

Rationality and Unification

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September 21, 2015



The idea of “Unification” is central to the Unification Movement. The current reality of the movement is that there is no clear path toward this ideal. This lack of a path, be it conceptual or real, is critical to a movement that carries the banner of “unification” both in doctrine and title.

This issue can be approached from various angles. I examine two types of “rationality,” instrumental and dialogical, and how they are tied to two different understandings of and approaches to “unification.” By highlighting the benefits of dialogical rationality and the type of unification associated with it, I call for further discussion of

the idea of unification. This article makes a reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s “Philosophical Hermeneutics.”

Why Rationality?

“Rationality” is a key issue in philosophy. Why do we need to care about “rationality” in philosophy and otherwise? Reasoning supports the presentation of a case, justification of a claim, or the establishment of an argument. The question then is what type of reasoning is used, consciously or unconsciously. Whatever type of rationality is used guides the discourse at a most fundamental level, and is critical to understand what kind of reasoning dominates one’s process of thinking. When one solves math problems, for example, he or she may use calculative rationality; in making moral judgments, one may use “prudence,” which requires experience and a sense of balance.

Instrumental Rationality



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What is the primary or even dominant rationality today? Martin Heidegger, Jürgen Habermas, and other thinkers identified it as “instrumental rationality.” They argue that instrumental rationality has been dominating discourse since modernity without our even being aware of it; that is, we use reason as an instrument to realize pre-set goals and purposes in the most efficient manner.

The instrumental use of reason is common in the technological era, which seeks efficiency and control. Its exclusive focus is gaining what you want in the most efficient and cost-effective way. This type of reasoning is efficient and effective in handling material. Modern technological developments and production were so successful, they argue, that we consciously or unconsciously adopted this

type of reasoning in all spheres of life.

In modern organizations, this type of reasoning dominates in dealing with both customers and employees. In other words, it dominates all types of operations in society.

Instrumental rationality is pervasive. For example, even in religious organizations, which are meant to turn a materialistic society into a genuinely humane society, congregations and affiliates may be seen as “tools” to achieve certain goals. Yet, since this rationality is not reflective, it seldom critically examines the goals and its own assumptions. Whether the Unification Movement is immune from the influence of such tendency is an open question.

This type of reasoning is not effective for open discussion among parties who hold incompatible assumptions and beliefs. Gadamer, Habermas, and other thinkers thus presented “dialogical rationality” in contrast to “instrumental rationality.” Gadamer developed “philosophical hermeneutics” and Habermas developed a “theory of communicative action” as its model. They approached the issue from different perspectives, yet equally call for change (Gadamer argues from the perspective of his “Philosophical Hermeneutics”; Habermas from his “Theory of Communicative Action,” rooted in a critical theory and pragmatism).

Dialogical Rationality

Dialogical rationality is characterized by its openness. For example, two opposing positions may not

agree on certain points. One side may have certain convictions and presuppositions, however, that party would try to listen to and understand the other. In order to understand the other, the self must reflect upon the framework of interpretation and be open to re-structuring his or her framework of understanding. In Gadamer's terms, "understanding" takes place as the "fusion of horizons," your horizon (framework of interpretation, constituted by beliefs and assumptions) and the horizon of the other party. Because the meaning of a claim arises from its relationship with the horizon (context), you must be open to the horizon of the other party as well as the issue at hand.



Hans-Georg Gadamer

By contrast, the instrumental use of reason means that one either wins or loses an argument. There is no incentive to listening to and understanding the other, and critically examining one's own beliefs. The purpose of a discussion is to defeat the other and win the argument, and reason is used as an instrument in this battle. "Unification" is thus understood as control, domination, or persuasion, and the center of discussion is you.

In dialogue, neither party is the center of the discussion. What matters is the truth. Both parties are open to truth, which is disclosed through dialogue. No one person takes an "infallible" stance. In dialogical rationality, truth is understood as a "happening" or an "occurrence" defined as "disclosure" (Heidegger defined truth as Greek *aletheia*, "laying bare" or "unconcealment" in contrast to the popular concept of truth as correspondent of ideas and reality; Gadamer also held this

concept of truth).

Interpretation necessarily underlies human understanding. The way to process your ideas, intuition, even "revelation" (given in images and symbols) is interpretive. Language and concepts are confined by social and cultural historical contexts. Gadamer argues that no interpretation is possible without historical heritage. Understanding texts is a dialogue between reader and text, where truth is disclosed and guides the process. Similarly, a dialogue between people is a dialogical process, wherein you experience the emergence of truth. For dialogical reasoning, "unification" can be an agreement for continuous dialogue, if not consensus in content; or integration of two opposite poles in a dialectical tension, seeking a higher ground of integration; a dynamic process rather than a static state.



Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) explained his concept of truth in reference to Vincent Van Gogh's "Pair of Shoes" (1885) in The Origin of the Work of Art.

From Correctness to Meaningfulness

In dialogical reasoning, the focus shifts from "correctness" to "meaning." To illustrate this point, Gadamer contrasted the experience of art with that of science. Poetry, for example, discloses truth not in terms of its "correctness" but its "meaning." Hermeneutic truth does not rest on correctness but on profound meaning. While an element of "correctness" is always present in judgment, a shift of focus is necessary in order to be open to others and the truth.

The Idea of "Unification"

What is "unification"? Is it a type of "subjugation" or "persuasion" (a soft form of "subjugation" or "control") or even "domination" of the other based on your

"infallible" beliefs? Or is it an effort to find a common ground for greater integration? Integration or even a productive dialogue is not easy among competing groups, be they religious or non-religious.

The task of Unificationism is, I argue, to make serious efforts to develop a workable model of "Unification." Organizational conflicts in reality are due to a mixture of theological differences, power struggles, group pressures, economic interests, and resentment generated by past struggles. In the Unification Movement, various efforts were made to build bridges among groups including interreligious activities, conferences, International Sisterhood Ceremonies, Religious Youth Seminars, and others. Even the Unificationist concept of marriage was interreligious-cultural-racial marriage. In spite of those endeavors, a conceptual model for "unification" has not been worked out.

When reason is placed under power, it can easily become a tool for ideological manipulation. Instrumental reason is good for technological control but not for dialogue. In order to develop a workable model for "unification," we need to liberate ourselves from the dominant use of reason as a tool and shift

to a dialogical rationality.

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