

Volume XIX - (2018)

Heavenly Society (신사회) and the Development of Hyojeong (孝情) Culture

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Journal of Unification Studies Vol. 19, 2018 - Pages 23 - 31

The Unification movement aims not only for the well-being of individuals and families, but also for the transformation of general society. In her recent public speeches on three continents, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon has called for the renewal of societies and nations using the Korean term *shin* (신) as a prefix. This “shin” could have a connotation of “new” (新), but she intends it as meaning “godly” (神) or heavenly. Gradually, she is re-naming the national branches of the FFWPU as “Family Federation for a Heavenly (nation).” For this article, I will treat the ideals of national transformation and renewal under the general heading of “heavenly society” (신사회).

In Unification Thought, the philosophical explication of the teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, a vision of the true society that people hope for is expressed in terms of the three-fold conception *gongseng, gongyeong, gong-eui* (공생공영공의, 共生共榮共義), known in English as “interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universally-shared values” or similar translations.^[1] The Africa Summit 2018 held in Senegal took place under the theme of this three-fold conception.^[2] This conception of mutuality provides three core requisites for a heavenly society (신사회), and points the way forward for such a society to be developed in practice.

Ultimately, analysis of the requirements for the development of heavenly society will also entail the development of “heavenly social science” (신사회과학, 神社會科學). As a step in that direction, I am proposing a link between the three-fold conception of “interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universally-shared values” and the keynote concept of “Hyojeong toward Heaven.”^[3] In this article, I will first explore the concept of *hyojeong* as the unity of two traditional ideas, *hyo* and *jeong*, and then apply the concept of *hyojeong* to the development of a heavenly social culture.

Hyo and the Roots of Humanity

The concept of filial piety (孝, pronounced *hyo* in Korean) is one of the most characteristic and precious features of traditional East Asian religious and philosophical culture, and represents a significant contribution to world culture.^[4] The concept of *hyo*, with its strengths and limitations, is also an important element in the international conversation about principles of good governance. In Unification thinking about Cheon Il Guk (天—國), the “trans-national nation of heavenly oneness” toward which we understand Heaven’s providence to be moving, *hyo* is a key element.

One of the most influential classical Confucian passages about *hyo* is *Analects* 1.2 “Being filial as a child and deferential as a younger brother are surely the roots of humankindness (*ren*, 인, 仁).”^[5] Prof. Huang Yong of Chinese University of Hong Kong notes, “According to the neo-Confucian interpretation, particularly the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi...it means that “filial piety and brotherly love are the beginning of practicing humanity.”^[6] Agreeing with Prof. Huang, there is certainly a practical, action-oriented dimension to filial piety; it is not simply an attitude or emotion. At the same time, filial piety comes to be expressed as natural, not out of duty to follow a rule or obligation, or even a conscious sense of propriety. It is by reflecting back on actual experiences of filial piety in action that it is possible to know for oneself the heart-and-mind of *hyo*.^[7]

The character graph for filial piety (孝), composed of elder (parent) above and child below, presents us with a visual symbol of the lineal connection between parent and child. The representation is not (as some modern critiques would see it) a vigorous adult dominating and suppressing a growing child. Rather, it portrays the

elderly or infirm parent being carried on the back of the vigorous adult child. Seeing the character in this way, we come to recognize that the filial child has sympathy or compassion for the situation of the parent. Extending this image in the direction of theological construction, the emphasis of *hyo* leads to a theological stance which seeks to inspire in disciples (as children of Heavenly Parent) a proper and passionate sense of sympathy for Heavenly Parent's situation.^[8] As we shall see, this sympathy for Heaven in turn undergirds the values of common cause, co-prosperity and interdependence in society.

Characterizing Jeong

In characterizing *jeong* (情), the second component of *hyojeong*, we can begin from the fact that in the classical texts of Confucianism, the word has a wide field of meaning, including “feeling” (*jeonggam* 정감, 情感—denoting feeling-in-motion or emotion), “situation” (*sajeong* 사정, 事情), and “circumstances” (*jeonghwang* 정황, 情況). Joining these meanings together, we can say that *jeong* is experienced as an emotional or intuitive bond of sensitivity to the situation of others.

Michael Puett characterizes *jeong* as dispositional responsiveness.^[9] In this sense, *jeong* can be understood as an interconnected network, or even a realm of shared feelings. The idea that *jeong* “arises from contact” is found in the early Chinese classic *Liji* (Record of Ritual) and carries through the Korean Neo-Confucian 4/7 debate about the relationship of the four moral sensibilities and the range of human feelings or emotions.^[10]

As with many East Asian concepts marked by the same character, the nuances of Korean *jeong* may be subtly different from modern Chinese *qing* or Japanese *jyo*, especially as they appear in popular culture. Describing *jeong*, a Korean-American blogger known as “Yujinshuge” writes:

Jeong (정, 情) is, according to certain translations, a feeling of affection or attachment. The best short explanation I have ever heard about it is “Korean connection feeling”, but that translation already assumes that you know what it is. *Jeong*, as I understand it, is a feeling of deep connection with something to the point that it is a part of you, and it is inseparable from you.^[11]

Similarly, in commenting on the particular sense of *jeong* in Korean cultural psychology, two Korean-American psychologists offer a helpful characterization:

Jeong is difficult to define. One Korean-English dictionary defines it as “feeling, love, sentiment, passion, human nature, sympathy, heart.” Although it is complicated to introduce a clear definition of *jeong*, it seems to include all of the above as well as more basic feelings, such as attachment, bond, affection, or even bondage.

By introducing the characteristics of *jeong*, I may be able to better clarify the meanings of *jeong*. One of the important characteristics is its “location.” *Jeong* seems located not only inside of our hearts but also outside. In other words, the location of *jeong* is between individuals.^[12]

Following the suggestion of Chung and Cho, *jeong* can be described as an emotion or feeling which is experienced as outside of the self or as taking place between oneself and other persons, or perhaps things. Even though it is not clear how the physiology of that feeling might actually work, it is fruitful to think of *jeong* in this interpersonal way.

Chung and Cho continue,

The earliest time an individual is exposed to the experience of *jeong* is when a baby is held and carried by his or her mother. As the mother's warmth permeates to and is felt by the baby, so too the *jeong* permeates to the heart of the baby. This type of *jeong* is called “*mo-jeong*,” which exists during the remainder of the person's life. This total trust of life and person without logic or reason starts from the earliest experiences of life. ...As a child grows older, the *jeong* experience will expand to include interactions between him/her and the father, friends or other relatives, neighbors, and members of the community.

We could say that if *mo-jeong* is the earliest connection-feeling that we experience in life, then *hyojeong* would represent the increasingly conscious filial connection-feeling which a child experiences in response to his or her parents.

The point of *hyojeong* as differentiated from *hyo* alone is that it involves others in a feeling-realm of mutual participation. In other words, *hyojeong* is not only a vertically-directed concept; it also includes a horizontal expansion. In this way, *hyojeong* can represent an important insight for articulating the goal of a society based on shared, common humanity. As Sun Jin Moon explains,

If we are to achieve lasting peace and if we are to achieve one family under God, a world culture of heart, *hyojeong* must be at its center. This is the supreme virtue to be cultivated within each one of us. *Hyojeong* includes the heart to live for the sake of others.”[\[13\]](#)

If *hyojeong* includes “living for the sake of others”, it must be generalizable to the wider society.

Hyojeong in Society

If *hyojeong* is something like filial connection-feeling, then directing it toward Heaven could support generalized or shareable connections with the Source of Life. Whether the Heaven is thought of in personal or impersonal terms, the sense of intimate connection and filial gratitude can still develop. In the Neo-Confucian tradition, Zhang Zai’s “Western Inscription” provides a model of a sense of filial intimacy even though the ontological background of his thought is an impersonalistic theology.[\[14\]](#)

According to *Analects* 1.2, *jae* (제, 悌)—the feeling of younger brotherly respect—is closely connected with *hyo*. The traditional concept of *jae* may be fruitfully expanded by recognizing the equal claims of all fellow humans as siblings under Heaven. The “earthly” reflection of *hyojeong*, an intimate connection-feeling with Heaven, could and should spread accordingly to sibling-feeling toward fellow brothers and sisters, providing the relational “glue” to develop social cohesion and integration.

I would like to return now to the three core requisites for heavenly society mentioned at the outset: interdependence (공생, 共生), mutual prosperity (공영, 共榮) and universal values (공의, 共義), and briefly sketch the ways that this vision of human flourishing can be empowered through *hyojeong*.

1. Interdependence and *Hyojeong*

The concept of interdependence, *gongseng* (공생, 共生), is based fundamentally on the nature of existence itself. Things are born or generated in such a way that they are interdependent with one another. If we want to recognize Heavenly creativity in the world, we must start by looking at the interdependence of things, or what advocates of intelligent design such as Michael Behe call “irreducible complexity.” Irreducible complexity means things are made or designed to be interdependent with each other and could not have come to exist without each other.

Mutual existence means that we humans are interdependent with all the other beings with whom we share this planet. Through *hyojeong*, we can recognize that this interdependence is under Heavenly dominion, namely we are ordained to be interdependent. According to the Genesis account, as human beings we are also ordained to be conscious of that interdependence, to intend it, and to develop it creatively.

In the social vision of Unification Thought, the recognition of interdependence through *hyojeong* supports a sense of economy which is based on joint ownership:

In the principle of mutual existence, joint ownership is based on God’s true love. In other words, it is first, the joint ownership of God and myself... Thus, joint ownership in the principle of mutual existence is the joint ownership of God and I, the whole and I, and my neighbors and I, all based on God’s love.[\[15\]](#)

Under the influence of *hyojeong* toward Heaven, it would be appropriate to say that the application of the concept of interdependence is based on our grateful and filial response to Heaven’s mandate and support.

2. Mutual Prosperity and *Hyojeong*

Mutual prosperity, *gongyeong* (공영, 共榮), the recognition of brothers and sisters in terms of rights and responsibilities, is based upon the atmosphere of *hyojeong* under Heaven (Heavenly Parent). The proper application of the concept of mutual prosperity is not limited to the “believers” of any specific community, but is generalized to allow recognition of fellow human beings as entitled/endowed with the values of human-relatedness and human flourishing. Seen in this way, from the recognition of irreducible interdependence we can also develop toward co-prosperity, especially understood in a political sense.[\[16\]](#)

Like interdependence, mutual prosperity is also part of our ordained nature as human beings. Our appropriate aim is to create the kind of environment in which human flourishing is able to develop for all. In practice, this requires “win-win-win thinking”. According to 3-win thinking, in political arrangements as well as in economic arrangements, it is not only the benefit of you and me but also the benefit of the whole which is at stake. The idea of mutual prosperity is three-fold rather than just two-fold.

Therefore the point of grounding this vision in *hyojeong* is to recognize the priority dispositional connection and attitude. Understanding *hyojeong* as filial devotion (sympathy as well as duty) to Heaven means that theological construction for economic and political theology properly begins from the concepts of

interdependence and mutual prosperity, as well as mutually shared values. So also in the case of mutual righteousness or mutually shared values, those values are to be discovered through participation together in interdependent and mutual prosperity-enhancing political and economic activities.

3. Mutual Righteousness and Hyojeong

The Korean term for universal values, *gong-eui* (공의, 共義), the third core principle of heavenly society, also contains the meaning of shared righteousness or uprightness. Understood in this way, it leads directly to the motivation of *hyojeong*. According to Confucian traditions, the filial child's support for his or her parent also includes the mandate to remonstrate with the parent, in order to help the parent do what is right.^[17] A passage from the Daoist text *Zhuangzi* (*Chuang-tzu*) similarly points out that “When a son assents to all that his father says, and approves of all that his father does, common opinion pronounces him an unworthy son...”^[18] Surely the same principle also applies in the sibling relationship: it is only when the younger sibling is willing to take on the task of nudging the older sibling in the direction of righteousness that bond of their connection is truly exemplary.

This familial remonstrance can be fruitfully compared with the Christian concept of brother/sisterhood in Christ, so clearly proclaimed in the New Testament. The sense of compassion for one another, “bearing one another's burdens,” is linked with the duty to help one's heavenly siblings toward uprightness: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently... Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”^[19] Likewise, the responsibilities and duties associated with the concept of mutual righteousness, *gong-eui*, ought to be carried out with both firmness and gentleness.

The more there is a shared attitude of *hyojeong*, filial sympathy toward Heavenly Parent, the more there also ought to be (and will be) a gentle attitude toward the difficult situations of brothers and sisters in our human family. This is the foundation for a heavenly society in practice.

Conclusion

The traditional concept of *hyo* is usually applied within a family setting; extended meanings are still based on that kind of human hierarchical order. However, the concept of *hyojeong* as presented here is wider and more egalitarian than that. It can be related to concepts of vertical and horizontal sovereignty. In this way, the concept describes a realm in which individuals and also families may dwell together under the shared feeling-connection with Heavenly Parent. In other words, it has to do with the felt connections, affinities or attractions among people so that the vertical dimension of filial feeling appears in the midst of the horizontal. *Hyojeong* is a quality of both feelings and actions. As such, when directed toward Heaven and reflected back to the earthly realm of human relations, *hyojeong* can provide both the direction and motivation for working toward and developing a heavenly society of interdependence, mutual prosperity and mutual righteousness for all.

Notes

[1] See Unification Thought Institute, *New Essentials of Unification Thought: Head-Wing Thought* (Kogensha, 2006), 507-524, in which the conception is translated “principle of mutual existence, mutual prosperity and mutual righteousness.”

[2] The official theme of the Africa Summit 2018, in Dakar, Senegal, was “Nouvelle Afrique : Interdépendance, Prospérité Mutuelle et Valeurs Universelles.”

[3] Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon has recently begun to promote the expression “Hyojeong toward Heaven” (*Hanul dehan Hyojeong*, 하늘대한 효정) as a guiding concept. The motto “*Become the Light of the World through a Filial Heart for Heaven*” was the keynote of the 4th anniversary celebration for her husband Rev. Sun Myung Moon's ascension, held on August 19, 2016.

[4] I would defend this point even though there are limitations and potentially unhealthy side effects in some forms of filial piety in practice.

[5] 孝弟也者，其為仁之本與！

[6] See his paper, “Why an Upright Son Does Not Disclose His Father Stealing a Sheep: A Neglected Aspect of the Confucian Conception of Filial Piety,” *Asian Studies* V (XXI), 1 (2017), pp. 15–45

[7] See my discussion of this passage in *Hsieh Liang-tso and the Analects of Confucius: Humane Learning as a Religious Quest*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47-48

[8] Thus, “Heaven” can be understood in a personalistic way as Heavenly Parent (하늘父母님). On this important theological point in Unification piety, see my discussion on “Confucian-Christian Hybridity in Unification Theology,” in *Dangdai Ruxue yu Xifang Wenhua: Zongjiaopian* 當代儒學與西方文化：宗教篇 (Contemporary Confucianism and Western Culture: Religion), (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2005).

[9] See Michael Puett, “The Ethics of Responding Properly: The Notion of *Qing* 情 in Early Chinese Thought.” Puett is using the Chinese pronunciation for the concept.

[10] The 4/7 debate focused on the similarities and differences between moral feelings and ordinary emotions. See Michael C. Kalton, et. al., *The Four-Seven Debate: An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

[11] <https://yujinishuge.wordpress.com/2010/08/02/jeong-and-han-a-look-at-the-korean-psyche/>. The blogger goes on to comment that she believes the phenomenon of *jeong* to be universally human, but Korean culture has a specific way of talking about it, and therefore Koreans are more aware of it.

[12] Christopher K. Chung and Samson Cho, “Significance of ‘Jeong’ in Korean Culture and Psychotherapy,” Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, posted on the website of the Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists, <http://www.prep.org/publications/sig.pdf>

[13] Speech by Sun Jin Moon, International President of FFWPU for the 2017 Cheon Il Guk Leaders' Assembly Opening Address on Sept. 9, 2017 at Cheongpyeong Heaven and Earth Training Center.

[14] “Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.” See Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 497

[15] *New Essentials of Unification Thought*, 508-9

[16] See *New Essentials*, 518-9, on the government of brothers and sisters, centering on Heavenly Parent.

[17] The duty of remonstrance is the main point of Huang Yong's article cited earlier, “Why an Upright Son Does Not Disclose His Father Stealing a Sheep: A Neglected Aspect of the Confucian Conception of Filial Piety.”

[18] *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 12 “Heaven & Earth” (translation by J. Legge). The text is: 親之所言而然，所行而善，則世俗謂之不肖子....

[19] Galatians 6:1-2 NIV