

V · Comparison of the Indigenous Modernity of Donghak and Daesoon Thought

2. Comparison of the Indigenous Modernity of the View of Earth (地觀)

Comparison of the Indigenous Modernity in Views of Earth

Research Purpose and Overview

This study aims to elucidate the characteristics of Korean indigenous modernity by comparatively analyzing the View of Earth (地觀, the perspective on land) of Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought.

Key research questions:

- How is land interpreted in each thought?
- What does it mean for indigenous modernity?

Definition of Key Concepts

View of Earth (地觀)

A philosophical and religious perspective on land - a system of thought concerning the status and role of the earth within the structure of Heaven and Earth (天地)

Indigenous modernity

A modernity, distinct from foreign modernity, that begins from an internal system of thought, encompassing a critique of material civilization and an alternative vision of the future

Donghak Thought / Daesoon Thought

- Donghak Thought: a 19th-century new-religious thought founded by Choe Je-u, centered on the concept of 'gihwa (氣化)'
- Daesoon Thought: a new-religious thought founded by Kang Jeungsan, centered on the concept of 'jori (調理)' and the thought of divine beings

The Concept of Gihwa (氣化) in Donghak Thought

Donghak expresses the earth as gihwa (氣化), conceiving Heaven and Earth in contrast to a transcendent Heaven rather than treating the earth as merely a part of Heaven and Earth.

The meaning of gihwa (氣化): the profound energy that constitutes the universe and the principle of transformation of all things

"Naeyu-sillyeong oeyu-gihwa (內有神靈 外有氣化)" - within there is divine spirit, and without there is gihwa

In Donghak Thought, gihwa:

- Acts as the principle of external connection between humanity and nature
- Is employed as a concept linking East and West
- The foundation of a material modernity revealed as gihwa in the Heaven-human relationship

The Concept of Jori (調理) in Daesoon Thought

- Daesoon Thought adds jori (調理, the principle of harmonization) to 'gihwa,' emphasizing that the earth is the central coordinator of the cosmic order

| "天用地用 口用之 調理綱紀 統制乾坤 此之謂造化手段也"

- Emphasis on the concept of principle (理) - the earth is the being that stands at the center of principle
- Characteristics of the category of principle (理): inclusiveness, diversity, and dynamism

The principle (理) of Daesoon Thought begins from the concept of 'Earth (土)' in Yin-Yang and the Five Phases - the point that differentiates it from the 'gihwa'-centered thought of Donghak Thought

A Comparison of Noimugong and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth

● Noimugong (勞而無功)

A concept appearing in Donghak Thought, meaning 'toiling yet not succeeding'

A term describing one's own accomplishment in Donghak Thought, where **Cheoncheon** appeared only as divine beings

Implying that there had been no instance of success

● The Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功)

A concept appearing in Daesoon Thought, meaning the complete harmony and achievement of earth and Heaven

where **Cheoncheon** appeared as **Chilgwan** and **Chilgwan** appeared as **Chilgwan**, dividing their roles

The realization of the Earthly Paradise in which earth and Heaven attain the concordance of yin and yang (陰陽合德)

Meaning within indigenous modernity:

- Donghak Thought: a self-reflective modernity that acknowledges an uncertain future and its limits
- Daesoon Thought: a consummate modernity that, by emphasizing 'the virtue of the earth (地德),' makes possible a life of peace of mind and body (安心安身)
- Through the contrast of the two terms, presenting the direction of development of Korean modernity

The Meaning of Indigenous Modernity

The modernity presented by Korea's new-religious thought exhibits an indigenous character distinct from the foreign modernity of the West.

Donghak Thought / Daesoon Thought

A gihwa (氣化)-centered immanent, critical mode of thought / An integrative, inclusive theory of development centered on jori (調理), divine beings, and Yin-Yang and the Five Phases

A critique of material modern civilization and an alternative vision of the future / The realization of the Earthly Paradise of yin-yang concordance through the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功)

Oriented toward a short-term, external, social Gaebyeok / Oriented toward a long-term, religious Gaebyeok brought about by divine beings

Both thoughts, grounded in a Korean identity, present a direction different from the Western-centered discourse of modernity, and display a new paradigm founded on the values of respect for life and harmony.

Conclusion and Implications

- Deriving the pluralistic meaning of Korean modernity through the comparison of the Views of Earth of Donghak and Daesoon
- Proposing a new paradigm that can complement the existing Western-centered discourse of modernity
- Offering implications for various fields, including identity discourse, ecology, and religious philosophy

Centering on the concepts of gihwa (氣化) and jori (調理), this study has reexamined the value of the indigenous modernity presented by Korean new-religious thought.

Through this, it has confirmed the contemporary applicability of East Asian thought and its distinctive place within the global discourse of civilization.