

From Nature to Morality in Emerson and Yi Hwang's Literature¹

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This paper examines Yi Hwang's and Emerson's ideas of nature and morality in their poems and essays, points of intersection in their respective ideas and their similar attitudes towards nature, how they combined nature with human morality, the basis of their reasoning, and finally, the social implications of their thought.

Emerson, in the newly rising America of the 19th century, claimed that every individual could become a subject of universal morality by realizing the holistic harmony of nature in himself. This was to become the basis of early American constitutionalism, which tended to function as an external regulator of moral behavior. Yi Hwang insisted that we could become moral subjects by internalizing the fundamental harmony of nature, as he was critical of the corruption of the 16th century Joseon government officials. Both scholars believed that the harmony and order found in nature was the root of human society; and that we could take part in the harmony and order as members of the universe.

Both of these authors have insight about how the individual gains his own reason for being, how he endows himself with the meaning of life. It is the only way to comprehend the meaning of life in a world that appears meaningless.

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Can morality be based on nature?

Yi Hwang (Korea, 1501-1570) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (U.S.A., 1803-1882) shared similar ideas on nature and morality that were a reoccurring motif in their poems and philosophical essays. Despite the diverse social conditions from which they emerged, their similarities stand out, as do the far reaching implications of their works.

The separate concepts of nature and morality are not challenging to think about. However, it is difficult to conceive how morality can be drawn from nature since nature is regarded as an organic body. For example, a typhoon or a hurricane can cause limitless human suffering, but they are both comprised of only the circulation of air, which is innocuous enough since it helps maintain a proper balance for the Earth.

Yi Hwang, who lived in the Joseon period as a poet and philosopher, looked at the relationship between nature and morality. According to Yi Hwang, morality was a topic of foremost importance; so much so that he sought out to establish a theoretical foundation on which to build his ideas. Yi Hwang regarded nature as the very foundation of human morality. However, it is more challenging to offer a logical explanation for the relationship between nature and morality. Korean philosophers debated this topic for centuries until it subsided in the late Joseon period.

Analyzing Emerson's Essay 'Nature', Cox pointed out that "By being the veritable pupil of Nature, Emerson will be the true teacher of society" (James M. Cox 1975: 65). When we look at what Emerson wanted to teach society as a pupil of Nature, if we are familiar with Asian philosophy, then Neo-Confucianism will quickly occur to us. Yoshino Takanashi, who understands Emerson within the scope of Asian thought, says, "In the broadest terms, Emerson's thought pursues an integration of inner-oriented transcendental metaphysics and outwardly directed ethics that is a hallmark of Neo-Confucian thought" (Yoshino Takanashi 2002:41). But Yoshino neither mentions nature enough nor does he explain why and how Emerson combined nature and human morality. We can understand Emerson's combination of nature and morality better through Yi Hwang, one of the most important Neo-Confucian scholars in the Joseon Period (1392-1910).

Here exists the foundation to make a comparative study of Yi Hwang and Emerson. As the details are given later, these two philosophers tried to extract the idea of human morality from nature and had something in common in their

recognition of the ultimate foundation of nature and morality. At the same time, they did not suggest morality as a concrete individual behavior but rather grasped morality as a norm of judgment and emotion leading to self-awakening to join in the harmony and order of the world. However, their perception was different from that of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Taoism in that they grasped that the ultimate power of nature would be the foundation of human morality. Also, in Christianity the foundation of human morality is God. But Emerson depersonalized traditional God as the harmony of nature. *Li* (Universal Pattern) of Yi Hwang recognized and personalized active action unlike the general idea of Neo-Confucianism. While Emerson depersonalized God and Yi Hwang personalized *Li* (Universal Pattern), their thoughts about the transcendental basis became united. To Yi Hwang and Emerson, nature was a vessel containing the basic harmony and order of the world whereas human morality is the perception and action participating in the harmony and order of the world through nature. In short, they share the idea of nature containing moral order.

In this article, I would like to look into Yi Hwang's and Emerson's ideas of nature and morality in their poems and essays and find points of intersection in their respective ideas regarding nature and morality. I will examine their similar attitudes towards nature, how they combined nature with human morality, the basis for their reasoning, and finally, the social implications of their thought.

Emerson's "Oversoul" and Yi Hwang's "Universal Pattern"

Both Emerson and Yi Hwang did not believe that reality existed in the tangible world. They believed in the ultimate essence beyond phenomena, as exemplified by the following poem, "Listening to the River," by Yi Hwang;

Tranquil flows the nearby stream,
In the distance we hear the river roar;
The people love the sounds of the flute and fiddle,
But who listens to the sound of stillness. (Yi Hwang 1980a: 151)²

He is describing a scene where he was listening to the sound of the river while

2. All of Yi Hwang's poems and prose quoted here are translated by YeonWoo Shin.

sitting at the pavilion of his student, Kim Sinjoong. There are several sounds in the poem; the sounds of the nearby stream together with those of the distant river are actual and concrete. Anybody could hear them. The sounds of the fiddle or flute are also audible. But there is another kind of sound Yi Hwang was eager to catch, that is, “the sound of stillness,” which exists beyond or lies deep within in the actual sounds. It is a sound that the ordinary person cannot hear. Yi Hwang thought that he could hear this transcendental and fundamental sound through the actual sounds of everyday life. But sound is not the only way to this deeper understanding, as can be seen in this Sijo³ poem;

Good to smell by itself the orchid in the valley
 Good to see by itself the white cloud over the mountain
 Within these, not to be forgotten the One who is so beautiful.
 (Yi Hwang: Microfilm)⁴

Anyone could smell the perfume of the orchid and see the white cloud floating over the mountain. Even though these two materials are secluded from this mundane world, anybody can see or feel them. Yi Hwang takes it a step further and asks why those orchids and clouds are beautiful. It is because there is the “Beautiful One” behind them. As I argued in my former study of Yi Hwang, this is the fundamental cause, the origin Yi Hwang had in mind in the poem and in his theory on nature and morality (Shin 2004: 159-182). In other words, Yi Hwang had a dualistic idea: While the world always exists and is in the course of change, the real substantial power lies beyond the visual world which makes the world as it is.

The following poem “Rhodora” by Emerson expresses an idea similar to that of Yi Hwang;

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
 I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,

 Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why

3. Sijo is a kind of Korean traditional formal poem which consists of three lines and used to be sung. Yi Hwang’s twelve Songs of Tosan Mountain are composed from twelve songs of Sijo.

4. All of the Sijo by YiHwang quoted in this article are from microfilm No. 356423. (Dankook University, Korea, Yulgok Memorial Library).

This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
 Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
 Then the beauty is its own excuse for being;
 Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
 I never thought to ask, I never knew;
 But my simple ignorance, suppose
 The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.
 (Emerson 1904: 37-38)⁵

The speaker discovered the rhodora and its beauty in his solitude. It bloomed where no person could see it, but the speaker is told that it pleases the desert and the brook, and gives the red-bird pure enjoyment. The reader must wonder: What made this flower grow there? The speaker says that it was the same Power that brought him there. The capital letter 'P' indicates that it is the fundamental power, which a rhodora or a human being needs to exist in this world together in "our solitude". The poem's subtitle: "On being asked, whence is the flower?" indicates Emerson's awareness of the origin or cause behind the rhodora flower.

We can compare this poem with Yi Hwang's Sijo, the Korean fixed form of verse shown previously. The orchid bloomed alone in a secluded area. It pleased the speaker with its perfume, which it emitted without effort. In this Sijo the question of what has brought it here is omitted. This is partly because the Sijo is too short, but the implied answer is "The Beautiful One." It is not a person, but rather the fundamental essence which lies in the Great Absolute. This essence enabled the orchid in the valley, the clouds over the mountains, and the humans watching them to all exist in this world together.

Even those who are wise enough to see the beauty of the rhodora could not see its essence. They believed that beauty in itself is the reason why it exists. They understand the sensible world well but cannot go beyond it. Emerson expressed tactfully the difficulty of arriving at this kind of insight in the poem, "April": The masters quite omitted / The lore we care to know (*Poems*, 255). Emerson's phrase can be compared to Yi Hwang's utterance where he thought people could hear the sound of a brook or musical instruments but could not hear the sound beyond them.

Emerson explained in his essay "Self-Reliance," about the ultimate power in detail:

5. All of Emerson's poems quoted in this paper are from this book.

In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For, the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. (Emerson 1979: 37)

Yi Hwang shared the same idea of gaining insight into universal existence in a time of tranquility.

Just as a person who has obtained a clear and highly elevated mind without selfish desires spontaneously runs into clear wind and the moon after rain, the scenery and mind are merged, heaven and humans join together, pleasure and taste are high, clear, and delicate. Inevitably, it is difficult to express such a rare moment of an unrestricted, soaring spirit. (Yi Hwang 1980b: 100)

The premise of heaven and humans joining rests on the combination of the clear and highly-elevated mind without having selfish desire. And the spirit Emerson called the ‘Oversoul’, Yi Hwang considered as the ‘Universal Pattern’.

However, it is nearly impossible to penetrate this oneness through concrete objects. The visible and sensible phenomena hardly show us the fundamental one. It seems impossible to bridge the gap between sensible phenomena and the ‘Universal One’ or ‘Oversoul’ with our cognitive faculties. We need a “transparent eyeball”, as Emerson said, for we cannot recognize the ‘Oversoul’ through ordinary human eyes. When we look into our mind deeply in tranquility, without any misapprehension or disturbances of the senses, we gain insight into the fundamental principle or ‘Oversoul’ of the universe.

But by what means can we link them and comprehend the fundamental one beyond phenomena? Emerson and Yi Hwang view “nature” as a means of resolving this dilemma.

Nature as Mediation

These two poets greatly loved nature, but did they do so simply because of its pure beauty? The epigrammatic poem by Emerson, “Nature,” suggests some-

thing more.

A subtle chain of countless rings
The next unto the farthest brings;
The eye reads omens where it goes,
And speaks all languages the rose;
And striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form. (Emerson 1979: 7)

Through analyzing the poem, we can ask the following illuminating questions: What does the eye see in a chain of countless rings? What does the rose as part of nature tell us? Why does the worm long to become a man and not want to remain a worm? Is it not because of the reason that nature takes the forms of spirals that provide the way to some ultimate purpose? This poem tells us that nature is an omen and the language of something grander than the objects of the sentient world. Therefore, objects cannot be accepted as they are.

According to Emerson, nature is a meditative language and a symbol, which connects the visible world to the invisibility of the ultimate cause. Nature has such a role because of its intrinsic superb properties. More than anything else, nature shows us complete harmony.

Come learn with me the fatal song
Which knits the world in music strong,
Come lift thine eyes to lofty rhymes,
Of things with things, of times with times,
Primal chimes of sun and shade,
Of sound and echo, man and maid,
The land reflected in the flood,
Body with shadow still pursued,
For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune. (Emerson 1904: 54)

This poem expresses the notion that harmony exists not only between things that are similar, but also between those that are opposite. Things with things, times with times, we find they are as much the same as they are different. In their difference, they can be harmonious. Man and woman, land and flood are as much different as they are the same. Since they are different, they can be harmonious.

It is impossible to achieve harmony when all is the same or all is different. When you see sameness in the difference and difference in the sameness, harmony prevails. This reminds us of the figure of the Great Absolute in Chinese philosophy, which is the source of the dual principle of yin and yang. The Great Absolute is represented in the form of a circle divided equally by a curved line. And the divided parts represent the difference in the whole harmony.

Emerson seems to emphasize the sameness or similarity rather than the difference in the diagram of the Great Absolute. Harmony is the way to see the same in spite of the differences or varieties. Emerson described it as: “Balance-loving Nature / Made all things in pairs./ To every foot its antipode/ Each colour with its counter glowed / To every tone beat answering tones”(Emerson 1904: 123).

Another alluring characteristic of nature to humans is its immutability. Since life is filled with changes, and change creates instability, which leads to unhappiness, nature’s immutability seems to have a special meaning for humans.

Behold the Sea,
The Opaline, the plentiful and strong,
Yet beautiful as is the rose in June,
Fresh as the trickling rainbow of July;
Sea full of food, the nourisher of kinds,
Purger of Earth, and medicine of men;
Creating a sweet climate by my breath,
Washing out harms and griefs from memory,
And, mathematic ebb and flow
Giving a hint of that which changes not. (Emerson 1904: 242-243)

Through examining this poem, it is possible to understand Emerson’s intent to show the sea as beautiful, helping to calm human emotion. It is more fulfilling for human beings to feel the unchanging ebb and flow, which has been constant for hundreds of thousands of years. When we face the sea, which is always constant, we come to compare it to human life; we cannot live without change. We cannot say we will be the same next year or ten years after. But nature has “the trusty almanac / of the punctual coming-back” (Emerson 1904: 176).

At the same time, we should keep in mind that nature is flowing, which is full of energy. The poem “Scashore” shows us that the ebb and flow has continued for thousands of years without change, a steady, circulating motion.

The world rolls round - mistrust or not, -
Befall again what once befell;
All things return, both sphere and mote... (Emerson 1904: 179)

Emerson also tells us in his prose "Circle": "there are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees" (Emerson 1979: 179). A volatile universe seems to contradict the immutability of nature. But understanding this apparent contradiction is absolutely essential for understanding Emerson. To him, the immutability and flowing circulation of nature make up the dual forces of harmony in nature and thus are not contradictory.

Emerson's enquiry makes us question, what harmony is. Harmony cannot be found in a situation where all movements cease, as in a still film, rather, harmony means the certitude of relation that changes continuously. It is a kind of non-changeability within the ceaseless change. On this Yi Hwang recited:

How is the green mountain green for thousands of years?
How does the flowing water flow day and night?
Let's not halt, either, and keep our green permanently.
(Yi Hwang: Microfilm)

It is an idea that, as the flowing water never changes its property of flowing, so does the green mountain ceaselessly retain its property of being green. It is an assertion that we humans should have something unchangeable within us as nature does. It is about the immutable property of the flowing water, and not a negation of its flowing quality.

To Emerson and Yi Hwang harmony consists of two sides: the non-changeability and the circulating flow. Harmony means that the circulating flow is, precisely, non-changeability.

Yi Hwang sees non-changeable flow and harmony in nature as does Emerson. Yi Hwang integrates these into a concept of "flying falcon, vaulting fish". He wants to see Li in Chi. This is one of the poems which Yi Hwang wrote using such a concept:

Full of flowers is the mountain in the spring breeze,
Full of moonlight is the hill on an autumn evening,
The beautiful joy in four seasons is the same as we humans,
Still more, is there any end in the pleasure of

Flying falcon, vaulting fish, shadows of clouds, light of heaven?
 (Yi Hwang: Microfilm)

The first two lines tell us about the order and beauty of the circulation of the four seasons. Spring has its own beauty and fall has its particular beauty. The four seasons follow a strictly ordered cycle. In the middle of the poem, the order of nature is transformed into the order of humans. Nature and humans essentially belong to the same order and harmony. He integrates this idea through the verse, “flying falcon, vaulting fish.” To Yi Hwang, “flying falcon, vaulting fish” point to the constancy of the universe as a lively movement, following a strict order. They move ceaselessly and their moving force is always fluctuating, but their movement has an element of invariability. Moreover, they do not offend the order and harmony of the separate spaces they each occupy. These images also demonstrate a kind of non-changeability and harmony. The harmony of “flying falcon, vaulting fish” is made possible by the fundamental function, which enables the flow to be consistent and always moving.

The concept of nature, as a combination of the changeability and non-changeability that flows seamlessly and harmoniously, is a model that combines the diversity of the world with the fundamental unity of the world. Yi Hwang tried to understand phenomena and substance of the world through nature rather than regarding nature as that of having a purpose.

In this respect, Emerson said:

Through all its kingdoms, to the suburbs and outskirts of things, it [nature] is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin. It always speaks of Spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us. The aspect of nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship. Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse, and as it were, distant phenomena of matter. (Emerson 1979: 37)

The link between Spirit or “God” to humans, according to Emerson, is nature. He insisted that, as it is difficult for us to see God directly, we see him by means of nature. The Spirit of the world speaks to us to make use of nature, so we can get close to Spirit or God through nature. We can say that the role of Jesus in tra-

ditional Christianity was a substitute for nature. In that case God should be regarded as the universal fundamental force or principle, not a god restricted by personification.

By this account we have to understand that the separated and individual parts of nature lack significance. Nature, as it is described here in this paper, is not seen as a separate entity. Yi Hwang knew the sufferings caused by flood and drought, and deplored the snowstorms that raged in the springtime. Every ship looks romantic but when we embark on a journey ourselves, "the romance quits our vessel and hangs on every other sail in the horizon"(Emerson 1904: 28). When his five-year-old son Waldo died, could Emerson have affectionate feelings toward nature? He could. That was because he could not forsake his belief in nature as a whole, even though he could harbor ill feeling against nature as part of individual experience. That was because nature was the foundation of the delight inside him. That is to say, it gives the ego a sense of delight to experience its expansion into a universal dimension. Emerson expressed this in his essay "Experience." The rage and disappointment in nature shown in the early part of the essay are revisited in the conclusion, but as delight and affirmation for nature. It is not an inconsistency, but a consistency on the grounds that his belief in the general principle of nature matters, and not individual experiences of the aspects of nature. We can understand Emerson better by observing Yi Hwang's way of understanding nature.

From Nature to Morality

It is well known that the concept of Hindu Brahmanism largely affected Emerson's thoughts and this is evident in his essay "Oversoul." By applying some principles of Brahmanism, he could express his view of the organic world and understand the universe as a flow of one force. This was often called "transcendentalism," and by employing this concept he was able to unify some of the culturally diverse beliefs of Americans living at that time.

At the same time, Emerson said that nature shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. But it seems illogical to think, as Emerson does, that nature, as opposed to God, lays out human morality. If the universe is just the flow of universal force, all the elements of the universe should be equally worthy. Can you say what is more worthy? Eastern Taoists say, we cannot tell any difference in the life of a fish or a deer or a

human: They are equal. It is all the same to be healthy, seriously ill, or a hunchback when you see through the eyes of nature. Moreover, according to Taoists, whom are basically naturalists, we cannot insist that human moral instructions, such as “Show filial piety to your parents”, be attributed to nature. I argue that it was necessary for Emerson to connect morality and nature logically in order to set up a fundamental ground for human morality.

In the Western religious tradition, moral code is dictated by God and expressed in the Bible. Emerson freed himself from the tradition of a personified God. He could not, however, free himself from social morality. He not only accepted the Brahma, the unity of the universe, but also emphasized morality in human society. Nature and morality seem to be unrelated. That is why Horton and Herbert cleared away the problem of morality in Emerson: “We find that, with the exception of its moral idealism, we have accounted for the major characteristics of Emerson’s concept of the Oversoul”(Horton and Edwards 1974: 118-119).

It was on this point, the linking of nature to morality, that Henry Thoreau parted from Emerson. Thoreau, who was immersed in nature more than Emerson,⁶ (Gelpi 1975: 150) wrote in 1841 that, “The moral aspect of nature is a disease caught of man — a jaundice imported into her.” Later he concluded that, “We do not believe in the same god” when he had read Emerson’s “Literary Ethics” (Smith 1999: 74, 139). Unlike Hindu and Buddhist philosophy that deny the life in this world and teach about the after life, Yi Hwang and Emerson put great significance in the reality of this world. Reading him solely within the reference of Hindu thought limits the full interpretation of Emerson’s view of nature and morality.

Nature and morality were combined by Kant and Schiller, and Cromphout’s analysis of their logic may give us some insight into Emerson’s view. Cromphout analyzed the logic of combining nature and morality in the frame of Kant and Schiller. According to Kant, this objective world is not the world itself we feel and sense; it is constructed in our mind. This construction enables us to recognize this world, but at the same time urges us to separate from the world and feel alienated. The self, who recognizes his/her limitation, tries to recover his/her original freedom, and this attempt is said to be his/her morality.

6. On the difference between Emerson and Thoreau, Albert Gelpi pointed out that; “For all of Emerson’s love of the woods and lakes around Concord, Emerson would write an essay on the “Natural History of Intellect” while Thoreau was to write “The Natural History of Massachusetts.”

Moreover, man needs to have knowledge about nature, for man can understand nature as a part of his "alter-ego" through this knowledge. Quoting Schiller, Cromphout insisted that man has a "desire for lost unity, a lost harmony with nature...As an object of striving, unity becomes a moral unity (moralische Einheit)" (Cromphout 1999: 134-138).

I think this kind of hypothetical analysis--even if it were correct-- is too dichotomous. How and when does the mind, divided from objects, come to realize the wholeness, if it is not present from the start? Cromphout regards nature as one being solely parallel to mind. However, mind already belongs to nature. We are born as nature. All we have to do is to comprehend that we are the ones that complete the harmony of nature. Cromphout used the word "overcome" and "dominate," when describing the relationship between humans and nature. I argue that Emerson incorporated an Asianic view of integration and ultimate unity into his philosophy, rather than maintaining such a severe dichotomy. Long before recognizing his alienation, Emerson speculated that man seems to feel an intrinsic unity with nature. Emerson says: "To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs to a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view man and nature are indissolubly joined" (*Emerson 1904*: 30).

How was Emerson able to link nature and human morality? By what measure could he extract morality from nature? Linking nature to specific moral dictates directly might seem counterproductive. It can encourage rigidity and people feel partial. So Emerson looked for a comprehensive way to disclose nature's characteristics that were assumed to be the foundation of morality, not specific moral mandates⁷ (Buell 1995, Cited from Cromphout 1999: 141). We should notice that he did not present us with specific moral terms. A comparison of Emerson with Benjamin Franklin and Henry Longfellow can clarify Emerson's link of nature and morality without using direct moral terms. Unlike Emerson, Franklin tried to introduce thirteen specific items such as temperance, frugality, industry, sincerity, etc. And unlike Emerson, Henry Longfellow, his contemporary poet, wrote instructive poems as guiding principles of life

Emerson said that we should be foremost aware of the unity of nature and ourselves as human beings. In the poem "Rhodora" the lines, "Then the beauty is its own excuse for being..." and "The self-same power that brought me there

7. Lawrence Buell, who tried to read Emerson's Nature as an admonition for ecology, admitted that Emerson's naturalism remained a religeo-philosophical mode of reflecting on nature."

brought you” make us aware of the congruency between nature and human beings. This awareness is important because the beauty of nature matters when the self recognizes the beauty and realizes the meaning of existence for itself. It is not endowed from an outer source or a God in heaven. As Sacks said, “Emerson acknowledged understanding derives from observation of external phenomena, but believed that the more important truths are eternal and intuitive, emerging from within” (Sacks 2003: 16).

And what is “beauty?” According to Emerson it is the totality, harmony, and order of nature: “the unity of nature, the unity in variety, which meets us everywhere”(Emerson 1904: 27). As he sang, “Nothing is fair or good alone.” And “I yielded myself to the perfect whole”(Emerson 1904: 5, 6). We should be aware that such vitality of nature in harmonious order is precisely what we should have in ourselves. This self-awareness becomes the root of moral awareness and the meaning of one’s self. Along with this kind of awareness, nature is always new. The following poem portrays nature as revealing not only the mystery of nature but also the mystery of existence of itself.

The rain comes when the wind calls,
The river knows the way to the sea,
Without a pilot it runs and falls,
Blessing all lands with its charity.
The sea tosses and foams to find
Its way up to the cloud and wind. (Emerson 1904: 57)

Rain and wind, river and sea, they all know what they should do naturally, and it becomes a blessing to the land. One who realizes the unity of all of nature should be a blessing to the world by doing what he or she should do. And it is important to realize that it is natural, not obligatory. The poet shares such self awareness: “a leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world” (Nature, *C.W.1*, 27).

This made Emerson sing a song of the harmonious mystery.

Of things with things, of times with times,
Primal chimes of sun and shade,
Of sound and echo, man and maid,
The land reflected in the flood

Body with shadow still pursued
For nature beats on perfect tune
And rounds with rhyme her every rune. (Emerson 1904: 54)

For Emerson, morality does not mean being humble, diligent, or sincere. It means for us to know nature's song of life, to weave the world with that music, to believe in the fundamental harmony, to comprehend the complimentary relation of the parts of nature. On this he spoke:

Nor can it be doubted that this moral sentiment which thus scents the air, grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is caught by man and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him. (Emerson 1971: 26)

Now we can understand what poetry means to Emerson. "The supreme value of poetry is to educate us to a height beyond itself, or which it rarely reaches; -- the subduing of mankind to order and virtue" (Emerson 1883: 66). The "order and virtue" are the precise moral characteristics nature innately has. By means of nature we humans come to be aware of our moral worth, the order and virtue within ourselves.

That is why Emerson emphasized creativity so much. He placed great value on meeting directly with nature's virtue, without making a detour of the instructions from teachers or books. He insisted that in order to comprehend the reality of the universe in ourselves, we should sometimes ignore tradition and accept the inconsistency of logic.

Yi Hwang shares Emerson's link of nature and morality without direct moral terms. Some poets in the era of Yi Hwang expressed moral lessons more strongly in their poems, as did Longfellow. Jong Chol was a famous contemporary poet of Yi Hwang, who wrote songs on moral instructions such as diligence, fraternity, loyalty to one's county, filial piety, and refraining from gambling.

Yi Hwang did not compel us to follow specific moralistic rules. Like Emerson, Yi Hwang wanted us to comprehend the overall harmony and ultimate principles inherent in nature for ourselves by emphasizing them in his writings.

Good to smell by itself the orchid in the valley,
Good to see of itself the white cloud on the mountain.

Within these, not to be forgettable the one who is so beautiful. (Yi Hwang: Microfilm)

We read this Sijo, previously along with Emerson's "Rhodora." We can find certain similarities between them. In "Rhodora" Emerson told us he could not know how the rhodora came to exist. It was just part of nature. Its sole purpose is to reflect its intrinsic beauty. The poet continued that the same force which enabled the flower to come into being also enabled it to exist. The poet wanted to experience the beauty and harmony of nature, reflected in the rhodora by himself.

In the above, Sijo Yi Hwang is saying that the orchid in the valley and the cloud over the mountain are nature. They express their own beauty, fragrance, and purity naturally, not being compelled by someone. And the poet told us he could not forget the very beautiful one. Who is the one? It is the one who brought the orchid and the cloud into existence. It is the poet who cannot forget the one. The poet, the orchid, the cloud and the one are connected to each other. Borrowing Emerson's expressions we can rephrase this: "the self-same power that brought the orchid there" brought Yi Hwang there, too.

This universe is harmonious. The four seasons circulate in regular sequence, the flowers on the Earth are in contrast with the moon in the sky, and thus all of them make up the fundamental harmony. The harmony and order of nature are regarded as a part of man, too. They are not endowed *ex parte* by the command of God. Man rejoices in recognizing the harmony and order of the world and takes pleasure in having them as his own.

For Emerson and Yi Hwang, the purpose of this kind of poem is to "educate us to a height beyond itself, or which it rarely reaches— the subduing of mankind to order and virtue". Yi Hwang called the man who realizes and follows the order and virtue of nature, the "man-of-old." With the help of the "man-of-old" Yi Hwang believed we can attain the moral merits, order and virtue, in ourselves.

As the man-of-old can not see me,
So can not I.
Although without seeing him,
The road he walked spreads before me.
When the road is before me,
What do I do without going on the road? (Yi Hwang: Microfilm)

The path that the man-of-old has walked on is the one all people can join, in the order and virtue of nature, transcending ourselves. It is the one we should walk on until we die, with joy, unconscious of aging. The premise of this is the awareness that my participation in the harmony and order of the world gives me pleasure.

What the man-of-old presents us is not the morality of specific behavior but “a code of acts, and of judgments and sentiments,” which creates the foundation of behavior. It is an artistic morality because it gives us the joy of feeling and knowing the “achievements of human will,” to use the words of Susan Sontag. She wrote “The moral pleasure in art consists in the intelligent gratification of consciousness”(Sontag 1967: 24-25). It is not a particular repertoire of specific and detailed subcategories of rules. This artistic morality can be expressed like this: When I feel like I have realized the totality of the world through a poem, the poem is moralistic to me. It gives me a feeling of self-awakening as I live in this world, and allows me to live with a sense of morality, inherently created within myself. As a result of such increased experience of self-awareness, the poetry of Emerson and Yi Hwang contributes to our notions of fundamental morality.

Social Significance

Emerson and Yi Hwang both tried to introduce a new sense of morality into their respective eras. Emerson knew that humans should arrange their own moral code because they had lost touch with the morality of God's commandments. The theory of Social Contract, a theory of modern times, rarely offers morality. As the contracts can be changed as often as one wants, it is difficult to ensure a fundamental moral trust. Emerson did not believe in the external factor, the mutual contract. He supposed a new morality that was rooted in self-awakening, which tells us that we are part of the universe. The meaning of life lies in taking part in the harmony and order of the universe by means of nature.

It seemed necessary for Yi Hwang, like Emerson, to introduce a new morality. A hundred and fifty years after the establishment of the Joseon Dynasty, corruption amongst the government bureaucrats was rampant. The society to which Yi Hwang belonged, guided by their belief in the morality of purity and non-changeability of the human mind, attacked such bureaucrats. Yi Hwang also established new notions of morality grounded in nature, as did Emerson. He

paid attention primarily to the purity and harmony of nature. He thought the foundation of morality came from participating in the harmony and order of the universe, by gazing inside himself steadily and finding the original aspects of nature within himself.

Yi Hwang's idea is that we can construct a moral society by self-awakening, achieved though discovering or experiencing the harmony, order, and purity inherent in nature, rather than through human laws.

Emerson had a stronger motivation, which was a reaction against the legalism adopted in early American society. Emerson's idea was to win a moral sense through individual self-awakening by means of nature. However, it is necessary to consider the social influences that acted upon him. Emerson lived at a time in history when a new society was being crafted. Early Americans, with their brief history, had to prepare a well-constructed legal system in order to accommodate the heterogeneous values of diverse peoples. As a result, they set up a model example of a law-governed society. However, Emerson realized that legal systems were too weak to be the foundations of human morality. Laws, which are imposed, externally, lose their coercive power when they are not actively applied, and ultimately the moral obligation to follow them ceases. For this reason, it was a necessity to establish the foundation of morality as a complementary measure to the legislative system. Emerson stressed the internal self-awakening of individuals over the tendency to place primary importance on the legal system. It was well-timed and of great help in establishing American values.

Conclusion

Thus far, Yi Hwang and Emerson's efforts have been examined and shown to contribute to forming morality by examining nature. Emerson, in the newly rising America of the 19th century, claimed that every individual can become a subject of universal morality by realizing the holistic harmony of nature in himself. This was to become the basis of early American constitutionalism, which tended to function as an external regulator of moral behavior. Yi Hwang insisted that we could become moral subjects by internalizing the fundamental harmony of nature, as he was critical of the corruption of the 16th century Joseon government officials. Both scholars believed that the harmony and order found in nature was the root of human society, and that we should take part in the harmo-

ny and order as members of the universe. This idea was new to Joseon and North America during the periods in which it was first introduced. It is apparent, needless to say, that Emerson downplayed the importance of traditional Christian faith, and set up Transcendentalism, thereby accentuating a new morality. Yi Hwang, too, tried to set up a foundation of morality by accepting Neo-Confucianism, which differed from the ancient Confucianism of Confucius or Mencius. As Joseph Needham pointed out, ancient Confucianism, unlike Buddhism or Taoism, did not satisfy the requisite cosmologic and metaphysical theory. The Neo-Confucianists introduced “by a prodigious effort of philosophical insight and imagination, the highest ethical values of man in their proper place against the background of non-human Nature, or rather within the vast framework (or, to speak like Chu Hsi himself, the vast pattern) of Nature as a whole”(Needham 1969: 453).

How can Emerson and Yi Hwang speak to us, in modern times, about morality? They offer a way for every individual to establish a moral foundation for oneself. In other words they provide a reason for why the Humanities exist, for Humanities are the answer to the question of how we can best live with an obligation to morality. It is the role of the Humanities to assist people in discovering a moral sense within themselves (Kim 2005: 7). One can establish one's own belief of morality, not as a result of coercive laws or rules from an outside authority such as nation or God, but because of the moral principles attained through self-awareness. This is a spontaneous process. It is about how the individual gains his own reason for being, how he endows himself with the meaning of life. It is the only way to comprehend a meaning of life in a world that appears meaningless. This is especially significant in modern times. It provides the opportunity for us to consider the importance of the Humanities, which we have lost while we were busy constructing a society governed by law-and-science.

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Glossary

- Universal Pattern (Li, 理)
Psycho-physical energy (Chi, 氣)
Great Absolute (太極)
Neo-Confucianism (性理學)
Yi Hwang (李滉)
Tosan JeonSeo (陶山全書)
12 Songs of Mt. Tosan (陶山十二曲)
Flying falcon, vaulting fish (鳶飛魚躍)

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