

# Toegye Yi Hwang's "Refutation of Wang Yangmyeong's *Record for Practice*"\*

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## Abstract

The first part of this article offers a translation and analysis of Toegye's arguments against Wang Yangmyeong's philosophy as seen in his short but highly influential essay "Jeonseumnok nonbyeon" (Ch. Chuanxilu lunbian 傳習錄論辯) (Refutation of Wang Yangmyeong's *Record for Practice*). It presents an analysis of the arguments found in this influential and remarkable piece of writing and suggests some ways Wang or his later followers might have responded to several of Toegye's criticisms. It also sketches some ways that certain of Toegye's arguments raise issues that remain of interest to philosophers today, not only in regard to how the later Confucian tradition is conceived and studied but also in regard to how we think about human nature and moral psychology and how we might work to improve the former through a process of self-cultivation. The last part (Section IV) of the article presents the first complete English translation of Toegye's text.

**Keywords:** Wang Yangmyeong, "Jeonseumnok nonbyeon", *Record for Practice*, Toegye

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## I. Introduction

This article offers a translation and analysis of Toegye's arguments against Wang Yangmyeong's philosophy as seen in his short but highly influential essay "Jeonseumnok nonbyeon" (Ch. Chuanxilu lunbian 傳習錄論辯) (Refutation of Wang Yangmyeong's *Record for Practice*).<sup>1</sup> This text is well known to those who study Korean philosophy, and I do not doubt that many of them understand it and its significance far better than do I, but I hope to make a modest contribution to its appreciation by offering, in Section II of this essay, an analysis of the arguments presented in this influential and remarkable piece of writing. In Section III, I sketch some ways that Toegye's arguments raise issues that remain of interest to philosophers today, both those interested in explicating and developing the Confucian tradition and those interested in moral psychology and the cultivation of moral understanding and character more generally, and in Section IV, I offer the first complete English translation of the text.

## II. The Text and Toegye's Arguments

Toegye begins his essay with Wang Yangmyeong's controversial<sup>2</sup> claim that we should follow the old version of the *Great Learning*, as it appears in the *Book of Rites*. The opening line of this version says that "loving the people" (*chinmin*; C. *qinmin* 親民) is the core of the Way of the *Great Learning*. The revised version of the text, championed by Ju Hui, emends this to read "renew the people" (*sinmin*; C. *xinmin* 新民). Wang offers three arguments to support his contention, and

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Glomb Jr. offered a partial translation and study of this work, which did not come to my attention until after I had completed my own article. His interpretation of parts of Toegye's work differs in some respects from my own and offers important historical context for Toegye's work as well as a discussion of his possible motivation for publishing it when he did. See Glomb (2007, 131–154). Representative of the excellent Korean scholarship on this work are Choe (2003, 1–50), Sin (2001), and Kim (2007, 289–325).

<sup>2</sup> Controversial only to those who follow Ju Hui (C. Zhu Xi 朱熹) and his redacted version of the text. For more on this, see below.

before proceeding to Toegye's objections, I would like to review the different arguments that Wang musters in defence of his reading. First, he asserts that when the word "renew" (*sin*; C. *xin* 新) is used in other parts of the received text, for example in the quotation of the "Announcement of Kang" (*Ganggo*; C. *Kanggao* 康誥) section of the *Book of History*, it does not mean to renew the people (in the sense that Ju Hui contends, i.e. something like *educating the people*) but rather to facilitate the people's renewal of themselves. This is clear, he claims from the fact that the text does not simply say *sinmin* but "*jak sinmin*" (C. *zuo xin min* 作新民)—which he suggests means something like "bring about the renewal of the people."

Wang's second argument is that the theme of *renewing the people* is not seen or in any way elaborated on later in the text, but *loving the people* is picked up and central to subsequent sections of the text, for example, in ideas such as "caring for an infant" or "[being] father and mother of the people." When we consider this latter point, Wang contends, we can appreciate that the text presents a unified and consistent discussion of a single theme. This consistency and focus are lost if we accept Ju Hui's suggested emendation.

Third, Wang produces a variety of passages from different classics—the *Book of History*, *Analects*, and *Mencius*—that support the reading of *loving the people*. This appeal to authority is added to an ironic implied appeal to the authority of the original text of the *Great Learning*—ironic because Wang is often portrayed and not without reason as an iconoclast and is infamous for saying that he trusts his own heart-mind over any classical text. In this case, he is arguing that the original text has at least *prima facie* authority and it is Ju Hui who is the iconoclast and perhaps even heretic.

Toegye does not refute each of Wang's arguments *seriatim* but the points he makes can be understood as replying to several parts and assumptions of the three arguments I have identified above. For example, he defends the idea that *renewing the people* is the core theme of the text, noting that it connects with other important ideas seen in the classic, and that this theme is pursued in a unified and consistent manner throughout the text. As he says,

The beginning of this chapter says, “The Way of the *Great Learning* lies in making bright one’s bright virtue,” which means that through learning one is to make bright one’s virtue. It goes on to say, “[The Way of the *Great Learning*] lies in renewing the people’ and this means that one is to extend one’s learning so that it reaches the people and causes them also to renew their virtue. Both cases entail the idea of “learning” and form a unified and consistent teaching.

Toegye contends the main message of the *Great Learning* is to cultivate oneself by pursuing learning and then extend one’s learning so that it reaches and inspires the people to engage in learning as well. Moreover, Toegye rejects Wang’s claim that the key theme of the text is caring for the people, “It has nothing to do with the ideas of ‘nurturing’ and ‘loving.’” He castigates Wang for daring to disagree with Ju Hui, “Yangmyeong brazenly rejects the established explanation of former scholars. . . .”<sup>3</sup> and dismisses his appeal to classical sources as nothing more than cherry picking, “[he] want-only draws upon various explanations that are similar in topic to construct an irrelevant and unsubstantiated interpretation.” Toegye also offers a consequence-based argument about Wang’s reading, “By his complete lack of concern for the consequences [of what he says] one can see how wrong his way of learning is. . . .” His final critical point seems to be nothing more than an *ad hominem* attack, “[one can see] how diseased his heart-mind [is],” though one might charitably contend that Toegye is assuming a kind of role-specific moral failure on the part of Wang Yangmyeong. To help make this case, we might draw upon an analogy Wang himself often made between his role and practice as a teacher and the role and practice of a physician. Toegye’s point might then be understood as a criticism of Wang for what amounts to malpractice. He concludes this opening set of criticisms by saying, “From this, one can be led to see the various kinds of disgusting errors that arise from this disease, which I endeavour to outline in what follows.”

The next section of the *Record for Practice* that Toegye presents concerns Wang’s teaching that pattern-principles all are within the

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<sup>3</sup> The references here are Jeong I (C. Cheng Yi 程頤) and, in particular, Ju Hui.

heart-mind. Wang's student Seo Ae (C. Xu Ai 徐愛) presses him on this point, obviously less than satisfied with his initial statement of this teaching. Seo Ae suggests that in order to serve one's parents with filial piety one has to inquire about numerous details concerning how to accomplish this work, and this means that one must seek outside the mind. Wang replies that practicing filial piety only requires that one work at ridding this heart-mind of human desire and preserving Heavenly pattern-principle. When Seo Ae insists that "there are numerous details and steps that one must discuss and explore." Wang agrees but avers that "One simply discusses and explores by ridding this heart-mind of human desire and preserving Heavenly pattern-principle."

Toegye offers a short criticism of this long section of text saying only, "This started off as a discussion of the purposeful activity (*gongbu*; C. *gongfu* 工夫) of fully comprehending pattern-principle, but he turns it into a mixed and confused explanation of how to implement and instantiate the results of this activity." I take him to be saying that Seo Ae's initial question concerned where one must look and what one must do in order to grasp pattern-principle, couched in a worry that simply looking within will not suffice. As he puts it, "If the highest good is sought only in the heart-mind, I fear that there will be pattern-principles of certain things under Heaven that are not fully understood." Toegye objects that Wang turns the conversation into a discussion of the kinds of things one must attend to *as one carries out such work*. When Seo Ae pushes him on the need to look into and discuss "numerous details and steps," Wang responds by saying "Why would one not discuss and explore [such things]?" which seems to be an admission that one must indeed look outside the heart-mind and engage in Ju Hui's style of investigating things. At the same time, Wang insists one has to do this *in a certain way*: i.e. by eliminating self-centered desires and preserving pattern-principle. That, though, is not a matter of contention between Wang and Ju and not what Seo Ae asked about. Wang or a defender might reply by saying that in order for such "discussions and explorations" to be effective, one must carry them out with the proper motivation and with keen awareness and vigilant attentiveness to the disabling

consequences of self-centeredness. The thought being that if self-centeredness infects one's inquiries and discussions, they will not lead to an understanding and appreciation of pattern-principle. This is a valid and important point, though not one with which Ju Hui would be likely to disagree; after all, he strenuously emphasized the need for reverential attention throughout the process of study, inquiry, discrimination, and reflection.

The next section from the *Record for Practice* records a question by Jeong Josak (C. Zheng Zhaoshuo 鄭朝朔) about seeking the highest good that extends the general line of inquiry begun by Seo Ae in the immediately previous section. Wang presents two arguments aimed at undermining the idea that the primary work of moral cultivation involves inquiring and analyzing things and affairs out there in the world and instead is all about ensuring that "this heart-mind is absolutely pure in regard to Heavenly pattern-principle." The first argument is that if the primary work of self-cultivation concerned inquiry about aspects of the external world, one could learn all one needed to know ". . . in only a day or two" and so what need would there be "for studying, inquiring, reflecting, and discriminating?" The point here is that the inner work of making sure that the heart-mind is perfectly pure consists of an on-going effort of study, inquiry, reflection, and discrimination aimed at ferreting out each and every self-centered thought and preserving the heavenly pattern-principle that is the heart-mind in its original state. The second point is related, at least in Wang's mind—though I am sure many actors would take exception to the assumption upon which it is based. Wang argues that if the primary work of self-cultivation entailed only knowing the formula or "script" of how to do this or that filial, conscientious, or humane thing, then an actor following such a script "could be called the highest good."<sup>4</sup>

Toegye's criticism of this selection contrasts Wang's inner work approach with Ju Hui's view that one needs to investigate the things

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<sup>4</sup> This general issue has a long history in the Confucian tradition extending at least as far back as Maengja who explicitly addressed the difference between acting *out of* virtuous dispositions as opposed to merely behaving in a way consistent with virtue. See *Mencius* 4B19.

and affairs of the world with a firm and unwavering attitude of reverential attention. If one proceeds in this way, the pattern-principles that are within one's heart-mind will be engaged and illuminated and one will advance in understanding; continuing to proceed in this way, one eventually will reach a threshold of understanding that triggers a kind of sudden moral enlightenment. Summing this process up, he says, "If the heart-mind is based upon reverential attention, when it investigates the absolutely authentic pattern-principles of affairs and things, it will understand normative principles." This process is not, as Wang sometimes caricatures it, solely focused on outside things; it aims to draw out the pattern-principles within the heart-mind by engaging with actual things and affairs in a serious and reverential frame of mind. Toegye alludes to the story of Cook Jeong (C. Ding 丁) in the *Jangja* (C. *Zhuangzi* 莊子) who after carving up innumerable oxen attained a state of mind in which he no longer "saw the ox as a whole" and could spontaneously and effortlessly carve along the "heavenly pattern-principle" (*cheolli*; C. *tianli* 天理) of the ox.<sup>5</sup> Toegye is incredulous that any amount of inner scrutiny aimed at eliminating self-centeredness and preserving pattern-principle could ever succeed in realizing such a result. He concludes this section by likening Wang's philosophy to Buddhism and accusing him of not only deceiving himself but of deceiving his unfortunate disciples as well.

The final section of the *Record for Practice* that Toegye considers concerns Wang's signature teaching about the unity of knowing and acting. Seo Ae, again, is his interlocutor and he presses Wang by saying that cases of moral failure—in which people seem to know that they should do a certain good act but still fail to do so—seem to show that knowing is one thing and action quite another. Wang insists that such examples do not concern knowing and acting as they are in themselves—their essence or "substance" (*che*; C. *ti* 體)—and that this is why texts like the *Great Learning* teach that "[knowing and acting] are analogous to liking a beautiful sight etc." This brief exchange

<sup>5</sup> I believe this passage in the *Jangja* is the first occurrence of the term "heavenly pattern-principle" in the history of Chinese philosophy.

elicits Toegye's most extensive and developed response, which presents some of his most trenchant and interesting criticisms.

Toegye starts out conceding that Wang's theory arose as an attempt to address a real problem, what he calls "a superficial type of learning that suffers the defect of being concerned only with speaking and listening." Learning that is not aimed at moral transformation that, in turn, leads to the regular performance of good acts is misguided and futile and represents a genuine problem for aspiring students, but Wang's theory of the unity of knowing and acting does not solve the problem and poses a hazard as great if not greater than the original problem it was designed to address.

Toegye then presents his first substantive argument against Wang's view, focusing in on the central example of "seeing a beautiful sight or smelling a bad odor." Toegye does not deny that when people see something beautiful or smell something bad they not only perceive but also and immediately assess and respond. In such cases, there is a seamless seeing, judging, willing, and acting. But he denies that this is the case when people encounter things that are morally good or bad,

... does Yangmyeong really believe that people see and like the good in the same way that they see a beautiful sight and naturally and sincerely like it? Does Yangmyeong really believe that people see and dislike the bad in the same way that they smell a bad odor and naturally and really dislike it?

In cases of seeing and smelling, there is a natural correlation and harmony between inside and outside; in such cases, people tend to act like Cook Jeong *after* he has mastered his craft and spontaneously accords with heavenly pattern-principle. But in regard to moral good and bad, like the example of Cook Jeong, this ideal is an achievement, the result of sustained and concerted effort and practice, "If one does not study, one does not understand; if one does not make effort, one will not be capable; what one does on the outside does not necessarily reflect what one feels on the inside." The result is the kind of moral failure that motivated Seo Ae's original question. Toegye concludes

his argument by saying, "Yangmyeong's desire to draw upon examples of what one does in regard to physical form and *gi* (C. *qi* 氣) to make clear his theory of the unity of moral knowing and acting is profoundly impermissible." Wang or his defenders might reply to this line of criticism by saying that they are describing the ideal state of knowing and acting and the analogies with seeing a beautiful sight or smelling a bad odor are not to be taken literally or too strictly.

Toegye's second argument is that the ancient sages and worthies recognized that knowing and acting are separate things and that each requires the other: knowing and acting are the wings of a bird; the creature cannot take flight unless both wings are working together. So, "the learning of the sages and worthies is rooted in the heart-mind and threads through and unites things and affairs." When one has engaged in learning and practices earnestly, one will attain the ideal and inner and outer will be in mutual harmony and form a unity. This requires one to regularly put into action what one knows and to reflect and understand the things that one does. Unfortunately, Wang's theory focuses exclusively on the heart-mind and is in this sense "one-sided." As Toegye put it, "[his] view is exclusively focused on the original heart-mind; he feared even the slightest contact with things and affairs." This led Wang to attribute all moral failure to the interference of self-centered desires and to ignore the hard work required to understand how to apply one's heart-mind to the things and affairs of the world, habituate oneself to the performance of goodness, and thereby achieve a harmony of inner and outer, knowing and acting. This, in fact, is precisely the method and approach taught by former sages and worthies.

Toegye then turns to Wang's claims that in order to know things like pain, hunger, and cold, one must have personally experienced such things. Toegye concedes that this is "a clever theory" but argues that "pain, along with hunger and cold, are things that the heart-mind and body contingently experience and are named in reference to the conditions that cause them" but these "do not refer to moral knowing and acting. If one knows acute pain and is able to deal with it successfully, then one can call it knowing and acting in regard to acute pain. If one knows hunger and cold and is able to deal with

them successfully, then one can call it knowing and acting in regard to hunger and cold. If one is just in pain and calls this acting then one's acting is a matter of blood and *gi* and not normative principles." I take his point to be that the examples Wang cites concern physical conditions, how they affect us, and how we come thereby to understand such things. But being hungry or in pain or cold simply are subjective states; such states, in themselves, are not morally or ethically evaluable.<sup>6</sup> *How one responds* to suffering such experiences is another matter and often involves moral considerations, but this is something that Wang does not consider;<sup>7</sup> he wants to use these examples directly to support his claim that in order to have moral knowledge one must already have moral experience of the requisite kind. But Toegye notes that uncultivated people and even birds and beasts can gain knowledge of hunger, pain, and cold (indeed it is hard to see how they can *avoid* acquiring such knowledge), but knowledge of physical experiences in itself does not constitute or grant moral knowledge. Toegye contends that Wang's theory is similar to that of Goja (C. Gaozi 告子), whose views Maengja (C. Mengzi 孟子) explicitly rejected, "If understanding pains and itches and being conscious of hunger and satiety are regarded as the nature, this view originally derives from Goja's theory that 'life is what we call the nature.'" Toegye closes with two final points. First, Wang never drew a strong and direct analogy between knowing things like hunger, cold, and pain and knowing things like filial piety and brotherly respect, because he knew that the "unity" seen in the former examples is not to be found in the latter. Rather, he switches gears when he talks about these and other moral issues. Instead of saying only those who have experienced filial piety and brotherly respect can be called filial or respectful, he says "those who are called filial and respectful *must have acted filially and respectfully*." This is a separate issue and unconnected with his developed discussion of hunger, cold, and

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Harvey Lederman for a helpful discussion of this aspect of Toegye's argument.

<sup>7</sup> Wang or one of his defenders might make a partial concession here but insist that only in such cases (i.e. when one is directly affected and moved) can one leverage the experience into an effective occasion for moral learning.

pain. Second, Toegye notes that Wang himself often falls back on the traditional distinction between knowing and acting; in the end, he "cannot avoid relying on the old division [between knowing and acting]. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

### III. Some Implications for the Contemporary Study of Confucianism and Moral Psychology

What, if anything, does Toegye's criticisms of Wang Yangmyeong's philosophy have to teach us today about the Confucian tradition and the cultivation of moral understanding and character more generally? I believe there is a great deal to learn from both of them on these topics but my remarks here will focus primarily on Toegye's views and be very circumscribed and programmatic. I will simply identify several issues that arise from his critique and criticism of Wang's philosophy and sketch some ways these relate to the modern study of Confucianism and some problems in contemporary moral psychology.

I believe it true and if true it should strike scholars of neo-Confucianism as quite remarkable, that *none* of Toegye's objections to Wang's theory concerns any of the latter's metaphysical claims. Toegye does not argue that Wang has a different view from the orthodox Jeong-Ju (C. Cheng-Zhu 程朱) School when it comes to the nature of pattern-principle (*ri*; C. *li* 理), *gi*, human nature (*seong*; C. *xing* 性), or the heart-mind (*sim*; C. *xin* 心). This does not mean there are no such differences or that Toegye does not argue that there are in other work, but if he holds that there are such differences, he does not think they are the central differences that separate Wang from the orthodox view. Throughout his critique and criticism, Toegye focuses on the ways in which Wang's view is "one-sided"—by which he means it is exclusively concerned with the heart-mind and neglects the phenomenal world. But he does not mean by this, at least in this essay, that Wang did not believe in the external, physical

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<sup>8</sup> Wang's best response here might be something along the lines of admitting that while knowing and acting are logically distinct they never are practically separated in genuine cases of moral learning.

world—something a number of scholars both past and present claim; I believe incorrectly—but rather that he neglected the critical role the external, physical world must play in the process of self-cultivation. Toegye criticizes Wang for believing and teaching that one can cultivate the heart-mind by looking only within and working to “eliminate self-centered desires and preserve pattern-principle.” Toegye makes clear this is a recipe for failure; one must engage in *learning* by which he means the investigation of things and affairs, while maintaining an attitude of reverential attention. This is what allows one to unite the pattern-principles found throughout the world with those of one’s heart-mind and thereby attain understanding.<sup>9</sup>

Toegye’s primary and strongest complaint about Wang’s philosophy is that it advocates a mistaken view about moral self-cultivation; it is one-sided in being the Learning of the Heart-mind (*simhak*; C. *xinxue* 心學) and not the Learning of Pattern-Principle (*ihak*; C. *lixue* 理學). If this is correct, it lends some support to the idea that contemporary scholars might need to reconceive and recalibrate their approach to the study of neo-Confucian *learning* and come to see that learning, rather than metaphysics, is the central issue of debate among the great thinkers of this part of the Confucian tradition.<sup>10</sup> This in no way should be taken as implying that there are no differences in the metaphysical beliefs of these thinkers—there are—but it might mean that differences about learning are equally important or even that the metaphysical differences parallel and often are in service to more fundamental or salient disagreements about how to engage in successful moral self-cultivation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This widely shared belief, that understanding consists in the matching up of inherently known pattern-principles in the heart-mind with their correlates in the world of phenomena, is reflected in modern Chinese word for understanding, 理會 (*ihoe*; C. *lihui*), which literally means “pattern-principles uniting.” This purports to explain how we come to understand the world. Plato appealed to his theory of recollection to account for the same phenomenon.

<sup>10</sup> In other work, I have argued that this is why thinkers of this period identify their allegiance to different traditions of “learning” (*hak*; C. *xue* 學) and not “schools” (*ga*; C. *jia* 家) or thought or “teachings” (*gyo*; C. *jiao* 教). See Ivanhoe (2016, 20–23).

<sup>11</sup> Many scholars highlight the fact that followers of the Yuk-Wang (Lu-Wang) School 陸王學 claim the heart-mind is pattern-principle (*simjiri*; C. *xinji* 心即理) and that this distinguishes them from adherents to the Jeong-Ju (C. Cheng-Zhu) School 程朱學, who

Whether or not one accepts all that I have said above about the central importance of learning, it is uncontroversial to claim that both Toegye and Wang shared a belief in a perfectly pure, innate, moral heart-mind and that self-cultivation describes the proper method for engaging the heart-mind and bringing it into full play throughout one's life. Their shared faith in a pure, innate, moral heart-mind is a massive metaphysical belief, but one I find impossible to embrace. This belief presents a challenge for those who, like me, are interested in what Toegye's critique and criticisms of Wang's philosophy has to offer to us today. I would like to focus on another angle of their disagreement and from this vantage point look for more common ground with issues that are still live and contested today. Specifically, I want to focus on (1) the degree to which moral decisions depend on innate psychological tendencies, (2) the extent to which these innate tendencies are ready-to-use as part of our nature, (3) how much training such tendencies might require in order to prove reliable, and (4) how much such training depends on understanding not only the human heart-mind but the environment within which we live. I believe all of these questions connect with issues at the heart of neo-Confucian discourse in general and Toegye's comments on Wang's philosophy in particular. Below, I will briefly trace some of these connections and offer a sketch of how one might use them to explore issues of contemporary relevance.

Toegye and Wang agree that moral decisions depend on innate psychological tendencies; as we have noted, they hold a very strong belief on this score, a kind of belief I have in earlier work described

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purportedly hold instead that the heart-mind is pattern-principle embedded in the most rarefied *gi*. But Ju Hui and others in his school at times say things quite similar to what is supposed to be this signature metaphysical claim of the Yuk-Wang School. For example, Jeong I (C. Cheng Yi 程頤) says that "Pattern-principle and heart-mind are one" (1981, 76), and Ju Hui later echoes Jeong I, suggesting that pattern-principle and heart-mind become one after a period of study and improvement (*Juja eoryeo*; C. *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, *gwon*; C. *juan* 卷 20). Both schools seem to hold that the original heart-mind is pattern-principle. Moreover, it is not clear that Wang would deny that the phenomenal heart-mind is pattern-principle embedded in the most rarefied *gi*. Thanks to Justin Tiwald for discussions on this issue and for the references to Jeong I and Ju Hui's works.

as “heroic” both in the sense that it is difficult to embrace and commits one to a very demanding but also inspiring moral ideal. Without endorsing their view about the existence of a fully-formed, pure, innate moral heart-mind, we can still make and defend the related claim that moral philosophy depends upon the psychological inclinations of human beings and, what is different, that any plausible moral system is constrained and must be informed by an accurate understanding of what human beings are like psychologically.<sup>12</sup> Of course, such a claim assumes that moral philosophy can and should be fully naturalized, but these are things that almost all neo-Confucians insist are true.

The second point concerns the extent that natural psychological inclinations and capacities are ready-to-use moral resources; in Confucian terms this question naturally leads to a consideration of the Four Sprouts (*sadan*; C. *siduan* 四端) originally identified by Maengja. This is an immense topic in its own right, as there are many irreconcilable interpretations of what Maengja meant by his claim about the Four Sprouts, but for our purposes I simply want to note two issues that are part of every account of this view. The first is whether in fact human beings possess any kind of moral tendency as part of their uncultivated nature. If we mean by moral tendency an inclination to be concerned about other people, creatures, or things, then I believe there is good evidence from empirical psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience to support such a minimal conception of Maengja’s view. One might develop this idea further and explore whether some of our innate moral inclinations are more or less amenable to the cause of morality: whether some are more easily recruited and trainable than others. This is another very large topic, but I will for now set it aside<sup>13</sup> and move on to ask a second question about the moral sprouts; namely, how ready-to-use and reliable are even our most promising natural tendencies? While contemporary psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience

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<sup>12</sup> This insight about the nature of moral philosophy was first described by Owen Flanagan in terms of what he called “minimum psychological realism.” See Flanagan (1993, 32–37).

<sup>13</sup> I have offered some preliminary thoughts on this topic. See Ivanhoe (2015, 401–429).

offer support for the existence of moral tendencies and capacities; they offer little to no support for a belief in anything like innate, fully-formed, robust moral sensibilities.

This leads naturally to our third question about how much training such psychological tendencies might require in order to prove robust and reliable. The short answer is *quite a lot*. While even pre-linguistic children show clear tendencies to approve of kindness and even the punishment of those who are not kind,<sup>14</sup> such psychological tendencies appear alongside quite disturbing inclinations to strongly favor those who are most like themselves. Furthermore, our best tendencies initially are weak, crude, and inarticulate; moreover, some important moral dispositions, such as a tendency to support fairness, are hard to find in untutored human nature. A great deal of what forms mature and impressive moral systems comes from enculturation and training in culturally specific conceptions, beliefs, and practices. This means that we cannot just rely upon the promptings of the heart-mind; it also strongly implies irreducible moral pluralism, though arguably not strong moral relativism.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth and final issue I wish to examine is the extent to which the moral training we require depends on understanding the world around us. Here again, contemporary psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience strongly support the need to grasp and incorporate an accurate understanding of our environment or ecology. There are many related dimensions to this point, but the main idea can be grasped by appreciating the extent to which we need to craft our norms, beliefs, and practices to fit our particular ecological niche. This is something all creatures must do and humans are no exception in this regard (though we are much more

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<sup>14</sup> The work of the Yale Infant Cognition Laboratory has done ground-breaking work in this regard, some of which is described in Bloom (2014).

<sup>15</sup> These are quite complicated issues but there is some excellent work on this topic from the naturalist and comparative perspectives. See for example David B. Wong (2006), though note his distinctive use of the concept of relativism, and Owen Flanagan (2016). For my own views on this topic, which continue to evolve, see Ivanhoe (2009, 311–329).

flexible as a result of having technology). One clear example of the need to understand and be informed by an accurate understanding of our environment is seen in the overdue but increasingly salient need we have as a species to develop and value ways of life that are sustainable, not only in regard to the physical environment but in light of the diverse, multi-cultural, and ever-more-interconnected world in which we live.

I will close with brief comments relating the four points I have sketched above to the respective views of Wang and Toegye. It should be clear that both thinkers agree on point one: moral decisions depend on innate psychological tendencies. I have suggested that a plausible version of this claim would appeal to a much more modest view about what distinctively moral psychological tendencies and capacities we in fact possess as part of our untutored nature, but even such a modest view is not inconsequential. Toegye and Wang part company on the second point: the extent to which such tendencies are ready-to-use as part of our nature, with Toegye holding that a great deal of work has to be done in order for our natural tendencies to be brought forth as robust and reliable traits of character, while Wang holds they are much more accessible, reliable, and readily deployed. Contemporary psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience offers more support to something like Toegye's view but for reasons very different from those that he offered. Contemporary naturalists do not believe in pure, innate, fully formed moral capacities —readily available and deployable or not. For them, hard work is needed to develop, acquire, shape, and direct proper moral dispositions; these simply do not exist as hidden parts of untutored human nature. Toegye and Wang also part company on issue three: how much training our natural psychological tendencies require in order to prove reliable, and again contemporary psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience would offer more support to something like Toegye's view over that of Wang but for reasons similar to and with caveats much like those that have been described in regard to issue two. Finally, in regard to issue four: how much does such training depend on understanding not only the human heart-mind but the environment or ecology within which we live, Toegye

holds that it is *only* by investigating things and events in the outside world that we can access and bring into play the pattern-principles within our heart-minds. So, he endorses something closer to the kind of view that finds strong support within contemporary psychology, anthropology, and cognitive neuroscience. Toegye's reasons for insisting on the investigation and appreciation of the world around us though is again different from those of a contemporary naturalist; the latter take such inquiry and reflection as a necessary step to developing pragmatic responses to the challenges we face in the real world, while he takes this as the only way to cultivate oneself and bring into play the innately endowed pattern-principles within one's heart-mind. Nevertheless, both believe one must look out, explore, and understand the world in order to craft proper norms and practices and properly order and shape our natural reactive attitudes, and this offers a contrast to Wang's philosophy (at least as it is presented by Toegye).

In conclusion, I will simply note what probably is clear already: in this work, I have not asked whether Toegye offers a fair description of Wang's philosophy. I have instead simply sought to describe Toegye's account and criticisms of Wang's view and relate these to several issues in the contemporary study of Confucianism and moral psychology. I hope this helps us to understand both Toegye and Wang's views more accurately—both what they shared and where they disagreed—and to begin to see how this might change our approach to and understanding of neo-Confucian thinkers in general and to appreciate how aspects of the arguments Toegye advanced can be connected to issues in contemporary philosophical inquiry.

#### IV. Translation of Toegye's Text

傳習錄論辯 Refutation of [Wang Yangmyeong's] *Record for Practice*<sup>16</sup>

Translated by Philip J. Ivanhoe<sup>17</sup>

傳習錄。王陽明門人記其師說者。今舉數段而辯之。以該其餘。

The *Record for Practice* is a record of Wang Yangmyeong's teachings made by one of his disciples. Now, I provide a refutation of select parts of it that is meant to cover the remaining sections.<sup>18</sup>

徐愛問在親民。先生以爲宜從舊本。何。先生曰。傳中作新民之新。是自新之民與在新民之新不同。下面治國平天下處。皆於新字無發明。如君子賢其賢而親其親。小人樂其樂而利其利。如保赤子。民之父母之類。皆是親字意。親民。猶孟子親親仁民。親之。卽仁之也。百姓不親。舜使契爲司徒。敷五教以親之。堯典。親九族。至平章協和。便是親民。孔子言安百姓。安百姓便是親民。說親民。便兼教養意。說新民。便覺偏了。

Seo Ae (Xu Ai)<sup>19</sup> asked, "in regard to [the phrase] '[the Way of the *Great Learning*] lies in loving the people' (*jae chinmin*; C. *zai qinmin* 在親民)<sup>20</sup> you, Master, say that we should follow the old version [of the text]. Why?"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> From the *Japjeo* (Miscellaneous Writings; C. *Zaju* 雜著) section of *Toegye sonsaeng munjip* 退溪先生文集 (Complete Works of Master Toegye) *gwon* 41. It was written sometime before 1566.

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to Suhyun Ahn, Chung Soyi, Eirik L. Harris, Halla Kim, Kim Hyoungchan, Harvey Lederman, Justin Tiwald, Hwa Yeong Wang, and Min Jung You for helpful corrections, comments, and discussions of an earlier draft of this translation.

<sup>18</sup> Chinese characters and English translation in parentheses that appear in smaller fonts are inter-linear comments inserted by Toegye. While Toegye here refers to the "remaining sections" of the text it is not clear precisely how much of the present *Record for Practice* he had to hand or had read. For an account of the process of compilation of this text, see Appendix 1 in Ivanhoe (2002, 143–153).

<sup>19</sup> Seo Ae (C. Xu Ai 徐愛 1487–1517) was Wang Yangmyeong's first disciple as well as his son-in-law. He began what became the *Record for Practice*.

<sup>20</sup> The opening line of the received text of the *Great Learning* says, "The Way of the *Great Learning* lies in making bright [one's] bright virtue, loving the people, and resting in the highest good." This question begins Wang Yangmyeong's *Record for Practice*.

<sup>21</sup> As noted in the precious note, the old version of the text, which appears in the *Book of Rites*, says "loving the people" (*chinmin*; C. *qinmin* 親民) is one of the core teachings of the *Great Learning*. The revised version of the text, championed by Ju Hui, emends this to read "renewing the people" (*sinmin*; C. *xinmin* 新民).

The Master replied, "In the received text the word 'renew' (*sin*; C. *xin* 新) in the term 'bring about the renewal of the people' (*jak sin min*; C. *zuo xin min* 作新民) means to cause the people to renew themselves; it does not have the same meaning as in the expression 'renewing the people' (*sinmin*; C. *xinmin* 新民) [that appears in the revised version of the *Great Learning*]. Below, when the text talks about 'bringing good order to the state' and 'peace to all under Heaven,'<sup>22</sup> it does not elaborate upon the term 'renew.' Passages like, 'Noble people deem worthy what they [the former sage kings] deemed worthy and love what they loved; the common people delight in what delighted them and are benefited from the beneficial [arrangements they bequeathed upon them]'<sup>23</sup> or lines such as 'caring for an infant'<sup>24</sup> or '[being] father and mother of the people'<sup>25</sup> all have the meaning of loving (*chin*; C. *qin* 親). Loving the people is like Maengja saying 'treat relatives (*chin*; C. *qin* 親) with the love appropriate to relatives and treat the people with humaneness.'<sup>26</sup> Loving others is treating them with humaneness. Because the hundred surnames did not love one another, Emperor Sun (C. Shun 舜) appointed Seol (C. *Jie* 契) as Minister of Education<sup>27</sup> to disseminate the Five Teachings; this was how he loved them. The 'Canon of Yo' (C. Yao 堯),<sup>28</sup> talks about how he 'loved the nine grades of his kin,' 'regulated and polished [the people],' and 'unified and harmonized [the various states].'<sup>29</sup> This is none other than loving the people. Gongja (C. Kongzi 孔子) talked about how '[Noble people cultivate themselves in order to] bring peace to the hundred surnames.'<sup>30</sup> Bringing peace to the hundred surnames is loving the people. To talk of loving the people conveys the sense of both educating them and nurturing them. To talk of renewing the people is, I believe, one-sided."

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 2 of the *Great Learning*.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 4 of the *Great Learning*.

<sup>24</sup> Chapter 11 of the *Great Learning*.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter 12 of the *Great Learning*.

<sup>26</sup> See *Mencius* 7A45.

<sup>27</sup> See *Mencius* 3A4.

<sup>28</sup> A chapter in the *Book of History*.

<sup>29</sup> The "Canon of Yo" section of the *Book of History*.

<sup>30</sup> *Analects* 14.42.

辯曰。此章首曰。大學之道在明明德者。言己之由學以明其德也。繼之曰。在新民者。言推己學以及民。使之亦新其德也。二者皆帶學字意。作一串說。與養之親之之意。初不相涉。陽明乃敢肆然排先儒之定論。妄引諸說之髣髴者。牽合附會。略無忌憚。可見其學之差而心之病矣。由是求之。種種醜差皆是此病。略舉數條於後。

I refute this by saying, “The beginning of this chapter says, ‘The Way of the *Great Learning* lies in making bright one’s bright virtue,’ which means that through learning one is to make bright one’s own virtue. It goes on to say, ‘[The Way of the *Great Learning*] lies in renewing the people’ and this means that one is to extend one’s learning so that it reaches the people and causes them also to renew their virtue. Both cases entail the idea of “learning” and form a unified and consistent teaching. It has nothing to do with the ideas of “nurturing” or “loving.” Yangmyeong brazenly rejects the established explanation of former scholars<sup>31</sup> and preposterously cites the seeming similarity between various explanations, cobbling them together to make a forced interpretation based on strained comparisons. By his complete lack of concern for the consequences [of what he says] one can see how wrong his way of learning is and how diseased *his heart-mind*. From this, one can be led to see the various ugly and inadequate kinds of errors that arise from this disease, several of which I endeavor to outline below.”

愛問至善只求諸心。恐於天下事理。有不能盡。曰。心即理也。天下又有心外之事。心外之理乎。愛曰。如事父之孝。事君之忠。其間有許多理在。恐亦不可不察。先生歎曰。此說之敝久矣。且如事父不成。去父上求箇孝的理。事君不成。去君上求箇忠的理。都只在此心。心即理也。此心無私欲之蔽。即是天理。不須外面添一分。以此純乎天理之心。發之事父。便是孝。發之事君。便是忠。只在此心去人欲存天理上用功。愛曰。如事父溫清定省之類。有許多節目。亦須講求。曰。如何不講求。只是有箇頭腦。只是就此心去人欲存天理上講求。如講求冬溫也。只是要盡此心之孝。恐怕有一毫人欲間雜。講求夏清亦然。只是講求得此心。此心若無人欲。純是天理。是箇誠於孝親的心。冬時自然思量父母的寒。便自要去求箇溫的道理。夏時自然思量清的道理。亦然。這誠孝的心。便是根。許多條件。便是枝葉。須先有根。然後有枝葉。不是先尋了枝葉。然後去種根。

Seo Ae asked, “If the highest good is sought only in the heart-mind, I fear that there will be pattern-principles of certain things under

<sup>31</sup> The references here are Jeong I and, in particular, Ju Hui.

Heaven that are not fully understood."

[Wang Yangmyeong] answered, "The heart-mind is pattern-principle. Is there any affair under Heaven that is outside of the heart-mind? Is there any pattern-principle that is outside of the heart-mind?"

Seo Ae replied, "In cases like serving one's father with filial piety or serving one's ruler with conscientiousness, there are many pattern-principles therein that, I am afraid, must be investigated."

The Master sighed and said, "This view has been causing damage for a long time. If there is something incomplete in one's serving one's parents, does one go and seek for the pattern-principle of filial piety in one's parents? If there is something incomplete in one's serving one's ruler, does one go and seek for the pattern-principle of conscientiousness in one's ruler? All the pattern-principles [one requires] are only in *this heart-mind*.<sup>32</sup> The heart-mind is pattern-principle. This heart-mind is without the slightest obscuration by self-centered desires; it is heavenly pattern-principle; there is no need to add even an iota to it from the outside. If one uses this heart-mind, which is pure Heavenly pattern-principle, to serve one's parents, it is filial piety. If one uses it to serve one's ruler, it is conscientiousness. One must simply apply oneself to the activity of ridding this heart-mind of human desire and preserving Heavenly pattern-principle."

Seo Ae said, "In serving one's parents by providing warmth [when it is cold] and coolness [when it is hot] and inquiring about their well-being each morning and evening, there are numerous details and steps that one must discuss and explore."

The Master said, "Why would one not discuss and explore [such things]? It is simply that there is a ground or basis [from which to carry out such things]. One simply discusses and explores by ridding this heart-mind of human desire and preserving Heavenly pattern-principle. If one discusses and explores how to provide warmth in

<sup>32</sup> "This heart-mind" (*cha sim*; C. *ci xin* 此心) refers to the original, pure and perfect moral heart-mind. The original reference is *Mencius* 1A7 (though the meaning there is quite different). The characters 是心 (*si sim*; C. *shi xin*) express the same concept. See *Mencius* 1A7, 6A10, and 7B30.

the winter one simply must fully express the filial piety of this heart-mind, fearing only that the slightest trace of human desire remains mixed in. The same is true if one discusses and explores how to provide coolness in the summer. One simply discusses and explores this heart-mind. If this heart-mind is without human desire and is pure Heavenly pattern-principle, then it is a heart-mind that is sincere in its filial piety toward one's parents. In the winter, it naturally will attend to and assess one's father and mother being cold and spontaneously explore ways to provide them warmth. In the summer, in the same way, it naturally will attend to and assess their being hot. This heart-mind, which is sincere in its filial piety, is the root; the various details and items [that arise from it] are the branches and leaves. One must first have a root and only then will there be branches and leaves. It is not that one first looks for branches and leaves and only then goes to plant the root!"

辯曰. 本是論窮理工夫. 轉就實踐工效上套說.

I refute this by saying, "This started off as a discussion of the purposeful activity (*gongbu*; C. *gongfu* 工夫) of fully comprehending pattern-principle, but he turns it into a mixed and confused explanation of how to implement and instantiate the results of this activity."

鄭朝朔問至善亦須事物上求箇是當. 方是至善.

曰. 若只溫清之節. 奉養之宜. 可一二日講盡. 用甚學問思辨. 惟於溫清時. 也只要此心純乎天理之極. 奉養時. 也只要此心純乎天理之極. 此非有學問思辨之功. 將不免於毫釐之謬. 若只些儀節. 求得是當. 便謂至善. 卽如今扮戲子扮得許多溫清奉養的儀節. 是當. 亦可謂之至善矣.

Jeong Josak (C. Zheng Zhaoshuo) asked, "[Does not] the highest good have to be sought by finding what is appropriate in regard to affairs and things in order to be the highest good?"

The Master said, "If it is only a matter of [understanding] the details about how to provide warmth and coolness [for one's parents] or what is needed to serve and support them properly, then one can discuss this completely in only a day or two. What need is there for studying, inquiring, reflecting, and discriminating? One only needs to be sure that whenever one provides warmth or coolness to them,

this heart-mind is absolutely pure in regard to Heavenly pattern-principle. One only needs to be sure that whenever one serves and supports them, this heart-mind is absolutely pure in regard to Heavenly pattern-principle. If one does not engage in the work of studying, inquiring, reflecting, and discriminating while providing such things, one cannot avoid making a minute mistake in the beginning that leads to a monumental error in the end. If the highest good were simply a matter of seeking to have the proper forms and details, then an actor acting out the various proper forms and details of providing warmth and coolness [for one's parents] or serving and supporting them could be called the highest good."

辯曰. 不本諸心而但外講儀節者. 誠無異於扮戲子. 獨不聞民彝物則. 莫非天衷真至之理乎. 亦不聞朱子所謂主敬以立其本. 窮理以致其知乎. 心主於敬. 而究事物真至之理. 心喻於理義. 目中無全牛. 內外融徹. 精粗一致. 由是而誠意正心修身. 推之家國. 達之天下. 沛乎不可禦. 若是者亦可謂扮戲子乎. 陽明徒患外物之爲心累. 不知民彝物則真至之理. 卽吾心本具之理. 講學窮理. 正所以明本心之體. 達本心之用. 顧乃欲事事物物一切掃除. 皆攬入本心妄說了. 此與釋氏之見何異. 而時出言稍攻釋氏. 以自明其學之不出於釋氏. 是不亦自欺以誣人乎. 彼其徒之始明者. 不覺其墮坑落塹於邪說. 乃曰言下有省. 亦可哀哉. 徐愛. 字曰仁. 陽明門人. 實紀是言者. 此條末有曰. 是日. 愛言下有省.

I refute this by saying, "If it is not rooted in the heart-mind but only an exterior explanation of forms and details, then surely there is no difference between this and an actor. But has [Wang Yangmyeong] alone not heard that the norms for people<sup>33</sup> and the standards for things<sup>34</sup> are all the Heaven-endowed absolutely authentic pattern-principles? And has he also not heard what Ju Hui said, 'Take reverential attention as one basis in order to establish the root. Fully comprehend pattern-principle in order to extend one's knowledge.'<sup>35</sup> If the heart-mind is based upon reverential attention, when it investigates the absolutely authentic pattern-principles of affairs and

<sup>33</sup> See the "Announcement to the Prince of Gang" (*Ganggo*; C. *Kanggao* 康誥) section of the *Book of History*.

<sup>34</sup> See "The Multitudes of the People" (*Jeung min*; C. *Zheng min* 烝民) in the *Book of Poetry*, *Mao* #260.

<sup>35</sup> See the fourth chapter (*gwon*; C. *juan* 券) of the *Heart Classic* (*Simkyeong*; C. *Xinjing* 心經).

things, it will understand normative principles. One will no longer ‘see the ox as a whole’;<sup>36</sup> what is within and what is outside mix and interpenetrate, the most refined and most coarse are reconciled and united. In this way, one can make one’s thoughts sincere, correct one’s heart-mind, and cultivate oneself, extend this process to one’s family and state, and encompass all under Heaven—majestic and unstoppable. Can such a one be called an actor? Yangmyeong was only troubled about exterior things fettering the heart-mind and did not understand that the absolutely authentic pattern-principles that are the norms for people and the standards for things are the pattern-principles that one’s heart-mind originally and innately possesses; nor did he understand that the aim of pursuing learning and comprehending pattern-principle is to illuminate the original heart-mind in itself<sup>37</sup> and encompass the functioning of the original heart-mind. Instead, he simply aimed to sweep away each and every affair and thing and drag them all into a mixed and confused account of the original heart-mind—how does this differ from the view of Buddhism? On some occasions, he said things mildly critical of Buddhism to make clear that his teachings do not come out of Buddhism—but does not this simply amount to deceiving himself and misleading others? Even those of his disciples who began in clarity ended up falling into the pit and moat of heresy without even being aware that they were doing so, saying, ‘after hearing this, I attained some understanding.’ How pitiful! (Seo Ae’s courtesy name (*ja*; C. *zi* 字) was “speaking humanity” (*warin*; C. *yueren* 曰仁); he was a disciple of Yangmyeong and recorded these words. At the end of the exchange [above] he said, ‘After hearing this, I attained some understanding.’)”

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<sup>36</sup> That is, one no longer sees the physical ox itself but grasps its essential structure and nature. See the story of Cook Jeong in Chapter Two of the *Jangja*.

<sup>37</sup> The phrase “in itself” is the translation for the Chinese character 體 (*che*; C. *ti*), which often is translated “substance” or “essence.” It refers to the fundamental and original state of a thing and is closely associated with the idea of “function” (*yong*; C. *yong* 用), which is the natural power or activity of a thing in itself.

徐愛問知行合一之說曰。人有知父當孝兄當弟者。卻不能孝不能弟。是知與行。分明是兩件。曰。此已被私意隔斷。不是知行的本體了。聖賢教人知行。正是要復那本體。大學說如好好色云云。

Seo Ae asked about the unity of knowing and acting saying, "There are people who know that parents should be served with filial piety and elder brothers with brotherly respect and yet are not able to be filial or respectful. This shows that knowing and acting clearly are two different things."

The Master said, "In this case [knowing and acting] already have been separated by self-centered thoughts; this is not how knowing and acting are in themselves. Sages and worthies taught people about knowing and acting specifically so they could return to what they are in themselves. The *Great Learning* says that [knowing and acting] are analogous to 'liking a beautiful sight'<sup>38</sup> etc."

辯曰。陽明謂今人且講習討論。待知得真了。方做行的工夫。遂終身不行。亦遂終身不知。此言切中末學徒事口耳之弊。然欲救此弊。而強鑿爲知行合一之論。此段雖極細辯說。言愈巧而意愈遠。何也。其以見好色聞惡臭屬知。好好色惡惡臭屬行。謂見聞時已自好惡了。不是見了後又立箇心去好。不是聞了後別立箇心去惡。以此爲知行合一之證者似矣。然而陽明信以爲人之見善而好之。果能如見好色自能好之之誠乎。人之見不善而惡之。果能如聞惡臭自能惡之之實乎。孔子曰。我未見好德如好色者。又曰。我未見惡不仁者。蓋人之心發於形氣者。則不學而自知。不勉而自能。好惡所在。表裏如一。故才見好色。卽知其好而心誠好之。才聞惡臭。卽知其惡而心實惡之。雖曰行寓於知。猶之可也。至於義理則不然也。不學則不知。不勉則不能。其行於外者。未必誠於內。故見善而不知善者有之。知善而心不好者有之。謂之見善時已自好。可乎。見不善而不知惡者有之。知惡而心不惡者有之。謂之知惡時已自惡。可乎。故大學。借彼表裏如一之好惡。以勸學者之母自欺則可。陽明乃欲引彼形氣之所爲。以明此義理知行之說則大不可。故義理之知行。合而言之。固相須並行而不可缺一。分而言之。知不可謂之行。猶行不可謂之知也。豈可合而爲一乎。且聖賢之學。本諸心而貫事物。故好善則不但心好之。必遂其善於行事。如好好色而求必得之也。惡惡則不但心惡之。必去其惡於行事。如惡惡臭而務決去之也。陽明之見。專在本心。怕有一毫外涉於事物。故只就本心上認知行爲一。而袞合說去。若如其說。專事本心而不涉事物。則心苟好色。雖不娶廢倫。亦可謂好好色乎。心苟惡惡臭。雖不潔蒙身。亦可謂惡惡臭乎。陽明亦自知其說之偏。故以不分知行爲知行本體。以分知行爲私意隔斷。然則古聖賢爲知行之說者。皆私意耶。至如知痛已自痛。知寒已自寒。知

<sup>38</sup> Chapter 3 of the *Great Learning*.

饑已自饑。其爲說亦可謂巧矣。然痛與饑寒。乃身心所值之事。緣境而得名者耳。非義理知行之稱也。知疾痛而處得其道。方可謂疾痛之知行。知饑寒而處得其道。方可謂饑寒之知行。若但痛而謂之行。則所行者血氣耳。非義理也。若但饑寒而謂之行。則所行者人心耳。非道心也。且痛而知痛。饑寒而知饑寒。塗人乞人與禽獸皆能之。若是而可謂之知行。何貴於學問爲哉。夫以知痛痒識饑飽爲性。此本出於告子生之謂性之說。陽明所見。正慣於此。故信口說出。以飾其辯。然而其說但可施於形氣之欲。而不可喻於義理之知行。故於孝於弟。不曰知孝已自孝。知弟已自弟。但曰人之稱孝稱弟者。必已行孝行弟。則與前後語意。不相諧應。終言古人所以既說知又說行處。未免只依舊分作兩箇說。蓋道理本如此。終袞合不得故也。

I refute this by saying, “Yangmyeong says that ‘people today only discuss learning with the hope of making their knowledge authentic (i.e., attaining real knowledge), and so when it comes to the purposeful activity of carrying it out in action, to the end of their lives they never act and to the end of their lives they never know.’<sup>39</sup> This teaching hits the mark in regard to a superficial type of learning that suffers the defect of being concerned only with speaking and listening. And so, with the aim of addressing this kind of damaging [teaching] he made a forced and excessive effort to develop his theory of the unity of knowing and acting. In the section above, though he offers an extremely detailed argument, the more clever it becomes, the further it goes awry. Why is this?

In regard to the ideas that seeing a beautiful sight or smelling a bad odor are examples of knowing, while liking a beautiful sight and disliking a bad odor are examples of action, he says that ‘when we see or smell [such things] we already like or dislike [them]. It is not that after seeing, we then set our heart-minds on liking or that after smelling we make another effort to set our heart-mind on disliking.’<sup>40</sup> This seems to be the evidence he presents for his theory of the unity of knowing and acting. However, does Yangmyeong really believe that people see and like the good in the same way that they see a beautiful sight and naturally and sincerely like it? Does Yangmyeong really believe that people see and dislike the bad in the same way that they smell a bad odor and naturally and really dislike it? Gongja

<sup>39</sup> See Section Five of the *Record for Practice*.

<sup>40</sup> See Section Five of the *Record for Practice*.

said, 'I have yet to see someone who likes Virtue as much as he likes beauty!'<sup>41</sup> He also said, 'I have yet to see someone who dislikes what is not humane.'<sup>42</sup> When the heart-minds of human beings manifest themselves in physical form and *gi*, then there are things they naturally know without having to study, things they naturally are capable of without having to make effort, likes and dislikes are present and available, and one's [feelings] on the inside accord with [what one does] on the outside. And so, as soon as they see a beautiful sight, they know it is beautiful and their heart-minds sincerely like it. As soon as they smell a bad odor, they know it is bad and their heart-minds really dislike it. [In such cases,] one can even say that acting resides in knowing. But this is not the case when it comes to normative principles. If one does not study, one does not understand; if one does not make effort, one will not be capable; what one does on the outside does not necessarily reflect what one feels on the inside. And so, there are cases where one sees the good but does not know it is good, where one knows that something is good, but one's heart-mind does not like it. [In such cases,] can one say that whenever one sees the good one naturally likes it? There are cases where one sees what is not good and one does not know it is bad and where one knows something is bad but one's heart-mind does not dislike it. [In such cases,] can one say that whenever one sees the bad one naturally dislikes it? And so, one can say that the *Great Learning* makes use of those cases in which one's [feelings] on the inside accord with [what one does] on the outside in order to encourage students not to deceive themselves. Yangmyeong's desire to draw upon examples of what one does in regard to physical form and *gi* to make clear his theory of the unity of moral knowing and acting is profoundly impermissible. And so, moral knowing and acting when spoken of as a unity require one another in order to function; one cannot omit either [knowing or acting]. When they are spoken of separately, one cannot refer to knowing as acting nor can one refer to acting as knowing. How can these be unified and regarded as one?

<sup>41</sup> See *Analects* 9.18 and 15.13.

<sup>42</sup> See *Analects* 4.6.

Moreover, the learning of the sages and worthies is rooted in the heart-mind and threads through and unites things and affairs. And so, in liking the good it is not just that one's heart-mind likes it, one must pursue the good in the carrying out of one's affairs—as when one likes something beautiful and one is committed to getting it. In disliking the bad it is not just that one's heart-mind dislikes it, one must eliminate the bad in the carrying out of one's affairs—as when one dislikes a bad odor and one is committed to getting rid of it. Yangmyeong's view is exclusively focused on the original heart-mind; he feared even the slightest contact with things and affairs outside. And so, he only recognizes how knowing and acting can be one on the level of the original heart-mind and [on this basis] proceeds to produce a mixed and confused argument. If we follow his theory, we would exclusively deal with the original heart-mind and never make contact with things and affairs. Then if the heart-mind [of some man] likes the beautiful sight [of some woman] can we really say he likes her beauty even though he does not take her as his wife and [thereby] abandons one of the fundamental human relationships?<sup>43</sup> If the heart-mind dislikes a bad odor can we really say one dislikes the odor even though one does not wash and [thereby] allows it to cover one's body? Yangmyeong himself understood that his theory was one-sided and so he took the lack of separation between knowing and acting as knowing and acting in and of themselves [i.e. the original essence of knowing and acting] and took the separation of knowing and acting as severance caused by the imposition of self-centered thoughts. If that were true, then the theories of knowing and acting advocated by the ancient sages and worthies all are expressions of self-centered thoughts!

When it comes to his [view] that “in order to know pain one must have experienced pain oneself, in order to know cold one must have experienced cold oneself, and in order to know hunger one must have experienced hunger oneself”—this surely can be called a clever theory. Nevertheless, pain, along with hunger and cold, are

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<sup>43</sup> Mencius identifies five fundamental human relationships, the third of which is the relations between husband and wife. See *Mencius* 3A4.

things that the heart-mind and body contingently experience and are named in reference to the conditions that cause them. These do not refer to moral knowing and acting. If one knows acute pain and is able to deal with it successfully, then one can call it knowing and acting in regard to acute pain. If one knows hunger and cold and is able to deal with them successfully, then one can call it knowing and acting in regard to hunger and cold. If one is just in pain and calls this acting then one's acting is a matter of blood and *gi* and not normative principles. If one is just hungry and cold and calls this acting then one's acting is a matter of the human heart-mind (*in sim*; C. *ren xin* 人心) and not the heart-mind of the Way (*do sim*; C. *dao xin* 道心). Moreover, if knowing pain is simply experiencing pain and knowing hunger and cold is simply experiencing hunger and cold then common people on the street and beggars, along with birds and beasts, are all capable [of knowledge]. If this is what one means by knowing and acting then what is there to esteem about study and inquiry? If understanding pains and itches and being conscious of hunger and satiety are regarded as the nature, this view originally derives from Goja's (C. Gaozi 告子) theory that "life is what we call the nature."<sup>44</sup> Yangmyeong's view is connected to and arises from this. And so, he trusts in eloquence to embellish his argument. Nevertheless, his theory can only be applied to the desires of form and *gi* and cannot explain moral knowing and acting. And so, in regard to filial piety and brotherly respect, he did not claim that in order to know filial piety one must have experienced filial piety oneself and in order to know brotherly respect one must have experienced brotherly respect oneself but only those who are called filial and respectful "must have acted filially and respectfully."<sup>45</sup> What he said at an earlier time does not harmonize and agree with what he said at a later time. In the end, when he says that whenever the ancients talked about knowing they also talked about acting,<sup>46</sup> he cannot avoid relying on the old division, which takes there to be two

<sup>44</sup> See *Mencius* 6A3.

<sup>45</sup> See Section Six of the *Record for Practice*.

<sup>46</sup> See Section Six of the *Record for Practice*.

[distinct] theories. This is the fundamental logic of the case. And so, he cannot mix and confuse them together.

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