

Im Yunjidang's View of Material Composition*

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Abstract

Im Yunjidang is a female Neo-Confucian who established her own theoretical system by criticizing Han Won-jin, Kim Chang-hyeop, and Im Seong-ju. According to Im Yunjidang, they misunderstood the relationship between one's nature and material composition. Han Won-jin stated that the former is separated from the latter; Kim Chang-hyeop argued the former is limited by the latter, and Im Seong-ju insisted that the latter is one's nature originally given from heaven. Im Yunjidang claimed that the one's original nature is principle (*li* 理), while one's material composition can move toward good or evil. Here, nature is one principle which guides one's material composition in the direction of good. In addition, mind—the part of the self which contains principle—is the agent which leads the material in the direction of good. This coincides with the structure of removing greed and recovering nature by learning ritual, according to the philosophy of Yi I. Therefore, Im Yunjidang faithfully follows Yi I's philosophy.

Keywords: original nature, material composition, mind, ritual, Yi I

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I. Introduction

Im Yunjidang 任允摯堂 (1721–1793) established her theoretical system by assuming a critical standpoint toward Han Won-jin (1682–1751), Kim Chang-hyeop (1651–1708), and Im Seong-ju (1711–1788). Han Won-jin, a scholar belonging to the Ho school (湖學), insisted that humans and other objects differ in their nature. Kim Chang-hyeop and Im Seong-ju, scholars belonging to Nak school (洛學), asserted that they are the same. The Ho school started from Yi I (1537–1584) and was succeeded by Song Si-yeol (1607–1689), Kwon Sang-ha (1641–1721), Han Won-jin, and Yun Bong-gu (1683–1767). The Nak school started from Yi I and was succeeded by Song Si-yeol, Kim Chang-hyeop, Yi Jae (1680–1746), and Im Seong-ju. Im Seong-ju is the older brother of Im Yunjidang and her academic teacher. Since Im Yunjidang argued that humans and other objects are equal in their nature, her thought is closer to the Nak school. However, Im Yunjidang criticized Han Won-jin as well as Kim Chang-hyeop and Im Seong-ju. This shows that Im was not just following the mainstream view of her academic circle but developed her own independent system of thought (G. Kim 2019).

Previous studies analyzed Im Yunjidang's thought primarily from the perspective of gender or the religious dimensions of Confucianism (S. Yi 2005). These studies understood Im Yunjidang's thought either as having given rise to modernity or as the fruit of religious experience but not primarily as the fruit of serious intellectual engagement with the philosophy of her time (Park 2003; H. Kim 2004; S. Kim 2014). Other studies criticized these approaches to her thought (Y. Kim 2005). My contention is that Im Yunjidang's thought is the result of her scholarly discussion within the world of male-centered Neo-Confucianism.

Previous studies approaching Im Yunjidang's thought from the perspective of gender or religion do not clarify what kind of contribution Im made to Joseon Neo-Confucianism in the 17th and 18th centuries. For instance, Im Yunjidang was not directly concerned with modern problems like equal rights or patriarchy and it is anachronistic and misleading to interpret her work as engaged with

such modern themes and ideas. Furthermore, Im Yunjidang retained a critical attitude toward theories by Neo-Confucians such as Han Won-jin, Kim Chang-hyeop, and Im Seong-ju. In other words, Im tried to establish her own view through scholarly engagement with the intellectual discourse of her age. In addition, there is no evidence that Im Yunjidang tried to advance herself or her work by taking a compromising attitude toward the male-centered world of Neo-Confucianism. She overtly engaged and criticized views she found mistaken or inadequate. My analysis of her work will show that she was a thorough Neo-Confucian philosopher, who was faithful to the ideas of Yi I.

II. Is It Possible for the Human Nature to be Transcendent?

Im Yunjidang had a critical standpoint toward the view that one's nature transcends material composition. This criticism was targeted against Han Won-jin's theory that "one's nature can be explained in three domains" (*seongsamcheungseol* 性三層說). He set one's nature as "the principle existing beyond appearance and material composition."¹ In Im's view, Han Won-jin's concept of human nature comes from an incorrect understanding of the theory that "principle comes before material composition" (*lixian qihou* 理先氣後).

People misunderstood Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200)'s teaching that, "principle comes before material composition" and thought of the Great Ultimate as a circle which surpassed appearance and material composition. This is obviously wrong. If there is no material, principle does not have a place to cling on to and create harmony. The Great Ultimate is merely the principle of *yin* and *yang* and there is

¹ In Han Won-jin's theory of three-tiered nature, the meaning of nature transcending the appearance of things may not accord with the criticism by Im Yunjidang. From the perspective of Im Yunjidang, Han Won-jin is assuming human nature as principle exists separately from material force. The meaning of transcendence in nature transcending the appearance of things may refer to principle not being influenced by material force in phenomena and not the domain over phenomena. For further discussion, see Lee (2016, 24–35).

no other principle separated from *yin* and *yang*. Principle refers to the spontaneity of *yin* and *yang*, and when that principle reaches the ultimate point to which nothing further can be added, it is called the Great Ultimate. If it is not for principle, the material is without origin, but if it is not for the material, where can principle reside? The meaning can be identified only from the aspect of the material.²

Then, how did Im Yunjidang analyze Zhu Xi's idea that "Principle is metaphysical and the material is physical?" Im Yunjidang asked in return "If there is no material, to what does principle cling on to and create harmony?" This statement suggests that principle can only manifest itself through the material, and it exists in the metaphysical domain before it clings on to the material. Thus, similar to Han Won-jin, Im Yunjidang understood Zhu-Xi within the context of human nature transcending the material composition.

However, Im Yunjidang argued that the Great Ultimate is merely the principle of *yin* and *yang* and there is no other principle separated from *yin* and *yang*. In short, the Great Ultimate is principle, and *yin* and *yang* is material. But if the Great Ultimate is merely the principle of *yin* and *yang*, the principle is merely an attribute of the material. Moreover, if there is no principle separated from *yin* and *yang*, the principle is merely a pattern. If principle is an attribute, various aspects of phenomena can be explained, but the universality of good is difficult to secure since the attributes of humans cannot be limited to good. If principle is a pattern, patterns of nature such as seasonal changes can be explained, but goodness arising from human nature, such as the four beginnings, is difficult to explain since pattern does not include emotional factors. Therefore, whether it is an attribute or a pattern, if Im understood principle to be relying on the material, she is being critical of Zhu Xi's views that "Principle is metaphysical and the material is physical."

Im asks "If it is not for principle, the material is without origin. However, if it is not for the material, where can principle reside?" In this statement, Im seems to define principle as the cause of various

² All subsequent quotations from Im Yunjidang's works are from Im (n.d.), unless otherwise specified.

changes, rather than as a metaphysical entity with transcendent and immutable qualities. This gives the impression that she wants to treat principle from the practical aspect and not merely from the logical perspective. Thus, I believe that Im Yunjidang set the relationship between principle and the material in terms of cause and effect, instead of between what is metaphysical and what is physical.

However, Im Yunjidang claimed that the meaning can only be identified from the aspect of the material. This means that the relationship between principle and the material can be understood only from the aspect of the material. When thinking from the aspect of the material, it is difficult to secure the necessary causal relationship between principle and the material. Whether it is the Ho school or the Nak school, principle is good and the material can appear as either good or evil. Thus, from the perspective of ethics, it is difficult to contend that principle bears a necessary causal relationship with the material.

Then, it can be assumed that if there is no logical contradiction in Im's theoretical system, principle must be the reason behind the directions of the material. For instance, even if the material can move toward evil, this is merely a probability and the material ought to be moving toward good. This normative characteristic is secured by principle, which is good. Therefore, principle is the reason why the material moves toward good, and the material originating from principle is good. The relationship between principle and the material can be further clarified in the part where Im explains the meaning of "one's nature is the principle."

Through one's material composition, each forms its own nature. This is everyone's Great Ultimate and the human nature in the statement "one's nature is principle." If there is an object without nature, the way of harmony would have been long lost. In general, principle cannot be said to flow through or be blocked, slanted or wholly provided, but the material composition can be said to be such. Thus, the nature of those whose material composition is whole can manifest all four virtues: benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and wisdom; as for, the nature of those whose material composition is

slanted or blocked, the principle is limited as well and only one of the Five Constants is manifested as human nature.

Im Yunjidang argued that through one's material composition, each forms its own nature. In general, nature based on material composition is called one's material nature. Material nature, referring to the principle inherent in the material, can be expressed as "one's nature that is the principle existing in the material" (*xingjilizhi zaiqi* 性即理之在氣). However, Im argued that this is everyone's Great Ultimate and the human nature in the statement "human nature is the principle." This may seem contradictory but is actually one of the main standpoints of the Nak school on human nature. The Nak school contended that the meaning of human nature can be clearly identified solely on the basis of the proposition "human nature is the principle."³ Im also faithfully abided by this standpoint of the Nak school.

Im Yunjidang explained the meaning of "one's nature is the principle" (*xingjili* 性即理) from the aspect of harmony. She claimed if there is an object without nature, the way of harmony would have been long lost. This statement suggests that plants and trees which are without consciousness also have nature. These beings grow and flower according to the changes of seasons. On the other hand, humans and animals, which do have consciousness, can either wholly or partially realize the four virtues. The material composition of humans is whole and thus capable of realizing all four virtues. The material composition of animals is not whole, but it can still realize

³The standpoint of Nak Hak adhering to "Nature is the principle" (*xigjili* 性即理) originates from the argument between Yi Gan and Han Won-jin. Han Won-jin thought that "Nature is the principle" cannot fully explain nature. Thus, he suggested the proposition "Nature is the principle existing in material force" (*xingjilizhi zaiqi* 性即理之在氣) by adding two characters in material force (*zaiqi* 在氣). Ho Hak argued that the nature of humans and things are different. This is why the proposition "Nature is the principle existing in material force" by Han Won-jin became an essential theoretical appeal used to explain the inherent characteristics of respective entities. On the other hand, Nak Hak claimed that the nature of humans and things are the same. Therefore, the first proposition of the Neo-Confucianism "Nature is the principle" (*xingjili* 性即理) is enough. With regard to this point, Han Won-jin and Yi Gan had an argument. For further discussion related to this topic, refer to Lee (2016, 9–15).

part of the virtues. This is because plants, trees, animals, and humans alike all received the same principle. As a result, all things constitute the harmony while realizing their respective principles.

The discussions so far show that Im Yunjidang did not postulate principle as the original human nature existing regardless of the material composition, as Han Won-jin did. Im viewed one's material composition plays a partial role in the manifestation of one's inherent principle, and these roles constitute the harmony of all things. Accordingly, Im's understanding of the statement "one's nature is the principle" refers to the order of all things made up of the principles in individual entities.

II. Is It Possible to Separate Human Nature from the Mind?

Im Yunjidang contended that when heaven engenders a thing, it has its own principle. Anyone would have agreed to this claim whether he/she belong to the Ho school or the Nak school.

When heaven engenders a thing, it has its own principle. It goes without saying that the principle is not the same when the appearance and the material composition are different. Also, how can the essence be whole but its function limited? If the origin is explained in terms of the principle, it can be said that "The unified essence of all things is one Great Ultimate" because humans and all other things share the same source. If the phenomena are explained in terms of the material composition, it can be said that "each has one Great Ultimate" because all things have their own nature. This is the meaning of "each rectifying its own nature."

However, Im Yunjidang claimed that it goes without saying that principle is not the same when the appearance and the material composition are different. This claim can be understood by the blooming and withering of trees and plants following the changes of the seasons. The principle of trees and plants that are without consciousness manifests in the form of patterns. On the other hand, animals and humans may or may not wholly realize the four virtues, depending on their

level of consciousness. For instance, ants are capable of perceiving the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, so they can realize righteousness among the four virtues. On the contrary, humans have the ability to perceive the rules of all five human relations, so they can wholly realize the four virtues (Im [n.d.]).

Then, with or without consciousness, all things are endowed with the same principle from heaven, and that principle can manifest as either pattern or nature depending on the material composition. Regarding this same principle, Im stated that “The essence of the whole is one Great Ultimate” (*tongtiyi taiji* 統體一太極), and for the different principles in individual objects as “each possess its own Great Ultimate” (*gejuyi taiji* 各具一太極). Im further asserted that the former reflects the dimension of principle while the latter reflects that of the material. This scheme may be restated in terms of “one principle being divided into the principles of the many entities through the material” (*liyiqi fenshu* 理一氣分殊). It may be further surmised that the material reveals each entity’s nature by limiting its principle (*qiju* 氣局). However, Im Yunjidang was critical toward these two position. Her critique is directed at Kim Chang-hyeop’s thesis that “the essence is whole while function is limited” (*chejeon yongbudal* 體全用不達).⁴

If one says that “benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and wisdom are the nature equally given to humans and animals, but the reason animals are unable to perceive the nature of benevolence and righteousness is that they are limited by the material, so the function is limited; thus, the nature limited by the material is not the original

⁴ Kim Chang-heup, the older brother of Kim Chang-hyeop, also mentioned “Essence has been wholly equipped but its application is limited” (*chejeon yongbudal* 體全用不達). The corresponding source text can be identified at *Samyeonjip* 三淵集 (Works of Samyeon). Here, Kim Chang-heup handled the meaning of “Material force limits the principle” (*qiju* 氣局) in the aspect of sensory organs. On the contrary, Kim Chang-hyeop handled the meaning of “Material force limits the principle” in the aspect of nature and mind. The corresponding source text can be identified in *Nongamjip* 農巖集 (Works of Nongam). When it came to the issue of material force limiting the principle, ImYunjidang extended the meaning of material force not only to sensory organs but also to the domain of mind. Therefore, I think that the source of Essence has been wholly equipped but its application is limited dealt by Im came from the work collection by Kim Chang-hyeop.

human nature (*benran zhixing* 本然之性),” this is vastly incorrect. This is clear if one only considers the statement “one principle being divided into principles of the many” (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊). The one principle is the original principle. How can principles of the many not be the same principle? The phrase “the many” should correspond to the phrase “one principle.” However, many people say that it corresponds to the “material” (*qi* 氣). Thus, people have come to say “the essence is whole while function is limited” after thinking that “the one” is the principle and “the many” is the material. This is absolutely wrong.

Im claims that it is vastly wrong to argue that “benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and wisdom are the nature equally given to humans and animals, but the reason animals are unable to perceive the nature of benevolence and righteousness is that they are limited by the material, so the function is limited; thus, the nature limited by the material is not the original human nature.” Based on this criticism, Im’s view can be summarized as follows. Both humans and animals are endowed with the four virtues. Whether the virtues are wholly revealed or not depends on the function of the material. Here, the function of the material is not limiting the four virtues but the ability to reveal them. The material composition of humans allows them to show all four virtues whereas the material composition of animals can reveal only a part. Notwithstanding the difference in ability, humans and animals are equally endowed with the nature of the four virtues from heaven.

It is difficult to find the text exactly matching the phrase cited by Im Yunjidang in the surviving works of Kim Chang-hyeop. However, Oh Hee-sang (1763–1833)’s explanation of Kim’s “the essence is whole while function is limited” is close to what Im cited.

When you try examining the classics, the parts where they mention the mind are mostly explained in terms of “after arousal” (*yifa* 已發). This applied to the mind of benevolence, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom. When Mencius spoke of benevolence as the “mind of compassion” (*ceyin zhixin* 惻隱之心), righteousness as “the mind of shame” (*xiuwu zhixin* 羞惡之心), rituals as the “mind of reverence”

(*gongjing zhixin* 恭敬之心), and wisdom as “the mind of right and wrong” (*shifei zhixin* 是非之心), all these refer to the mind “after arousal.” Even if birds and beasts are born with the five constants, how can this mind be whole as they are manifested? This is the so-called “the essence is whole while the application is limited.” (Chang-hyeop Kim 1998, 581)

Kim Chang-hyeop argued that Mencius’ four beginnings are the mind “after arousal.” But if the mind is already in state of after arousal, what is the unaroused state of mind? Kim Chang-hyeop argued that birds and beasts were born with the five virtues just like humans. This suggests that the unaroused state of mind is the nature of the four virtues. Normally, the four beginnings arisen from the nature of the four virtues are said to be purely good. However, he insisted that even if the nature of the unaroused state is whole, the mind in the aroused state is limited. This means that the nature of the unaroused state can lose its purity when bound by one’s material composition. Thus, Kim Chang-hyeop did not see a causal relationship between the nature of the unaroused state and the aroused state of mind.⁵

By contrast, Im Yunjidang saw a necessary causal relationship between the “one principle” and the “principles of the many.” The goodness of the latter derives from the former. Nevertheless, Im Yunjidang understood the statement “the essence of the whole is one Great Ultimate” as referring to the dimension of the principle and “each possess its own Great Ultimate” as to that of the material. The structural relationship between these two statements are equal to that between the “one principle” and “principles of the many”: the principle of the myriad things and the nature of individual entities. Therefore, it is cannot be simply concluded that the principles of

⁵ He did not set the relationship between moral perception (*zhi* 智) and sensory perception (*zhijue* 知覺) as the relationship between essence and application. Moral perception refers to the principle as the moral judgment standard and sensory perception refers to the application of mind being revealed without any principle. Therefore, in the ethical aspect, moral perception and sensory perception or nature and mind do not inevitably form a causal relationship. See Lee (2016, 98–108) and Cho (1999).

the many are completely free from the material. Thus, we must understand the principles of the many as being inclusive of the material, which actually makes it function rather than restricting it.

Based on the discussion so far, we can see that Kim Chang-hyeop separates human nature from the mind. The mind limits one's nature. On the other hand, Im Yunjidang does not separate the two. In the sense that she sees the mind as that which makes one's nature function, the mind as material can seem purely good as well. But if mind as the material is purely good, where does evil come from? A discussion on the origin of evil in Im Yunjidang's philosophy is necessary for a clearer grasp of her theories on material composition.

III. Where Do Individual Differences and Evil Originate from?

Im argued that human nature is purely good and without evil. She also explained the principle given to us as our nature is good and all humans have equally received it. Then, where do individual differences and evil originate from?

Human nature is purely good and without evil. It is based on the one principle and all humans have equally obtained it. There exist differences in dullness, smartness, strongness, and weakness because of the differences in material qualities. Humans have obtained differences owing to material composition. The principle is neither elaborate nor crude, sages and ordinary people differ because their material composition differs in clarity. Because one's material composition is mixed and murky, one is foolish, and foolish ones do not realize that extreme good given from heaven lies inside their mind and lose their nature while chasing after external things.

The individuality of humans refers to the differences of dullness, smartness, strongness, and weakness. This characteristic arises from the material quality. In other words, the material quality is a factor behind the difference in intellectual capacity as well as strength. If one's material quality is good, one's intellectual capacity and strength are good. If this is not the case, vice versa. This material quality

originates from material composition, which in turn can be reduced to the material. Therefore, material composition and material quality are sub-categories of the higher concept—material.

The highest concept of material is often discussed along with the mind. One of the most important propositions in the Yulgok School is that “the mind is the material” (*xinshiqi* 心是氣). The distinction between the Ho school and the Nak school depends on whether or not one sees the material as purely good. The Ho school does not acknowledge the pure goodness of the material whereas the Nak school does. Whether the material is purely good or not is a highly controversial issue. If there is a separate source of goodness outside the mind, the mind comes to pursue the ultimate stage detached from the phenomenal world. Then rather than focusing on the interactions with external objects, the mind can come to focus on realizing the ultimate stage beyond the reality.⁶

Im seems to have noticed the crucial weakness of the Nak school. She did not find the reasons of moral failure outside the mind. The reason lies in the murky material composition, and whether one’s material composition is murky or not has to do with mind. If the mind is murky, it forgets that good nature is inside and loses one’s inborn nature while chasing after external objects. This also means that even if one’s material composition may differ, the human nature in mind is equal in everyone. Therefore, one’s material composition is one of the reasons behind apparent evil.

She further explained the origin of evil in her discussion on the relationship between virtue and talent. Virtue refers to benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and wisdom, and there are roughly three types of talents.

The talents of those who have virtue and sincerity can be used everywhere. This is like the excellent talent of the Duke of Zhou. This is the great talent of a sage thoroughly knowing the principles of heaven and earth. It is like the saying “a man of virtue is bound to

⁶The blind spot of Nak Hak is well-exposed in Han Won-jin criticizing Yi Gan. For further discussion, refer to Lee (2016, 48–54).

have talent” (*Analects* 14:4). Then there are cases of having excellent innate talent and outstanding wit. Some examples are Cao Zi-jian 曹子建 writing a poem after taking just seven steps and Liu Mu-zhi 劉穆之 reaching a verdict quickly. This means that one’s material composition was blocked in the beginning but developed at the end. This is like the saying that “ones with talents are not always virtuous.” (*Analects* 14:4) Finally, there are examples like King Zhou 紂 of the Shang Dynasty, whose wit and power seemed to have been greater than anyone else. He may not seem foolish but considering what he did, he was truly a foolish person.

First, there is the talent of being able to do all things by possessing the four virtues and an honest mind. The Duke of Zhou is the leading example. His accomplishment is in having arranged the system of rites and music. He was the person who had the insight to understand the principle of heaven and earth. His talent is related to his nature and mind. Second, there is the talent to do well in literary activities or make quick judgments. The leading examples are Cao Zhi-jian and Liu Mu-zhi. Both had exceptional talent in one field, and this talent could be exercised regardless of their virtues. Thus, their talents are relatively trivial matters. Third, there is the talent whose wit and power are superior to others. King Zhou of the Shang Dynasty is the leading example. He reigned with his superior power. This may seem like showing his authority, but it became the reason for the fall of his dynasty. Thus, talent and power without virtues eventually come to evil acts.

These types of talents are related to virtue, skill, and power. The talent related to virtue bears a good outcome, such as the system of rites and music that the Duke of Zhou created. The talent related to skill maximizes one’s strong points regardless of virtue. The talent related to power ultimately results in evil outcomes, such as war and the fall of the dynasty. Thus, talent is value neutral; it can give rise to good or evil results depending on its origin.

If one’s talent is also a part of one’s material composition, evil can be assumed to arise from the material composition. With regard to the relationship between the material composition and evil, Im made the following statement.

Evil is born after there is form. It is possible to refer to this as the material nature, but it is not right to say that this is the original nature given from heaven. There are only the four virtues in human nature. How can there be evil? Since there is no object without nature, everything is good at the foundation, but one can fall into evil when obstructed by material composition. It is okay to say that this is not the original human nature given from heaven, but if one is to say that it is not nature, where did the evil come from? Therefore, this is why Cheng Hao said, "Good and bad are all the nature",⁷ but it does not mean that human nature has two kinds and that things came to existence through their interaction.

Im claimed that it is possible to refer to the evil resulting from material composition as the material nature, but it is not right to say that it is the original human nature given from heaven. This suggests that she distinguished the causes of good and evil as the original human nature and material nature, respectively. Then she is postulating two kinds of nature. However, Im further asserted that there are only the four virtues in human nature. Then human nature is not the material nature, which is the cause of evil, but the original human, the cause of goodness. Strictly speaking, material nature is not human nature.

Then why did Im describe the material nature as the cause of evil? She suggested an answer in a citation. She contended that human nature is good, but it can be evil when hidden by material composition. This means that evil is not a perverted form of human nature but an obstruction by the material composition. It is the same as the sun hidden by dark clouds. The material nature Im spoke of is the original human nature hidden by one's material composition. Thus, she did not postulate another material nature distinct from the original human nature (Im [n.d.]).⁸

Im's understanding of human nature is quite complex, but it seems to be grounded on Cheng Yi's claim that good and evil are all

⁷ *Henan Chengshi yishu* 河南程氏遺書 (Posthumous Work of Two Cheng Brothers from Henan) 1:12.

⁸ This clearly shows the position of Im Yunjidang of not setting physical nature other than the nature of humans originally given from heaven.

human nature.

What is inborn is one's nature. One's nature is the material, and the material is one's nature; thus, they are inborn. When humans are born with the material, it is only natural that good and evil coexist. However, it is not the case that the two came into being as a pair. (Chen-Hao 1984, 10)

Cheng Yi explained the meaning of "What is inborn is one's nature" by appealing to Gaozi's theory of human nature, which refers to the characteristics of individual entities, which belong to the material. Theoretically, the material can move toward either good or evil. Thus, Gaozi's theory of human nature, which is strictly restricted to the material dimension of the nature, differs from the human nature Mencius spoke of. This can be identified from Cheng's statement that "it is not the case that the two came into being as a pair." Cheng did not postulate material nature separated from the original human nature. In short, Im faithfully followed Cheng's view.

Im's position regarding to the original nature endowed from Heaven and material nature is different from that of Im Seong-ju. Im Seong-ju did not distinguish the two.

All occasions of "nature" in the *Mengzi* 孟子 are one same nature, which is the original nature endowed from Heaven. If the nature of dogs, cows, and humans are regarded as the material nature, and nature is made by separating from the nature of innate goodness, it will not make sense and not fit logic (S. Im 1998, 566).

These many occurrences of "nature" in the chapter about "What is inborn is nature" (*sheng zhi wei xing* 生之謂性) in the *Mengzi* 孟子 are understood as the material nature, they will not make sense (S. Im 1998, 42).

Im Seong-ju argued that various occurrences of "nature" in the *Mengzi* are all the same, which is the original nature given from heaven. However, in the *Mengzi*, there are some positions totally different from the innate goodness of Mencius such as Gaozi's claim that "what is inborn is nature." This means that, Im Seong-ju understood nature as stated by

both Mencius or Gaozi as the original nature given from heaven.

Then, Im Seong-ju interpreted that the original nature given from heaven refers to the inherent characteristics of dogs, cows, and humans. Dogs, cows, and humans have received inherent characteristics as individual entities. This is why dogs defend houses, cows cultivate fields, and humans reveal good emotions. This can seem reasonable.

Nonetheless, the original nature given from heaven stated by Im Seong-ju still has logical flaws. For instance, dogs are faithful in defending master's house but cannot realize the virtue of the father-son relationship (benevolence *ren* 仁). Why can't dogs realize the virtue of the father-son relationship? This is because dogs do not have the ability to perceive the father-son relationship or were not born with benevolence.

In addition, if Im Seong-ju understood the nature as described by Gaozi as the original nature given from heaven, he is denying the four virtues given to both humans and animals, since Gaozi argued that the love toward family is an inherent nature but the respect toward others is a social norm (*rennei yiwai* 仁內義外). Benevolence is an inherent nature, but righteousness has been tailored to social norms. Thus, the original nature given from heaven in Im Seong-ju's view is material nature limited to one's material composition.

To summary, Im Yunjidang strictly adhered to the view of the original nature given from heaven. There is no nature other than the original nature given from heaven. She did mention material nature, but this refers to the state of the original nature as hidden by material composition. In addition, the state of material composition hiding the original nature refers to evil. Therefore, she tried to secure good from the original nature while explained evil from material composition.

IV. How Does One's Mind Enable Moral Practice?

Im Yunjidang argued that one's nature is the principle in the mind, and the mind is the part of the self which contains one's nature. Then

she explained in detail that the relationship between nature and mind is separated but also united.

Nature is the principle of the mind, and the mind contains one's nature. They are separated but also united. Therefore, the mind is empty, responsible, changeable, and difficult to assume. Principle is the reason that mind is empty, responsible, changeable, and difficult to assume. Principle has no function, but the mind does. Principle does not leave any trace, but the mind does. If not for principle, there is nothing to be revealed. If not for mind, nothing can be revealed. How can principle and the material be mixed? How would it be possible for the nature and the mind to be revealed by themselves, respectively? There have been discussions regarding this matter by past Neo-Confucians, but I await the judgment by the future generations, as I do not trust such discussions.

If there are two distinct relationships between one's nature and the mind, it means that their inherent roles exist. If there is only one relationship between one's nature and the mind, their inherent roles perform one joint task. The mind is empty but has the ability to respond rapidly to the stimulation of external forces. Also, it is not easy to predict the response of the mind. The response can move toward good or evil. This is why it is necessary to guide the mind in the direction of good. Principle is responsible for that role.

Im clearly divided the roles of the mind and principle. This is criticizing the argument that "the nature and mind are revealed by themselves, respectively." That "nature can be revealed by itself" refers to the claim that "the principle manifests" (*lifa* 理發) by the Toegye School. Im criticized this claim by saying that "If it is not for the mind, nothing can be revealed." That "the mind can be revealed by itself" refers to the Yangmyeong school's claim that "the mind is the principle (*xinjili* 心即理)." Im criticized this claim by saying that "if it is not for the principle, there is nothing to be revealed."

Im argued that the principle is without function or any traces whereas the mind has both function and traces. This shows that she faithfully conformed to the philosophy of Yi philosophy. Yi defined principle and the material in the following way in his letters to Seong

Hon (1535–1598).

Principle and the material are not originally separated from each other, so they look like they are one. They are different because principle has no shape and the material has a shape, and principle has no function whereas the material does. The standard (*zhu* 主)⁹ of telling whether there is a shape or not and whether it has function or not is principle. That which has shape and function becomes the container of that which has no shape or function. (I Yi 1989, 44: 201).

Yi I stuck to the position that principle and the material cannot be separated. This is clearly distinguishing the role of principle and the role of the material. Principle has no shape and is without function whereas the material has a form and has function. Then, based on the function of the material, principle can be good or evil. However, Yi I insisted that principle has no shape and function, but it becomes the standard of material force. This means that the function of the material has to be revealed based on principle. Yi I also claimed that “the material is the container of principle,” the material refers to the mind. But the function of the mind cannot be revealed only through good. Therefore, Yi I’s definitions of principle and the material become Yulgok School’s grounds for criticizing both the Toegye School and the Yangming School.

Im Yunjidang’s criticism of both the Toegye School and the Yangmying School was that they jumbled together principle and the material. She also went beyond the Yi I philosophy, which means that she also sees principle as existing in the mind. However, even if principle is in the mind, it cannot lead the mind since it is without function. Therefore, the mind must regulate itself by learning the rituals, which is the realization of principle, or the discovery of the

⁹ “主” is mostly translated as “superintendence.” However, since superintendence reflects will, it does not accord with “the principle is not applied.” The principle becomes the standard of distinguishing whether the application of material force is appropriate or not after it has been applied and if material force has been applied in a good way, it has been shown according to the inner standard. Thus, I selected standard as the corresponding term for “主.”

inner principle.

However, when occupied by the search for principle in the mind, principle can become something ideologically irrelevant to reality. It could be some form of disconnected religious experience. Im Yunjidang was well aware of this problem. A more detailed discussion can be seen from her discussion on “overcoming the self and recovering the rituals is practicing benevolence” (*keji fuli weiren shuo* 克己復禮爲仁說).

The inherent material of individual humans are said to be different, but when seeing the silent and unchanging original essence, sages and ordinary people are the same. However, as the free floating material force is gathered, murky and light residues become mixed into ordinary people. If the mixed residues can be removed with effort that is a thousand times stronger than others, how will that silent and unchanging essence disappear? Since it is inherent, the original nature given from heaven can be recovered. Then, what has to be done first in making efforts? There is nothing better than setting an aim in life and investing devout efforts. While setting an aim and making ceaseless efforts, one should keep asking “Who is Shun and who am I?” One must study the principle of all things, be aware of and get rid of evil by observing the signs of good and evil, and work hard by being aware of good and firmly protecting it. Staying alert, keeping a strict control, not bound by trivial selfish interests with a fearful and anxious heart, abiding by the principles set by heaven in the midst of endless life, this is “practicing benevolence” by “overcoming the self and recovering the rituals.” This is brightening the bright virtues. Bright virtues given from heaven are the foundation of the world.

Im Yunjidang claimed that the oneness of humans lies in their essence. Also, their essence is not something that can be perverted or removed by something else. Then, why are humans different and make moral failures? She insisted that murky and pale residues are mixed and become ordinary people. The ordinary people, which are beings in stark contrast from sages, are bound to make moral failures. Thus, the reason behind the diversity among humans and their moral

failure lies in material composition.

Then, can ordinary people become sages? How? Im Yunjidang stated that even ordinary people can recover benevolence (*ren* 仁) when they work hard to change their moral composition. The recovery of benevolence does not refer to some transcendental stage reached through the transformation of material composition. Benevolence is the original nature given from heaven. Therefore, the recovery of benevolence refers to the revealing of the essence when human desires are removed; it is the same as the sun shining after the clouds have disappeared.

Im suggested “establishing an aim” (*lizhi* 立志) and “making devout commitments” (*duxing* 篤行) as the ways to recover the essence. Establishing an aim and making devout commitments by Im Yunjidang also faithfully follow Yi I’s philosophy.

Those who are learning for the first time must establish an aim and promise to become a sage. Establishing an aim is important since it helps overcome the negative thoughts toward failure while studying. If one is to do as one wishes, as one is insincere and weak in will, how can one accomplish anything for one’s entire lifetime? (I Yi 1989, 45:83)

Yi I explained the process of becoming a sage to be starting from the promise to oneself. This does not mean that Yi I restricted the meaning of “establishing an aim” merely at the beginning of learning. Establishing an aim is defined as the method of awakening oneself in the course of learning and overcoming laziness and fear. Therefore, establishing an aim can be the method of learning, which takes place in the entire faithful process.

Im Yunjidang also defined establishing an aim in the same context as Yi I. She encouraged ordinary people to keep in mind the phrase “Who is Shun and who am I?” This is repeatedly emphasizing the fact that all humans have received the same nature. Anyone can become a sage. Thus, the goal of those who are learning must be in becoming a sage.

The most important thing in becoming a sage is thinking about the

principle of all things. The principle of all things should be taken into consideration to remove evil, defend good, and work hard. The signs of good and evil are the response of mind with regard to stimulation by external objects. Then, how can humans evaluate the good and evil of such responses? Since human nature is good, humans can evaluate good and evil by themselves. However, when good and evil are in conflict with one's interests, humans tend to mistake good and evil. This is why humans should always look out for their desires and strive to follow the principle given from heaven. Here, the principle given from heaven is the rituals. The rituals are the norms of action. Thus, thinking about the principle of all things is learning the rituals. Also, the rituals are no different from the virtues in our mind. Therefore, Im Yunjidang argued that removing selfish desires and revealing nature by learning the rituals is brightening our virtue.

In summary, rituals are the institutionalization of principle. Mind plays the role of the institution for learning the rituals and conducting moral practices. Mind not only has the ability to learn but also the ability to judge and examine one's own awareness. However, mind, due to differences in material composition, can make accurate judgments only if it sets the rituals as its standard. Therefore, in her theories, one's nature is the inner virtue as well as the external standard while the mind is the agent which realizes virtues through this standard.

V. Conclusion

Im Yunjidang is a Neo-Confucian scholar of the Joseon Dynasty who faithfully followed the philosophy of Yi I. The 17th century to the 18th century Neo-Confucianism of the Joseon Dynasty was led by the Yulgok School. The Yulgok School is divided into the Ho school and the Nak school. One of their main issues was "Is the nature of humans and the nature of things the same?" The Ho school argues that they are different whereas the Nak school claims that they are the same. Im Yunjidang, a scholar belonging to the Nak school, stated that the natures are the same. Therefore, one can assume that Im Yunjidang organized her own theory by criticizing the Ho school.

However, Im Yunjidang not only criticized the Ho school but also pointed out the theoretical flaws of the Nak school. She did not agree with the view about “the principle which transcended shape and the material” taught by Han Won-jin of the Ho school. She also had different thoughts about Kim Chang-hyeop’s thesis “Essence is whole while the function is limited,” as well as Im Seong-ju’s claim that “the natures of all entities are all original nature given from heaven.” The common point of these criticisms has to do with the relationship between nature and material composition: Han Won-jin’s understanding of human nature is irrelevant to material composition; Kim Chang-hyeop’s view is that nature is limited by material composition; and Im Seong-ju’s understood nature as the same as material composition.

In her view, the principle as one’s nature always stays with one’s material composition. Also, the material composition does not limit the original nature but makes it work. Then, one may ask “Where does evil originate from?” She argued that evil results from material composition. If the material composition is after profit or power, one is bound to commit evil. If the material follows principle, it does good. This structure faithfully followed the main tenets of Yi I’s philosophy that “the mind is the material” and “returning to the rituals by overcoming the self.”

Im Yunjidang’s philosophy was not primarily concerned with contemporary views about gender or religious experience. She established her own theoretical system by criticizing famous scholars and this criticism was based on the core propositions of Yi I’s philosophy. I believe that Im Yunjidang was a Neo-Confucian scholar who followed and developed Yi I’s philosophy better than anyone else.

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