



# **(e) Correlative Thought as the Philosophical Methodology of Indigenous Modernity**

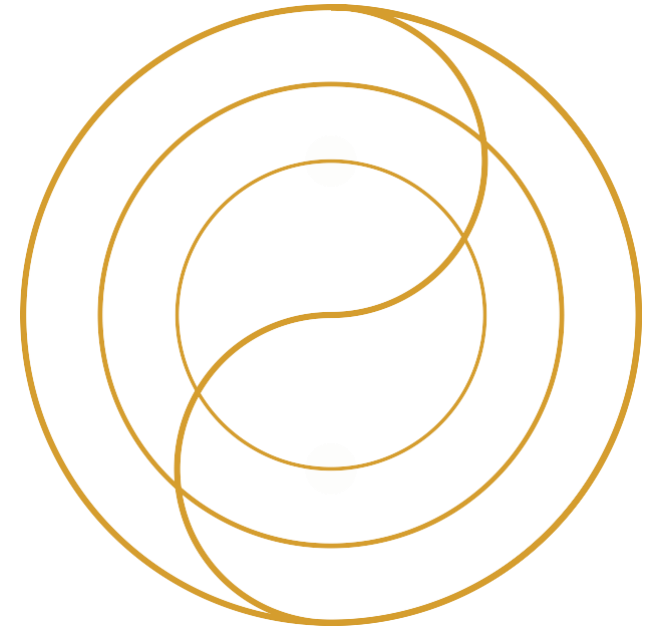
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Correlative Thought as Philosophical Methodology

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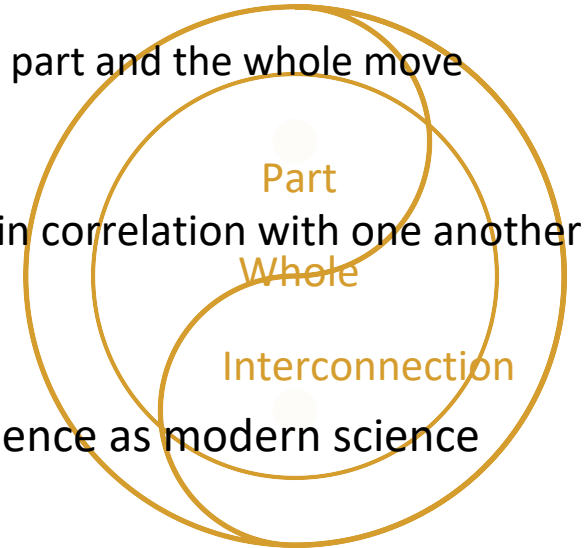
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# The Concept and Definition of Correlative Thought

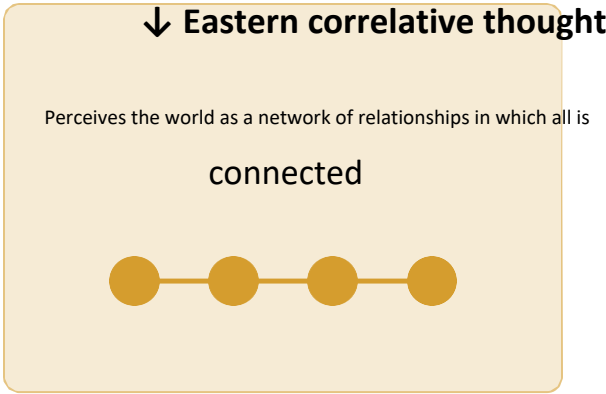
“Correlative thought (相關的 思惟, correlative thinking) is a mode of thinking in which the part and the whole move simultaneously.”

- A cognitive system holding that the whole lies within the part and that all things stand in correlation with one another
- Most civilizations except the West possess this system of thought
- Once dismissed as superstition, it is being reassessed as a possibility for a new science as modern science verifies it
- Yin-yang theory is drawing attention as a representative system of correlative thought



# A Comparison of Western Analytic Thought and Eastern Correlative Thought

- **Analytic thought:** the Western way of thinking that all things move independently and can be divided into particles (atoms, molecules, quanta)
- **Correlative thought:** the Eastern generative way of thinking that recognizes all things as interconnected, indivisible, and correlational
- Even most modern Easterners with a Western education adopt analytic thought



Category | Analytic thought (West) | Correlative thought (East)

Epistemological basis | Individuality, separateness | Wholeness, connectedness

Approach | Decompositional, reductionist | Synthetic, relational

Mode of thinking | Linear, rectilinear | Circular, relational

# The Development History of Correlative-Thought Theory

- The first positive appraisal of the theory of yin-yang and the Five Phases began with Granet
- A. C. Graham (1919-1991) grafted structuralism onto Chinese philosophy to prove the East's correlative scientific character
- Research expanded to Roger T. Ames, David L. Hall, Benjamin Schwartz, Joseph Needham, and others
- Correlative-thought theory appraises the yin-yang and Five Phases theory as objectively as possible and reinterprets it as a primitive form of science
- Through this the West began to understand the East's scientific character, and the East found occasion to rediscover its own identity through the West's interpretation

1920s–1930s | Marcel Granet's first positive appraisal of the theory of yin-yang and the Five Phases

1950s–1970s | Joseph Needham's research on the history of Chinese science and technology

1970s–1990s | A. C. Graham's grafting of structuralism and Chinese philosophy

1990s–2000s | Ames, Hall, and Schwartz's systematization of correlative thought

Present | The expansion of research into an integrated approach to Eastern and Western philosophy

# Henderson's Four Classifications of Correlative Thought

John B. Henderson's classification system of correlative thought

## 1 The relation between the human and the cosmos

The correlation between the microcosm (人) and the macrocosm (宇宙); the correspondence of the human body and the cosmic order

## 2 The state analogy (Needham) — the relation between the cosmic realm (Heaven) and the terrestrial realm (the dynastic/state bureaucracy), in which the order of Heaven is reflected in earthly politics

## 3 A numerological correlative system

Explaining cosmic phenomena through numerical and symbolic systems such as the Five Phases (五行: metal, wood, water, fire, earth)

## 4 The system of the Book of Changes

A system of the study of change (易學) that explains the transformation of all things in the cosmos through the laws of yin-yang change

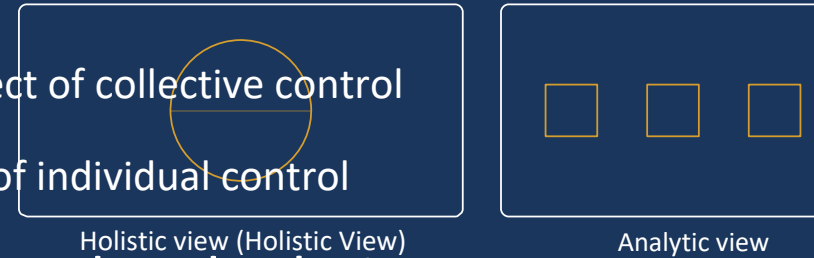


# Cognitive-Psychological Evidence

Richard E. Nisbett: “For Easterners, owing to correlative thought, the world appears more complex than it does for Westerners... they are truly two different worlds.”

- Cognitive traits of Easterners: correlative thought, context-centered, an object of collective control
- Cognitive traits of Westerners: analytic thought, object-centered, an object of individual control
- Experimental results: Easterners attend to background and relations, Westerners to the central object • Though there are differences between countries, the tendency toward correlative thought is common across the Eastern cultural sphere

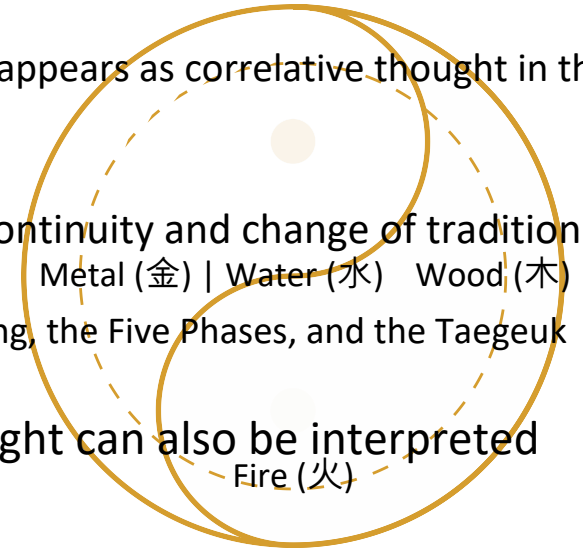
Eastern cognition | Western cognition



# The Eastern Worldview and Tradition

“Since correlative thought is the common cognitive frame of the Eastern worldview, its principle appears as correlative thought in the continuity and change of tradition.”

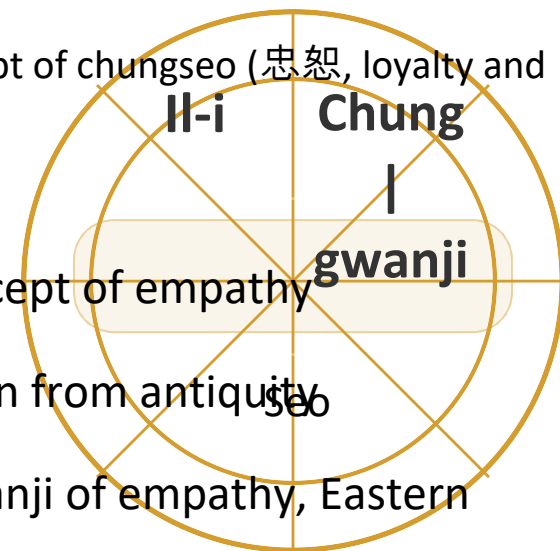
- Eastern thought, represented by yin-yang, the Five Phases, and the Taegeuk, explains the continuity and change of tradition
- In Eastern culture, tradition and change are judged by how well they accord with the concepts of yin-yang, the Five Phases, and the Taegeuk
- The changes of tradition and continuity appearing in Donghak and Daesoon Thought can also be interpreted through the concepts of yin-yang, the Five Phases, and the Taegeuk
- In Eastern philosophy, the principles of yin-yang and the Five Phases are the basic system that integrally explains the cosmos and the human world



# Confucius's Illigwanji and Empathy

“Confucius threaded his whole doctrine together (Illigwanji, 一以貫之) with the empathic concept of chungseo (忠恕, loyalty and reciprocity).”

- Illigwanji (一以貫之): a coherent system of principles threaded together into one
- Chungseo (忠恕): sincerity and understanding toward one another, the core concept of empathy
- Suribujak (述而不作): not creation but the transmission of tradition handed down from antiquity
- The East is more attached to inner consistency than the West; through the illigwanji of empathy, Eastern thought attains objective consistency
- The mutual empathy of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity is expressed as “resonance” (gameung); empathy is an extension of resonance

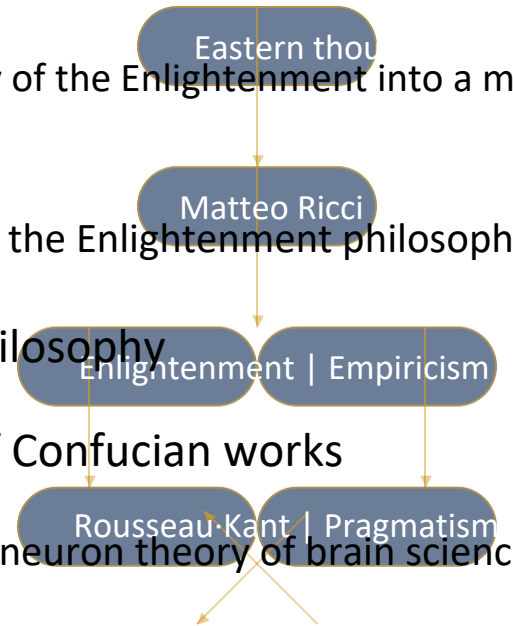


“My Way is threaded together as one.”  
— the Analects, “Wei Ling Gong”  
chapter

# Its Influence on Western Enlightenment and Empiricism

“The Enlightenment was a foreign idea in the West, and the West, by developing the heterogeneity of the Enlightenment into a moral foundation replacing God, was able to build modern civilization.”

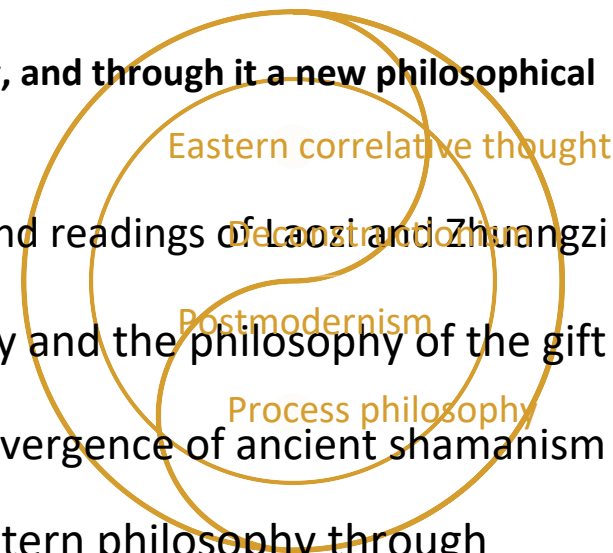
- Jullien: discovering the common ground of empathy in the immanence theories of Mencius and the Enlightenment philosophers
- Rousseau: introducing empathy, an Eastern immanence hard to find in Western philosophy
- British empiricism: adopting Eastern thought through Matteo Ricci's translations of Confucian works
- Developing into evolutionary theory and evolutionary anthropology, combined with the mirror-neuron theory of brain science
- Dewey's pragmatism: its similarity to Confucius's thought, exerting great influence on China



# Connection with Postmodernism

**“The East's correlative thought has a deep connection with contemporary postmodern philosophy, and through it a new philosophical dialogue is opening.”**

- Kim Hyeong-hyo: connecting Jeungsan thought and postmodernism; a study of Derrida and readings of Laozi and Zhuangzi
- Park Jeong-jin: from a religious-studies perspective, a study of the gift of philosophy and the philosophy of the gift
- Park Yong-suk: from a civilizational-history perspective, a study of the East–West convergence of ancient shamanism
- Daesoon Thought research: seeking the possibility of a fusion of Eastern and Western philosophy through comparative studies with Hegel, Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze



# Conclusion and Significance

Unlike Western analytic thought, correlative thought is an essential element of Eastern philosophy that understands nature, humanity, and the cosmos holistically—a philosophical methodology being reexamined in modern science.

- Correlative thought: an independent epistemology, the essence of Eastern philosophy, that recognizes the interconnectedness of all things
- Indigenous modernity: unlike Western modernity, a distinctive modernization process that emerged from the East's immanent value system
- Contemporary significance: an interconnected worldview being rediscovered in modern disciplines such as ecology, quantum physics, and complexity science
- Philosophical methodology: the philosophical integration of East and West, and the expanding possibility of grafting it onto postmodernism
- Future prospects: the possibility of integrating Eastern and Western philosophy through correlative thought and the construction of a new academic paradigm

