the disk at the bottom the earth or "Kingdom," then the yellow disk, labelled "Being," can be seen to represent a True Person.

In Divine Principle terms, a True Person is one who has fulfilled the first blessing and is living in the direct dominion -- a person who is connected in heart to the source of our being and can directly channel the will of God in the world. Such persons will be seen by others as having the utmost integrity. They will present the same heart and pure motivation to all people they meet and will not waver from one day to the next.

Their own experience of the world will likely be one of raised consciousness and heightened awareness. This state is sometimes coined in popular literature as "living in the moment" or "being here now." It is a state which all of us have experienced on occasion. Perhaps we have done so on emerging from a deep prayer or meditation, or on receiving a shock of some sort, or perhaps artificially through narcotics (not recommended). It is a state familiar to sports players who need to get into "the zone" in order to perform at their best. Essentially, this requires them to silence the conversation in their head and let body memory take over. While it is possible to cultivate this state of consciousness through meditative practices or awareness exercises, it is not a state of mind in which we are habitually centered.



Rather our mind is constantly engaged in give-and-take action. We are thinking about what to eat for lunch, a comment from a co-worker, whether we are being paid enough, the golf score we would have made without the poor shots we hit, what we should have said if we had been thinking quicker to the person who just crossed us -- the list is endless. It is possible for us to walk down the street so wrapped up in our train of (usually) inconsequential thought that we notice nothing of the surrounding environment at all.

Further, when interacting with people, we have a selection of different personae (the Latin word persona means "a mask") that we trot out depending on the circumstances: the professional image we try to project to clients, the sensitive image we project to someone whose affections we are trying to woo, the image of coolness and indifference we may project when negotiating a monetary transaction, the concerned citizen image when taking a political stance, the aggrieved husband or wife. Again, the list is endless. When it comes to a discussion about politics or religion or even just idle gossip with neighbors, we can express different viewpoints on the same topic, depending with whom we are speaking. While everyone wants to be appreciated by their family, friends and peers as a person of integrity, we all know people – perhaps even ourselves on occasions – who behave like chameleons, changing colors from one moment to the next. These various personae are all part of one's identity. To a mild degree, we all sometimes show signs of what psychologists nowadays term "dissociative identity disorder."

The Divine Principle makes the distinction between original and fallen natures. This distinction is invaluable if we are to develop an understanding of good and evil both within ourselves and the world around us. The definition of sin as any thought, feeling or action that takes us further away from God is simple and experientially verifiable in our daily life. The cycle of temptation is easily observable. The paradigm of the fall and the destructive impact on male-female relationships of archangelic behavior that results in betrayal, infidelity and extra-marital affairs, are very real to many whose heart has been broken in love.

However, when it comes to an understanding of consciousness, the distinction between original and fallen natures is not such a useful prism. While it may be tempting to identify true men and women as being centered in their original nature and fallen men and women as being centered in their identity, this division does not quite work. If we reflect upon our own development as human beings from our birth as a baby, through childhood and adolescence, we observe that our sense of identity takes shape over time.

Initially, its emergence was connected to the development of our language capability. Babies have no sense of identity. Their attention is either outward-facing, focused on external sense impressions, or inward-facing, focused on bodily sensations. Young children when learning to speak often start by talking about themselves in the third person, referring to themselves by name. We do not enter the world seeing

any separation between ourselves and everything around us. It takes a while before a sense of "I" takes root in our mind.

Unificationism lacks a meditation tradition. Arguably, this is a consequence of the lack of emphasis on consciousness within the Divine Principle, where spiritual growth is fundamentally focused on heart and one's capacity to love. This, in turn, is gauged by the ability to sacrifice for the sake of others and the greater good. Undeniably, true love is the goal to which we all aspire. But to attain our heart's desire, we need to change and this requires us to be conscious of who we are. "Awareness, acceptance and will" are a tried and tested recipe for self-development.

There are other philosophical and theological traditions that have a more developed understanding of consciousness than Unificationism. Buddhism is one. It combines a strong meditation discipline with a highly sophisticated theory of causality; the quality of compassion is accentuated; the ultimate goal is enlightenment.

Another tradition is the [Kabbalah](#). The Tree of Life, a schematic around which the Kabbalistic teaching revolves, identifies ten basic principles, known as the [Sephira](#), interconnected by 22 paths – associated with the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The Tree thus formed comprises 12 separate triads, sometimes associated with the 12 astrological types or gates to heaven. Overall, the Tree of Life is seen as a pattern that permeates every aspect of life from the macrocosm to the microcosm. It has three vertical pillars. As traditionally depicted, the pillar on the right is the male pillar, the one on the left the female pillar, and the central pillar is that of consciousness. Those familiar with the Tree of Life may have identified the earlier diagram as a partial representation of this schematic.

Serious practitioners of Kabbalah can find within the Tree of Life a rich framework for understanding the workings of the world. Where the Kabbalistic tradition clearly parts company with the Divine Principle is in its view of evil. For Unificationists, evil is an active force that works at every level – individual, family, society, nation, world, and cosmos – to thwart the will of God. Kabbalists, if asked about their understanding of evil, may talk about the dichotomy we face as conscious beings wanting on the one hand to preserve our identity as individuals and on the other to be part of something greater.

In brief, there is much we can learn from other traditions, although there is a need for caution: no tradition provides satisfactory answers to all questions and translating from one set of thinking to another is fraught with misunderstanding. But while the Divine Principle offers a comprehensive view of the world and vision for humankind, it does not present students with a clearly measurable path for spiritual growth. For early members, perhaps the "formula course" once helped fulfill that role, but that is now history. Internal guidance lectures went some way to addressing the inner struggles that members faced, but were never organized into a coherent curriculum.

Today, most people who are spiritually searching are initially concerned with their own personal development rather than saving the world. Might not Unificationism broaden its appeal by developing a program of self-development and incorporate this, alongside a meditation tradition, into its teachings of heart, love and restoration?

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