

(a) The Western Formal (形相的) View of Heaven

The Western Formal View of Heaven

Introduction: The Importance of the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity

The central element of Western modernity lies in the changes in the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity.

- The worldview shift of the modern West:

Heliocentrism and Calvin's doctrine of predestination are both representative examples showing a change in perspective on the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity.

- The basic foundation of existence and survival:

The View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity serve as the most basic philosophical foundations directly bound to human existence and survival.

- A measure of civilizational change:

A change like modernity, which marks an epoch, is measured by changes in the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity.

"Because the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity are the most basic foundations directly bound to human existence and survival, a change like modernity, which marks an epoch, is measured by changes in the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity."

Plato's Theory of Ideas and the Samjae of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity

In both East and West, the Samjae of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity has served as the fundamental foundation of cosmic cognition.

- The relationship between Plato's Idea and Heaven, Earth, and Humanity:

The invisible world of Ideas corresponds to the Eastern 'Heaven,' the visible world to 'Earth,' and the observing being to 'Humanity.'

- The connection between Western and Eastern cosmology:

In Platonic philosophy too, the three-dimensional structure of cosmos, God, and humanity appears in a form similar to the Samjae of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.

- The core of the theory of Ideas:

The view that the visible cosmos is a reflection of the invisible world of Ideas – the basis of the formal View of Heaven



Aristotle's Form-Matter Theory

Aristotle reinterpreted Plato's theory of Ideas in a realistic manner.

- A practical transformation of Plato's theory:
By reinterpreting the Idea as form (形相, *eidos*) and the actual world as matter (質料, *hyle*), it presents a practical cosmology.
- The combination of form and matter:
It explains things and change through the combination of the formal Heaven (天, *essence*) and the material Earth (地, *phenomenon*).
- The position of humanity:
The human being is positioned between Heaven and Earth as a medium that helps embody the form of Heaven upon the Earth.
- The beginning of the ontological worldview:
By establishing the basis of ontological thinking that explains change through substance, it forms the foundation of Western philosophy.

"For Aristotle, the cosmos, appearing in the form of a formal Heaven and a material Earth, appeared as a world in which the form of Heaven transformed the Earth as matter. The human being is regarded as a being that helps the form of Heaven appear upon the Earth."

The Western Ontological Thought System

In Western thought, change and being are explained on the basis of 'substance.'

- The substance-based mode of thinking:

An ontological theory holding that in order to explain the process of change logically, it must be explained through substance.

- The direction of thought:

Unlike the Eastern way of thinking from the whole to the parts and from the top down, the West adopts a thought system that expands from the parts to the whole and from the bottom up.

- The distinction between essence and phenomenon:

In Western ontology, essence (form) and phenomenon (matter) are clearly distinguished.

Unlike the Eastern monistic mode of thought, it forms a dichotomous structure.

"Ontology and generative theory are today the principal thought systems that distinguish East and West. The West can be said to be an ontology that explains change through substance."

Aristotle's Four Causes Theory and Four Elements Theory

The Four Causes Theory (四原因説)

- Formal cause (形相因):
the cause that determines the essence and form of a thing
- Material cause (質料因):
the material basis that constitutes a thing
- Efficient/moving cause (作用因):
the external cause that brings about change in a thing
- Final cause (目的因):
the ultimate goal toward which a thing aims

The Four Elements Theory (四元素説)

- Earth (地):
the ground, the element of compression and explosion
- Water (水):
water, the element of convergence and descent
- Fire (火):
fire, the element of expansion and ascent
- Wind (風):
wind, the element of expansion and movement

The foundation of the ontological cosmology

Aristotle's substance theory is an ontological theory holding that for the process of change to be explained logically, it must be explained through substance. The Four Causes theory and the Four Elements theory became the core foundation of the Western formal View of Heaven.

The purpose and action by which form and matter combine are the Four Causes through which substance is formed, and the differentiation of matter yields the four great elements of earth-water-fire-wind. Until the 17th century, this theory was regarded as the most rational theory explaining the cosmos in the West.

Differences Between Eastern and Western Thought

Western ontological thinking / Eastern generative thinking	
Principle of change / Principle of change An ontological system that explains change through substance / A generative system that does not posit substance Form as substance (eidos, form) acts upon matter / Explained as change in properties such as Yin-Yang and the Five Phases	
Direction of world-perception From the bottom up (from the parts to the whole) A dichotomous distinction between essence (form) and phenomenon (matter)	Direction of world-perception From the top down (from the whole to the parts) A monistic integration of phenomenon and essence
Core theory and application The Four Causes theory and the Four Elements theory (earth-water-fire-wind) Identifying the cause of change substantially (the development of anatomy)	Core theory and application The Sangsaeng-Sanggeuk system of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases (相生相克) Explaining change through resonance and fractals (the development of biomedicine)

"Whereas the East explains change as a property through Yin-Yang and the Five Phases, the West's earth-water-fire-wind explains it through substance; this difference greatly influences the modernity and worldview of East and West."

Conclusion and Significance

The philosophical meaning and contemporary implications of the Western ontological View of Heaven

- A worldview based on substance theory:

The foundation of Western philosophy, running from Plato's Idea to Aristotle's form-matter theory, forms the ontological structure of the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity.

- The structural difference between Eastern and Western thought:

The contrast between Western ontology, which explains change through substance, and Eastern generative theory, which does not presuppose substance, explains the different paths of civilizational development.

- Contemporary significance:

Understanding the legacy of the ontological View of Heaven, which still influences the formation of today's scientific paradigm and worldview, serves as a philosophical foundation for the fusion and mutual understanding of Eastern and Western civilizations.

"In short, the Western ontological View of Heaven is represented by the earth-water-fire-wind worldview beginning with Aristotle. In the West, which observes things from the bottom up, substance is divided into essence and phenomenon, and phenomenon is the form—which is the essence—transforming the matter—which is the phenomenon—as substance."