

V · Comparison of the Indigenous Modernity of Donghak and Daesoon

3. Comparison of the Indigenous Modernity of the View of Humanity

Comparison of Indigenous Modernity in Views of Humanity

Research Overview and Problem Statement

- Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought occupy an important position in modern Korean religious philosophy
- The two thoughts' views of humanity differ in equality, the view of the divine, modernity, and so on
- This presentation, through major concepts such as Innaecheon (人乃天), Sinin-johwa (神人調化), Buryeon-giyeon (不然其然), and Seongsa-jaein (成事在人), examines the human-universe-divine relationship and the differences in modernity

The Concept of Innaecheon in Donghak Thought

- Innaecheon (人乃天): meaning 'humanity is Heaven', the core of Donghak Thought
- A radical philosophy of equality — the claim that even butchers, women, and children can become Heaven
- Asserts equality in the human world in a pre-modern society where only the "Son of Heaven (天子)" could become Heaven
- Pursues a transformative modernity — assessed as a concept consistent with Western modernity

"Innaecheon (人乃天) is a concept that, among the Heaven-human and Earth-human relationships of Donghak Thought expressed as the divine spirit within and gihwa without, excludes the transcendent aspect and maximizes the immanent aspect so as to accord with Western modernity."

The Concept of Sinin-johwa in Daesoon Thought

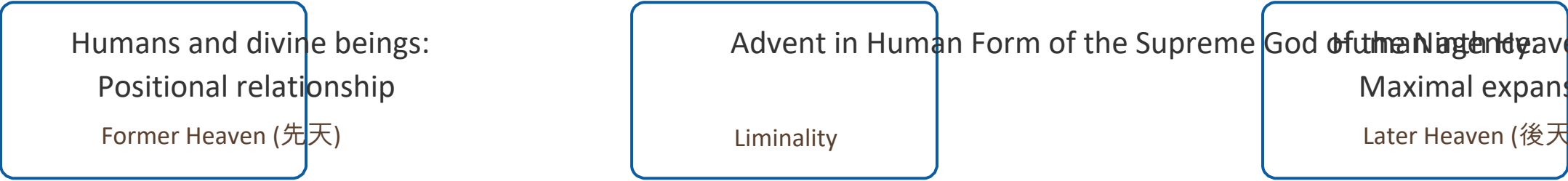
- Sinin-johwa (神人調化): emphasizes the harmony and mutual life-giving between the divine (the Supreme God, divine beings) and humans
- A critique of Innaecheon: humans cannot be equal to Heaven; it warns against the arrogance of humans who forget the grace of Heaven and Earth
- Haewon (解冤) and requital of grace (報恩): the importance of resolving grievance and repaying the grace of Heaven and Earth
- View of the Three Realms (三界觀): the heavenly, earthly, and human realms are operated by divine beings and interact with one another
- Human status rises gradually through harmony with divine beings rather than through transformation

Donghak vs Daesoon: Comparison of Views of Humanity

Category	Donghak Thought	Daesoon Thought
Core concept	Innaecheon (人乃天): humanity is Heaven	Sinin-johwa (神人調化): harmony between the divine and humans
Realization of equality	Pursues immediate, revolutionary change	Gradual realization through Haewon and Sangsaeng
Human-divine relationship	Human-centered, weak concept of divine beings	Values interaction with divine beings, emphasizes the Way of the Divine (神道)
Cosmology	Lacks the concept of the Three Realms (三界)	Clear structure of the Three Realms (Heaven, Earth, Humanity)
Features of modernity	Transformative, consistent with Western modernity	Indigenous Modernity, revitalization of the God-human relationship

The Meaning of Buryeon-giyeon and Seongsa-jaein

Buryeon-giyeon (不然其然): in Donghak Thought, the meaning that even what cannot be understood (buryeon) can, through practice, someday be understood (giyeon)	Presents the possibility of enlightenment through human understanding and Dotong (道通)
Seongsa-jaein (成事在人): in Daesoon Thought, the meaning that accomplishment rests with humans; Former Heaven: "Planning rests with humans (謀事在人), accomplishment rests with Heaven (成事在天)" → Later Heaven: "Planning rests with Heaven (謀事在天), accomplishment rests with humans (成事在人)"	Signals a revolutionary change in human agency after the Advent in Human Form of the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven



The View of the Three Realms and the Theory of Divine Beings

- Daesoon Thought explains the relationship between the universe and humans centered on the Three Realms (三界)
- Divine beings (神明) are beings "utmost in truth" and are responsible for the operation of Heaven and Earth
- Unlike Donghak Thought, it emphasizes the interaction between the realm of divine beings and the human realm

The Heavenly Realm (天界)

Includes the celestial world and the underworld (明府)

Planning of celestial
civilization

The Human Realm (人界)

Accomplishment in the human world

The subject of
accomplishment
(jaein)

The Earthly Realm (地界)

Includes the subterranean realm, and the

origin of scientific
civilization

Differences in Indigenous Modernity

The Modernity of Donghak Thought

- Pursues immediate, revolutionary realization of equality
- Transformative modernity: aims at radical reform of the existing order
- A human-centered thought, with a point of contact with Western modernity

The Modernity of Daesoon Thought

- Change centered on gradual Sangsaeng and Haewon
- Sinin-johwa: emphasizes the interaction between divine beings and humans
- Seongsa-jaein (成事在人): the expansion of human agency

The Diversity of Korean Modernity

Both thoughts present a path of Korean Indigenous Modernity distinct from Western-centered modernity, sharing the reconstruction of the human subject and worldview, yet differing in their mode of realization and cosmological frame

Conclusion and Significance

- Both Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought present important currents of thought for Korean Indigenous Modernity
- Donghak presents equality and immediate transformation, while Daesoon presents the path of Haewon and gradual Sangsaeng
- The two thoughts' views of humanity show a junction of Eastern and Western thought differentiated from Western modernity

Innaecheon and Sinin-johwa are not merely religious concepts; they become a philosophical foundation offering a new way of thinking about human agency and the God-human relationship in modern Korean society