

A Reflection on the Values of Unification and Unification Philosophies*

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Abstract

The unification of South and North Korea should resolve the internal problems within each country as well as the conflicts between them. In order to secure the support of the international community, however, the pursuit of unification should also address universal issues and implement a new model of development that surpasses the singular goal of peace on the Korean peninsula. From this perspective, the process of the unification of the Korean peninsula should pursue values that permit all human beings to be respected, establish harmonious relationships, and construct a sustainable society within nature. Accordingly, the discourse on unification must encompass a value-oriented philosophical discussion. This paper discusses the idea of hyanga seorwi 向我設位 (setting up a ritual altar toward oneself) in Donghak (Eastern Learning), which is marked by human sympathy and consideration for others as the basic spirits of Confucian proprieties in the realm of social understanding and Neo-Confucian moral norms in the understanding of nature.

Keywords: unification, unification philosophy, Cheonan Incident, reverence, relations, sympathy, consideration

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Introduction: Should Unification be Achieved?

Whatever form the process of unification may take, a unified Korean peninsula will have to foster the values desired by the residents of the South and the North and seek to realize the human rights to freedom, equality, peace, democracy, livelihood, and security and a healthy environment. Should such values be attained without fail, the imperative of unification is unquestionable. If, however, unification will only yield overburdening economic crises, exacerbate political conflict, and give rise to an exploitative social system, there exists no rationale for the achievement of unification.

With the recent shift of emphasis in the unification discourse from recovering national homogeneity to increasing economic efficiency, the need and rationale for unification seem to have lost urgency, at least for South Koreans. At the same time, debates on the values that unification should pursue have also receded. However, in the aftermath of the sinking of the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* (known as the Cheonan Incident) on March 26, 2010, a climate of public grief and indignation over the heartbreaking deaths of these young sailors emerged from within South Korean society. The ensuing South Korea-U.S. joint military exercises, responses thereto by China and North Korea, and the North's shelling of Yeonpyeondo island eight months later revealed that the reality of division continues to be deeply rooted in the lives of both South and North Koreans, reiterating the urgent need for peace while simultaneously illustrating numerous obstacles to unification.

This paper reviews the ways in which the Cheonan Incident developed into a political situation comprised of conflicts and controversies within and outside the Korean peninsula and examines the values that unification should pursue. In doing so, this paper also seeks a path to the realization of such values by turning to an intellectual tradition that far preceded the 38th parallel. The attention paid to this intellectual tradition is evidently related to the author's specialization in Korean philosophy, but it also reflects the view that an approach based on an indigenous philosophical tradition can be

most appropriate and persuasive in discussing the topic of unification.¹ The fact that few discussions on unification incorporate the Korean intellectual tradition should not prevent us from such an attempt.

POFC Shin of Navy Corvette *Cheonan*

Petty Officer First Class (POFC) Shin Seon-jun² was aboard the Navy corvette *Cheonan* that was sunk off Baengnyeongdo island in the West Sea on March 26, 2010. Though his personal website was flooded with the prayers of family, friends, and other South Korean citizens, POFC Shin failed to return home to celebrate his 29th birthday (April 2, 2010) and his body was uncovered in the ammo depot of the ship, salvaged on April 15. It was the tenth year since he enlisted in the Navy as a sailor.

On April 16, an altar was installed in the 3-B classroom of his alma mater Ulsan Industrial High School in Ulsan. The students and teachers held a memorial service for him, during which his portrait was displayed on a monitor installed in each classroom and the teachers' lounge. Around two months later, a controversy arose over Shin's mother, who had deserted him and his sister when he was two years old and had never visited him since, collected half of the 200 million won paid under the Military Personnel Pension Law and likewise, claimed half of the 500 million won of remuneration that was paid out of public contributions for the bereaved families of those

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1. The author agrees with Lee Byungsoo's assertion that an "inherent approach utilizing the value systems based on the national tradition prior to the national division, shared by the two Koreas," is needed in theoretical and practical terms, while guarding against "excessive nationalistic cultural passion." The article attempts to approach the theme of unification from this perspective. See B. Lee (2009, 28-41).
 2. POFC Shin was promoted to chief petty officer on April 25, 2010 under the Navy decision to posthumously promote all the 46 sailors who died during the sinking. But in this article, which focuses on the significance of the *Cheonan* Incident, he is described as POFC Shin, based on the rank he held at the time of the disaster.

killed in the Cheonan Incident.³

POFC Shin, along with his sister, led a hard life and joined the Navy upon graduating from high school as a non-commissioned officer. Most of the 46 sailors who died in the disaster also seem to have been from a lower-middle class background like POFC Shin. Most of them were high school graduates; only three of the 30 non-commissioned officers had college degrees. Warrant Officer Han Ju-ho, who died in line of duty while attempting to save the missing sailors, had also joined the Navy upon graduating from Sudo Industrial High School in Seoul.⁴

Consequently, controversies surrounding the Cheonan Incident also brought to light the question of whether politicians and government leaders had fulfilled their own military duties. A considerable number of Cabinet ministers and senior presidential secretaries, along with senior diplomats and security officers, have not fulfilled the mandatory military duty. While not all of them are believed to have evaded the duty illegally, the fact that most of the military personnel who died in the sinking were from a lower middle-class background points to the pervasive social inequality of South Korean society. Considering such a discomfoting aspect, it becomes difficult to dispel the discrepancy between the country that the Cheonan sailors risked their lives to safeguard and the country—or the illusion of one—that government leadership seek to defend.

A similar situation can be found in late nineteenth-century Korea, when the righteous armies fought against Japan. Kim Baek-seon, in spite of being a commoner, was a capable gunner who later distinguished himself as a shock troop leader under the command of Yu In-seok, a prominent righteous army chief. When a conflict emerged between Kim and a fellow guard leader who belonged to the aristocratic class (*yangban*), Yu In-seok executed Kim on charges of destroying the order of the nobles and the commoners. Kim's actions, though not

3. *Chosun Ilbo*, "Claim for Cheonan Remuneration by Blood Mother who Deserted Home 28 Years ago Causes Court Dispute," July 2, 2010.

4. *Chosun Ilbo*, "Cheonam Stern Salvaged," April 16, 2010.

constituting a revolt against seniors, were ruled to be a breach of social hierarchy and thereby a disruption of the order of the righteous army camp. Such class conflicts, which took place from time to time in other camps as well, significantly weakened the capability of the righteous armies (D. Kim 1988, 350-355; S. Lee 1987).

Such conflicts stemmed from the differences between the priorities of the *yangban* righteous army chiefs and those of the righteous army members from ordinary families. The question about what should constitute a matter of life or death on the battleground was very basic. The Donghak (Eastern Learning) peasant army that fought against Japan's invasion from 1895 was comprised of both commoners who attempted social reform through a rebellion in 1894 and members of the *yangban* class who opposed or actively suppressed the commoners' rebellion. These two classes shared a common enemy but differed in the vision of the society they aspired to build upon victory.

The motto of the Donghak Peasant Uprising in 1894, "Sustain the Nation and Provide for the People" (*boguk anmin* 輔國安民),⁵ was highly contrasted to "the country of grand unification" envisioned by the righteous army chief Yu In-seok (Yu [n.d.] 1973, 551-552). The peasant army's motto was derived from the tenet that Heaven is inherent in every human being and each individual should thus redirect his reverence for others toward the self and establish an altar for himself; an egalitarian society would be established as a result of every member of society being revered as Heaven (Choe and Yi 2000, 454-466). On the other hand, the "grand unification" motto pursued an organic hierarchy in which the constant single way (*do* 道; *dao* in Chinese) permeates nature, state, and society through heaven and earth, emperors, and sages, respectively (H. Kim 1992, 282-295). In light of such a stark ideological contrast, conflict between the two groups became unavoidable. The principal members of the Donghak

5. "Changuimun 倡義文" (Proclamation for the First Call to Arms), issued by Jeon Bong-jun, Son Hwa-jung, and Kim Gae-nam in March 1894 (quoted in Shin 1982, 73-74).

peasant army gradually shifted to members from ordinary families, but the defeat of an army holding such fundamental conflicts was unavoidable. Joseon eventually collapsed in the face of Japan's invasion.

Freedom, Equality, and Reverence

Shortly after liberation, Korea was divided into two countries: capitalist South Korea and communist North Korea. Both South Korea and North Korea, however, envisioned a society free of discrimination, one that would guarantee fair opportunities and rights for individuals regardless of social class unlike the Joseon society. Such a public consciousness facilitated both the rapid industrialization and democratization of the South as well as the establishment of a communist regime in the North.

Each of the newly formed states affirmed their national pursuits by stipulating the guarantee of freedom and equality in their respective constitutions.⁶ On the one hand, North Korea's state of affairs affirmed that equality devoid of freedom produces an unequal society with a new and highly destructive class order. On the other hand, developments in the South illustrated that liberty without the guarantee of equal opportunities cannot bring about a truly liberated society.

The aforementioned issue surrounding the Cheonan situation exposes an unequal class system in South Korean society that has formed under industrialization and democratization. Although social change in any new political system is natural, it is by no means desirable that such social inequality become fossilized. Furthermore, if privileged individuals evade their responsibilities as citizens and foster a system of unfair competition by exploiting the vulnerabilities of others, a vicious circle of rising social inequality and structural discrimination becomes unavoidable. Recent surveys⁷ also show that

6. Constitution of the Republic of Korea, ch. 2, "Rights and Duties of Citizens"; and Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, ch. 5, "Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens."

7. *Chosun Ilbo*, "Ladder Is Disappearing," July 5, 2010.

the “ladder of education,” an important route to upward social mobility, is collapsing.⁸

The emergence of communist North Korea in the wake of liberation from Japan prompted South Korea to guarantee equality to the same extent, at least in terms of legality, even as it set out with a capitalist system. Because of the clear failure of the North Korean economy, South Korean society is disillusioned in its view that capitalistic competition is the most effective engine for development. As the Cheonan situation reveals, the vicious circle of social polarization, comprised of unfair competition, eventually leads to public grievance and sociopolitical crisis.

If unification implies the collapse of the North and the South’s absorption of North Koreans as second-class citizens, the situation could become worse than the continuous restraints placed by the North on the South’s potentially limitless capitalism. Such a circumstance would blur the rationales employed by the South to assert the necessity of reunification, such as the recovery of national homogeneity, peace on the Korean peninsula, and economies of scale. If the vision of a unified nation does not guarantee freedom based on equal opportunities, we should rethink the intended purpose and beneficiary of unification. The absorption of North Korea into a fixed class order and capitalist economy would exacerbate social conflict. In light of such potential conflict, such a form of unification cannot be considered desirable.

If unification is to provide the path to a future better, we must work toward a society in which fair opportunities are guaranteed so that the South and North Koreans may develop their capabilities to the fullest extent. If the South continues to view the process of unification as a one-sided absorption, South Korean society must prepare

8. President Lee Myung-bak’s repeated emphasis of “fair society” paradoxically indicates how seriously fairness is threatened in Korean society. The various illegal acts committed by senior government officials revealed in the course of parliamentary hearings and the employment of a Cabinet minister’s daughter as a diplomat must only be a tip of the iceberg of unfair acts openly practiced by Korean government leaders.

for such a society, not least by reforming its discriminatory perception of North Koreans and practicing a view of understanding that extends beyond the idea of human rights. We can draw a connection to Donghak ideology, which posited that one ought to redirect one's reverence for others toward oneself, set up an altar for oneself, and then project the self-reverence onto others.⁹ This principle extends beyond recognizing other individuals as equal beings and respecting their human rights; it calls for the reverence of both self and others, understanding them as entities comprised of life and divinity.

Such an attitude would bring about a breakthrough in one's consciousness and mode of living. Donghak became influential around the nineteenth century for its attempts to apply such a principle by revering marginalized women and children. The voice advocating breakthroughs in human consciousness was strong enough to disturb the firm feudalistic social order.

“Should our country become independent, I wouldn't mind becoming the humblest in the country,” said Kim Gu, a leader of the Korean independence movement. “For being the poorest and humblest in an independent country would be more pleasing, honorable, and hopeful than living a life of wealth and honor in a country of others” (G. Kim 2002, 423-430). However, we must realize that the unification of political borders alone will not fulfill this sentiment.

Controversy over a Written Statement on the Cheonan Incident

On May 20, 2010, an investigation team comprised of both civil and military personnel announced its finding that the naval corvette *Cheon-*

9. The author agrees with the assertion that human rights must be included as an important theme of the unification discourse (Chang 2009). Given that human rights are not well observed even in the South, let alone the North, some may claim that advocating for more is unreasonable. But the author, taking into account the current circumstances of the South and North, finds it necessary to uphold the Donghak (Eastern Learning) formula, demanding a near-spiritual recognition of others, beyond the Western conception of human rights.

an had been attacked by a 250-kilogram North Korean-made torpedo. Some questioned why the findings were made public only twelve ahead of the June 2 local elections, and why President Lee Myung-bak made the announcement in person at the Korean War Memorial. A poll disclosed that 27.3 percent of respondents distrusted the outcome of the investigation.¹⁰ The June 2 local elections, conducted amid widespread speculation about whether the focus on North Korean threats would garner greater voter support or merely backfire, resulted in the defeat of the ruling party. On June 11, the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) presented their views and doubts regarding the official investigation to the United Nations Security Council. This gesture gave rise to a controversy over whether it was appropriate for a civic organization to submit their opinions to the Security Council at a moment in which the government was also working to produce a Security Council chairman's statement based on the findings of the official investigation team. A few right-wing organizations carried out protests at the PSPD headquarters.

The PSPD's submission of a written statement to the Security Council led to an argument over the importance of freedom of speech in comparison to the interests of a nation. In fact, a considerable number of citizens seemed to have decided whether or not to trust the outcome of the official investigation even before it was made public. Underlying the controversy was a political tension between conservatives and progressives. Progressive citizens critical of the incumbent government distrusted the outcome of the official investigation, while conservatives held that the results of any official investigation must be accurate. In a sense, the actual truthfulness of the investigation was secondary to long-standing party conflicts. The PSPD's submission of

10. See the article based on a survey conducted by *Kyunghyang Shinmun* and KSOI: *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, "71% Trust Government Announcement on the Cheonan Sinking," May 15, 2010. On September 7, 2010, the Unification and Peace Research Institute of Seoul National University disclosed the outcome of its survey, showing that 35.7% of respondents were distrustful of the government, 32.5% trustful, and 31.7% in between (*Hankyoreh*, "Distrust of Cheonan Announcement Expands: Only 32% Trust Government Announcement," September 8, 2010).

the written statement merely provided an additional channel for political arguments between conservatives and progressives.

Though a conflict between conservative versus progressive political parties can be found in nearly any historical setting, it has persisted in Korean society in the past decade or so to an extent that it has made state management nearly impossible. A similar example of such an ideological and political conflict in Korean history can be found in the factional disputes over proprieties that took place in the seventeenth century. The first occurred following King Hyojong's death in 1659 over the mourning rites to be observed by Queen Jaui, King Hyojong's stepmother and King Injo's second wife. A second dispute ensued in 1674 over the mourning rites to be observed by Queen Jaui, who was still alive when Queen Inseon, Hyojong's wife and Hyeonjong's mother, died. The former dispute took place in the early years of Hyeonjong's reign, and the Westerners (Seoin) who were in power and controlled the opinion of Neo-Confucian literati won. During the second dispute which occurred 15 years into his rule, Hyeonjong accepted the assertion of the Southerners (Namin), who drove out the majority (Westerners) and gained power.

Considering the superficial nature of the issue at hand, these factional disputes can be criticized as merely political. However, they were essentially highly advanced political philosophy debates on the theoretical basis for establishing political orientation. The Southerners attempted to establish royal authority based on ancient proprieties and to govern the nation with the king at its center by emphasizing the characteristics of royal propriety. On the other hand, the Westerners, the majority faction in power, tried to base their governance on intellectual bureaucrats by asserting that the king is no more than one of many learned men; therefore, they argued that special rules should not be applied to the royalty.¹¹

11. There exist controversies within the academic community over the viewpoints of the Southerners and Westerners in the propriety disputes as being based on ancient propriety (*gorye* 古禮) and household propriety (*garye* 家禮), respectively. Because this is not an important issue in the context of this paper, however, the author adopted the somewhat simplified structure of confrontation presented in Jung (1998).

In Neo-Confucianism, proprieties refer to the laws of universe and nature revealed in detailed, worldly terms; a human being, a constituent of nature, is considered to be endowed with the laws of nature as the true character of morality, which is realized through the form of propriety. With Neo-Confucianism as state ideology, defining the roles of the king and bureaucrats through the interpretation of propriety was natural in Joseon. Propriety, based on the laws of nature, set the criteria for values and norms in reality, in which numerous interests confronted each other. The winner in a dispute over propriety was thus recognized as a man of virtue qualified to lead or rule over a society. The loser, on the other hand, was considered an insignificant person and had to oblige to the power gained by the winner.

The problem lay in simplifying diverse points of dispute into an abstract discourse dubbed propriety, and furthermore, in driving the situation to political purges rather than stopping at a shift of power. Factional conflicts crossed the due course when they demanded the lives of opponents and the downfall of their families. Dialogue was no longer possible when the dichotomy between a virtuous and petty person deteriorated into the dichotomy between one who practices Confucian culture and one who disrupts it. The issue of propriety was reduced to the rationalization of a faction's interests, giving way to a distorted political system.

Conservatives, Progressives, and Circles of Relations

In many ways, disagreements between conservatives and progressives¹² in modern South Korea have become even more serious than

12. The defining characteristics of conservatives and progressives are related to their emphases on freedom or equality and change or stability; the right-wing and left-wing are defined by focus on either growth or distribution and state or market. These concepts should be clearly defined (see Kim Ho-gi's remarks in Hansun Foundation, Korea Futurology Society, and Good Policy Forum 2010, 255). This paper, however, uses both conceptual pairs without distinction to overcome the confrontation between the two ideological orientations.

the chronic regional conflicts. As a system of power change through elections was institutionalized, citizens showed a tendency to vote for candidates or political parties that had higher chances of winning. In this atmosphere, the various demands of citizens were simplified and reduced by the media, political parties, and intellectuals into a state of confrontation between conservatives and progressives, or rightists and leftists. The more a state of confrontation is simplified, the less room it leaves for rational reasoning and alternate opinions. When such a state of confrontation is directly linked to political power, the pursuit of ideas and values is bound to degenerate into a phony justification for partisan maneuverings.

This was preceded by the lesson from factional disputes over propriety in seventeenth-century Joseon. In Joseon, which had originally attempted to establish universal values based on the law of nature and realize them through propriety-oriented governing, the factional disputes over proprieties degenerated into gruesome power struggles. Since democratization in 1987, not only major politicians but also other elites were replaced by followers of the winning party under slogans of “liquidating the past history” or “eliminating left-wingers.” Such instances in modern Korea show that ideological discussions have disintegrated into fights for pork barrel legislation and other financial advantages.

The most clear-cut outcome of conflicts between conservatives and progressives is the division of the Korean peninsula. In the wake of liberation from Japan in 1945, the major political factions failed to cope with changes in the global order, blinded by their ideological conflicts. The intensification of conflict between right- and left-wing political parties in contemporary Korea not only distorted the unification discourse but also constituted a key obstacle to initiating the unification process. Consent or objection to a proposition is determined not by a rational understanding of the proposal, but by the question of which side it is advocated by. Ideas and values are reduced to power struggles and thereby lose their potential to effect real political change. Meanwhile, the lives of South and North Korean citizens, who are supposed to be the subjects and beneficiaries of unification,

appear to be excluded from such disputes. If the South and North are unified, there is no doubt that conflicts over thought and ideology will deepen throughout the peninsula. Unification must contribute to dispelling such conflicts and realizing a peaceful and stable society. Given the history of ideological differences, the unification of South and North Korea under present conditions would be a disaster.

The cooperation of both conservatives and progressives is necessary in order to reexamine the basic objectives of competing ideologies. When proprieties were deprived of their original meaning and became formalized, it was Confucius himself who strived to find their fundamental spirits by raising the question, “Why does a human being practice proprieties?” He elucidated that proprieties help people develop harmonious mutual relations because they are inherent in human beings, and that a mindset of sympathy and benevolence toward others leads human beings to have strong consideration for others.¹³ He explained that a selfish man’s respect for others can be learned, starting from his filial duty.¹⁴ Confucius further explained that a diverse group of individuals can create a harmonious society when each expands the scope of their sympathy and consideration for families, nation, and world, in the manner of an orchestra of heterogeneous instruments producing harmonious tunes.¹⁵ Heo Mok, a chief figure of the factional disputes over proprieties in the seventeenth century, also asserted that if and when everyone understood and complied with the spirit of propriety in such a way, proprieties would naturally be held in high regard even by an ordinary person or child (Heo [n.d.] 1988, 98:165a).

After all, proprieties can be defined as the basic formula of a

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13. This explanation is based on the phrases in the chapters “Yongye 雍也” and “Yan Yuan 顏淵” of *Lunyu* (Analects of Confucius), respectively: “夫仁者 己欲立而立人 己欲達而達人” and “爲仁由己 而由人乎哉”; and on Zhu Xi’s account of the concept of “*zhong-shu* 忠恕” (loyalty and forbearance) in the chapter “Liren 里仁” (Virtuous Manners in Neighborhood) of *Lunyu*: “盡己之謂忠, 推己之謂恕.”
14. “有子曰 其爲人也孝弟 而好犯上者 鮮矣, 不好犯上 而好作亂者 未之有也 君子務本 本立而道生 孝弟也者 其爲仁之本與” (“Xueer 學而” [To Learn], in *Lunyu*).
15. “子曰 興於詩 立於禮 成於樂” (“Taibo 泰伯” [The Eldest Son Taibo], in *Lunyu*).

human society: a human being establishes relations of mutual survival and existence in accordance with the principles of nature, in which all beings coexist harmoniously. Self identity is determined not by one's differences from others but through relations of sympathy and consideration. One's identity is determined as a child from one's relationship with one's parents; as a parent in the relationship with one's children; as a village youth in one's relationships with villagers; and as a subordinate or senior in relationships with seniors or juniors at the workplace. One's existence becomes established where circles of such relations overlap with one another.¹⁶

Once this principle is understood, innumerable relationships and variables of human realities have to be taken into account when applying the laws of nature to a society. Though three thousand prescribed proprieties are generally recognized,¹⁷ hundreds and thousands of other interpretations are possible in application. The sheer number of existing books on propriety indicates the open-endedness and versatility of such interpretations.

Conservative and progressive political parties are determined by their relationships with opponents as well as the era, region, and ideological spectrum of a given society. Given this, their points of dispute can never be simplified into a dualistic structure of polar opposites or simplified arguments such as market versus state, stability versus change, growth versus distribution, and freedom versus equality. Therefore, a simple dichotomy between conservatives and progressives is not only naïve but also tends to produce a lot of harm. If North Korea's human rights violations and nuclear possession are taken into account, such a dichotomy further loses significance. The market requires change while stability requires a state. Sustained growth is impossible without the guarantee of equal opportunities,

16. "Circles" are used in the sense that one's relationships with others are not merely linear, but also encompass the direct and indirect conditions surrounding those involved.

17. This is often expressed as "經禮三百, 曲禮三千" ("There are three hundred standard rites and three thousand detailed rites.").

and distribution without freedom is undesirable. Such points of contention in a dichotomous structure of confrontation actually overlap with each other albeit they seem to be mutually exclusive. They are relatively determined depending on where significance is placed as conservative or progressive, rightist or leftist views. The foci of disputes change depending on the social context, with ideologies or political lines of action being only minimum devices to initiate discussion. Upon realizing that the seemingly dichotomous discussion topics are actually overlapping and interrelated ideas, it becomes apparent that the identities of conservatives and progressives are determined where these interrelated ideas intersect with each other.¹⁸ Furthermore, one should also be able to recognize that the dual confrontational elements of the numerous issues are enveloped by disparate circles of interrelations. If one chooses an ideological orientation only in reaction to differences with one's opponents and adopts it as one's self identity, one risks being consumed by ideology. However, one can exercise complete agency over ideology by realizing that the convergence of various viewpoints determines ideologies and actions.

The Presidential Statement of the UN Security Council and Joint Military Drills by South Korea and the United States

The situation of the Korean peninsula came to light during the developments that took place after the Cheonan Incident, such as the UN Security Council presidential statement, discussions about resuming the six-party denuclearization talks, China's backlash against joint military drills by South Korea and the United States, reinforcement of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and discussions about military cooperation

18. One may dispute that applying the logic of "circles of interrelations," an idea once applied to the existence of the self and others, to abstract or ideological perceptions overlooks differences in conceptual categories. But it is easier to apply "circles of interrelations" logic to abstract dualistic concepts such as market versus state because a considerable portion of these concepts exist in the same space and time frame, while the self and others occupy different realms of time and space.

between South Korea and Japan on the Korean peninsula. Such a situation reminds us that peace and unification cannot be achieved without the consent of the international community, particularly the major powers involved. Diplomatic strategies based on the existing international order will not be sufficient for attaining a peaceful unification and the realization of freedom and equality for all. Such outcomes will be possible when we secure the moral justification that unification can be an illustrative process of attaining universal values and when the international community accepts that peace and unification on the Korean peninsula must be achieved for not only the Korean people but also for the world.

More than a thousand years have elapsed since the first homogeneous nation of Goryeo was founded. It is only in recent years, however, that Korea has touted itself as a homogeneous and unified nation. Such an exclusive national consciousness was bred both consciously and unconsciously among Koreans as a survival strategy, when the sinocentric East Asian order crumbled under the massive wave of Western inroads into the East and Korea became colonized by Japan. The Joseon dynasty persisted for 500 years amid dramatic changes in mainland China not so much because of its national self-respect but more so in the belief that it was the nation most equipped to realize the values of Confucianism, the national ideology of the time.

Toegye Yi Hwang, disillusioned by the dominance of national politics by maternal relatives of the royal family, returned to his home town in 1549 and developed ideas and theories needed for securing the practicality of Neo-Confucianism and thereby rectifying the country's realistic politics. In setting up a *seowon* or private academy, he established the criteria to be observed by the state and the focal point of his criticism. He also attempted to disseminate his idea to the public through *hyangyak* or community pact (H. Kim 2007a, 2007b). During the reign of King Seonjo, who attempted to rectify the state by recruiting Neo-Confucian intellectuals, Yulgok Yi I took part in politics with intent to practice the ideas based on Toegye's issue consciousness and presented an example of politics based on the

ruler's moral self-cultivation.¹⁹

Yi Hwang authored a history of oriental philosophy, the first of its kind in the world,²⁰ not in the capital of Hanyang but in his hometown of Andong, Gyeongsang-do province. It was an attempt to formulate a philosophy for national governance by grasping the entire spectrum of the Zhu Xi philosophy, the most advanced academic theory at the time, and integrating the latest theoretical innovations. Yi explored the true character, structure, function, and principles of human morality as well as private and public methods of self-cultivation and how to sustain and realize it in daily life. His philosophy did not involve the border of a nation or state. Rather, he delved into universal values as an intellectual of the human community. Since his philosophy could be materialized through a country, he merely endeavored to discover ways for realizing his ideals in Korean realities.²¹ Such efforts provided a philosophical foundation, based on which Korea would overcome disorder in the latter half of the six-

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19. Yi I first visited Yi Hwang at the latter's private academy Dosan Seowon when he was 23 years old in 1558. He since turned to Toegye time to time when he encountered difficulties and academic questions. Yi Hwang reciprocated Yi I's respect with affection. The example of politics, referred to here, denotes *Seonghak jibyo* 聖學輯要 (Essentials of the Sage's Learning).
20. *Songgye wonmyeong rihak tongnok* 宋季元明理學通錄 (Comprehensive Record of the Principles of Noumenon and Phenomenon from Late Song through Yuan and Ming Dynasties).
21. The account is given in consideration of the current global argument on citizenship versus patriotism. The argument, which took place in the United States in 1990s, was introduced into Korea through a book titled *Nara-reul saranghandaneun geot* (Loving a Country) (Seoul: Samin, 2003). Martha Nussbaum, a proponent of global citizenship, disclosed a stance somewhat shifting toward patriotism in her lecture "Can There Be a 'Purified Patriotism'? An Argument from Global Justice" that she delivered in Seoul in 2008. In Korea, debates on the progressive camp's patriotism issue have been conducted through the biannual *Simin-gwa segye* (Citizens and the World) and the daily *Hankyoreh* since 2009. As found in the discourse, both camps have merits, but are liable to being used as abstract logic at the cost of neglecting practical needs, or of defending or justifying the current system. Accordingly, the context and emphasis of a discourse should shift in accordance with social context. The exclusion of either side from a discourse, however, could be dangerous.

teenth century and reattempt the construction of a Confucian society in the seventeenth century.

The Horizon of Philosophical Thinking on Unification

With regard to the economic development strategy of unification, the utilization of global production bases already established by South Korean businesses would be preferable to a mere transplant of the South's industrialization to the North's current production base of low-wage labor. This judgment is partially based on the cost effectiveness of unification but primarily concerns the possibility that such an economic structure would render the North an inferior region and turn North Koreans into second-class citizens, and coerce the outdated systems of South's politics and economy onto the North.

Convincing the powers involved that a unified Korean peninsula will contribute to the development of the international community calls for a medium- and long-term national strategy for constructing a social system based on a post-industrialization and information-oriented model. It will involve not only boosting national income through economic development but also overcoming the wounds the Korean peninsula has sustained from conflict in the twentieth-century and turning a unified Korea into a successful model of future society. Given the history of colonialism, the post-independence struggles between capitalist and communist ideologies and the implementation of industrialization and democratization amidst an evershifting cultural context, perhaps a unified Korean peninsula is ideally equipped to construct a unified societal model and has an imperative to do so. Accordingly, unification should not allow the North to take over the less advanced parts of the South's industries and become a low-wage production base, but should rather ensure that both regions on the Korean peninsula construct a sustainable society based on the South's history of industrialization and democratization. Global priorities such as sustainable development, cultural diversity, creative capitalism, and nuclear disarmament should form the basis for a unified

future of the Korean peninsula.

Toegye Yi Hwang's examination of the country's fundamental ideology and philosophy offers an excellent example for today's intellectuals. To him, the domination of the country by the king's maternal relatives was a crisis for Korean society; he attributed the failure of Neo-Confucian practice in politics to deficiencies in the theoretical system as well as in methods of academic study and cultivation, which hinder the practical application of theoretically acquired knowledge. Based on this diagnosis, he constructed a branch of scholarship that closely integrated theory and practice. But such a methodology was not confined to mere combination of theory and practice.

Toegye's philosophical thoughts are well summarized in his *Seonghak sipdo* 聖學十圖 (Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning), which he submitted to King Seonjo shortly after he acceded to the throne. In this booklet, he identified mankind amid nature through an understanding of the birth and growth of the universe and all creatures. He called on human beings, as constituents of nature, to adopt the principles of nature as the foundation of morality, emphasizing the need for continuous scholarship and cultivation based on a comprehensive understanding of the structure and processes of moral nature and relying on the principle of nature. Claiming the booklet as a guide to becoming a sage king, Toegye urged the king to study it by pasting its pages onto a folding screen in his room and keeping a copy of it on his desk at all times. But the book contained no instructions on how to rule a country. Perceiving that a man's proper way of life is rooted in the universal laws of nature, he attempted to help the king understand that recognizing, experiencing, and implementing these principles would lead to the most humane form of life and ideal society. He requested that the king endeavor to realize such principles in everyday life by carrying out his studies and self-cultivation with a mindset of reverence. Furthermore, by tracing the lineage of contemporary Joseon academics to classic Confucianism and establishing the orthodoxy of Korean Neo-Confucianism, Yi Hwang attempted to create firm ideological and moral restraints on royal authority, which is limited to a certain time and space.

If we seek to discuss a unified Korea by examining the surrounding issues from the perspective of universal values and take a leadership role in realizing them on the peninsula, the unification discourse should first reexamine the position of human existence in nature. Topics such as environmental protection, energy crisis, and sustainable development require an understanding of nature and a fundamental reexamination of human relations with nature; issues like cultural diversity and creative capitalism call for a new understanding of human existence based on such reflections. Yi Hwang's philosophical endeavors in sixteenth-century Joseon cannot be directly transposed to current Korean society. However, given the fact that we are accustomed to perceiving nature and others as mere objects, utilizing them as tools for realizing our own interests and realizing our desires through transactions, it is important to consider them in order to prevent unification from expanding and reinforcing such modes of living.

Establishing the Direction for a Philosophical Debate on Unification

The unification of South and North Korea should primarily seek to resolve the internal problems within each country and the conflicts between them. In order to secure the support of the international community, however, the pursuit of unification should also address universal issues that affect mankind and strive to implement a new model of development that transcends the singular goal of peace-keeping on the Korean peninsula. From this perspective, the process of unification on the Korean peninsula should pursue values that permit all human beings to be respected, establish harmonious relationships, and construct a sustainable society within nature. In efforts to search for an appropriate philosophical approach to fulfill these aims, this paper presented the idea of *hyanga seorwi* 向我設位 (setting up a ritual altar toward oneself) in Donghak (Eastern Learning), which is marked by human sympathy and consideration for others as the basic spirits of Confucian proprieties in the realm of social under-

standing and Neo-Confucian moral norms in the understanding of nature. The principles by which human beings should live, such as ethical norms, are not formulated by attempts to regulate and control human desires and interests. Rather, they are products of nature, to which humans belong. It is also essential to understand how such ethical norms govern personal relationships in the midst of rational judgment, emotional impulse, and practical actions. Even more importantly, it is necessary to preserve the dignity of every human being regardless of citizenship. As noted earlier, these principles are intended to convince the international community of the justifiability of unification; to resolve conflicts between conservative and progressive ideologies; and to guarantee human rights, freedom, and peace for each and every resident of the two Koreas. These value-oriented discussions are not proposed to simply revive Eastern ways of thought or focus on abstract discourse while neglecting real-world matters. Discussing unification in philosophical terms is essential for a genuine understanding of our own lives, including those of fellow citizens such as the late POFC Shin Seon-jun. At the same time, such philosophy-oriented discussions will provide the basis for a positive outlook on a unified Korean peninsula.

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