

An Investigation and Assessment of Yi Toegye's *Li-Qi* Dualism

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Abstract

This essay investigates the reasons and methods that Toegye used to justify his li-qi dualism, and indicates the internal intensions in his thoughts. On the one hand, Toegye solved some problems raised by the critics of li-qi dualism and contributed to the understanding of his master Zhu Xi's works. On the other hand, his justification also brought forth new tensions and, as a result, showed new directions for the development of Neo-Confucianism, which was testified to by Yi Yul-gok's qi monism. In a sense, Toegye's system is a milestone in the development of Korean Confucianism, just as Zhu Xi's thoughts are the foundation of Neo-confucianism.

Keywords: *li (i), qi (gi), xin (sim)*, Toegye, Four Beginnings, Seven Emotions, the Great Ultimate

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Introduction

Yi Toegye (Yi Hwang, 1501-1570), a famous Korean philosopher and devoted disciple of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), inherited the latter's dualism in many aspects. He determinedly insisted upon the distinction between *li* (*i*, 理,) and *qi* (*gi*, 氣), and endorsed almost all the correlatives of this dualistic standpoint, for example: the division of physical nature (*qizhi zhixing*) and original nature (*benran zhixing*), the distinction between the "mind of the Way" (*daoxin*) and the "human mind" (*renxin*), and most importantly, the distinction between the Four Beginnings (*siduan*) and the Seven Emotions (*qiqing*). Therefore, many concepts that Toegye used in his discourse can be understood in the context of Neo-Confucianism. Sometimes, criticism towards Zhu Xi's doctrine can be applied to Toegye's as well. However, Toegye did not passively follow Zhu Xi's doctrine at all. He proposed many innovative thoughts for Neo-Confucianism from his social and cultural context, especially at the time he was faced with Ming scholars' critique towards Zhu Xi's thought and the rise of the Yangming school. As an apologetic scholar of the Cheng-Zhu school, he, on the one hand, tried to justify the dualistic relation between *li* and *qi*, through emphasizing the activity of *li*. In this way, he avoided the pitfalls of Zhu Xi's system, in which the *li* in the flow of *qi* was described as being like a dead person riding on a galloping horse.¹ On the other hand, he responded to Wang Yangming's (1472-1528) doctrine of "the unity of knowledge and action," and criticized him for confusing the process of understanding and internalizing moral principle with the spontaneous responses of human instinct. This essay will attempt to explore the legitimacy of *li-qi* dualism and the tensions in Toegye's thoughts.

1. "Bianli" 辨戾 (Discerning Errors), in Cao Duan (1976).

Toegye's Li-Qi Dualism

Toegye first insisted *li* and *qi* to be two distinct entities. This view was clearly stated in his essay, "A Clarification That *Li* and *Qi* Are Not One Thing"² (Yi 1997, 2:330b-332a), and was further elaborated by a quotation from Zhu Xi's discussions:

Li and *qi* must definitely be two entities. But when we look at them from the aspect of a concrete thing, they both combine as an integrated mass and cannot be separate from one another. However, this state does not change the fact that each of them exists as an entity. If we look at them from the aspect of *li*, although there is not a concrete thing yet, the *li* of this thing has already existed. But, it is only the *li* that exists, as the thing of the *li* has not yet come into existence (Yi 1997, 2:331a).

In this quotation, Toegye also implied his second standpoint, *li* and *qi* neither separation nor mix. "With regard to *li* and *qi*, they are neither separate from, nor mixed with each other. From the aspect of not-separation, they combine as one thing, but few people realize that they never mix completely. From the aspect of not-mix they are definitely two things, but few people realize that they never separate from each other" (Yi 1997, 4:83b).

As a defense of his dualism, Toegye openly criticized the *qi*-monism held by other scholars. In the "Clarification," he indicated that Luo Zhengan's (Luo Qinshun: 1465-1547) mistake lay in that he regarded *li* and *qi* not as two, although Luo had some insights into Neo-Confucianism. In Toegye's first reply to Ki Gobong (Ki Dae-seung: 1527-1572) on the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions, he implied that Ki Gobong was fond of the sameness and undifferentiated whole of *li* and *qi*, but disliked their separation and difference, and could not understand fully the distinction between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions. As a result, Ki would take *li* and

2. 「非理氣爲一物辯證」.

qi as one thing and find no distinction between them (Yi 1997, 1:407a).

Along with this distinction between *li* and *qi*, Toegye further gave *li* and *qi* different places and functions in both the natural and human worlds. He endorsed the doctrine that “Each thing has a Great Ultimate”³ and believed that a same *li* or principle ran through the myriad things. As a result, he supported Zhu Xi’s doctrine that the nature of all things shares the same origin. The differences of their nature resulted from the different degrees of clarity of *qi*. Moreover, *qi* is the factor that makes things different, and is used to explain the variety of things in the universe as well as the different intelligence amongst human beings. When applied to moral cultivation, *li* is regarded as perfect and always good, while *qi* is regarded as the potential origin of evil, and inferior to *li*. This kind of distinction between *li* and *qi* in morality is critical in Toegye’s system, and it sets the foundation for his explanation of the evil tendency of the mind and the distinction between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions.

However, the *li-qi* dualism has received much criticism since Zhu Xi proposed it. In order to justify this *li-qi* dualism, Toegye first had to answer such criticism or solve the difficulties arising from them, which will inevitably result in his adjusting to Zhu Xi’s doctrine. For instance, with regard to Zhu Xi’s thought, *li* as a pure and vacuous realm, with no form or trace, is unable to create and move without attaching itself to the movement of *qi* (Zhu 1994, 3), Cao Duan (1376-1434) criticized the relationship between *li* and *qi* in Zhu Xi’s system as being similar to a dead person attached to a running horse.⁴ In response, Toegye accorded to *li* the power of activity, and claimed that it can move or rest by itself. “‘The Great Ultimate has its movement and rest’ is that the Great Ultimate can move or rest by itself” (Yi 1997, 1:354a). He also justified the activity of *li* from the relation between substance and function. “Therefore it is known that

3. 物物有一太極.

4. “Bianli” 辨戾 (Discerning Errors), in Cao Duan (1976).

to be ‘without feeling or intent, unable to create or act’ refers to the original substance of *li*; that to manifest itself according to the situation and reach everywhere is its marvelous function. Formerly, I only knew the non-action of the substance and ignored the manifestation of the marvelous function, and then I almost took *li* to be a dead thing. That would be far from the truth” (Yi 1997, 1:465a).

Following this logic, Toegye further advocated the dominant and creative power of *li* over *qi*. First, he thought that the activity of *qi* resulted from the activity of *li*. He quoted Zhu Xi’s statement: “*Li* has movement and rest, so *qi* has movement and rest. If *li* had no movement or rest, whence did *qi* have its movement and rest?” (Yi 1997, 2:299b). He even made the statement that *li* is most lofty and is without parallel, and it commands things and receives no command from them. Second, he stated that *li* gives birth to *qi*, and that *qi* is the result of *li*’s function. “It is true that when *li* moves, *qi* is born consequently; when *qi* moves, *li* is manifested. Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) said, ‘The Great Ultimate moves and then gives rise to *yang* (陽),’ which means that the movement of *li* gives rise to *qi*” (Yi 1997, 2:18a).

If this aspect of Toegye’s thought were developed further, it would lead to *li*-monism. But both Toegye and his master Zhu Xi found it difficult to explain the emergence of evil if *li*-monism were carried through, for in such a case, they would have to acknowledge *li* as the origin of evil. In order to avoid this difficulty, they chose *qi* as the scapegoat, and endorsed *li-qi* dualism instead. In their opinion, although *li* gives rise to *qi*, acting as the guiding principle of *qi*, after *qi* is born, it will have its own autonomy, thus affecting the manifestation of *li*, or even deviating from it. Toegye expounded on this point: “*Li* in its essence is the loftiest and is without parallel. It commands things and receives no command. It should not be surpassed by *qi*. However, after *qi* takes form it [*qi*] becomes the situation or material embodiment of it [*li*].⁵ Therefore, whenever they function in coordination, for the most part *qi* is in control.” (Yi 1997, 1:354a-354b). In this way, the legitimacy of *li-qi* dualism was justified.

5. 却是氣爲之田地材具.

The Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions

The distinction between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions is a main theme of Toegye's *li-qi* dualism in the field of human nature. In the debate between Toegye and Ki Gobong, Toegye's views on the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions can be summarized thusly:

1. Both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions belong to emotion, are composed of *li* and *qi*, and are activated in the process of interaction with external things.
2. The Four Beginnings are always good, while the Seven Emotions are susceptible to evil.
3. The first standard for the division between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions is that the perspectives of naming them are different. That is, the Four Beginnings are named from the aspect of *li*, while the Seven Emotions from the aspect of *qi*. The justification for this standard is the parallel between nature and emotions. According to Toegye, nature can be divided into original nature and physical nature in terms of *li* and *qi* respectively, as can emotions.
4. The second standard for the division is that which one, *li* or *qi*, issues first in the process of the emergence of emotions. If *li* issues first and *qi* follows, the resultant emotion will belong to the Four Beginnings; if *qi* issues first and *li* follows, the resulting emotion shall belong to the Seven Emotions.

With regard to Toegye's division, Ki Gobong at first disagreed, insisting that the Four Beginnings are only particular cases of the Seven Emotions and cannot be independent categories. In his opinion, the Four Beginnings are those of the Seven Emotions which meet due measure in their issuance. Later, he made some corrections, acknowledging the division of the Four and the Seven, but insisted upon his position that the Four Beginnings be not different from those of the Seven Emotions which meet due measure in their issuance. Toegye appreciated this concession, yet it is still fundamentally different from Toegye's standard, for the Four Beginnings to which Gobong

referred to include both the emotions issuing from *li* and those issuing from *qi* while meeting due measure; and the Seven Emotions are all the emotions issuing from *qi*, whether they meet due measure or not. As Gobong emphasized, "Although the Seven Emotions may be categorized as *qi*, *li* is already within. When they issue and meet due measure, they are called heavenly endowed nature and the original substance. In such a case, how can they be regarded as issuing from *qi* and be different from the Four Beginnings?" (Yi 1997, 1:440b-441a). He further defended his standpoint by saying, "In *Zhongyong* (The Doctrine of the Mean), the statement that 'joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are aroused, and each attains its due measure. It is called harmony' would also be regarded as the universal way under heaven. If you [Toegye] were right, then could the universal way be regarded as something issuing from *qi*?" (Yi 1997, 1:441a). Although Gobong stated, "As for what *Mencius* called the Four Beginnings, it is a matter of singling out those emotions issuing from *li* and being perfectly good from the emotions that, composed of both *li* and *qi*, are potentially good or evil," nevertheless, his definition of "issuing from *li*" is "issuing from *qi*, but meeting due measure," as displayed in the statement: "When the issuance of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure all meets due measure, this is called *li*, the good" (Yi 1997, 1:441b). In Gobong's eyes, the Four Beginnings are still a particular case of the Emotions. The only difference was that he made an equivocal statement on the relation between "issuing from *li*" and "issuing from *qi*, but meeting due measure."

Then why did Gobong admit that, "Each of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions elucidate one particular truth, and I fear that one may not mix them together as one"? (Yi 1997, 1:442b). According to Gobong, the Four Beginnings in *Mencius* reveals the good elements of human emotions and asks people to cultivate and extend them, while the purpose that Master Cheng discussed concerning the Seven Emotions lies in that the emotions will destroy nature after they flare up. Thus, the awakened person restrains his emotions and draws upon them in due measure (Yi 1997, 1:440b). The Four Beginnings are raised from the aspect of good in order to encourage people

to extend the good elements while the evil elements are not of concern, though they exist in human emotions. The Seven Emotions are raised from the destructive or evil aspect of emotions to nature in order to admonish people to restrain their emotions in due measure. They are raised at different times for different purposes and cannot be put into an antagonistic position. Thus, Gobong did not endorse Toegye's Four-Seven antitheses in spite of his acceptance of Toegye's division.

Now, let us analyze Toegye's standards for the division of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions. First, the analogy between the division of nature into heaven-earth nature and physical nature and the division of feeling into the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions cannot be justified. On the one hand, this kind of analogy cannot be set up. Heaven-earth nature and physical nature are divided by the criterion that the former is solely *li* while the latter is *li* in *qi*. The former is only the ideal state of the latter and is not actually existent. Although the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions are divided according to the standard that the former are named from the aspect of *li* while the latter are from the aspect of *qi*, it should be noticed that the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions, in Toegye's mind, are qualitatively different. The Four Beginnings are not the ideal state of the Seven Emotions, and they both are actual existent emotions. On the other hand, the place of *qi* in the division of nature is different from its place in the division of emotions. In the former, *qi* is the medium of *li*'s manifestation. In the latter, *qi* is a participant in the arising of emotions. If we follow Zhu Xi's analogy,⁶ then the distinction between original and physical nature is simply a difference between the manifestation of a pearl itself and its different manifestations in as seen through water that gives it a different transparency. Water acts only as a medium that is able to affect the

6. In volume 4 of *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu*, Zhu Xi said, "Li in *qi* is just as a bright pearl in water. Li in clear or pure *qi* is as the pearl in pure water, which is completely manifested. Li in impure *qi* is as the pearl in turbid water, in which the pearl cannot be seen from outside" (Zhu 1994, 73).

pearl's brightness, but cannot change the pearl itself.⁷ Differently, the arising of emotions includes not only the action of *li*, but also that of *qi*, no matter when *qi* begins to participate in the arising. *Qi*, as a participant, is a critical factor related to the arising and essence of *qing* (情 *jeong*).

Bae Jong-ho supported Toegye's justification regarding the parallel between *qing* and *xing* (性 *seong*). In *Korean Thought*, Bae Jong-ho said, "Toegye followed Zhu Xi's thought regarding the distinction between the nature of principle (*li*) and the nature of physical dispositions (*qi*), so Toegye thought the former to be purely good, and the latter to be a mixture of good and evil" (Bae 1982). But this did not seem to be the reality that Zhu Xi and Toegye imagined. For both Zhu Xi and Toegye, physical nature is not different from original nature, and they are both good. Bad or evil only come forth when nature is blocked by *qi*. In other words, physical nature is just a real case of original nature when it falls into *qi*.

Second, Toegye distinguished between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions by the standard that which, *li* or *qi*, issues first in the arising of feelings. Specifically, the Four Beginnings are those emotions that *li* issues first, then *qi* follows, while the Seven Emotions are those that *qi* issues first, which *li* then mounts. In this way, he seemed to divide emotions into two qualitatively different groups although he admitted that both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions were composed of *li* and *qi*. The ontological foundation for this division is that both *li* and *qi* can be active. On this presupposition, either *li* or *qi* can issue first. Therefore he confidently made the claim: "The Four Beginnings issue from the nature of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom; and the Seven Emotions issue

7. Metaphorically speaking, the original nature is like a flashy pearl; the degree of its brightness in water of different transparency is physical nature. In a reply to Yi Deok-hong (pen name: Goengjung, 1541-1596), Toegye said, "There are not two natures. It is only being called the original nature from the aspect when it does not mix with physical endowment, while is called the physical nature when it is in physical endowment. Now you take them as two, you are wrong" (Yi 1997, 2: 219b).

in dependence of the situations in which external things interact with the human body and agitate the human mind” (Yi 1997, 1:406a). Although both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions result from the human body’s interaction with external things, the emotions that *li* issues first and the emotions that *qi* issues first can thus be differentiated because either *li* or *qi* can issue first in the process of the arising of emotions. However, this justification brings forth a new problem for the relation of *li* and *qi*, for under this division, Toegye seemed to have placed *li* and *qi* in a conflicted relationship. Moreover, there is also the implication that *li* is not the *li* of *qi*, and *qi* is not the *qi* of *li*. This will be contradictory with his claim that “Under heaven, there is no *li* without *qi*; no *qi* without *li*” (Yi 1997, 2:226b). This may explain why after Zhu Xi made the statement “The Four Beginnings are what *li* starts, while the Seven Emotions are what *qi* starts” (Zhu 1994, 1297), he immediately supplemented it with another statement, “The Seven Emotions cannot be separated from the Four Beginnings,” and “The Four Beginnings can be understood from the standpoint of the Seven Emotions” (Chung 1995, 55; Zhu 1994, 2242).⁸ Otherwise, the insistence of the division that *li* issues first or that *qi* issues first will destroy the ontology that there is no *li* without *qi* and there is no *qi* without *li*.

If the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions are put into the context of Confucianism, they are not necessarily onset in opposition to one another. When Mencius talked about the Four Beginnings, as Gobong indicated, he tried to show people the existence of moral elements and was not concerned with whether they issued from *li* or *qi*. If more of Mencius’ thoughts are considered, it shows that Mencius, like Confucius, tended to regard the Four Beginnings as describing the natural disposition of human beings. This natural disposition is more likely to be the function of *qi* than of *li*. For example, the arising

of the mind of commiseration (*ceyin zhixin*) when seeing a baby crawling close to the edge of a well (*Mencius* 3:6) or the arising of the feelings of remorse when seeing that one’s parent’s corpse was eaten by foxes or insects (*Mencius* 5:5) can be interpreted as human instinct of kin-love, not necessarily any knowledge of moral principle. This is also why Confucius put the basis of human-heartedness as the feeling of filial piety and fraternal friendship, for this kind of feelings emerges from human instincts, just as Toegye reasonably took loving beauty and detesting stench as instincts. If we understand in this way, it seems that the Four Beginnings were just used by Mencius in order to show people’s humanness. They cannot be regarded as a separate or independent category of emotions beyond the Seven Emotions. In other words, the Four Beginnings can be regarded as the emotions among the Seven Emotions that meet due measure in their arising. This might explain the reason why Ki Gobong insisted that the Four Beginnings were merely special cases of the Seven.

After the debate of Toegye and Gobong, the relation between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions was attended to repeatedly. Several years after Toegye passed away, another Korean philosopher, Yi Yulgok (Yi I, 1536-1584) resumed the debate. Yi Yulgok clarified Ki Gobong’s point and insisted that both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions were issued from *qi* and were mounted by *li*. The Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions had no difference in terms of quality. Around the seventeenth century, Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) shed some ink on this issue again. Wang Fuzhi took the Four Beginnings as nature, and the Seven Emotions as emotions, and thought that the Four Beginnings acted as a guide for the proper issuance and flow of the Seven. If the Seven Emotions did not follow the Four Beginnings, this would lead a fall into evil (Guo 2001). Wang Fuzhi’s ideas were similar to Toegye’s in his qualitative separation of the Four Beginnings from the Seven Emotions, but different in the sense that he took the Four Beginnings to be nature, whereas Toegye took the Four Beginnings to be emotions.

Today, Tu Wei-ming has endorsed Toegye’s standpoint that the

8. It seems that Chung dos not complete understand Zhu Xi’s words, “七情自于四端橫貫過了,” which means “The Seven Emotions have already been run through by the Four Beginnings,” not “The Four Beginnings can be understood from the standpoint of the Seven Emotions” as Chung understands.

Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions are qualitatively different. “The Four Beginnings as defining characteristics of human nature must also be endowed by heaven, and are therefore primordial and transcendental. The Seven Emotions are not so, instead are conditional expressions of our physiological and psychological states” (Tu 1985). Tu seems to forget that the arising of the Four Beginnings also depends on human being’s interaction with external things. Moreover, some of the Seven Emotions also have primordial and transcendental characteristics. Tu further argues that since the mind is itself a combination of *li* and *qi*, it is conceivable that the mind could be the manifestation of either *li* or *qi*. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the manifestation of *li* in the mind is symbolized by the Four Beginnings, and the manifestation of *qi* in the mind is symbolized by the Seven Emotions (Tu 1985). Here Tu ideally differentiates the manifestation of *qi* from the manifestation of *li*, which is never endorsed by either Zhu Xi or Yi Toegye. Both Zhu Xi and Yi Toegye would insist that the manifestation of *li* was actually the manifestation of *qi* in a situation in which *li* is dominant. Even in the manifestation of *qi* where *qi* is dominant, there is also a manifestation of *li*, for otherwise *li* and *qi* would separate from each other.

The Special Position of *Xin*

Xin (心, Mind or Heart-Mind), as the union of *li* and *qi* and the stage on which *li* and *qi* interact, is an important concept for the understanding of Toegye’s dualism.

First, as Toegye has stated, *li* is good while *qi* has potential to be evil, is it likely that *xin* originally has the potential to be evil? In response, Toegye said, “If it is traced back to the formation of *xin*, *xin* is also good and without evil. Why? Before *xin* is activated and *qi* is not in power, only *li* exists. Whence comes evil? Only in the process of *xin*’s activation is *li* eclipsed by *qi*; then, does *xin* tend to be evil” (Yi 1997, 1:349a). This indicates that evil results from the activation of *xin*. However, does all the activation of *xin* result in

evil? This leads to Toegye’s further definition of *xin*’s activity. On the one hand, he discussed *xin*’s movement and rest in terms of its interaction with external things. “Human mind comprises substance and function, contains silence and response, and penetrates movement and rest. Before it interacts with things, it is silent and motionless, full of the myriad principles (*li*), yet the whole body of the mind is unquestionably preserved. When things approach the mind, it responds and thus communicates without any mistake in category and detail, and its great function will prevail” (Yi 1997, 1:486a). In this case, Toegye did not indicate whether the activation of *xin* was evil. On the other hand, he interpreted “*xin*’s movement according to *li*” as “rest,” while “its movement not according to *li*” as “movement.” In this way, he took “movement” to be the state of a mind in turmoil. He said, “As a human being unites *li* and *qi* as *xin*, if *li* is the master and directs the *qi*, his mind will be tranquil and concentrated, and engages in no unnecessary thinking; If *li* cannot be the master and is dominated by *qi* instead, then his mind will be endlessly occupied with disorderly thinking” (Yi 1997, 4:29b). In short, only those movements that do not accord to *li* lead to disorderly thinking or evil.

Based on this differentiation between “movement” and “rest,” Toegye distinguished the sage’s thinking or movement from that of ordinary people. “The sage is purely in compliance with *li*, so in him rest controls movement and *qi* is governed by *li*; ordinary people give in the flowing of *qi*, so in them movement destroys rest, and *li* is disturbed by *qi*” (Yi 1997, 2:358a). In regard to how to avoid the disturbance of *qi* or unnecessary thinking, Toegye recommended self-cultivation by following moral principles. “In rest, one cultivates the original heavenly principle; in interaction, he discriminates against the incipient tendency of human desires. In this way, he practices a long time and reaches the well-learned point, then he will keep void when resting, frank when interacting. In ordinary life, although events rise and fall a hundred times, his mind will be self-composed. So those trivialities will not be able to affect him” (Yi 1997, 2:70a-b). In Toegye’s opinion, if one reaches this point, his mind’s response to events will be as the reflection of a mirror to things. “The way that the mind

deals with things, is that, before they come, it does not go to meet; when they come, it reflects them completely; after it responds to them, nothing is left without perception. The substance of his mind is clear as a bright mirror or tranquil water” (Yi 1997, 2:63b). Therefore, the rest Toegye discussed in this sense is actually the “stability” (*ding* 定) mentioned in Cheng Hao’s *Dingxingshu* (Essay on Stabilizing One’s Nature). It is not the rest in an ordinary sense, but the self-composed state of mind that is accomplished through moral practice.

Second, Toegye proposed, “one’s mind is the mind of Heaven and Earth, and also the minds of myriad peoples” (Yi 1997, 1:463b). His basis is that all people share the same *li* and *qi* from Heaven and Earth; the minds, the unions of *li* and *qi*, should be the same too. As discussed in the previous paragraph, if “the minds” refer to minds before they are activated, they should be the same for that in which *li* is in power only and *li* has been regarded as one. If the minds refer to the minds after being activated, they are the same only on the condition that they follow *li* or principle in their interaction with external things. In other words, Toegye implied that in the state of following *li*, all minds are the same and can be regarded as one. The minds in the statement, “all minds are the one,” refer only to the minds that follow *li*. Those minds that do not follow *li* will be in great variety.

Third, in Toegye’s view, although the mind takes *li* as its component, and has the power to perceive *li*,⁹ this does not mean that human beings can behave according to *li* or moral principles spontaneously. The performance of moral conduct involves a process of deliberate learning and practice in compliance with *li* or moral principle. On the basis of this point, Toegye insightfully criticized Wang Yangming’s doctrine: “the unity of knowledge and action” (*zhixing heyi*). He indicated that Wang Yangming confused human instinct with deliberate moral activity (Youn 1985). Loving beauty and dislik-

9. *Xin* locates in the inch-square place, but is perfectly empty and perfectly intelligent; *li* is written in books and diagrams, and is perfectly manifested and perfectly real. Using this perfectly empty and intelligent mind to seek that perfectly manifested and perfectly real *li*, *li* should be obtained with no question (Yi 1997, 1:197a).

ing stench are components of human physiological instincts, in which it is difficult to distinguish knowing from acting. In contrast, learning and practicing moral principles belong to deliberate activity, in which there exists a distance between knowing and practicing. As he states:

Generally, as to the part of the human mind that issues from physical form or *qi*, it will know without learning, it will have the capacity without effort. Where love or dislike appears, the internal and the external will be in accord. Therefore, once seeing the beauty one knows it as beauty, and loves it truly; once smelling the stench one knows it as stench, and dislikes it truly. In such a case, even though it is said that action is in knowledge, it is acceptable. With regard to moral principle, it is different. Without learning, one cannot know; without practice, one cannot perform. The external action is not necessary to accord with the internal. Therefore, seeing good but not knowing it is possible; knowing good but not liking it is possible. Is it suitable to say that when seeing good, one already loves it? Seeing evil but not disliking it is possible, knowing evil but not disliking it is possible. Is it acceptable to say that when one knows evil, one already dislikes it? (Yi 1997, 2:334a-b).

Toegye made a sharp differentiation between those behaviors issuing from physical form or *qi* from those being performed according to moral principles. The former is spontaneous while the latter is the outcome of deliberate practice. This distinction, no question, is a fatal attack on Wang Yangming’s doctrine, but it also brings in unnoticed tension to Toegye’s interpretation of Mencius’ *liangzhi* and *liangneng*. According to Mencius, *liangzhi* is knowledge innate without learning, and *liangneng* are those innate capacities extant without practice. Mencius further regards filial piety and fraternal love as *liangzhi* and *liangneng*, and the fundamental basis for cultivating human-heartedness (*Mencius* 13:15). It is on this point that Confucius and Mencius set up a naturalistic justification for Confucian morality. Now, if we follow Toegye that the practice of morality is the outcome of deliberate practice of moral principles, it will lead to the conclusion that morality is just an invented norm imposed upon

human beings from without for the discipline of human behavior. It follows that, Toegye would depart from the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius and espouse the doctrine of Xunzi, who advocated “the transformation of human nature through the exertion of human effort” (*huaxing qiwei*).¹⁰ Differing from Toegye, Wang Fuzhi criticized the doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action from an analysis of the nature of knowledge and the relation between knowledge and action. Wang Fuzhi said:

With regard to the doctrines proposed by Lu Jiuyuan (Lu Zijing: 1139-1193), Yang Cihu (Yang Shi: 1053-1135), and Wang Yangming, I have already seen through them. They do not think that knowledge is posterior to action. However, the knowledge they take is not real knowledge, therefore the action they implement is not real action. . . . Taking such knowledge as action will be equal to taking no-action as action. Then, although they might realize the order of human society and the principle of things some time, they would not carry them out through their body and mind (Wang 1998, 2:312).

For Wang Fuzhi, real knowledge should be moral principles as well as the principles of things that are related to human existence and welfare; real action should be the practice of moral principles and the utilization of things for human life. Based on this point, Wang Fuzhi stated that Wang Yangming’s knowledge was not true knowledge. Yet, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged that the Lu-Wang school had discovered some truth about the order of human society and the principle of things. He criticized the members of the Lu-Wang school for not putting their knowledge into practice. In this regard, he took Wang Yangming and his disciples’ action as false action. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s prescription for the Yangming school would be the investigation of true knowledge and the correspondent earnest moral practice, while Toegye’s prescription would be the internalization of moral principles as nature through repetitive practice. That is, deliberate

10. “Xing’e” 性惡 (Nature Is Evil), in *Xunzi* 荀子.

behavior can become spontaneous responses through lengthy and repetitive practices (Wang 1998, 12:85-86).

Last, although Toegye stated that *xin*, as the combination of *li* with *qi*, has the marvelous ability to sense,¹¹ he seems to have given a different explanation regarding how *xin* becomes marvelous. In a letter replying to Yi Gong-ho, he said, “What makes a person think and act is *qi*” (Yi 1997, 2:301b). In an attachment to a letter to Jeong Ja-jung, he denied the marvelous ability of *qi*, and said: “*Qi* is indeed marvelous. But how can *qi* be marvelous by itself? It is its combination with *li* that makes *qi* marvelous” (Yi 1997, 2:11b). Nevertheless, it is evident that Toegye tended to emphasize the function of *li*, which is in accordance with his preference for *li*. In Toegye’s opinion, the intelligence of the mind resulted from the dominant function of *li* in *qi*, and *qi* by itself could not make the mind intelligent.

Now that *li*, as a component of *xin*, makes *xin* intelligent, why cannot *xin* perceive *li*? In a sense, this is also the question why *li* cannot perceive itself in consideration of its critical place in the intelligence of *xin*. Toegye would say that this is because of the eclipse of the impurity of *qi*. He also spent a lot ink on how *qi* affects the different intelligence among animals and human beings.¹² However, this explanation seems to put *qi* in the critical place in intelligence as a result. Just like Zhu Xi’s simile on the manifestation of a pearl in water, the shining or dim manifestation of the pearl is determined by

11. To unite *li* with *qi*, there is *xin*, which naturally has the empty but marvelous ability to sense (Yi 1997, 1:455b).

12. Since the clarity and turbidity (of *qi* in the myriad things) are determined at their birth, after birth, those embodying clear *qi* are able to know, while those embodying turbid *qi* are not. Since the purity and impurity are determined at their birth, at the time of practice, those embodying pure *qi* are able to be perfect, while those embodying impure *qi* are not. . . . As to breath and movement, they are the function of *qi*. Both the sage and the ordinary people can do them. However, that the sage is able to know, but the ordinary is not is because of the different degrees of the clarity of their *qi*. As to ears, eyes and physical body, these belong to material substance. Both the sage and the ordinary have them. That the sage is able to practice, but the ordinary is not is because of the different degrees of purity of their *qi* (Yi 1997, 2:214b).

the degree of the water's purity. Water determines the manifestation of the pearl. Similarly, concerning *xin*'s intelligence, it is the degree of *qi*'s purity that determines the manifestation of *li*, and as a result, determines *xin*'s intelligence. Toegye might reply that although *qi* can affect the manifestation of *li* or the intelligence of *xin*, it is still *li* that determines what is to be manifested. Just like a fire in the night, although the purity of air or darkness can affect the degree of its shining, it is still the fire that gives out the light.

Due to the eclipse of *qi* to *li*, Toegye recommended people to investigate *li* in external things to illuminate or awaken the *li* in human mind. But if as Toegye said, the *li* in my mind is the same as the *li* in external things, why do I bother to investigate the *li* outside? Why do I not just muse on the *li* in my mind? This question has been raised by Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming to Zhu Xi. In order to solve this question, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming do not place much importance on the investigation of things, but rather on the clarification of human mind from selfish desires. As a result, Zhu Xi's method of investigation of external things is criticized as jumbled and ambiguous. Toegye stood on the side of Zhu Xi, and criticized Wang Yangming in return.

Yangming vainly worried that external things were the obstacles to the enlightenment of the mind, but he was unaware that the perfect principle running through cardinal human relationships and the rules of external things is the same as the principle already existing in my mind. Lecture and investigation are the very means through which to elucidate the substance and to realize its function of the original mind. However, Yangming intended to sweep away all external things and events, subsuming them under the original mind and discussing them as a whole. Then what is the difference between his doctrine and Buddhism? (Yi 1997, 2:333b)

Toegye accused Wang Yangming of falling into Buddhism just as Zhu Xi criticized Lu Jiuyuan's doctrine as Chan Buddhism.¹³ But, Toegye

13. The doctrine of Chan (Kr.: Seon; J.: Zen) Buddhism is uncertain. Today it says

put more emphasis on the epistemological aspect of Wang Yangming's doctrine, and indicated that Wang omitted the process of investigating external things and events, while subsuming everything under the original mind. If Toegye's were developed further, it would reach Wang Fuzhi's conclusion that Wang Yangming's knowledge and action was false, for Wang Yangming could not correctly put morality into practice without knowledge of external things and situations. However, Wang Yangming might have argued, if the principles existing in the mind and external things are the same, it will be unavoidable to subsume external things under the mind. In this case, Toegye might defend his standpoint by admitting that, in order to understand *li* and put it into practice, one must obtain knowledge about real situations and external things, instead of simply depending on one's subjective knowledge.

When Zhu Xi and Toegye made the argument that the *li* in the mind is the same as the *li* in external things, and the investigation of the latter would enlighten the former, they already had two presuppositions: 1) the *li* in the mind and the *li* in external things are the same in nature; 2) the investigation of external things also prepares the way for the implementation of moral principles in different situations. Regarding 1), their premises are that all principles in the world are different manifestations of the principle of *yin-yang* interaction¹⁴ or the Great Ultimate, so they share the same nature. In this respect, moral principles should also share the same nature as the principles existing in myriad things. Therefore, investigating the principles of external things is a way to illuminate the principle of the human mind. However, due to Toegye and Zhu Xi's acknowledgement of the autonomy of *qi* after its birth, and their tacit acceptance that *qi* can act in violation of *li*, they implied the existence of another kind of

something certain, tomorrow it changes to uncertain. Lu Zijing liked it. The teaching of sages and worthies does discriminate among inside and outside, root and branches, or up and down. Now Zijing insisted to concentrate on the inside, leave the outside unattended. Where is there such a case? (Zhu 1994, 2974).

14. "One *yin* and one *yang* is the Way," in "Xici shang" 系辭(上) of *Yijing* 易經 (The Book of Changes).

principle different from the assumed *li*. This would have brought incoherence to their systems. Regarding 2), due to Zhu Xi and Toegye's acknowledgement of the autonomy of *qi*, though the moral principles are the same, in practice, they must meet the requirement of different situations. For example, the same activity of filial piety will be different to one's mother and father in Confucian rituals. This led to Zhu Xi's famous doctrine, "The *li* is one while its manifestations are many (*liyi fenshu*)."

Internal Intensions in *Li-Qi* Dualism

Although Toegye gave justifications for his *li-qi* dualism, he could not yet escape some of its internal tensions. The fundamental one is the tension between the superiority of *li* and the autonomy of *qi*. On the one hand, Toegye claimed that *li* gives rise to *qi*,¹⁵ and is the reason why *qi* behaves so.¹⁶ On the other hand, he admitted that *qi* can control the situation and deviate from *li* after it is produced, which implies that *qi* has its own principle besides *li*. As a result, both the superiority and the sameness of *li* in the universe are open to question.

From the autonomy of *qi*, Toegye explained the different manifestations of *li* in different things. In his explanation, the primordial *qi* or *yin-yang* can produce various *qi* with different levels of purity or clarity, which has different ability to manifest the *li* within it. On this basis, Toegye stated, "Each thing has its own nature," which is referred as physical nature (*qizhi zhixing*). When the different manifestation of *li* is applied to human beings, it is used to explain the difference in moral capacity. In other words, the purer a person's *qi*, the more *li* is manifested, and the more likely he or she behaves morally. As a result, a person's disposition would be innately predetermined.

15. *Li* has its function naturally; thus it can produce *yin* and *yang* spontaneously (Yi 1997, 2:299b).

16. 氣之所以然. "What could move or rest is *qi*; what makes *qi* move or rest is *li*" (Yi 1997, 2:358a).

As Toegye emphasized, it was the transformation of *qi* that allowed the birth of Shun from an evil father; and it also the transformation of *qi* that allowed the birth of evil sons to such sagely fathers as Yao and Shun (Yi 1997, 2:273a-b). What, then, is the role of human effort in moral cultivation? In regards to this question, Toegye flatly denied the incorrigibility of destiny and endorsed the significance of human effort in changing it. He quoted Cai Jiufeng's (Cai Chen: 1167-1230) words: "*qi* has purity and impurity, so destiny has gain and loss. Once destiny is completed, Heaven and Earth cannot change it. But it is man who can change it" (Yi 1997, 2:220b). Here, Toegye inherited the emphasis on human subjectivity in Confucian tradition,¹⁷ but he still had to explain how a predestined human being could change what is endowed by Heaven.

Toegye would resort to human intelligence to answer the question raised in the last paragraph. He might state that human beings can actively follow moral principles and change their endowed physical dispositions through the application of their own intelligence. But as Toegye also explained the difference between human intelligence on the basis of the degree of *qi*'s purity, it is very likely that human intelligence is predetermined and cannot be changed either. This is also reflected in Toegye's division of human beings into sages and ordinary people by the standard of the purity and clarity of *qi*. If this were true, in consideration of the facts that both intelligence and moral capacity are arranged by the degree of *qi*'s purity, i.e., the degree of *li*'s manifestation, it would follow that *qi* has the ability to determine whether a particular person is able to follow *li* or not. If this logic is extended further, it seems that it is *qi* that stands for the real existence of man in moral cultivation, while *li* is just a transcendental principle or abstract standard. *Qi* would carry on the task to change itself. Doubt would rise as to the possibility of how predes-

17. As we know, Confucius said, "it is man that can make the Way great; it is not the Way that makes man great" (*Analects* 15:28). Later, Zhang Zai proposed, "*qi* and the physical form can be transformed through learning." 「經學理窟—義理」(The Den of Principle of Confucian Classics: Principle) of *Zhang Zai ji* 張載集.

tined *qi* could change itself. It seems that all human effort to change one's endowed disposition would be futile. Being aware of this difficulty, Wang Fuzhi claims that the *qi* endowed at one's birth is only a part of one's *qi* in his whole life; later, the universe keeps infusing him with fresh parts of *qi*, so he can transform not only his physical form, but also his moral endowment. This is what Wang Fuzhi calls, "Nature generates itself daily and accomplishes itself daily."¹⁸

The basic reason for these tensions lies in that when Zhu Xi or Toegye discussed *li*, they mixed the *li* of morality and the *li* of natural world. The *li* of morality are normative, which distinguish good from evil. For example, they regard the nourishment of life as good while regarding its destruction as evil. The *li* of the natural world, on the other hand, are descriptive. They regard all things as neutral and natural and do not differentiate good from evil among them. In Confucianism, these two kinds of *li* are thought to originate from the same source, the *yin-yang* interaction. In this way, Confucian scholars find a cosmological justification for moral principles.¹⁹ However, they seldom make a conscious difference between these two kinds of *li*, but subsume them both under the term *li*. (Only Zhuang Zi wholeheartedly warns people of the difference of the human way [morality] from the Way of Nature.) Zhu Xi and Toegye unconsciously followed the mainstream of Confucianism and kept the distinction between the two kinds of *li* ambiguous, so when they applied the *li* of morality to natural things that are morally neutral, a conflict or inconsistency will emerge. They would find that some natural things, such as bees or ants, barely share *li* (*li* of morality) while most others do not, because the *li* of morality is narrower than the *li* of the natural world. As a result, they had to admit that either an impure *qi* does not have the *li* (*li* of morality), or that a thing can have its own principle besides *li* (*li* of morality).

18. Wang Fuzhi says, "Nature is the principle of life. It generates itself daily and accomplishes itself daily" (Wang 1998, vol. 2).

19. In Appendix A (系辭上) of the *Book of Changes*, the author infers the noble and abject of human beings from the high and low of Heaven and Earth. 天尊地卑 乾坤定矣. 卑高以陳 貴賤位矣.

If we return to Wang Yangming and Lu Jiuyuan's criticism of Zhu Xi, we can find that they wanted to cut off the investigation of external things, i.e., investigating the *li* of natural things. For they find inconsistency between the *li* of morality and the *li* of natural things. They knew that the Confucian emphasis was on the improvement of human morality, so they just recommended seeking the *li* in one's mind and casting away selfishness. In this way, they kept their doctrine of moral cultivation consistent. Here also lies the reason they criticized Zhu Xi's doctrine as devious and roundabout.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have analyzed Toegye's *li-qi* dualism and its role in the Four-Seven Division and the function of *xin*. Regarding himself as a disciple of Zhu Xi, Toegye developed the latter's dualism by proposing the activity of *li*, thus avoiding Cao Duan's criticism, and secured the *li-qi* dualism upon a sounder basis. However, in doing this, he needed to give an explanation of the relation between the activity of *li* and the activity of *qi*, otherwise, it would be hard to retain the doctrine that "there is no *li* without *qi*, no *qi* without *li*." In other words, without a harmonious unity between the activity of *qi* and the activity of *li*, it very likely would lead to the idea that *li* and *qi* act as two independent parts in the formation of a thing. Perhaps, it is on this point that Zhu Xi did not dare to make claims about the activity of *li*, but just regarded it as the master or principle of *qi*, although he admitted that sometimes *li* as the master could not control the activity of *qi*. Zhu Xi's equivocation or contradiction on *li-qi* relation as well as the new intension Toegye created after he proposed the activity of *li*, both show the difficulty in adhering to *li-qi* dualism. As a result, later scholars inevitably choose *xin*-monism or *qi*-monism.

Toegye's acknowledgement of the activity of *li* will reasonably lead to his Four-Seven Division in consideration of which of *li* and *qi* issues first in the arising of emotions. This division simply delimits

the Four Beginnings as good emotions from the Seven Emotions as a mixture of good and bad emotions. Although both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions appear in Confucian classics, can this division attain its legitimacy?

This brings up the interpretation of Mencius' Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions in *Zhongyong* on the one hand, and the relations between these two groups of emotions on the other. As has been shown, Mencius tended to regard the Four Beginnings as a natural disposition of human beings, while *Zhongyong* regards the Seven Emotions as the entire range of human feelings; the Four Beginnings should be counted as part of the Seven Emotions. To some degree, it is the inconsistency between the Seven Emotions being regarded as issuing from *qi* in Toegye's system and those of the Seven Emotions meeting due measure being regarded as the universal way in *Zhongyong* that leads Gobong to doubt the feasibility of the Four-Seven Division. Actually, Gobong's subsuming the Four Beginnings under the Seven Emotions implied that he had the tendency to believe in *qi*-monism although he did not openly reject Toegye's *li-qi* dualism.

When it came to *xin*, Toegye had to explain the origin of evil in human behavior as well as the feasibility of moral cultivation in terms of the *li-qi* relationship. In his opinion, evil appears when *li* is eclipsed by *qi*. This eclipse leads the human mind to be unable to follow moral principles and thus fall into evil. Moral cultivation thus should focus on the awareness of moral principle, i.e., understanding the *li* both inside and outside. In this way, he followed Zhu Xi's investigation of things so as to gain an understanding of *li*. However, he had to confront the question: now that *li* is the same in all things and also already exists in the mind, why do I bother to investigate external things instead of simply concentrating on the *li* in my mind? He proposed as a response that the investigation of the *li* in external things would not only help awaken one's awareness of the *li* in the mind but also help facilitate one's moral practice in concrete situations. But this answer was too vague. If this problem is to be solved, it is necessary to make a distinction between the moral principle for human behaviors and the natural principle of things. In this way, the

investigation of external things can be regarded as a way to understand real situations and facilitate the practice of morality. This idea was later proposed by Dai Zhen (1723-1777).

Nevertheless, when viewed from another point, Toegye's insistence on moral cultivation and the investigation of things stands as a severe attack on Wang Yangming's doctrine, "the unity of knowledge and action." In Wang's opinion, once one realizes the moral principle in his mind, he is able to carry it out in practice. On this point, Toegye indicated the difference between the activation of human instincts and the completion of deliberate moral activities, and thus corrected the tendency of empty talk instead of practice in the Lu-Wang school. Toegye's emphasis on moral practice has deeply influenced subsequent Koreans' seriousness in their compliance with Confucian principles. Moreover, his emphasis on the deliberation of moral activity showed his tendency to regard morality as a correction of human nature, rather than a spontaneous response of human nature to external situations. In this aspect, his doctrine goes closer to Xunzi's "transformation of human nature through the exertion of human effort."

At this point, we might be able to offer an explanation of or make harmony between Toegye's two ideas. That is, he proposed deliberate moral activity on the one hand, and insisted on the Four Beginnings as issuing from *li* on the other. At first sight, these two ideas seem unrelated. But Toegye had to answer whether the Four Beginnings were deliberate moral behaviors or not. From Mencius' text, they are apparently not. At this point, Toegye was required to harmonize the deliberation of moral activity and Mencius's natural spontaneity of the Four Beginnings. This requirement would lead Toegye to regard the Four Beginnings as issuing from *li* and always perfect, another name of spontaneous response or issuance. Then, all the Seven Emotions would be subject to the influence of human deliberation, i.e., if the mind follows moral principle, the Seven Emotions will be due measure; otherwise, they will not. In this way, what Toegye regarded as deliberate moral activity should belong to the regulation of the Seven Emotions, not to the spontaneity of the Four

Beginnings. This also tells why he stuck to the difference between issuing from *li* and issuing from *qi* as defining the standard of the Four-Seven Division.

As has been mentioned above, although Toegye proposed the activity of *li*, he did not further develop the relation between its relation with the activity of *qi*, and its role in the activities of the human mind. For example, when Toegye explained differences among human beings, he, just like Zhu Xi, resorted again to the different purity of *qi*. This results in not only a predetermination of human nature but also the predetermination of human intelligence, thus creating new problems for the possibility of moral cultivation, whose fulfillment depends on human intelligence. This new problem forces later scholar to give an answer about the possibility of moral cultivation and as a result, Wang Fuzhi's statement that "nature generates itself daily and accomplishes itself daily" comes into play.

In summary, we have discussed the problems Toegye solved, as well as those that his solution in turn brought on in the great context of Confucianism. His development of Zhu Xi's dualism and his criticism of Wang Yangming's doctrine not only indicated the important place of his doctrine in the development of Confucianism, but also showed new directions for future Confucian scholars. To some degree, his discussions indicated the tendencies that Wang Fuzhi and Dai Zhen's philosophy took on later. This is testified to by Yi Yulgok's *qi*-monism in Korea. From this point of view, Toegye is a milestone in the development of Korean Confucianism, just as Zhu Xi is in Neo-Confucianism. He identified some contradictions in Korean Confucianism, and in so doing pushed it to new stages.

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GLOSSARY

<i>benran zhixing</i> (Ch.)	本然之性	<i>qi zhi suoyi ran</i> (Ch.)	氣之所以然
<i>ceyin zhixin</i> (Ch.)	惻隱之心	<i>qizhi zhixing</i> (Ch.)	氣質之性
Cai Jiufeng (Ch.)	蔡九峰	<i>siduan</i> (Ch.)	四端
Dai Zhen (Ch.)	戴震	<i>renxin</i> (Ch.)	人心
<i>Dingxingzhu</i> (Ch.)	定性書	<i>taiji</i> (Ch.)	太極
<i>daoxin</i> (Ch.)	道心	<i>tiandi zhixin</i> (Ch.)	天地之心
<i>huaxing qiwei</i> (Ch.)	化性起為	Wang Fuzhi (Ch.)	王夫之
Ki Dae-seung	奇大升	<i>weifa</i> (Ch.)	未發
<i>liangneng</i> (Ch.)	良能	<i>xintong xingqing</i> (Ch.)	心統性情
<i>liangzhi</i> (Ch.)	良知	Yang Cihu (Ch.)	楊慈湖
<i>liyi fenshu</i> (Ch.)	理一分殊	<i>yifa</i> (Ch.)	已發
Lu Jiuyuan (Ch.)	陸九淵	<i>zhengxin</i> (Ch.)	正心
Luo Zhengan (Ch.)	羅整庵	<i>zhixing heyi</i> (Ch.)	知行合一
<i>Lu-Wang xuepai</i> (Ch.)	陸王學派	<i>Zhongyong</i> (Ch.)	中庸
<i>qiqing</i> (Ch.)	七情	Zhou Dunyi (Ch.)	周敦頤
(Ch.: Chinese)			