

(a) Gihwa (氣化) and Jori (調理)

Gihwa and Jori

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Introduction to the Concepts of Gihwa (氣化) and Jori (調理)

Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought present gihwa and jori as core concepts explaining the generation and change, order and harmony of all things in the universe. These two concepts are key to understanding the character and worldview of each thought.

Gihwa (氣化) Jori (調理)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The principle of the generation and change of all things in the universe◆ In Donghak Thought, symbolizes the vitality of Heaven and Earth◆ "Naeyu-sinnyeong oeyu-gihwa (內有神靈 外有氣化)" — the divine spirit "Cheomgongjijonggi" (천공기정기)◆ Emphasizes dynamic energy and the creative principle◆ The fundamental life-force that enables the generation and circulation of all things | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The principle that establishes order and harmony in the universe◆ In Daesoon Thought, a key principle of control and mediation◆ "Cheomgongjijonggi jori-ganggi (天用地用 人用之調理綱紀)" — Heaven, Earth, and humanity act in harmony◆ Emphasizes principle (理) and law, granting order◆ Linked to the mediating role of 'Earth (土)' in Yin-Yang and the Five Phases |
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Gihwa and jori center respectively on gi (氣), which symbolizes dynamism and creativity, and yi (理), which symbolizes order and harmony; this reveals the difference in worldview between Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought.

The Concept of Gihwa (氣化) in Donghak Thought

Donghak Thought, founded by Suun (Choe Je-u), explains the flow of Heaven and Earth and of the universe through gihwa (氣化), valuing it as the fundamental energy of the life-force. Donghak broke away from the traditional theory of Yi and Gi (理氣論) to emphasize the dynamism and practicality of gi (氣).

The core concept of gihwa — Naeyu-sinnyeong, oeyu-gihwa

- ◆ The flow of Heaven and Earth and the fundamental energy of the life-force
 - ◆ Thinking centered on gi (氣) rather than the traditional theory of Yi and Gi
 - ◆ Values practical life-force and dynamism
 - ◆ "Dogijangjon sabulip (道氣長存邪不入)" — when the energy of the Dao endures, evil cannot enter
 - ◆ Expressed through the masculine concept of 'jigi (至氣)'
- ◆ The divine spirit (神靈) within, gihwa (氣化) without
 - ◆ The dual aspect of Cheonju (天主) — both personal and impersonal, transcendent and immanent
 - ◆ Emphasizes the union of inner spirituality and outer energy
 - ◆ A shared energy mediating between person and person, self and other
 - ◆ An Eastern trait that, unlike Western religion, emphasizes the divine spirit of gihwa

"Western teaching lacks the divine spirit of gihwa, and its learning lacks the teaching of Cheonju"

— Suun's critique of Western teaching in the Nonhangmun

Through the concept of gihwa (氣化), Donghak Thought offered a critique of material modern civilization and an alternative vision of the future. Early Donghak aimed at a short-term, external, and social Gaebyeok, which later became the foundation of Korean new-religious thought.

The Concept of Jori (調理) in Daesoon Thought

In Daesoon Thought, jori (調理) is a core principle of the workings of the universe, signifying the mediation, order, and harmony effected by the transcendent Heaven. It is a concept contrasting with the gihwa (氣化) of Donghak Thought.

天用地用 人用之 調理綱紀 統制乾坤 此之謂造化手段也

Heavenly use (天用), earthly use (地用), and human use (人用) evenly order the guiding principles (綱紀) and thereby govern Heaven and Earth; this is called the means of creative transformation (造化).

Harmony with the realm of divine beings (神明界) and the mediating role of Earth (土)

- Emphasizes the role of jori (調理) by the transcendent Heaven that made its Advent in the Five Phases. Earth (土) is the mediator positioned at the center of the Five Phases.
- Forms a view of the earthly realm (地界觀) harmonized by the realm of divine beings.
- Irwol musa chi manmul (日月無私治萬物) — the sun and moon govern all things without partiality.
- The principle of cheonwon-jibang (天圓地方, round Heaven and square Earth).
- The practicality of yi (理) applied to everyday things (日用事物).
- The meaning of the Oju (五呪) as the fluid essence (津液) of Heaven and Earth.
- Links the inclusiveness, diversity, and dynamism of the category of yi (理) with the character of Earth (土). Grants a substantive world order.
- through divine beings

Unlike Donghak's masculine concept of 'gi (氣)', Daesoon Thought emphasizes the resolution of grievance according to the feminine mind and principle. Through "Jinsim gyeonsu bokseonrae (真心堅守福先來)", it shows a difference in valuing the role of the mind over "Dogijangjon (道氣長存)".

Comparison of the Concept of Yi (理)

Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought show a marked difference in their understanding and emphasis of the concept of 'yi (理)'. This difference clearly reveals the worldview and fundamental approach of the two thoughts.

Yi (理) in Donghak Thought Yi (理) in Daesoon Thought

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Breaks from the existing theory of Yi and Gi to emphasize the priority of gi (氣) Mugeuk-Taegeuk (無極太極)◆ "Dogijangjon sabulip (道氣長存邪不入)" — values the co-existence of the Daejeonjin (道真)◆ Values dynamism and life-force over the substantiality of 'yi (理)'◆ Focuses on critiquing material modern civilization and offering an alternative◆ Oriented toward a short-term, external, and social Gaebyeok <p>"Western teaching lacks the divine spirit of gihwa, and its learning lacks the teaching of Cheonju"</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Emphasizes the substantiality of yi (理) grounded in the Daejeonjin (道真)◆ "Doimangdegi insu bokseonrae (真心堅守福先來)" — values the feminine mind and principle◆ Yi (理) is the practical norm applied to everyday things◆ "元亨利貞大經大法道正天地數定千法而理定心法" — explains the relation between Earth (土) and the mind◆ Oriented toward a long-term, religious Gaebyeok effected by divine beings◆ "理雖高 出於太極无極之表 不離乎日用事物之間" (though yi is lofty and arises from Mugeuk-Taegeuk, it never departs from everyday things) |
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By linking the concept of yi (理) with the concept of 'Earth (土)' in Yin-Yang and the Five Phases and thereby revitalizing it, Daesoon Thought was able to present a more concrete Indigenous Modernity than Donghak Thought, which leaned toward the concept of 'gihwa (氣化)'. Where Donghak emphasizes the masculine 'jigi', Daesoon emphasizes the resolution of grievance according to the feminine mind and principle.

Integration of Eastern and Western God-Human Relationships

Donghak and Daesoon Thought present a perspective that integrates the traditional Eastern view of the divine with the Western view. In particular, they emphasize that, through Haewon-sangsaeng, the Eastern and Western God-human relationships can be fused.

Eastern divine beings (神明) Western angels (天使) and God

- ◆ Diverse divine existences understood through the principle of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases Divine beings reduced in status to the concept of angels
- ◆ The distinction and coexistence of ancestral gods and nature gods A separated ontological hierarchy of humans and angels
- ◆ Emphasis on impersonal, principle-based notions such as Mugeuk and Taegeuk Personification of the Absolute (Jesus' expression "Father")
- ◆ An interactive relationship between humans and divine beings Familiarity with the underworld deity (a feature of Western tradition)
- ◆ "Once an ancestor is four generations (代) past, it becomes both a spirit and a good deity" The weakened status of ancestral spirits and the possibility of their return — the connection between ancestors and divine beings

Integrative Perspective

- ◆ The possibility of integrating Eastern and Western God-human relationships through Daesoon Thought's Haewon-sangsaeng
- ◆ The process by which the Western concept of angels returns to the status of Eastern divine beings
- ◆ East-West fusion through the personal expression of principle-based notions such as Mugeuk-sin (無極神)
- ◆ The human-divine relationship is restored in the West as well, creating a new harmony

Conclusion and Significance

The comparison of Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought is an important key to understanding the current of Korea's indigenous thought and the process of forming its Indigenous Modernity. The key conclusions and significance revealed through the comparison of the two concepts of gihwa and jori are as follows.

Research Conclusions Academic Significance

- ◆ Conceptual difference: Donghak's 'gihwa' emphasizes dynamic life-force and indigenous Daesoon's 'jori' emphasizes the process of controlling Korea's distinctive modernity, different from Western modernization
- ◆ Reinterpreting the concept of yi (理): Daesoon Thought revitalizes yi (理) as the concept of Earth (土) and links it to the Donghak bodogite beings played in maintaining national identity
- ◆ Divine beings and gihwa: Daesoon Thought expands Donghak's concept of ceu-gihwa and gives it concrete form as harmony with the realm of divine beings
- ◆ Haewon (解冤) and Sangsaeng (相生): presents a way to realize principled integration of standing of principles through (理法) and the personal God

Contemporary Meaning

Academic Dimension

The comparison of Donghak and Daesoon Thought offers a new perspective for the study of Korean intellectual history and shows the possibility of reinterpreting and applying East Asian traditional thought in the modern age.

Practical Dimension

The relevance of the study of gihwa and jori offers the wisdom to distinguish order and harmony (jori) even amid the rapid change and dynamism (gihwa) of modern society.