

An Encounter between the Ethics of the Other and Korean
Confucianism: A Review of Toegye's Theory of Cultivation as a
Principle of Accepting the Other

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Abstract



When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: even nowadays, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. They will feel so, not as a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing.

- Mencius -

Introduction

In the modern era, social philosophy started from the concept of equal and autonomous **subjects with reason/rational subjects**. The field of ethics which started from this philosophical foundation has a distinctive characteristic of emphasizing the reciprocity of rights and responsibilities, and ethical problems have degenerated into calculating efficiency and interest under the capitalist mechanism of seeking profit. So even in ethical issues of confronting the misfortune and suffering of others, the economic principle of calculating interest precedes acts of benevolence or devotion performed without expectations of compensation. Further, the tendency to highlight humans as rational subjects emphasizes reasoning even on moral issues. Due to the emphasis on the responsibility of rational subjects for their autonomously chosen actions, the ego tend to forget its solidarity and ties with the Other. This kind of isolationist, solipsistic thinking leads to the evasion of responsibility toward the Other.

At this juncture, we need to examine the ethical situations which involve encounters and contact between human beings. They concern the question of the subject as an ethical actor, the Other who makes ethical demands and commands, and the relationship between the Other who givies ethical demands and commands and the subject who performs the ethical acts. Therefore, an ethical approach to the moral situation must

consider the subject of action, the Other who is the origin of ethical commands and the relation between the subject and the Other. Despite this, however, philosophical ethics in the West has confined the scope of ethics to an ego-centered or subject-oriented ethics, to an extreme degree. When the origin (or **foundation**) of ethical action is believed to be the subject's free will and nothing else, discussions of ethics center on the subject and emphasize autonomous subjectivity which highlights the subject's autonomy. But when morality is explained in this manner, the Other is not presented as a fundamental component of the explanation. Discussions of ethical situations are limited solely to the problem of the subject's will. That is, the horizon of ethical discussion is focused on autonomy. Thus, the Other who gives ethical orders gets none of the deserved attention. Some of the moral philosophers supporting this position are Immanuel Kant, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and **R. M. Hare**. However, **reason**, on which their philosophies are based, has already been called into question for its solipsistic characteristic. Because there is no road to communication with others. Furthermore, This raises a fundamental question of whether reasoning of the ego without any relations with others can be **the elucidation of morality**.¹⁾

How does an ethical approach that can resolve these ethical difficulties become possible? If ethically problematic situations arise from "emergency situations exposed by an Other," there is a need to completely review the ethical approach. This is because the ethical exigency showed by an Other occur irrespective of my will or autonomy and because the key of the morality here is how to accept and respond to the appeals and demands for ethical help. Therefore, we need to shed light on the situations from the perspective of the Other. In ethics founded on the acknowledgment of existence of the Other, the Other is deeply related to ethical situations and appealing for help obtains a legitimate place. What is the significance of the Other who asks the subject to commit moral acts in ethical situations? What is the acting principle which urges the subject to accept the implorations of the Othe

1) Kim Yeon-Sook, *Levinas taja yullihak* (Levinas: Ethics of The Other) (Seoul: Ingan sarang Publishing, 2000), pp. 267-268.

r?2)

Starting off with these questions, this paper reviews the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995) who presents a new direction for ethics to go beyond egoism and solipsism and urges the acceptance of the otherness of the Other and the formation of peaceful, ethical relations with the Other. I also review the self-cultivation theory of Toegye (1501-1570), a great Korean Confucian scholar, who emphasized the overcoming of personal greed and the cultivation of one's good nature to develop moral sensibility toward the epiphany of the Other, an important topic in the ethics of Other.³⁾

The Other's Face and Epiphany

In his book *Totality and Infinity*,⁴⁾ Levinas discusses how we accept the existence of the Other who reveals his existence through exteriority in the section titled "Sensibility and the Face." The face (visage) represents the face of a human being, a living being (l'étant). The face clearly reveals the existence of another human being. The face looks at me and gazes at

2) *Ibid.*, p. 269.

3) Early on, 蕺孤山 said "A profound understanding of the teachings of Confucius was achieved by in-depth studies by two great scholars of the Song Dynasty of China, Chengzi and Zhu Xi. Their studies were handed down to Yi Toegye of Korea, who transmitted it to Yamazaki Ansai of this country (Japan)." See Yun Sa-sun, *Toegye seonjip (Anthology of Toegye)* (Seoul: Hyonam Publishing Co., 1993), p. 9. This attests to the status of Toegye in the study of Confucianism. The breadth of Toegye's thought can be traced in the debates shown in letters he exchanged with his contemporary scholars. He played the role of teacher to scholars around him in the study of Confucianism and possessed a detailed understanding and interpretation of pre-Qin Confucian texts such as *Yijing* (or I ching, The Book of Changes), *Lunyu* (The Analects of Confucius), *Daxue* (The Great Learning), and *Zhongyong* (The Doctrine of the Mean). He obtained a deep understanding of the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism and of the human mind. With his concrete experience and deep reflection on human nature, he went beyond the theories of famous Confucian scholars and opened a new horizon of debate in Confucianism and a new horizon of discussion in the history of scholastic Confucianism of the Joseon Dynasty as well. Therefore, Toegye's theory of self-cultivation is evaluated to rest in and surpass pre-Qin scholastic Confucianism and the subsequent Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism at the same time.

4) Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

me. (autrui me vise). Through the face facing me, I see, feel and am awakened. The face shows absolutely otherness beyond my cognitive structure (schema) rather than being assimilated and integrated into my consciousness. Though the otherness manifested as the face, the directness of the existence and the nudity of the face (la nudité du visage), the Other is no longer a neuter without concrete individuality, but expression itself. Thus, the Other as the face is opposed to impersonal, anonymous being. At the same time, the face signifies an individual concrete being. The mode of existence of the Other manifested as the face refuses to become the object of consciousness which is abstracted and theorized by the ego.⁵⁾

When one encounters a face that reveals the existence of the Other, what kinds of experiences, perceptions, thoughts and orientations are required of a being who wants to accept the revelation of the face? This problem becomes clear if the difference between epiphany and phenomenon, which reveals the different characteristics of sensibility and representation, is elucidated. While a phenomenon arises as an object of the consciousness of the ego, an epiphany is for the Other himself to show his naked face, irrespective of the ego's intention. In other words, an epiphany shows itself based on sensibility of enjoyment, whereas phenomenon is a concept related to the object of phenomenological consciousness. The Other is not a phenomenon, but an enigma which cannot be defined with phenomenological concepts. The Other's face is manifested, revealed and shown to me. What does this mean? In the relation with exterior beings, making exteriority an object of the intentionality of the consciousness necessarily results in the assimilation and integration by the ego. In contrast, the epiphany is a mode in which the exterior being is revealed to me directly and exteriorly/externally.

What does a face show and manifest? What kind of meaning does the face reveal? What does it communicate? Levinas answers that "the face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation."⁶⁾ In

5) Kim Yeon-Sook, 2000, "Taja yulli-eseo yullijeok sotong-e gwnahan yeon-gu: eolgul, mannam, daehwa" (A Study on the Ethical Communication in the Ethics of the Other of Levinas: the Face, Encounter and Dialogue), *Journal of Korean Ethics Studies* 44.7: p. 90.

6) E. Levinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 201.

other words, a face manifests the primordial meaning, meaning irrespective of any context. Then, what does this mean? Every meaning becomes clear in a context. If the face of a human shows its primordial meaning independent of context, what is the content of that meaning? "A baby playing dangerously near a well," "a child who has nothing to eat for lunch," "elderly people who are dying from poverty and illness," "young children crying in the ashes of war." What is the meaning of the messages these suffering people send us? These are ethical epiphanies which implore us to perform ethical acts.⁷⁾

The very straightforwardness of the face means fundamentally "a human being" rather than a being in a context. The face in and of itself signifies everything. You are you. It is in this sense that the face cannot be an object of the ego, but has meaning beyond the horizon of my consciousness. While a vision explores aimed goals and absorbs existence, the relation of faces is ethical. The face is a symbol of human ethics. Each individual talks to others through one's face, which is a unique mode of communication, so then, the face is a form of discourse. Then, what is the specific content of the discourse transmitted by the face? It is primordial expression, the first word: "You shall not commit murder."⁸⁾ Like this, it takes on the form of an ethical command: "you shall not kill me." To manifest oneself as a face is to impose oneself above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form.⁹⁾ Moreover, it presents oneself in a mode irreducible to representation, in the straightforwardness of the face to face, in one's nudity, that is in one's destitution and hunger. Here the infinite resistance of the face of the Other is connected to the relation with what is absolutely other and to ethical resistance.

The face of the Other is the cry of a naked and needy being that demands a response, a fundamental appeal and ethical command. It is an order that makes it impossible to negate or destroy the appeal. "A human in suffering" does not appear as a genus.¹⁰⁾ A human as a genus does

7) Kim Yeon-Sook, 2000, "Taja yulli-eseo yullijeok sotong-e gwanhan yeon-gu: eolgul, mannam, daehwa," p. 90.

8) E. Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 55.

9) E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 200.

10) Son Bong-ho, 1995, *Gotong banneun in-gan* (Humans in Suffering) (Seoul: Seoul National

not groan or cry out. A human in suffering refuses to be reduced to an object of consciousness and resists the self from the exterior. At the same time, a human in suffering appeals, protests and judges with the fact that he is in suffering. This occurs from the very fact of his suffering. Here it is important to understand the ethical urgency implied by the face. The face of the Other is a cry of the naked and needy and a fundamental appeal and a command demanding a response. The nudity of the face is an exposure that becomes the possibility for understanding. It is an order that prevents the negation or the destruction of the Other.

The nature of a human is written on the face. **The absolutely Other presented in the face does not negate the same and does not do violence to it. This presentation is nonviolent, for instead of offending my freedom it calls it to responsibility.**¹¹⁾ The face incapacitates my/one's violent power with ethical demands. But the demands do not wield violence and approach from above. The exteriority, or the appeal of the Other, is truth of the Other. The face in its epiphany and expression shows total resistance to murder, injustice, unjust possession and violence.

One can turn away from the Other and even wish for his death. One could kill him as if one were a slaughterer or a hunter. But if one understands the Other as an element of the world, in the openness of universal existence, one cannot encounter the Other as the face. To encounter the Other as the face means that one cannot kill the Other. The epiphany of the face judges the temptation to or an actual execution of murder to be ethically impossible.¹²⁾ Infinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance that paralyses my powers. This is because the face reveals itself in its nudity and destitution. This comprehension of this destitution establishes the very proximity of the Other.¹³⁾

In the straightforwardness and expression of the face are manifested the demands on the ego or the Other's rights concerning me. The demands on the ego constitute a concrete situation in which these

University Press), pp. 203-204.

11) E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 203.

12) Kim Yeon-Sook, "E. Levinas-ui yullijeok sotong-e gwanhan yeon-gu: eolgul, mannam, daehwa," p. 91.

13) E Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 199.

rights emerge. The face of the Other starts with extreme honesty. It already accuses the ego in its anxiety and defenseless state, makes me doubtable, and makes demands and assertions. Herein lie the rights of the Other, of all the other human beings, toward the ego. In the honesty of exposure, order and designation lie rights—more fundamental than any form of respect or value.

A poor person, a stranger in poverty, approaches the ego to be served. The Other orders me as if he were my master.¹⁴⁾ After all, the order orders one to give an order. The epiphany of the face is an order from the Other which demand that one take responsibility. This is executed in ethical exigency that demands a response. This is not limited to relations with special people, but reveals the **third party in fundamental honesty. The third party looks at me from the standpoint of the Other.** The being who reveals himself in the face approaches one in a dimension of height that bestow a duty, from a transcendent level. The Other who dominates the ego in transcendence is the stranger, the outsider, the widow, or the orphan who bestows duty. The epiphany that occurs as a face opens up love for humanity.

Epiphany of the Other and the Theory of Self-Reaching/ Attaining** *Li***

An important question here is whether the subject shall respond to the orders and appeals from the epiphany of the Other or refuse to do so. This question basically concerns how to understand the demands from the Other and at the same time, it confronts us with the difficult question of how humans should deal with the ethical demands of the Other. What are the ethical demands and commands from the Other? **In fact, they are what our ancestors had discussed for so long, the concept of *li* or the "what ought to be" which is manifested in the relations of all people.** The discourse on the virtue that should exist between human beings, which our ancestors sought so hard to attain, and on "ultimate goodness," (*jiseon*) that there is a proper order in all things, is in fact a

14) *Ibid.*, p. 213.

discourse on the ethical epiphany of the Other.¹⁵⁾ This discourse on ethical demands—of the father on the son, son on the father, an old neighbor on me, a wayfarer on a Confucian scholar, Confucian scholar on a wayfarer, an anonymous third party on me or him on me—was expressed and approached in terms of human duties and the five virtues (*osang*: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trust). We are urged to listen to the ethical epiphany, the voice, and the delicate tremblings and pains of the Other, to treat them with respect, to collect and cultivate ourselves, and to reflect on and practice these virtues.

What is notable in Toegye's thought in relation to the ethics of the Other is his "theory of self-reaching *li*" (*ijadoseol*) and cultivation. *Li* is often described as "what ought to be" (*sodangyeon*) or "the reason why it is so" (*soiyeon*). The former generally refers to norms and the latter, natural law. When "what ought to be" is emphasized, *li* is interpreted as the "principle of goodness" or "goodness itself" and in this sense *li* is related to values. As this presupposes the meaning of standard (*ji*, Ultimateness), it also means the form or nature of something.¹⁶⁾ Toegye finds the metaphysical foundation of the Four-Seven theory on human nature in the theory of *li-qi* and views *li* as "what ought to be" rather than Zhu Xi's "reason why it is so."

In understanding Toegye's concept of *li*, we need to check the interpretation of an "investigation of things" (*gyeongmul*) and "things being investigated" (*mulgyeok*) in *Daxue* (The Great Learning). The opening sentence of *The Great Learning* states: "What the Great Learning teaches is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence." Confucianism makes it clear that the goal of learning is to illustrate illustrious virtue, or to understand the righteous relations between the self and the world, or the self and the Other. *The Great Learning* continues to explain how to illustrate illustrious virtue: "Those who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue . . . first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such an

15) Yun Sa-sun, p. 162.

16) Yun Sa-sun, p. 38.

extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete." This emphasizes that in order to illustrate illustrious virtue, one must be sincere in seeking knowledge by investigating things and one's knowledge must reach high as things are investigated.

Toegye delineates the investigation of things and things being investigated as follows: the "investigation of things" is to understand the logic of things deeply and "sincere knowledge" means being sincere in seeking knowledge. "Things being investigated" means to reach the deep roots of things and "knowledge becomes complete" means that there is nothing insincere in the knowledge of my mind. When there is nothing incomplete or insincere, it is a state of ultimate goodness and a full realization of the principle.¹⁷⁾

Let us examine this in more detail. At first Toegye, following Zhu Xi, understood *li* as possessing no feelings, intention, understanding or operation and our mind as reaching out to the object and understanding its logic. Based on this, he interprets "things being investigated" as "reaching out to things." But later he considered that if *li* has no operation, thereby is not living, then, it is dead, a lifeless object like dead ash, so it becomes something without any capabilities. Toegye came to think that though *li* is formless, tranquil and has no operation like Ultimateless (*wuji*), it reveals its own natural force which manifests itself like a flying swallow or a leaping fish and that the natural force of *li* comes out when it is in full action. Therefore, he says that "Regarding the investigation of things, I say that I investigate and reach the ultimate truth of the *li* of things. Then, regarding the things being investigated, why can I not say that there is no ultimate truth of the *li* of things which cannot reached by investigation?"¹⁸⁾

Li is in all things. Where *li* is in action, there is no place that the

17) "Dap Kim Ijeong" (Answer to Kim Ijeong), in *Toegye jeoseo* (Collected Works of Toegye), *gwon* 29, (Seoul: Toegye Institute, 1992), p. 331; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* (Korean Translation of Collected Works of Toegye), vol. 7 (Seoul: Toegyehak Studies Institute, 1992), p. 331.

18) "Dap Ki Myeongeon beolji" (Answer to Ki Myeongeon: Addendum), in *Toegye jeoseo* vol. 18, p. 465; Kim Hyeong-hyo, *Wonhyo-eseo Dasan-kkaji* (From Wonhyo to Dasan) (Seoul: Chunkye Publishing, 2000), p. 291.

revelation of *li* is not complete or sincere wherever the human mind reaches. Therefore, I should only worry about my investigation of things not being to the utmost, instead of *li* not revealing itself. Investigation of things means that I reach the highest point of the *li* of things through earnest pursuit, while things being investigated means that the highest point of the *li* of things reach anywhere according to my earnest pursuit. Here *li*, in nature, has no definition or operation, and it is the extremely mysterious action of *li* that it reveals itself and reaches out no matter where it is.¹⁹⁾

Then, how does the interpretation of "things being investigated" relate to the ethics of the Other? The *li* of things being investigated is connected to Levinas' assertion that the Other is not a phenomenon that is the object of consciousness, but an existence that reveals her/himself. "Things being investigated" or "things reach out" means that the *li* of the object talks to my intelligence and approaches my mind. This is expressed as the "theory of self-reaching *li*" and this can only be understood under the assumption that *li* approaches my mind. I can read *li* in the human face, *li* as what ought to be, or ethical orders in the face of the Other approaching me and directed at me. As *li* reaches me by itself, the Other approaches me proactively and reveals, presents and expresses her/himself, manifesting ethical orders and demands. But *li* does not approach me automatically, but as much as I seek *li* with sincerity. That is, the object does not reach me without my effort to investigate the object.²⁰⁾ In other words, when I strive to reach the *li* contained in the object, the *li* of the object reaches me. Using the terms of the ethics of the Other, I can reach the *li* of what ought to be—ethical norms, ethical orders, an ethical demands and appeals, an ethical epiphany of the Other being—insofar as I open up myself to the Other, longing for, listening to and seeking the Other. This means that to the degree that I approach *li* as what ought to be, the ethical epiphany of the Other approaches me. It can be said that the ethical epiphany of the Other or ethical orders shown by the existence of the Other regardless of

19) "Dap Ki Myeongeon" (Answer to Ki Myong-eon), in *Toegyje jeoseo*, *gwon* 18, p. 291.

20) Kim Hyeong-hyo, *Wonhyo-eseo Dasan-kkaji*, p. 263.

the context described by Levinas are the epiphany of *li* as what ought to be.

Accepting the Other and Toegye's Theory of Cultivation

What is the *li* shown by human beings who express themselves, who cry, sob, and scream in suffering? How can we open our ears to hear what those in suffering are telling us? How can we be responsive to the Other's eyes, face, and voice? These questions arise because ethics cannot just assert that "Those who have ears should listen." The problem left to us is how much our mind responds to the *li* of "what ought to be." What does the Other in suffering reveal to me? If I empty myself of selfishness for a moment, what message does the Other reveal to me? What *li* does the Other show me? If we use Toegye's term for the problem of whether we should respond to the suffering of the Other that appeals to our sensibility, the Other with their rights denied, this can be called the dividing point for the virtuous mind and human desire.

Since Plato designated as the "real" world the world of idea which is shown by the light of reason beyond the phenomenal world of the senses, human sensibility that hears the Other's voice and sympathizes with the Other's pain has been devalued and repressed by reason. In reality, the repression of human emotions and senses are found in many religions and ethics of all ages and regions. Particularly, they encourage human beings to sever the chains of emotion by becoming like a dead tree or ash and recommend religious austerities and ascetic practice to achieve this. But the following sentences in the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* (the Doctrine of the Mean) separates Confucian thought from the tradition prevalent in all societies of all ages: "While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of the Equilibrium (*zhong*). When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony (*he*). . . . This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world should pursue and

this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue."²¹⁾ This means that though humans are enjoying beings that possess the emotions of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, they can attain the supreme state of interpersonal relations if those feelings are stirred and reach a state of harmony, and that by reaching this state, human relations, i.e., the self and the Other, can find their place and form ethical relations. This is a thorough affirmation, not a repression or denial, of human emotions. Pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are the contents of feelings revealed at the level of human emotions. Humans are logical, intellectual and abstract beings, but before that, and more fundamentally they are happy, angry, and joyful and they love and revel in joy. This aspect of human feelings is affirmed in the ethics of Other as the feeling, enjoying self. The meaning of the sensing side of humans becomes clear in the consciousness of an ethically problematic situation in which humans are understood only as a priori, rational selves. The ethical problem which implicates the entire process of ego brought on by isolated, rational thinking lies in the violent totality which is formed centered on the self. Besides, rational thinking based on logic does not know the mode of human existence which is expressed in hunger, pain and joy.

The self of the body, sensibility and enjoyment includes the process of totality which makes the Other a part of the self, out of the desire for self-preservation, enjoyment and concern for tomorrow. This is also expressed as selfishness, the driving force of human possessiveness. However, the human body and sensibility are double-edged; they are selfish and ethical at the same time. Human sensory organs and sensibility can listen and feel the demands and appeals of the Other. Levinas' concept of the selfish ego and the ethical self can be understood through Mencius's concept of the great [and the small man](#). While Levinas distinguishes the selfish, enjoying ego and the ethical self, Mencius does the small man who follows the desires of his eyes and ears and the great man who follows his inner mind. If selfishness and ethical quality coexist in humans, how are they related? It is the same question Gong Duzi ([Kung Tu-tzu](#)) asked Mencius, "All are equally men, but who are great

21) *the Doctrine of the Mean*.

men and who are small men?" Mencius said in reply, "All are equally men, but some are great men, and some are small men. . . . Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men and those who follow that part of themselves which is small are small men."²²) In other words, one becomes a selfish being by following small desires of the body. This is because when one is confronted by an object, one is possessed by one's desire for it. In contrast, one becomes ethical by following a greater cause, which is attained if one's mind seeks to be ethical.²³)

In this context, the natural goodness of humans (*seongseon*) in Confucian ethics is a fruit of incessant self-cultivation rather than the same as a substance which maintains sameness voluntarily or from within/a substance which remains constant in and of itself in the midst of endless changes. This is why Confucius said, "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart."²⁴) and "The progress of the superior man is upwards; the progress of the mean man is downwards."²⁵) The nature of humans/human nature is similar at birth, but becomes selfish or ethical depending on practices. The great man advances himself towards ethical goodness day by day, while the small man degenerates gradually by committing ill deeds day by day. Thus, humans are in the making rather than existing as a fixed substance, and they must control their selfishness and cultivate natural goodness to fulfill ethical goodness. In a nutshell, the fire of ethics, conscience and natural goodness grow if fuel is added and it become extinguished if it is not.²⁶) So Mencius said, "Seek it and you get it. Ignore it and you lose it"²⁷) and

22) Mencius, Book 6: Gaozi.

23) Mencius, Book 6: Gaozi. "Gongduzi (Kung Tu-tzu) pursued, 'All are equally men, but some follow that part of themselves which is great, and some follow that part which is petty. How is this?' Mencius answered, 'The senses of hearing and seeing do not think, and are obscured by external things. When one thing comes into contact with another, as a matter of course it leads it away. To the mind belongs the office of thinking. By thinking, it gets the right view of things; by neglecting to think, it fails to do this. These—the senses and the mind—are what Heaven has given to us. Let a man first stand fast in the supremacy of the nobler part of his constitution, and the inferior part will not be able to take it from him. It is simply this which makes the great man.'"

24) *Analects of Confucius: Yang Ho (Liang Huo)*.

25) *Analects. of Confucius: Hsien Wen*.

26) Mencius, Book 6: Gaozi. "If it receives its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not grow. If it loses its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not decay away."

Confucius said, "Hold fast and it remains with you. Let it go and you lose it."²⁸⁾

Toegye's theory of cultivation emphasizes controlling human desire and preserving the right mind to listen to natural goodness and furthermore, presents the means to cultivate oneself continuously. According to Toegye, when humans receive the Heaven Mandate (*cheonmyeong*), the mind governs the body with four virtues. If the mind moves according to the goodness or evil of an object when felt inside, it becomes feelings and intentions. Thus, the great man must preserve his body through cultivation when his mind is calm and use his mind rightly with reflection if feelings and intentions arise. This is because the mind cannot keep its nature or establish its essence if it fails to remain constant with **respect/mindfulness** (*gyeong*). Toegye emphasizes that the mind can be stirred even by the slightest motion like that of a feather and easily fall into a pit, so one must keep it calm with extreme caution and maintain it in the right state.²⁹⁾ To cultivate the mind and "study in the right place of mind," the first step is to prevent the "neglect of the mind" (*bangsim*) and cultivate virtue. The "neglect of the mind" occurs not only when the mind wanders around hastily chasing after things but when even a single thought is lost or disappears for a brief moment. One must check everyday, every minute, wherever one is, or whatever one is doing. If one realizes something is slipping away, one must gather oneself, put one's mind in order and seek to be alert, which is called "defeat neglect of the mind" (*gu bangsim*).³⁰⁾ This means to put the mind in the right **state**. The key to this practice is by "concentrating on one thing and not allowing any distraction" (*juil mujeok*) or by "being alert, prudent and afraid" (*gyesin gonggu*). Complete concentration should be

27) *Mencius, Book 7: Jinxin (Tsin Sin)*. "Mencius said, 'We get by our seeking and lose by our neglecting; in that case seeking is of use to getting, and the things sought for are those which are in ourselves.'"

28) *Mencius, Book 6: Gaozi*. "Confucius said, 'Hold it fast and it remains with you. Let it go and you lose it. Its outgoing and incoming cannot be defined as to time or place.' It is the mind of which this is said!"

29) "Japjeo" (Miscellaneous), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon*. 8; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 13, p. 212.

30) "Dap Jo Sageyong" (Answer to Jo Sageyong), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon* 23, p. 465; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 6, p. 304.

practiced whether one is in motion or still. The state of alertness and prudence lies in a state of calmness, so the two go together.³¹⁾ If one keeps the proper order whether in motion or in calm, one's mind is "empty and clear" (*heomyeong*) before a thought occurs and the origin is deep and pure. In this state, when a thought occurs, its intent and logic are revealed clearly, so greed retreats. When this matures through continuous development of their practice, it becomes the key of cultivation.³²⁾

Following the Confucian tradition, Toegye considers that the human mind immeasurable but by nature equipped with all **reason**. Before it comes in contact with objects, it is empty and bright, and unambiguous in understanding and conception. With constant cultivation in daily life, it **grows the mysterious** ability to illuminate evenly and respond broadly to all situations even if one does not strain to do so at every occasion. If one practices nurturing **the natural state of the heavenly principle** in **calm** and severing the chain of greed at the faintest sign of its occurrence while in motion and becomes accustomed to this, one's mind becomes empty in calm and widely responsive in motion.³³⁾ **In other words, one must cultivate basic virtues and hold on to one's mind sincerity in everyday life.** If a thought occurs, one must prevent personal greed and maintain one's reason only. This is to say, when there is nothing special to do, keep your mind calm and cultivate it. If there is something to think about, one must keep one's mind on it and not let it stray away, then, one can keep one's mind moving in calm.³⁴⁾ If one is not alert and careful even for a moment when one comes into contact with external objects, one loses balance and is swept away by personal desire, overturning one's body and mind. Thus, in everyday contact with objects, one should always check if each and every act is reasonable. If it is, one should exert oneself further and if not, correct it immediately. If

31) *Toegye jeoseo gwon* 16, p. 465; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo gwon* 5, pp. 142-143.

32) "Dap Kim Donseo" (Answer to Kim Don-seo), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon* 28; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 7, p. 261.

33) "Dap Kim Donseo" (Answer to Kim Don-seo), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon*, 28; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 7, p. 263-265.

34) "Dap Ki Myeongeon beolji" (Answer to Ki Myong-eon: Addendum), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon* 28; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 7, p. 270.

one is always cautious and afraid and does not become lax in practicing virtue and gaining understanding, one's mind will be humble and acts, sincere.³⁵⁾

In the pre-response state of feelings and intentions, one should be alert, careful and respectful in order not to be swept by personal feelings or let one's mind stray. Then, when one's mind comes in contact with external objects, one can extend one's mind to respond properly to the epiphany of the face of the Other. If one maintains a calm mind, natural and **immovable**, by which one is not swayed by personal desire, one is positioned to accept the *li* revealed by the Other and the ethical appeals, demands, orders, revelations and epiphanies from the Other, In short, this is to have an attitude of compassion.

To Toegye, the ultimate goal of study is to seek benevolence. As a method of seeking benevolence, he presents the method of "**remain** respect and seek *li*" (*geogyong gungni*). The core of Toegye's theory of cultivation is to "**be respectful**" (*jigyeong*) and to "understand and practice the truth" (*jinji silcheon*). This is to "preserve one's mind to be careful when alone" (*sindok*), "be alert and cautious" (*gyegu*), to "keep internal tranquility" (*jeongje eomsuk*), concentrate on one thing and allow no distraction, and to "be sincere" (*seongseong*). All of this emphasizes being alert in order to maintain and nurture the natural goodness in the human **mind**, or **the right state of** mind. Toegye's theory of cultivation is also combined with having compassion for the Other's suffering based on benevolence. His emphasis on benevolence is illustrated by the fact that he treats *Ximing* (The Western Inscription, written by Zhang Zai)—which lays out how to acquire benevolence—as a separate section in his *Seonghak sipdo* (Ten Diagrams for Sacred/Sage Learning). His main arguments in *Ximing* can be summarized as follows: "From the standpoint of the benevolence of coexistence, the people are my brethren and objects are my limbs. I should respect my seniors because they experienced heaven and earth ahead of me. I should have compassion on the lonely and the weak because they are like children. The pale and sick, orphans,

35) "Dap Kim Ijeong" (Answer to Kim Ijeong), in *Toegye jeoseo* vol. 29; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseu* vol. 7, p. 356.

childless elders, widows and widowers are all my brothers and sisters who have no one to turn to for help. . . . The goal of sacred learning is to seek benevolence. I should understand the profound meaning of this to know what it is to be one with all things in the universe. When this is done, studying to seek benevolence becomes friendly and enjoyable. Then, I do not need to worry that learning may become futile or meaningless, and the virtue of my mind becomes complete without the fallacy of assuming others to be like myself."³⁶⁾

Toegye states that one can grasp the meaning of benevolence if one understands its identity by savoring the complete flavor of *Ximing*. Because a benevolent person experiences this in his mind, he can embrace and have compassion for everything. Toegye's sincerity in this can be glimpsed in his ardent appeal to the King, which states "When hunger and cold become unbearable and people have no one to turn to, they lose all their possessions and are pushed to think of living a rootless wanderer's life. So they pack up their meager belongings and become vagabonds. . . . Instead of trying to save the lives of people in suffering, the harsh officials and vicious petty officials ransack houses, take away young men and arrest monks. They also scheme plots against them, threaten, abuse, violate and press them harshly. People are exploited endlessly until their flesh is torn and their bones are crushed." He describes the lives of people in misery and implores the King as follows: "In the past, the King considered people to be needy and protected them like helpless children. The King loved them as parents love their children and there was nowhere his love did not reach. When they were stricken with illness, hunger or cold, the King felt sad and had compassion for them as if he himself were suffering. The King embraces them, consoles them, looks after them sincerely, has concern with how they live, feeds them and treats them with medicine. If the King governs people as their parents, how can he turn a deaf ear to their illness and starvation?"³⁷⁾ This is a solemn admonishment to the King on his responsibility for the

36) "Chaseomyeong" (Answer to *Ximing*), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon 7; Gukyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 3, pp. 112-117.

37) "*Mujin gyeongyeon gyecha*" (무슨 의미입니까?), in *Toegye jeoseo gwon 7, p. 465; Gukyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 3, pp. 91-92.

lives of people whose survival was threatened by sickness and starvation. Since it was a monarchical society at the time, he might well have staked his own life when he made such an appeal to the King.

Toegye states that if all attain the right mind, they become like brothers and sisters; they become one with all creatures in the world; they have compassion for everything; and they experience that there is no difference between the internal mind and external objects and between near and distant.³⁸⁾ Toegye tells us to have compassion or benevolence for the suffering of others through endless cultivation of controlling greed. The fruit of the effort to suppress greed, personal desire and pursuit of self interest and to empty oneself is to attain the state of an empty mind and a full acceptance of the Other, that is, to sympathy with the Other, which is the proper response to the Other. This clearly shows that Levinas' lonely cry in this century to stop seeking personal interest and respond to the demands of the face of the Other and to take responsibility for the suffering of the Other even if one did not cause it directly is not an unfamiliar teaching.

Conclusion

I pointed out above the problems in an ethical approach centered on the subject and also examined the ethics of the Other, often called the **primary philosophy** of the twenty-first century, and Toegye's cultivation theory as a methodology that could contribute to it. More specifically, I have investigated the meaning of the epiphany of the Other, which is the mode of manifestation of the Other asserted in the ethics of the Other, and have tried to comprehend the epiphany of the Other within the context of Toegye's theory of self-reaching *li*. I have also examined Toegye's cultivation theory as the subject's state of mind in accepting the Other, **because one must be respectful for *li* to approach one's mind.**

The Other is not a representation or a phenomenon which is an object of my consciousness, but an enigmatic, mysterious being who

38) Yun Sa-sun, p. 128.

manifests and expresses himself through appeals, revelations and commands. The face of the Other is a primal ethical word, which manifests itself beyond the discriminations of gender, age, class, race or ethnicity and irrespective of the context. This word is uttered by the lack or poverty of the naked face of the Other and it is an ethical resistance, demand and command. The poorer the Other or the more difficult situation the Other is in, the stronger the ethical command. We are all directly endowed with this ethical appeal and command. Despite this, there are always people in the society who turn away from the demands of neighbors, like cold-hearted Cain.

In this regard, I believe that as Levinas argues, a disinterested attitude, or the rejection of the pursuit of personal interest, is needed to gain more responsiveness to the Other's demand.³⁹⁾ In fact, how to free oneself of self-interest is the core of Toegye's cultivation theory. As examined earlier, **Toegye emphasizes being ethically alert in everyday life in order to empty oneself of personal greed and maintain a clear state of mind, and hindering "neglect of mind" from the very early signs of evil and nurturing the natural goodness of the mind.** When one forgets one's personal will and greed, one can listen to the voice of the Other. The Other's voice, demand and orders can enter one's mind when the conscience is awake. To the extent that one keeps the mind clear and tries to understand the **reason** revealed by the Other, one can be approached by the *li* of the epiphany of the Other.

This method of trying to link Eastern and Western philosophy may commit the foolishness of "a hawk gobbling dates whole" (*gollyun tanjo*),⁴⁰⁾ the metaphor which Toegye used for those who combine ideas and come up with theories while disliking analysis in their studies. **In the study of intention and principle,** he recommends the emptying of the mind and observing the meaning and intention carefully using good judgment without any ungrounded assertions. That way, one can comprehend the differences in two similar things and the commonalities in differences. When they are examined differentiated from one another,

39) For a detailed discussion on this, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1974).

40) Yun Sa-sun, p. 182.

the original meaning prior to the differentiation should not be violated. When they are merged into one, the two should not be mixed. This is necessary to gain a balanced understanding.⁴¹⁾ Although recalling the solemn teachings of Toegye, I admit that I run the risk of the foolish hawk, however, I continue because of the similarities and fascinating differences in Eastern and Western philosophy and the possibility of complementarity displayed on the horizons of different discussions in the process of resolving ethical problems. I only hope that my work, despite the risk, can provide momentum to explore one future direction for a **foremost philosophy** of the postmodern era.

GLOSSARY

<i>bangsim</i>	放心
<i>cheonmyeong</i>	天命
<i>Daxue (Ch.)</i>	大學
<i>geogyeong gungni</i>	계경궁리
<i>gollyun tanjo</i>	鶻倫吞棗
<i>gu bangsim</i>	求 放心
<i>gyegu</i>	戒懼
<i>gyeongmul</i>	格物
<i>gyesin gonggu</i>	戒慎恐懼
<i>heomyeong</i>	虛明
<i>ija doseol</i>	理自到說
<i>jeongje eomsuk</i>	정제엄숙
<i>jigyeong</i>	止敬
<i>jinji silcheon</i>	진지 實踐
<i>juil mujeok</i>	主一無適
<i>mulgyeok</i>	物格
<i>osang</i>	五常
<i>qi (Ch.)</i>	氣
<i>seongseon</i>	性善
<i>seongseong</i>	성성

41) *Toegye seonsaeng munjip* (Anthology of Toegye), *gwon* 7; *Gugyeok Toegye jeonseo* vol. 3, pp. 91-92.

sindok 慎獨
sodangyeon 所當然
soiyeon 所以然
wuji (Ch.) 無極
Ximing (Ch.) 西銘
Zhang Zai (Ch.) 張載
Zhongyong (Ch.) 中庸

(Ch.: Chinese; J.: Japanese)

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