

Philosophical Implications of the Discussion of *Mibal* in the Horak Debate of the Late Joseon Period

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Abstract

In the East Asian intellectual context emphasizing the unity between human and the nature, Neo-Confucian scholars of Joseon displayed a profound interest in accomplishing the moral state of pure good without evil. The discussion on mibal 未發 (the state where thoughts and emotions have not been aroused) within the Horak debate asked whether humans, with all their thoughts and desires, can free their mind-hearts from the influences of their innate temperaments (gijil 氣質). This study examines how the mind-heart was interpreted in the framework of the li-qi theory (igi ron 理氣論) as illustrated by the debates between two Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars, Yi Gan and Han Won-jin. Yi Gan and other Nak-ron scholars asserted that the mind-heart was “pure” in mibal and could therefore be established as the legitimate moral agent connected to original nature (bonseong 本性). On the other hand, Ho-ron scholars, including Han Won-jin, argued that one must accept the presence of qi 氣 in the mibal state even though qi does not function in such a state, because it is only through qi that li 理 can be manifested in reality.

Keywords: Horak debate, Yi Gan, Han Won-jin, *li*, *qi*, *mibal*, original mind-heart, cultivation of the mind-heart

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Introduction

This study examines the Horak debate with a focus on the discussion of *mibal* 未發 (*weifā* in Chinese) or the state where thoughts and emotions have not been aroused, in order to identify the kinds of topics of interest to Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars and examine how the debate unfolded. In the East Asian intellectual context highlighting the oneness between human and the nature, Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars were deeply interested in the moral state of pure good without evil. They advanced their discussions by furthering issues raised within Chinese Neo-Confucianism, among which the idea of *mibal* attracted particular attention. They regarded *mibal* as the pure state of consciousness prior to and unaffected by the stimulation of emotions and thus as the legitimate foundation for accomplishing one's morality.

Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars showed a particular interest in the question of whether the state of pure good could be accepted as the universal moral standard. How was the Theory of the Mind-Heart and Nature (*simseong ron* 心性論) idealizing the pure good of the human mind-heart integrated into the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* theory (*igi ron* 理氣論) explaining natural laws? This was a constant topic of Joseon Neo-Confucian issues such as the Four-Seven Debate (*sadan chiljeong nonbyeon* 四端七情論辨) of the mid-Joseon period.¹ This attempt to interpret the mind-heart in the frame of the *li-qi* theory also underlies the Horak debate of the late Joseon period covered in this study.²

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1. While the Four-Seven Theory (*sadan chiljeong ron* 四端七情論) dealt with emotions (*jeong* 情) or workings of the mind-heart, the debate on *mibal* as part of the Horak debate in the eighteenth century focused on the *mibal* state where the mind-heart has not begun to function, exploring the issue of good and evil more fundamentally. Furthermore, the debate on whether humans and non-human creatures have the same nature (*inmulseong dongi ron* 人物性同異論) expanded its scope to the natural world. Refer to Choi (2009, 280).
 2. Most of the researchers interested in the late Joseon period took notice of the Horak debate, regardless of whether they studied specific scholars and themes. Refer to Choi et al. (2003) and Cho (2006).

When the Horak debate emerged in the eighteenth century, Joseon Neo-Confucianism was undergoing theoretical elaboration. The aftermath of the Japanese invasions of Korea (1592-1598) necessitated the reestablishment of Neo-Confucianism as the national ideology and the internal solidarity of the Noron faction that was being divided according to the different regional origins of its members. The debate on *mibal*, one of the main topics of the Horak debate, questioned whether humans can free themselves from the influences of temperament (*gijil* 氣質). The human mind-heart or the vessel through which the original nature (*bonseong* 本性) can be realized, was thought to lie in the area of *qi* 氣 subject to evil because, in reality, the mind-heart displays signs of both good and evil. In this context, various questions ensued, such as whether temperament exists in the state of *mibal* where it does not function, and, if so, whether its individual presence has any significance in a state of pure good. These discussions are understood as part of the process through which Neo-Confucian scholars tried to cultivate and value pure morality by obtaining better wisdom.

The focus of this study will be on the debates between Oeam Yi Gan (1677-1727) and Namdang Han Won-jin (1682-1751), the most notable Neo-Confucian scholars at the height of the Horak debate. Before delving into the main part of the study, relevant terms and ideas will be briefly overviewed.

The Development of the Discussion on *Mibal*

The Onset of the Discussion on Mibal

The philosophical origins of *mibal* can be traced back to *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), specifically the first paragraph of the text:

Zhong 中 (the middle) refers to the state in which joy, anger, sadness or happiness have not been aroused while *he* 和 (harmony) refers to the state where they have been aroused and settled in a

moderate form. *Zhong* is the Great Origin (*daiben* 大本) of the world and he is the common Way of the world.³

In the above excerpt, the *mibal* state of the mind-heart where human emotions have not emerged is termed as *zhong* 中 or the state of being unbiased or undistracted. Meanwhile, if those emotions manifest themselves in their proper form in the state of *ibal* 已發 (the state where thoughts and emotions have been aroused), this state was understood as *he* 和. Mentioning the concepts of *zhong* and *he* were not uncommon even before *Zhongyong* was established as one of the Four Books (*sishu* 四書) of Confucian classics. For example, these concepts appeared in the statements in *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects of Confucius) that “Excessive is worse than insufficient” (*guoyou buji* 過猶不及) or that “In administering the proprieties, establishing harmony is important” (*yejiyong hwawigwi* 禮之用 和爲貴). Here, *zhong* and *he* were seen as no more than practical methods for ethical life; no attempts were made to use the terms as integral explanations for human mentality such as emotions or desires.

It was only with the appearance of *Zhongyong* that *mibal* and *ibal* or *zhong* and *he* began to receive attention as conceptual bases of morality. Since emotions and desires that come out of the mind-heart triggered behaviors, it was important to maintain the mind-heart in a state compatible with natural laws or moral principles. The author of *Zhongyong* argued that one must keep the mind-heart in the state of *zhong* and *he* as the solution for daily problems. In the Northern Song period, the concepts of *zhong* and *he* went beyond indicating the aroused or unaroused state of emotions and signified metaphysical essentials and operation of the mind-heart, laying the theoretical foundation for the Theory of the Mind-Heart and Nature and the Theory of Self-Cultivation (*xiuyanglun* 修養論) (Sho 2004). In particular, attention was given to defining the state of *mibal* or *zhong* where emotions have not yet been aroused, since pure morality was

3. “喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中，發而皆中節，謂之和。中也者，天下之大本也，和也者，天下之達道也” (*Zhongyong*).

considered as subject to constant change and unavailable in the mind-heart with aroused emotions.

The Development of Zhu Xi's Theories of Zhonghe

By his theories of *zhonghe* 中和 (“middle and harmony”; *junghwa* in Korean), Zhu Xi, known as the founder of Neo-Confucianism, catalyzed the firm establishment of the topics of *mibal* and *ibal* as a main philosophical issue. His idea on *zhonghe* underwent changes and led to the formation of the “new theory of *zhonghe*” (*zhonghe xinshuo* 中和新說), which served as the foundation of East Asian Neo-Confucianism.⁴

The first question about *mibal*, the state prior to the generation of thoughts, was how it should be defined. If *mibal* was understood as the state where one has no consciousness due to detachment from external entities, the concept would be hard to grasp for humans living in ceaseless streams of consciousness. *Mibal* obviously is not such a blackout state or comparable to the concept of hazy slumber (*honchim* 昏沈) in Buddhism. Cautious of this erroneous understanding, Zhu Xi was against the practice of earlier Daonan School (Donamhak 道南學 in Korean) Neo-Confucian scholars because they employed meditation (*jeongjwa* 靜坐) as the method of self-cultivation to reach the state of *mibal*. Zhu Xi, however, was not satisfied with the Huxiang School (Hosanghak 湖湘學 in Korean) either, which endeavored to look into and recognize the essentials (*bonche* 本體) of nature in the *ibal* state. Such efforts to examine signs of morality at

4. In general, Zhu Xi's theories of *zhonghe* have been classified according to *Zhuzi nianpu* 朱子年譜 (A Chronological Biography of Master Zu) written by Wang Mao-hong, who conducted historical research on Zhu Xi Confucianism. Clear distinctions between the Old Theory of *Zhonghe* and the New Theory of *Zhonghe* are presented in *Juja eollon dongi go* 朱子言論同異攷 (Discrepancies in Speeches and Writings of Zhu Xi) by Han Won-jin, who was a contemporary Joseon Neo-Confucian scholar. Both scholars shared the view that these theories provided a clue for a clear explanation of Zhu Xi Confucianism albeit they used different bases in distinguishing the two theories. Refer to C. Lee (1996).

every single moment of consciousness may cause unending tension to life with ups and downs of reality. Consequently, Zhu Xi shifted his method of self-cultivation from the recognition of the essentials to the nurture of the essentials.

Zhu Xi paid particular attention to the role of the mind-heart encompassing *mibal* and *ibal*. He viewed the state of *mibal* as the essentials of the mind-heart where thoughts had yet to be generated and *ibal* as the operation of the mind-heart where different emotions revealed themselves due to external entities. Through the mind-heart, which carried these two ambivalent aspects, one must pursue purity in the original state of the mind-heart while trying to accomplish morality in reality. Zhu Xi defined *mibal* above all as “the state in which nature is united in perfect harmony and morality is completely formed.”⁵ This definition affected Neo-Confucian scholars, who engaged themselves both in the nurture of *mibal* and the introspection of *ibal*⁶ to adopt the attitude of reverence (*jing* 敬; *gyeong* in Korean) as their self-cultivating methods.

According to Zhu Xi’s discussion, *mibal* is not the same as the mere halting of consciousness but alike to the awakesness immediately before a response to changes in situations. Nevertheless, the two conditions required for the establishment of *mibal*, namely the notion of dormant thoughts and that of clear perception, may seem as contradictory as when one is told to stop and run at the same time. The mind-heart bridging *mibal* and *ibal* was seen as the point where such a contradiction could be resolved. Zhu Xi perceived self-centeredness as covertly underlying conscious states of mind such as emotions and thought and suggested the self-cultivation method of nurturing original nature in the *mibal* state, where consciousness had yet to unfold (Lee 2007a).

However, the mind-heart falls into the realm of *qi*, unlike nature, which is directly linked to *li*, in that both good and evil reside in the mind-heart. Thus, one cannot be totally free from the influences of

5. “方其靜也，事物未至，思慮未萌，而一性渾然，道義全具” (Zhuxiji).

6. “未發之前是敬也，固已主乎存養之實；已發之際是敬也，又常行於省察之間” (Zhuxiji).

temperament and body even when one is in the state of *mibal* or clear mind-heart. On the other hand, if the mind-heart were comprised only of *qi*, it would be difficult to accept the traditional notion that morality of pure good is inherently potential in humans. This tricky issue emerged as a scholarly controversy in Joseon Neo-Confucianism, which sought to refine and elevate the pure and good mind-heart by expounding the mind-heart and nature in the frame of the *li-qi* theory.

Development and Issues of the Discussion on *Mibal* in the Context of the Horak Debate

Joseon Scholarly Interest in the Notion of Mibal

Yi Hwang (1501-1570), who laid the foundation for Joseon Neo-Confucianism, criticized those who understood *mibal* as a detachment from consciousness similar to meditation. Yi I (1536-1584) also rebutted Seong Hon's (1535-1598) assertion that original nature undergoes transfiguration even in the *mibal* state due to each person's unique characteristics of *qi* (Song 1996, 147-151). These arguments were relevant to the main tendency of Joseon Neo-Confucianism to idealize the state of *zhong* or *mibal*, where the mind-heart and nature overlap.⁷ This approach to the notion of *mibal* became one of the main themes of the Horak debate that emerged in the eighteenth century.

A letter sent by Han Won-jin to his colleague Choe Jing-hu in 1708 gives hints to the origins of the Horak debate. The three assertions in this letter came to form the central themes of the Horak debate: the state of *mibal* incorporates not only original nature (*bonyeonji seong* 本然之性) but also temperamental nature (*gijilji seong*

7. While *ibal* refers to the state where emotions have emerged, *mibal* is linked to nature of pure good that human beings must pursue. But considering that *mibal* involves clear perceptual activities, it is also regarded as part of the mind-heart. Thus, the concept of *mibal* straddles both nature and the mind-heart.

氣質之性); every being is prevented by its inherent and unique *qi* from being fully endowed with the Five Virtues (*osang* 五常); and one's temperament and the mystic emptiness (*heoryeong* 虛靈) of mind-heart determine whether one can be a sage or a commoner. The following excerpt shows Han's response to Choe's rebuttal that the temperamental nature cannot be integrated into the state of *mibal*:

If we regard the state of *mibal* as the original nature, does it exist by itself or does it rely on something else for its being? If its existence is independent, I cannot but agree to your argument. But if it needs something to rely on, I should label that something, along with its foundation of *qi*, as temperamental nature. Then, how could one ever say that the original nature is the only thing that exists in the state of *mibal* whereas the temperamental nature comes into being in the state of *ibal*? Although it is standard to equate *mibal* with nature, I've never heard that it applies to *ibal* as well. Moreover, although it is said that nature becomes emotion (*jeong* 情) when it is aroused, I've never heard that it becomes another kind of nature by arousal.⁸

Han Won-jin's assertion was that the state of *mibal* embraces not only the original nature but also the temperamental nature, which has characteristics of *qi*. Han agreed to regard *mibal* as the original nature, but opposed the opinion that defined temperamental nature as emotion aroused in the state of *ibal*, criticizing that it confused nature with emotions. In his view, equating *mibal* to the original nature and *ibal* to the temperamental nature, although rightfully intended to highlight the purity of *mibal*, was contrary to the basic tenets of Neo-Confucianism. It was in this regard that Han Won-jin introduced a rather sensational assertion that the temperamental nature exists in the state of *mibal*, which had been generally said to be pure.

8. “只道未發之前本然之性，其有所寓而方存乎，抑無寓而獨立乎？以為無所寓而獨立，則高論是矣。若以為有所寓而方存，則其有所寓之氣而命之曰氣質之性，安得謂未發之前，只有本然之性，而已發後方有氣質之性乎？蓋聞未發謂之性，未聞以已發為性也；聞性發為情，而未聞性發又為性也” (*Namdangip*).

Han's opinion faced harsh criticism by Yi Gan as well as other scholars. Since *mibal* referred only to the state of purity and originality where *qi* had no role, it was deemed nonsensical to discuss the presence of the temperamental nature in the *mibal* state where *qi* is not in operation. A few years later, Han and Yi met at Hansansa temple in Chungcheong-do province to discuss this issue but could not reach a consensus. Yi Gan maintained an uncompromising stance that "it is inappropriate to consider temperamental nature when the Great Origin has not gone through arousal." This encounter triggered Yi Gan's full-fledged criticism of Han Won-jin.

The two scholars eventually came to consult their teacher Kwon Sang-ha (1641-1721), an influential figure in Chungcheong-do province, for the settlement of their debate. According to Kwon, one's inherent temperament automatically causes both good and evil to exist in the state of *mibal*. Yet, one can retain one's good original nature in the *mibal* state because *qi* does not function without exposure to external entities; however, in the *ibal* state, one is supposed to respond differently according to whether the temperament responding to the outside world is good or bad. Kwon's opinion was identical to that of Han Won-jin, except that he used the term "temperament" to mean what Han termed "temperamental nature." This topic continued to stimulate heated debates in correspondence exchanged between Han and Yi circa 1712, in which Han himself mentioned that the "presence of the temperamental nature in the *mibal* state" was one of the major issues of the time.⁹

In addition to Kwon Sang-ha and his followers, Kim Chang-hyeop (1651-1708) and other Neo-Confucian scholars in the Seoul and Gyeonggi area were engaged in similar debates, expressing ideas comparable to those of Yi Gan. Kim Chang-hyeop considered *mibal* as the foundation for his learning. Notably, he highlighted the mystically empty and clear mind-heart filled with *cheolli* 天理 (*li* of Heaven) along with the *mibal* state. His efforts to cultivate the mind-heart and

9. "先生之說不同於公舉者，其大目有二，曰未發氣質之性有無之辨也，曰人物五常之性同異之辨也" (Gyeongui *gimunnok*).

unite it with the essentials implied his belief that the mind-heart functioned as the moral agent in reality, as described in his debate on perception (*jigak nonui* 知覺論議).

Many Neo-Confucian scholars had already been actively engaged in discussions over the issue of *mibal* when the ideological confrontation between Han Won-jin and Yi Gan occurred. The two scholars discussed their predecessors' ideas in a free-spirited fashion, thus contributing to the establishment of a sound scholarly atmosphere. The standpoint shared by Han Won-jin and Kwon Sang-ha that the temperament influenced the *mibal* state and induced the temperamental nature to exist within it came to develop the Horak debate between the Ho-ron and Nak-ron factions, which were formed according to regional origin and the scholarly stances of each faction's respective members.

The Issues and Implications of the Debate on Mibal

The constant issue in the debate on *mibal* was whether one must accept the presence of temperament even in the state of *mibal*. Even in the calmness of *mibal*, the mind-heart ultimately belongs to the realm of *qi*, unlike the original nature that is pure good in and of itself. Given this, can such mind-heart be seen as possessing morality? Can humans ever be free from the influences of temperament? Provided that the mind-heart of a sage and that of a commoner are originally different, is it meaningless to say that one can change one's temperament to become a sage, the ideal moral person in Confucianism? Is it not correct to say that every human being has the minimum amount of humanity to have consideration or compassion for others even if they are not free from the influence of temperament? Different issues derived from contrasting responses to these questions furthered the contention within the debate.

1) Can the Mind-Heart be Free from Temperament?

Han Won-jin and Yi Gan, central figures at the heart of the Horak debate, took the same position that both good and evil function in

the mind-heart, but differed in their understandings of the essentials of the mind-heart. Han drew a distinction between the pure and clear mind-heart and the mind-heart affected by *qi*, where good and evil are mixed:

The clarity of the mind-heart is its very spirit before it has been aroused, whereas distractedness, darkness, fullness, or deficiency of the mind-heart is the manifestation of *qi* endowed upon it. The originally innate *qi* still exists even when *qi* itself has not been aroused. The pureness and emptiness emanate from the establishment of *zhong*, which is made possible when *qi* is not yet working to shield *li*.¹⁰

In the above excerpt, Han Won-jin viewed the spirit of the unaroused mind-heart as full of clarity and good. He added that each person has different characteristics because of different temperaments, which can be equated to one's original self.

Criticism against Han Won-jin was directed at his assertion that such temperamental differences still exist in the state of *mibal* because the presence of *qi* containing evil tendencies in the state of *mibal* is incompatible with the idea that *mibal* is the state of purity. Han argued that since *li* cannot exist without *qi*, one must at least assume the presence of inactive *qi* even in the state of *mibal*. However, applying the *li-qi* theory to the interpretation of the mind-heart and nature by equating them to *qi* and *li*, respectively, was met with the problem of discordance between the mind-heart and nature. In particular, Han faced criticism for accepting the existence of the root of evil in the *mibal* state and thus violating the notion that nature is inherently good (*seongseon* 性善) and *mibal* is the basis for moral behavior.

Yi Gan, Han's major adversary, also agreed with the idea that human beings have the original mind-heart with purity and good as well as the temperamental mind-heart affected by *qi*. Contrary to

10. “此心湛然，心之未發氣像也；偏昏羸乏，心之氣稟本色也。氣雖未發，本稟自在，湛然虛明，氣不用事，故理無所蔽而中體立焉” (Gyeongui *gimunnok*).

Han, however, his emphasis was on the original mind-heart (*bonsim* 本心), seeing it as the foundation for human morality. His notion of the original mind-heart as presented in Confucian scriptures was the pure and moral mind-heart connected to *cheolli*, which encourages one to show consideration for others. The mind-heart was something endowed to human beings at birth and depicted as the Bright Virtue (*myeongdeok* 明德) or the root that they must follow.

Yi Gan highlighted the presence of the original mind-heart in human beings and contrasted it against temperament:

Whether one becomes a sage or a commoner depends on the difference in the influence of temperament that causes their mind-heart to be bright versus dark or good versus evil. But like the host and the guest or the root and the tip, the mind-heart and the temperament exist as separate entities with a clear-cut division between them.¹¹

The above excerpt from the first paragraph of Yi Gan's "Mibal byeon" 未發辨 (Thesis on Unarousedness) summarizes his longstanding debates with Han Won-jin. Yi judged Han as ignorant of the meaning of *mibal*, the cause of which he ascribed to Han's confusion about the original mind-heart.

Sages are those who maintain their moral self, unlike commoners. Whether one becomes a sage or a commoner depends on how much one is affected by temperament. Though nobody, including morally ideal sages, is free from the influences of temperament, the situation can be changed when one can attenuate those influences and keep the mind-heart in its initial state of purity without evil. As Yi Gan tried to establish the original mind-heart as his basis for morality, it was necessary for him to identify the pure mind-heart unaffected by temperament. He wrote, "the mind-heart is the mind-heart, and the temperament is the temperament." In other words,

11. "聖凡之間，隨其所拘之淺深，而此心爲之昏明焉，爲之善惡焉。而然其賓主本末之間，心自心而氣稟自氣稟，界分部伍，亦甚井井矣" (*Oeam yugo*).

like the host and the guest or the root and the tip, the original mind-heart and the temperament certainly belonged to different areas and one must endeavor to rely on the presence of the original mind-heart.

2) Is *Qi* Inactive in the State of *Mibal*?

In their debate, Yi Gan and Han Won-jin presented different interpretations of the notion that *qi* does not work in the *mibal* state (*gibul yongsa* 氣不用事). The term *yongsa* 用事 generally refers to handling something or a situation through management or operation. But when one says that *qi* does not work in the state of *mibal*, it does not mean that *qi* is totally inactive. Yi Gan's definition of *gibul yongsa* as the condition that the degree of purity and consistency (*cheongtak subak* 清濁粹駁) of *qi* does not hinder the mind-heart from functioning as the moral agent towards goodness.¹² Han Won-jin's remark that *qi* exists but does not work in the *mibal* state was rather unsatisfactory to Yi Gan:

Mibal is the moment when *qi* does not work. It is the state where clear and pure good exists without being swayed by the extent of purity and consistency of *qi*. This is the genuine state of *li*, spreading to all directions without bias, and there is no need to acknowledge the presence of *qi* that does not even work in such a state.¹³

Yi Gan's point was that paying unnecessary attention to *qi* in the *mibal* state may cause one to underrate the purity of *mibal*, which is by definition the state full of clear and pure good. Yi Gan tried to find the meaning of *mibal* not in the inactivity of *qi* but in the active working of the original mind-heart:

Sages and commoners are endowed with the essentials of the

12. Overemphasizing the notion of *gibul yongsa* as interpreted by Neo-Confucian scholars may cause one to misunderstand *mibal* as the stoppage of all psychological activities or experiencing a mystic stage. Refer to S. Lee (2007b).

13. “所謂未發，正是氣不用事時也。夫所謂清濁粹駁者，此時無情意無造作，澹然純一，亦善而已矣。此處正好單指其不偏不倚·四亭八當底本然之理也，何必兼指其不用事之氣而爲言乎？” (*Oeam yugo*).

Bright Virtue in an equal manner, but the two are endowed with different vigors (*hyeolgi* 血氣), which can be either pure or impure. The Bright Virtue is the master of the vigor, or of the temperament. If the master takes control, the vigor retreats from the entire body and harks to it and the mind-heart becomes mystically empty and bright. This is the *mibal* as defined by Zisi 子思, where the Great Origin is found. On the other hand, the vigor functions to spoil purity of the mind-heart if the master has no control. This is the *mibal* of Han Won-jin, where good and evil are mixed. The difference in principles and foundation lies here.¹⁴

Yi Gan was against the view that both good and evil are present in the state of *mibal* because it presupposed a situation in which vigor has already begun to function. This is different from a situation in which the original good mind-heart has full control over vigor. To him, the functioning of vigor in the *mibal* state meant the possibility of the presence of evil in *mibal*, of which he disapproved.

On the other hand, the notion of *gibul yongsa* was more significant in Han Won-jin's arguments. Han agreed to the general notion that *mibal* is the clear state of the mind-heart with no impurities where thoughts have not yet begun to arise from contact with external entities. However, he emphasized the fact that *mibal* is the state with the potential to perceive but that it is different from actual perception.¹⁵ Although the state of *mibal* was supposed to be different from the state of *ibal*, where both good and evil are mixed and present, Han acknowledged the potential for perception, a facet of temperament, in the *mibal* state. This assumption of Han that tempera-

14. “明德本體，則聖凡同得，而血氣清濁，則聖凡異稟，明德即天君也，血氣即氣質也。天君主宰，則血氣退聽於百體而方寸虛明，此大本所在，而子思所謂未發也。天君不幸，則血氣用事於方寸，而清濁不齊，此善惡所混，而德昭所謂未發也。彼此綱領本末，如斯而已” (*Oeam yugo*).

15. “至虛至靜之中，但有能知能覺者在，而無所知所覺之事，此一悉時節，正為未發也” (*Gyeongui gimunnok*). Lee Seung-Hwan interprets this phrase with concepts of physics: “The state of consciousness in *ibal* is compared to a ‘vector’ that has both size and direction, while in *mibal* it is comparable to a ‘scalar’ that only has size. Thus, *mibal* ultimately refers to the state where pure perceptual activities occur without objects towards which they are oriented or the state of *jigak bulmae* 知覺不昧” (S. Lee 2010).

ment, or *qi*, is dormant in the *mibal* state led to his argument that the temperament in the *mibal* state contains both good and evil. Against his intention, this argument had to face Yi Gan's consistent criticism that it underestimated *mibal* as a state with inactive impurities.

3) How Can One Actualize Morality?

Yi Gan highlighted the importance of the original mind-heart as what human beings, the lord of all creatures, have to pursue in their efforts to accomplish *cheolli* against their usual mind-heart influenced by temperament. He went so far as to say that the original mind-heart is clearly present in anyone at anytime, and the mind-hearts of sages and commoners are alike when aroused. The mind-heart, though falling under the realm of *qi*, has its own moral aspect unlike temperament, and one must make efforts to maintain the moral original mind-heart through cultivating it.

This idealized notion of Yi Gan, however, had limitations in that the mind-heart distinguished from the temperament was difficult to accommodate in reality. Han Won-jin questioned whether the mind-heart could ever exist away from the temperament to attack the concept of the original mind-heart. Although the mind-heart perhaps could stay pure and good, it could never stand on its own without relying on temperament. Yi Gan asserted that temperament is pure and good in the *mibal* state on the grounds that accepting the presence of the evil aspect of *qi* in *mibal* would lead to doubting the absolute goodness of original nature. But Han Won-jin refuted Yi Gan on the basis that considering *qi* as the prime foundation for *zhong* of the Great Origin or the original nature is illegitimate no matter the purity and goodness of *qi*.¹⁶

Faced with this apparent contradiction, Yi Gan maintained that the true face of human nature and its inherent goodness could be

16. “竊觀老兄前後主意，蓋專要於明性之善，而獨未察乎理氣之分合看者。故初以氣質之兼言者，恐嫌於性善，則不免於析本然氣質而為前後兩性。後知其性之不可離於氣質，而又恐其氣之惡者，有嫌於性善，則又以未發之氣質為純善，而不免於兼氣質言中矣” (*Namdangjip*).

assured when the latter was accompanied by moralistic behavior. For Yi Gan, who emphasized the essential mind, omitting the actualization of the moral mind rendered any claims regarding the goodness of original nature meaningless.

Responding to Han's rebuttal, Yi Gan argued that the goodness of original nature inherent in human beings can be actualized only when it leads to moral behaviors in reality. Without such actualization, the claim that original nature is good is nothing more than meaningless rhetoric. Mindful of this, Yi Gan said, "Only when *qi* becomes pure and identical to the origin, can *li* be so, too," implying that the grounds for original nature can only be established by the pure mind-heart, the moral aspect of which is ultimately connected to original nature. This remark was furthered by his argument that "*li* and *qi* can be actualized as the same entity and the mind-heart and nature can be united as one":

Although the goodness of nature and *li* is not based on *qi* of the mind-heart, its actual being depends on the good aspect of the *qi* of the mind-heart. It makes no sense to say that one can maintain *che-olli* when one has lost the original mind-heart. . . . Further discussions must develop after *li* and *qi* have been actualized as the same entity and the mind-heart and nature are united as one (*igi dongsil simseong ilchi* 理氣同實 心性一致). When *qi* does not follow *li*, or the mind-heart does not follow nature, it is feared that achieving the Great Origin and the Way (*daebon daldo* 大本達道), along with the virtue of *junghwa*, will be impossible.¹⁷

Simseong ilchi 心性一致, the core of Yi Gan's Theory of the Mind-Heart and Nature, was the proposition that expressed the oneness of nature and the mind-heart, or the original mind-heart as unaffected by temperament. This notion was founded on another proposition, *igi dongsil* 理氣同實, that referred to the idea that the pure aspect of *qi*

17. "性理之善，雖則不本於心氣，而其善之存亡，實繫於心氣之善否。本心亡而天理存者，天下有是乎？... 蓋單指似本無涉於其器，而必待夫理氣同實，心性一致處言之者，或處理然而氣不然，性然而心不然，則畢竟不成爲大本達道，不成爲中和之德故也" (*Namdangjip*).

must be connected to *li* to be actualized. Both propositions were intended to highlight the role of *qi* and the original mind-heart as the agents that actualize *li* and nature in reality. It was in this connection that Yi Gan proposed the methods of practicing humaneness in daily life: establishing a pure and profound basis, staying modest without showing off one's cleverness, and working with the whole and accurate mind-heart. In other words, he never doubted the purity and goodness of original nature, but rather took more interest in the area of the mind-heart as the place where the mind-heart and nature could be united.

On the other hand, Han Won-jin opined that Yi Gan's emphasis on the pure and good aspect of *qi* highlighted the temperament relative to original nature. He warned that the heretical and dangerous logic of Zen Buddhism (Seonhak 禪學) and Wang Yangming Confucianism (Yangmyeonghak 陽明學) was incorporated in the ideas of Yi Gan and other Nak-ron scholars (Kim 2006). His stance was that one must let original nature be the reference point against which the purity and goodness of the mind-heart are identified, since it is not the mind-heart but original nature that has the direct link to *cheolli*. He believed that the essentials of *li* and the original nature would not be distorted or damaged even if one categorized the original nature into several types according to individual differences in the temperament. Since the mind-heart belonged to the area of *qi*, which is imperfect unlike *li*, humanness must be accomplished by changing one's temperament through external regulations (Lee 2008). This strictness in eliminating the importance of *qi* was simultaneously the strength and weakness of Han Won-jin's argument.

Yi Gan and Han Won-jin's debate can be attributed to the difference in their understandings of *qi*, which is compositive but separable as illustrated through Yi I's statement of *igiji myo* 理氣之妙 ("Li and qi are one and two at the same time."). Qi not only has an evil aspect that must be corrected, but also a correct aspect that must be nurtured like the magnanimous spirit (*hoyeonji gi* 浩然之氣).¹⁸ The debate

18. "按矯治，固當克盡，而保養不可不密。蓋保養正氣，乃所以矯治客氣也，實非二事，而言各有主，故分爲二章"

reflected their interests in the scope of the morality of pure goodness that human beings can accomplish. In particular, their attempts to trace the foundations of pure and good behaviors in the conscious state back to the point of *mibal* can be interpreted as the process of searching for the compatibility of *li* and *qi* in the mind-heart. Their discussion centered on the state of *mibal* since pure morality could not be rooted in the *ibal* state, where emotions have already been aroused. Similarly, the question of how to understand the mind-heart belonging to *qi* in the state of *mibal* was the major topic of the Horak debate in the Joseon Neo-Confucian circle.

As reviewed, Han Won-jin continued to point out the bind of the mind-heart to temperament, where good and evil are mixed, no matter the extent of morality that it could achieve. He asserted that temperament is present even in the *mibal* state where *qi* is inactive. This led to his argument that one must find one's morality on the original nature directly connected to *li* rather than on the mind-heart which, independently, is swayed by external conditions and lack of morality. On the contrary, Yi Gan identified the original mind-heart, or the moral aspect of the mind-heart distinguished from emotions, and advocated humans' active efforts to retain the mind-heart as the moral agent. This was based on the belief that nature, or *li*, can be actualized through the retention of the original mind-heart and that nature is only meaningful when it is united with the pure and good aspect of *qi*.

(*Yulgok jeonseo*). Han Won-jin's belief that the mystic emptiness and the temperament all belong to the area of *qi* is in contrast to Yi Gan's idea of clear division between the original mind-heart and the temperament. Their discordance is attributable to their different opinions on how to understand *qi* in *simsigi* 心是氣 ("The mind-heart is *qi*."), a proposition of Yulgok Yi I's scholarly line. Dealing with the same topic of the mind-heart, Yi Gan emphasized the original version of the mind-heart while Han Won-jin underlined that the mind-heart is in a continuum of *qi*. Refer to C. Lee (2009).

Conclusion

Neo-Confucian scholars of the past constantly endeavored to establish the morality of pure goodness without evil in the *mibal* state where emotions have not been aroused. The debate on *mibal* focused on two topics, namely self-cultivation as a method to change temperament and the explanation of pure morality of the mind-heart in terms of the *li-qi* theory. As the Horak debate was started by the question of whether temperamental nature exists in the *mibal* state, a major interest of Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars was the elucidation of the mind-heart within the frame of the *li-qi* theory. Scholars engaged in the Horak debate aimed to actualize pure morality in the *mibal* state as moral behaviors in reality.

Yi Gan and other Nak-ron scholars tried to identify the pure mind-heart as the moral agent connected to original nature. The notion was in stark contrast to the stance of Ho-ron that the actualization of *li* presupposed accepting the inactive presence of *qi* in the *mibal* state. Yi Gan criticized Ho-ron's stance because it underrated the purity of the *mibal* state by integrating *qi*, which has an evil aspect, into such a state of purity. Han Won-jin countered Yi's argument by asserting the separation of the original mind-heart from temperament and claimed that Yi mistakenly regarded temperament as the moral foundation.

At the end of the debate, Yi Gan was convinced of every human being's ability to reach original nature by harnessing the original mind-heart to resist the temptation of desires. Human beings, according to Yi Gan's argument for the oneness of mind-heart and nature, have the capacity to free themselves from the effects of their temperaments through constant efforts. The ideal of Yi Gan and other Nak-ron scholars was represented in the image of moral beings who tried to identify their inherent original mind-heart and practice it in daily life. Han Won-jin and other Ho-ron scholars, however, insisted that humans conform to *cheolli* by refraining from arbitrary choices amidst the reality known as temperament, which they are endowed with. Accepting the fact that human beings are born to be good, Ho-

ron scholars regarded it vital to rely on nature, or *li*, as the universal moral standard by restraining themselves.

The debate depicted *mibal* as the state where thoughts have not been aroused, *qi* is still inactive, and the purity of the mind-heart is maintained; these ideas presupposed that human beings are a special entity in the natural world. This led to further attempts to understand the mind-heart and nature in conformity with the *li-qi* theory, which was regarded as the explanation for the natural world. The debate on *mibal* functioned as the process that sought to find common qualities between human beings and the external natural world. The understanding that humans were part of the natural world and the endeavor to identify their uniqueness in it as found in the Eastern intellectual tradition provided opportunities for humans to live in and communicate with the natural world.

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