

# A Study on Toegye(退溪) Yi Hwang(李滉)\*

## : Ultimate Concern and Ultimate Reality of Chosun Confucianism

Lee, Kwang Ho\*\*

**Abstract:** Chosun Dynasty was a Confucian state-the state whose political and educational ideology was Confucianism. The Confucian State seeks to realize the ideal of ‘Kingly Government’ (王道政治, Wangdochongch'i), in which the king and sadaebu (士大夫; aristocrats or a literati class) rule the nation in accordance with the will of the people as the very foundation of the nation. ‘Kingly Government’ refers to a political system, in which the king as a man of virtue governs the nation under the principle of morality (道德) with the help of sadaebu who are, both academically and ideologically, committed to Confucianism. The first and foremost concern of Confucianism including the Chosun Confucianism is “What is morality?” This question leads to another more fundamental one: “What is Heaven as the ultimate reality?” It is because morality in Confucianism is a way in which the human nature endowed by Heaven is actualized

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\*\* Professor of Yonsei University.

within human relationships.

T'oegye Yi Hwang was a representative neo-Confucian scholar in Chosun Dynasty, who systemized Korean neo-Confucianism and attempted to reach the realm of the sage by putting its ideals into practices.

1. His Learning is the study for the sake of self (为己之学)
2. The study for the sake of self is directly Simhak (心学: Study of the mind-and-heart)
3. Li (理, Principle) is the Truth of eternal immortality
4. Simhak (心学) in the dimension of lihak (理学: Study of the Principle) is systematized centering on Substance-Function (体用)

The ultimate interest in T'oegye (退溪) Yi Hwang (李滉) was to be equipped with the saint's personality through personal cultivation in self. This interest couldn't be realized without truly knowing li (理), which is the ultimate reality. His theory of study is clearly explaining a method of becoming a saint by recognizing and practicing Li (理), which is the ultimate reality, based on lihak in the position of Simhak based on the theory of substance-function.

Due to the development in science, the world of animals other than a human being is all threatened. Air and water, which are as important as life itself, are being contaminated as a whole. And, due to competition and distrust between nation and nation & between individual and individual, the number of people, who can make a comfortable life, is getting rapidly reduced. If there are the thought and method in this period that personal cultivation leads to changing own life into extremely good life, and that such personal cultivation allows neighbors to be comfortable, and further all the mankind to be comfortable, will this thought be able to be unconcerned for a reason of being not suitable for science?

We are living in the era of human being's subjectivity fallen into the instrumental

nationality, not knowing how to approach human being's subjectivity. In this era Yi Hwang's study can offer a method of newly illuminating what the subjectivity and rationality are. There is no way to approach the eternal world and the absolute world that cannot be approached with science, which is the study of just analyzing and synthesizing the individualized phenomenon. Yi Hwang shows the universal validity by connecting the transcendental world with the phenomenal world based on a human being's inner world. The message, which Yi Hwang's study gives to today's philosophy, is powerful.

**Key Words:** Confucianism, Yi Hwang, Li, the Ultimate Reality, Substance-Function

## Introduction

Chosun Dynasty was a Confucian state-the state whose political and educational ideology was Confucianism. The Confucian State seeks to realize the ideal of 'Kingly Government' (王道政治, wangdochongch'i), in which the king and sadaebu (士大夫; aristocrats or a literati class) rule the nation in accordance with the will of the people as the very foundation of the nation. 'Kingly Government' refers to a political system, in which the king as a man of virtue governs the nation under the principle of morality (道德) with the help of sadaebu who are, both academically and ideologically, committed to Confucianism. The first and foremost concern of Confucianism including the Chosun Confucianism is "What is morality?" This question leads to another more fundamental one: "What is Heaven as the ultimate reality?" It is because morality in Confucianism is a process in which the human nature endowed by Heaven is actualized within human relationships. According to the first chapter of *Doctrine of The Mean* (中庸), "What Heaven has endowed is called the nature. Following the nature is called the Way(道, Tao). Cultivating the Way is called instruction."<sup>①</sup> This statement can be seen as a key argument of Confucian moral philosophy, positing the relationship between Heaven and human nature and between morality and education.

The mainstream of Chosun Confucianism was neo-Confucianism (性理学, Seonglihak), which had been founded and philosophically systemized by Cheng brothers (程颢, 程颐) and Chu Hsi (朱熹) in Sung Dynasty. The philosophical aim of Neo-Confucianism was the rehabilitation of Confucianism as a ruling ideology against Buddhism, the foreign religion that had prevailed in China. Because of neo-Confucian

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① *Doctrine of the Mean*(中庸), chapter 1.

scholars, Chinese society once again transformed into Confucian one. In Korea, sadaebu, the newly-emerging ruling class at the end of Goryeo Dynasty, adopted neo-Confucianism as a state ideology in building a new Confucian dynasty, which was Chosun. In order to actualize the moral politics of Confucianism, the king and sadaebu themselves should become sages capable of righteous thought and act by cultivating Tao through learning the Confucian Scripture. The learning system of Confucianism is best described in *The Great Learning* (大学). The Great Learning has two main parts, self-cultivation (修己) and the government of people (治人). Here, the primary concern is self-cultivation because it is the foundation of the government of people. The central issues of self-cultivation are ‘expanding knowledge through investigating the essence of things’ (格物致知), ‘making one’s thought sincere’ (诚意), ‘the rectification of mind’ (正心), and ‘cultivating one’s own person’ (修身). In neo-Confucianism, one has to go through the whole process of self-cultivation (修己) to become a king or sadaebu. That is to say, Neo-Confucianism puts emphasis on self-cultivation as the very foundation of every politics.

Toegye Yi Hwang was a representative neo-Confucian scholar in Chosun Dynasty, who systemized Korean neo-Confucianism and attempted to reach the realm of the sage by putting its ideals into practices.

## His Learning is the study for the sake of self(为己之学)

What is the ultimate concern of Confucianism? It is a problem of morality. Morality is banal. Confucian morality is about the relationships between human beings—between fathers and sons, between kings and subjects, between adults and children, and

between friends-and about how to lead a life in the middle of these complex human relationships while not offending one's own nature. Since one's own nature is endowed by Heaven, the realm of eternity, an endeavor to remain faithful to one's nature would open the door to Heaven, in which one can let go of his nature and make his way to eternity. Furthermore, Confucianism also claims that self-cultivation is a key element in not only making a person virtuous, but also making other people and even all the world comfortable and establishing universal peace.

Cultivating oneself in accordance with his own nature given by Heaven and making efforts to putting morality into practice in everyday life is a way of reaching Heaven and transcending all the worldly things toward eternity.

Mencius (孟子) argues, "One who exerts one's mind to the utmost knows one's nature. One who knows one's nature knows Heaven."<sup>①</sup> Confucius also maintains, "One, who gets to know oneself by keeping learning human morality and reaching the ultimate truth while neither blaming Heaven, nor reproaching other people, is Heaven itself."<sup>②</sup> And according to *The Doctrine of the Mean*, "The sage cannot help cultivating himself, and he should obey his parents in order to cultivate himself, and he should know what human beings are in order to obey his parents, and he should know Heaven in order to know what human beings are."<sup>③</sup>

In Confucianism, although the question of morality is rooted in everyday life, its essence is connected to the notion of eternity. Thus, if there is no recognition of the world of eternity, no morality is possible. For this reason, although the questions of self-cultivation and morality seem very banal and relatively insignificant, they include the most essential problems of Confucianism. In some regards, it is the most unique part of

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① Mencius(孟子), 7A:1.

② *Confucian Analects*(论语), 14-37.

③ *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 20.

Confucianism that the first priority is given to one's self-cultivation over allegedly more important questions like governing the state. Therefore, if one cannot understand that morality lies where banality and eternity intersect, one would have trouble understanding Confucianism itself.

According to Chu Hsi's commentary, "The great origin of Tao is not changeable because it originates in Heaven."<sup>①</sup> Since human nature is determined by Heaven and it is a natural course of things to follow the nature, it may well become one of the most crucial issues of Confucianism to obey Heaven and love humankind through the realization of human nature within everyday life by recognizing the righteous way of being. It was Yi Hwang that was the most keenly aware of this issue in Chosun Confucian tradition.

"The sage's learning is just for his sake. As Chang Shih(张栻) argued, that learning is just for his sake means that 'it is naturally so without any willful pursuing.' For instance, a wild orchid sends forth a sweet fragrance day and night to make the whole mountain odorous, not knowing it does so. It is just like this that the sage's learning is for his sake."<sup>②</sup>

Why is self-cultivation that important? We, armed with modern science and technology, cannot easily agree with that. Of course, it may not be we alone that could not understand the importance of self-cultivation. Probably, most Confucian scholars had trouble in grasping it. Even Tzu-lu (子路), the third greatest disciple of Confucius, hesitatingly cast a doubt on it. He once asked his teacher what the sage is. Confucius's answer was simple: 'The sage cultivate himself with Kyōng (敬: mindfulness).' Tzu-lu

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① *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 1. Chu Hsi's commentary.

② *Toegye Chōnsō* 5, "The Pure Words by Teacher Yi Hwang(李子粹語)", 卷 1, 2-13, 成均馆大学学校大东文化研究院, 1978.

got more confused, “Is that all?” Confucius retorted squarely, “The sage cultivates himself only to make people happy.” Still, Tzu-lu could not suppress his suspicion. “Is that all?” The teacher answered more firmly, “Even Yao Shun (尧舜) worried himself how he could cultivate himself to make people comfortable.”<sup>①</sup>

Personal cultivation leads to disciplining self. Personal cultivation leads to allowing other people to be comfortable. What personal cultivation leads to allowing the people to be comfortable is not only that Junzi (君子, a virtuous gentleman) will need to do, but also to which Confucius (孔子) himself points. Thus, it is the determined answer with saying of being the way that Chinese scholars had it as the ideal, and that even the saints like Yao Shun (尧舜) had followed.

Yi Hwang's study, which established his whole study system as the theory of personal cultivation while saying that the study for the sake of self, namely, the study of personal cultivation, is Junzi's study, is reconfirmation on the study called Confucianism.

## The study for the sake of self is directly Simhak(心学)

After Chu Hsi integrated Seonglihak (性理学-neo confucianism), Confucianism was changed into the system centering of the Four Books from the system of centering on Six Classics (六经). The book, which needs to be read the first among the Four Books, is *the Great Learning*. The preceding chapter being recognized as classical text even out of *the Great Learning* are just about 250 letters, which comprised

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<sup>①</sup> *Confucian Analects*, 14-45.



Samgangryeong (三纲领: three heads) and Paljomok (八条目: eight particulars). Paljomok is what divided Samgangryeong into clauses in detail. Thus, the three heads of Confucianism are what 'lights up the bright virtue, renew the people, and remains in the Ultimate good(至善).' Paljomok(八条目) are divided into 8 kinds such as 'Investigating things' 'Extending knowledge' 'Making the will sincere' 'Rectifying the mind' 'Cultivating one's person' 'Regulating the family' 'Ordering the state' 'Making the world tranquil', thereby explaining these three heads. Chu Hsi(朱熹) made Bomangjang(补亡章), and analyzed 'gaining knowledge by the study of things(格物致知)' that there is no non-reaching Pyo-ri-jeong-chu(表里精粗: external and internal, the subtle and the coarse) or the things and that there is no non-brightness in Jeon-che-dae-yong(全体大用: entire substance and great function) in my mind. Since then, scholars failed to pass through a gateway to gaining knowledge by the study of things, thereby having come to be worried. Since then, all kinds of theories on gaining knowledge by the study of things came to be rampant. Furthermore, Wang Yang-ming(王阳明) came to criticize Chu Hsi's theory on gaining knowledge by the study of things, and to declare the independent theory. Even Yi Hwang is leaving a record that he had been worried about gaining knowledge by the study of things until a few month before facing death. However, Yi Hwang established his new study system, thereby having established the problem about gaining knowledge by the study of things as a basis of the moral theory in Confucianism.

"In short, the mind is what possessed both li(理, principle) and *ch'i* (气, material force) governs Seong-jeong(性情: the nature and the feelings). And, the moment, when Seong(性: nature) is given out, thereby becoming Jeong(情: feeling), is the time that the disposition of the mind sprouts, thereby being a hinge(枢要) in everything and a turning point of good and evil. A scholar needs to clearly discern li and desire by consistently keeping Kyöng(敬: mindfulness) heartily, and to further abstain from the moment that

Seong is given out, thereby becoming Jeong. If truth(真) is accumulated and an effort is continued by allowing the study of Jon-yang(存养: preserving and nurturing) deeply at the time of Mibal(未发: before arouse) and by allowing the habit of introspection(省察) to be familiar at the time of Ibal(已发: after arouse), then Sage Learning (圣学) in 'Jeong-il-jip-jung (精一执中: being discerning and undivided, holding fast the mean)' and Simböp (心法) of 'Jon-ch'e-eung-yong' (存体应用: preserving substance and functioning in response) will all be able to be obtained here with no need trace in other place.”<sup>①</sup>

Yi Hwang divides a method of becoming a saint into Sage Learning in Jeong-il-jip-jung and Simböp in 'Jon-ch'e-eung-yong.' Simböp in 'Jon-ch'e-eung-yong' is with saying of preserving substance in the mind given being calm, and of reacting according to li (理) in the mind given facing a situation. There is no doubt at all that this is Simhak (心学: the study of the mind-and-heart). Then, what is Sage Learning in Jeong-il-jip-jung?

Jeong-il-jip-jung is the abbreviation of the remark with saying that “a person's mind is dangerous, and Mind of Dao is hidden and subtle (隱微), thus the Mean can be practiced only when requiring to consistently keep Tao Mind by precisely examining”.<sup>②</sup> Yi Hwang says that 'examining precisely' is study of selecting goodness or study of lighting up goodness, thereby calling this as gaining knowledge by the study of things (格物致知), namely, study of cognition. 'What keeps Tao Mind consistently' is study of firmly keeping goodness, thereby being understood as the study of practice corresponding to 'Making the will sincere', 'Rectifying the mind', 'Cultivating one's person' in *the Great Learning*. In case of Yi Hwang, Sage Learning as the study in order to be a saint ultimately implies that a person recognizes what goodness is and

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① *The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning*, “Diagram of 'the mind goverens the nature and feelings'”.

② “The preface on the Doctrine of the Mean with Chu Hsi's commentary by Chu His.”

practices while proceeding with living. By the way, the cognizance and practice at this time is said to be possible through introspection and realization on substance and function (体用) in the mind. It implies that even both Simbŏp (心法) and Sage Learning explained by Yi Hwang are ultimately explained within the substance and function in the mind. Therefore, Yi Hwang's study in order to be a saint can be said to be Simhak.

Yi Hwang explained in the aspect of Sage Learning centering on “Diagram of the Elementary Learning (小学图)” and “Diagram of the Great Learning (大学图)” even in the structure of *The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* (圣学十图, Sŏnghak sipdo), and explained with Simbŏp (心法) centering on “Diagram of the Saying, ‘The Mind Combines and Governs the Nature and the Feelings’ (心统性情图)”. By the way, these two studies can be said to be unified into Study of the Mind (心学).

The work, which was mentioned the most in Yi Hwang's *The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* (圣学十图), is the work of Jeong bok-sim (程复心) in Won Dynasty. About five works such as “Diagram of the Western Inscription (西铭图)”, “Diagram of the Saying, ‘The Mind Combines and Governs the Nature and the Feelings’” (心统性情图) & Explanation of the Diagram (图说), “Diagram of the Study of the Mind(心学图)” & Explanation of the Diagram were cited. This is because Jeong bok-sim (程复心) clarified the way of being a saint through Study of the Mind(心学). At the end of Explanation of the Diagram of the Study of the Mind (心学图说), Jeong bok-sim said that the main point of studying in order to be a saint, is in Kyŏng (敬: mindfulness).

“In short, the main point of studying fails to leave one Kyŏng. Generally speaking, the mind implies the supervision (主宰) in the body. And, Kyŏng is the supervision in the mind. If learners try to familiarly study thoroughly on ‘theory of Ju-il-mu-jeok(主一无适: concentrating on one thing and not departing [from it])’, ‘theory of Jeong-je-eom-suk (整齐严肃: well-ordered and even-minded, grave and quiet)’, ‘theory of collecting the mind’, and ‘theory of awakening always’, the study is naturally fulfilled, thereby

being probably not difficult even to enter the saint's state.”<sup>①</sup>

Following Jeong bok-sim (程复心)'s “Diagram of the Saying, ”The Mind Combines and Governs the Nature and the Feelings “(心统性情图)”, Yi Hwang arranged Chu Hsi's “Diagram of the Explanation of Humanity (仁说图)”. Again, following arranging Jeong bok-sim's “Diagram of the Study of the Mind (心学图)”, Yi Hwang arranged the study related to Kyŏng, which Jeong bok-sim said it to be the main point of becoming a saint, in No.9 diagram (图) and No.10 diagram. Yi Hwang's Wigijihak (为己之学: study for own improvement) can be said to be directly Simhak.

## Li is truth of eternal immortality

Yi Hwang is a scholar of Simhak who makes his study clear centering on mind, but strongly criticized Wang Yang-ming's ‘Mind is the same as Principle (心即理)’ or ‘Unity of knowledge and action (知行合一)’. What will be a reason for this? Yi Hwang emphasized mind (心). However, he emphasized mind because li (理) is in the middle of mind and because li is realized in the wake of mind, but didn't assert that ‘mind is the same as li’ like Wang Yang-ming. In case of Yi Hwang, the existence is anyway composed of li (理) and ch'i (气). The mind is just oneness of Li and material force. Mind is great because of being able to reveal this. Yi Hwang's Kyŏng is the study that allows the mind to concentrate and that allows the mind to be the master, but the study in mind is pointing to li, which is truth. The mind is always pointing to li, thus the state of being oneness in the mind and li, is regarded as the ideal state. Therefore, Yi Hwang exactly emphasizes the mind, but is a scholar of Simhak (心学) in Lihak (理学), not a

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① *To Become a Sage*(trans by Michael C. Kalton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988 )  
“ The Diagram of the Study of the Mind(心学图)”.

simple scholar of Study of the Mind (心学), and is ultimately a scholar of Study of the li. Thus, Yi Hwang attached the most importance to cognizance on li (理), and strived to explain easily and clearly li, which is the absolute truth that he recognized. At the age of 49, Yi Hwang confessed to his pupil that he studied “The Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (太极图)” for over 30 years, but has nothing to know yet. Yi Hwang regarded the true knowledge on truth as very difficult.

“A reason for the occurrence of difference between study and Method of Tao (道术) in ancient and modern people is because the character 'li (理)' is difficult to be known. What 'li' is said to be difficult to be known is not roughly what is difficult to be known, but will be what is difficult to be completely understood by truly knowing and profoundly understanding.”<sup>①</sup>

However, Yi Hwang doesn't spare bold expression about truth that he had recognized from around 53 years old when he had drawn “New Diagram of the Mandate of Heaven (天命新图)”. Let us examine the typical parts, which Yi Hwang explained about li.

Yi Hwang said that Li is different from anything in the phenomenal world, through a method of ‘denial (否定)’.

According to Yi Hwang, “li has neither the ego and the non-ego (物我) nor the inside and outside (内外). It has neither fragmentation (分段) nor Bang-ch'e (方体).”<sup>②</sup>

What li hasn't ego and the non-ego implies that there is no distinction between I and other person, thereby meaning that li has no difference between my li and your li.

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① *Toegye Chōnsō* 1-16, “Reply to Ki Taesūng, extra paper”, 成均馆大学校 大东文化研究院, 1978, p.424.

② *Toegye Chōnsō* 1-24, “Reply to Cheng Tzu chong(郑子中)”, 成均馆大学校 大东文化研究院, 1978, p.576.

This is the denial of the phenomenal world, which is the world in an individual that everything is divided into me and other person. What there is no inside and outside (内外) implies that there is no interior and exterior in li, thus this is the denial of all things, which have the inside and outside, and of the phenomenal world. What there is no fragmentation (分段) means to be impossibly divided, thereby being the denial of the phenomenal world that cannot be dissolved. What there is no Bang-ch'e (方体) implies that there is no certain shape, thus this is also the denial of the phenomenal world that is equipped with shape (形象). Given expressing this synthetically, those are as follows. 'Li has no shape (形象), thereby being unable to be divided. And, it has no inside and outside, thereby being the existence without distinction between you and me.' Given attaching name to this existence, 'The Metaphysical One' (形而上的一者) is likely to be suitable. 'The Metaphysical One is 'the Unlimited' (无限者) against the phenomenal world. There is no shape, thereby having no size. And, it hasn't inside and outside, thereby having nothing to fail to include. A person, who includes everything without certain size, cannot have creation and extinction. What is created implies to have the beginning by which any thing, which had never existed, starts to exist in any form, thus the Metaphysical One is the eternal one. It includes everything, thereby being 'all Inclusive (包括者). It is beyond the phenomenal world while including, thereby being 'Com-Transcendent (包越者).

Yi Hwang ever expressed li with a negative method, but further is clarifying as if nearly declaring with the more positive method that li is the absolute truth in eternal immortality that anything cannot be compared.

"Given reaching the perfect state by devising several li, li will come to be clearly recognized. Li is what is extremely substantial while being extremely empty, is what is highly existence while being highly non-existence, is what has no movement while moving, is what has no silence while being calm, and is what is clean and tranquil,

thereby being what fails to be added even a little and to be subtracted even a little. It is the foundation of Yin and yang (阴阳)·Wu Xing (五行: Five Agents)·All Things (万物)·All Affairs (万事) and simultaneously is not locked by Yin and yang·Wu Xing·All Things·All Affairs, thus how it can be recognized as one thing and be seen as same by mixing with material force (气)!”<sup>①</sup>

Yi Hwang explained li with the pair in a mutually inconsistent and contradictory concept, thereby having mentioned that li is the existence of simultaneously including all in four pairs that are impossible to co-exist in the phenomenal world. It indicates ‘what is substantial while being empty’, ‘what is existence while being non-existence’, ‘what has not movement while moving’, and ‘what has no silence while being calm’.<sup>②</sup> The existence of including ‘substantiality and emptiness’ (虚实), ‘existence and nonexistence’ (有无), ‘activity and quiet’ (动静) cannot help implying the absolute existence that is beyond the relative phenomenal world. It is the root of all of relative and contradictory things, and on the other hand, is the absolute existence that is beyond the relative world. And, it has all the characteristics that are possessed by the existence in the phenomenal world called ‘substance’ (实), ‘existence’ (有), ‘movement’ (动), and is simultaneously the existence in ‘emptiness’ (虚), ‘non-existence’(无), ‘silence’ (静), thereby having the li in it that enables all the phenomenal world, but being in a state of ‘clean and calm’, ‘tranquil and empty’, ‘non-existence’. In this way, li is the absolute existence, thereby becoming the root of ‘Yin and Yang’·‘Wu Xing’·‘All things’·‘All affairs’, but being the absolute existence in the above form (形而上), which has nothing to be locked by the phenomenal world. This absolute li is not the

① *Toegye Chŏnsŏ*, 1-16, “Reply to Ki Taesŭng, extra paper”, 成均馆大学校 大东文化研究院, 1978, p.424.

② For following explanations of the Principle, see my doctoral thesis.(Lee, Kwang Ho, “The Structure of Substance-Function in Yi To'egye's Notion of Study”, Seoul National University, 1993.)

existence that can be together identified or mentioned with material force (气), which is created and becomes extinct. When Yi Hwang having said that he truly knows li, this is the meaning of perfectly knowing li, which is this absolute truth. The problem of recognizing and practicing li, which is explained by Yi Hwang, needs to be understood in light of li in the above characteristics, about which Yi Hwang said that he truly knew (真知) and substantially acquired (实得).

## Simhak in the dimension of Lihak is systematized centering on substance-function

Recognizing the absolute truth in eternal immortality is a very difficult thing. Yi Hwang knew keenly how difficult it is to truly know truth and rightly practice. However, as hard as he knew, even the description on a method of recognizing and practicing truth as well as the description on truth itself are detailed and explicit. The most important concept for Yi Hwang to understand nature and a human being is a concept of substance-function (体用).

“Mr. Jeong (Jeongi: 程颐) said it to be the substance and function sharing the same origin (体用一源), and to be surely the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间). The two characters in substance-function is but what is alive, not what is dead, thereby having nothing not to include, and being unable to devise profundity in all.”<sup>①</sup>

Two characters dubbed substance-function (体用) are profound, thereby being said to have nothing not to include. It is said that there is no profound character more than

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① T'oegye Chönsö, 2-41, “A Discussion on the Saying of No Substance and Function in Mind”, pp.329-330.



two characters dubbed substance-function in explaining the living natural world and the human world. He likes to explain a change in creation of universe and nature, and a human being's life, with a concept called substance-function.

“In case of heaven and earth (乾坤), what is Chung-Mak-Mu-Jim (冲漠无朕: empty and tranquil, and without any sign) is the substance of Mu-geuk-tae-geuk (无极太极: Non-Ultimate & Supreme Ultimate), thereby being already equipped with all shapes. In case of things, what is Chung-Mak-Mu-Jim becomes the function (用) in manifestation (发见) and prevailed (流行), thereby being everywhere anytime and anywhere. Therefore, when Mr. Jeong talks about the substance and function sharing the same origin (体用一源), he surely spoke of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable(显微无间).”<sup>①</sup>

Yi Hwang understands the whole nature as perfect existence that has the structure of substance-function (体用) which implies in ‘the substance and function sharing the same origin’ and ‘the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable’ (显微无间). When explaining about the process of formation and creation in nature, the nature is understood in the position of the substance and function sharing the same origin (体用一源). And, when understanding all things that were born by being given Mandate of Heaven (天命), the nature is understood in the position of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间). Yi Hwang says that “The Diagram of the Supreme ultimate (太极图)”, which was drawn by Ju ryeom-gye (周濂溪), is what the relationship between the ultimate truth called the Great ultimate and all things are schematized from the viewpoint of the position of the substance and function sharing

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<sup>①</sup> Toegye Chönsö, 2-41, “A Discussion on the Saying of No Substance and Function in Mind”, p.329.

the same origin (体用一源). On the other hand, “Cheon-myeong-shin-do’ (天命新图)”, which was drawn by him, is said to be what the relationship between all things in the phenomenal world and the ultimate truth was interpreted from the viewpoint of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间). Yi Hwang uses the viewpoint of the substance and function sharing the same origin and the viewpoint of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable mutually and supplementarily, and explains nature and a human being. This understanding about nature and a human being was literally reflected even in his theory of study, thereby forming the core of his methodology in study.

As for Yi Hwang's method of study, the study of doing perfectly substance-function in the wake of Mibal (未发: Before Aroused) and Ibal (已发: After Arousd) in mind based on *Doctrine of the Mean* is said to be study of substance-function (体用). The study of substance-function is the study that accepted li of the substance and function sharing the same origin in nature and li of the substance and function sharing the same origin in mind. In the middle of ‘surely indulging in and not forgetting the natural li’ and of ‘not being determined to bring about or encouraging’ the natural li, which is prevailed (流行) without suspending through substance-function in mind, Tao-ch'e comes not to be contrary or blocked, and further to become oneness in mind and Li, thereby coming to advance even to confirmation that “li (理) of movements (动静) in a human being's mind is directly li of movements in heaven and earth (天地).” All in the constant practice of mindfulness & thorough study of li, Kyöng-ui-hyeop-ji (敬义夾持: the constant practice of mindfulness and righteousness), Jon-yang (存养: preserving and nurturing [one's innate, good dispositions in quiescence]) and exercising reflection and discernment [in activity] are the study of substance-function (体用) based on substance-function in mind.

Yi Hwang understands about Investigation things & Extending knowledge (格物致

知) in *the Great Learning* as the study of cognizance, and about Making the will sincere (诚意), Rectifying the mind (正心), and Cultivating one's person (修身) as the study of practice, and explains the learning system in Confucianism as the study of cognizance and practice. The study of cognizance and practice is what applied the understanding of nature in the position of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间) to the learning method.

The study of substance-function and the study of cognizance and practice are mutually different methods, but form the mutually organic unity. First of all, both studies are formed based on Staying in Kyöng (居敬). In other words, those are formed on the basis of master in mind. And, the phrase, to which Yi Hwang attaches the most importance in studying cognizance and practice, is the contents with saying that 'a man's mind is dangerous, and Tao Mind is hidden and subtle (隐微), thus the Mean can be practiced only when requiring to precisely examine and consistently keep.' Yi Hwang understands examining precisely as the study of selecting and lighting up goodness, namely as the study of recognizing goodness, and understands constantly keeping as the study of practice, which firmly observes goodness. Even the most important aspect in the study of cognizance and practice implies what recognizes and practices goodness in the wake of the function in mind.

The study of substance-function aims to reach the ideal state that mind (心性) in the substance and function sharing the same origin is smoothly realized by progressing study according to the mind in the substance and function sharing the same origin, namely, according to the method of li (理). And, the study of cognizance (认识) and practice (实践) aims to ultimately obtain the life of the substance and function sharing the same origin through learning cognizance and practice by realizing the Mandate of Heaven (天命) immanent according to the li of the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间), and by having this as the standard and the starting point.

*Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸) was mentioned that “what is bright from sincerity (诚) is called Nature, and what becomes sincerity from brightness is called Instruction (教).”<sup>①</sup> The study of substance-function is the study of pursuing “brightness from sincerity”. And, the study of cognizance (认识) and practice (实践) is the study of pursuing ‘what becomes sincerity from brightness’.<sup>②</sup> *Doctrine of the Mean* continued to be mentioned that “becoming sincerity leads to being bright, and being bright leads to becoming sincerity.” Given seeing according to this word, the study of substance-function (体用) and the study of cognizance and practice will come to ultimately meet in one world that sincerity is all realized and brightness is all revealed. Yi Hwang called this world as ‘the world of the substance and function sharing the same origin (体用一源) and the manifestation and obscurity of being inseparable (显微无间),’ and called this state, which a human being reached, as ‘the state of unity (合一) with the nature’, namely as ‘Unity of Heaven and a man’ (天人合一).

“By being the mind like the mind of Yanzi (颜子), who says that he doesn't violate patience (忍) for 3 months, even governing a nation will come to be obtained in the midst of it. By becoming like Tsengtzu (曾子) who realized consistency with Chung-shu (忠恕: Loyalty and Empathy), the responsibility for delivering Tao (道) will come to be given to self. By which reverence (畏敬) doesn't leave in daily life and by which neutralization is formed, the order of Heave and earth will be made straight, and even the honor that all things are incarnated (化育) will be able to be accomplished. The virtuous conduct doesn't escape from morality, but the wondrous unity of Heaven and man (天人合一) will

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① *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 21.

② *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 21.

come to be obtained.”<sup>①</sup>

Yi Hwang's study was what has the saint's state as the state, which obtained life of unity of Heaven and man through moral practice by which the life in substance-function (体用) was perfectly realized on the basis of the natural view and human view of substance-function (体用), and was what has a goal of learning as the arrival at this state.

## Conclusion

The ultimate interest in T'oegye (退溪) Yi Hwang (李滉) was to be equipped with the saint's personality through personal cultivation in self. This interest couldn't be realized without truly knowing li (理), which is the ultimate reality. His theory of study is clearly explaining a method of becoming a saint by recognizing and practicing li, which is the ultimate reality, based on Lihak (理学: Study of the Li) in the position of Simhak (心学: Study of the Mind-and-Heart) based on the theory of substance-function (体用).

Due to the development in science, the world of animals other than a human being is all threatened. Air and water, which are as important as life itself, are being contaminated as a whole. And, due to competition and distrust between nation and nation & between individual and individual, the number of people, who can make a comfortable life, is getting rapidly reduced. If there are the thought and method in this period that personal cultivation leads to changing own life into extremely good life, and that such personal cultivation allows neighbors to be comfortable, and further all the

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① *To Become a Sage*(trans by Michael C. Kalton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988 )  
“Address Presenting the Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning”.

mankind to be comfortable, will this thought be able to be unconcerned for a reason of being not suitable for science?

It is said that “when Chung-ho (中和: equilibrium [of the mind before it is aroused] and perfect harmony [after it is aroused]) is performed devotedly, the Heaven and earth come to be made straight, and all things come to be cultivated.”<sup>①</sup> There are sayings as follows. “Only an extremely sincere person in the world can fulfill own original nature. Given being able to fulfill own original nature, other people's original nature can be allowed to fulfill. Given being able to allow other people's original nature to be fulfilled, other creatures' original nature can be allowed to fulfill. Given being able to allow other creatures' original nature to be fulfilled, the harmony and growth in the Heaven and earth can be helped. Given being able to help the harmony and growth in Heaven and earth, it can be three along with Heaven and earth.”<sup>②</sup> In modern society that a human being forgets own original nature, and ruins all the living world, the philosophy in Confucianism needs to be newly recognized and restored.

We are living in the era of human being's subjectivity fallen into the instrumental nationality, not knowing how to approach human being's subjectivity. In this era Yi Hwang's study can offer a method of newly illuminating what the subjectivity and rationality are. There is no way to approach the eternal world and the absolute world that cannot be approached with science, which is the study of just analyzing and synthesizing the individualized phenomenon. Yi Hwang shows the universal validity by connecting the transcendental world with the phenomenal world based on a human being's inner world. The message, which Yi Hwang's study gives to today's philosophy, is powerful.

A strong point in Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism relies on difference from

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① *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 1.

② *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 22.

science. However, on the other hand, even the problem depends on just this difference. It is the problem about which relationship there is on earth between Confucianism & Yi Hwang's theory of study and science. Namely, is it what can include science? Is it what is contradictory to science, but mutually supplementary?

In traditional Confucianism, the moral judgment was emphasized much. However, the problem of empirische Erkenntnis(experimental recognition) about the objective world is clear to have been addressed negligently. Xunzi, who had formed the two great masters with Mengzi in Warring States, perceived importance of empirische Erkenntnis, and strived to systematize a theory on empirische Erkenntnis. However, he resulted in being pushed from spiritual enlightenment in legitimate Confucianism. Confucianism in modern society is being requested again the establishment of new relationship between Mengzi (孟子)'s recognition and Xunzi (荀子)'s recognition.

The effort to overcome this problem about moral philosophy in Confucian history of Chosun Dynasty was begun by scholars of Silhak (实学), who were influenced by the Western thought and study. Seongho (星湖) Yi ik (李滉)'s effort for separation and unity in morality and science, and Dasan (茶山) Jeong Yak-yong (丁若鏞)'s philosophy and thought of attaching importance both to the world in moral recognition and the world in scientific recognition, were the efforts to unify and combine philosophies and thoughts in the East and the West.

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## Glossary

Li (理)

Seong (性)

Mind (心)

Mibal (未发) Ibal (已发)

Jeong-il-jip-jung (精一执中)

Theory of Ju-il-mu-jeok (主一无适)

Gaining knowledge by the study of things (格物致知)

Unity of knowledge and action (知行合一)

Jon-ch'e-eung-yon (存体应用)

Simhak (心学)

Silhak (实学)

Jeong bok-sim (程复心)

Yi ik (李翼)

Kingly Government' (王道政治)

Diagram of the Elementary Learning (小学图)

*The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* (圣学十图) Unity of Heaven and a man (天人合一)

Ch'I (气)

Jeong (情)

Kyŏng (敬)

Simbŏp (心法)

Jon-yang (存养)

Theory of Jeong-je-eom-suk (整齐严肃)

Substance-Function (体用)

Lihak (理学)

Sage Learning (圣学)

Chu Hsi (朱熹)

Yi Hwang (李滉)

Jeong Yak-yong (丁若镛)

the study for the sake of self (为己之学)

Diagram of the Great Learning (大学图)



## 退溪李滉研究

李光虎

**中文提要：**朝鲜是以儒教看作是政治、教育的理念的儒教国家，而儒教国家又是国王与士大夫根据民本主义理念来治理国家、从而实现王道政治理想的国家。王道政治根据儒教的政治理念与教育理念，提倡具有德性的君主与士大夫一同治理政治。包括朝鲜儒学在内，儒学首先关注的是道德，而对于道德的疑问又引出更加根本的问题，即道德的根源——天的问题。在儒学看来，道德意味着人类在相互关系中实现上天所赋予人类的本性。

退溪李滉是朝鲜最具代表性的新儒学者，他对韩国新儒学进行体系化，通过儒学理论的实践，为揭示圣人之道而作出努力。本稿主要从如下几个方面阐述他的哲学。

1. 他的学问是为己之学。
2. 为己之学就是心学。
3. 理是永恒的真理。
4. 以体用为中心，将理学的心学体系化。

退溪李滉的终极关心就在于通过个人的人格修养成为圣人。如果无法认识和实践终极的实在理，那么人格的修养也就不可能实现。他的学问通过对内在终极的实在理的认识和实践，明确阐明圣人之道。心由体用两方面构成，他的学问也主要从体用两个方面进行考察。

随着科学的发展，我们生活在一个包括人类在内，所有的生命都受到威胁的时代里，而且如同生命般重要的水和空气受到严重污染，各个国家、个人之间的

竞争与不信任还威胁到人类共同体的生存。在这种年代里，如果存在一种思想，它可以通过自身修养将自己的生活转变成善的生活，还将他人的生活改变成善的生活，那么这种思想即使与科学相背离，我们能舍弃其思想？

我们生活在一个人类主体性沦落为工具主体的时代里，在这一时代里，连准确把握人类主体性的途径也都被堵住。李滉的哲学向我们解释人类的本心和宇宙与生命创造之真理。在以现象的分析和综合作为学问方法的科学来说，根本无法找到可以到达超过现象界的、将现象变为可能性的主体性与真理。退溪则通过对人类内在心性的考察与体验，说明可以将现象世界与超越世界统一的原理。李滉哲学给我们所传达的信息可谓非常重大。

**关键词：**儒学，李滉，理，终极的实在，体用