

## **A Study of the Relationship between *Li* and *Sangze* in Yi Hwang's neo-Confucianism: with Occasional Reference to that of Zhu Xi**

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Yi Hwang(李滉,1501-1570, neo-Confucianist at Choson dynasty in the Korean history) writes that the body(體, *che*) of *li*(理, metaphysical being) is non-feeling and non-willingness and the limbs(yòng, 用) of *li* is movement and production(能發能生, *nunghalnungsaeng*). But Zhu Xi(1130-1200, neo-Confucianist at NánSòng dynasty in Chinese history) writes that *li*(理, principle) is non-feeling, non-thought, and non-operation. That is, it is motionless. In addition, he also writes that *li* is movement. Therefore, we can see that Zhu Xi's *li* harbors a contradiction. Yi Hwang, however, is different from Zhu Xi. Here, I claim that Yi Hwang overcomes the contradiction in Zhu Xi's *li*. For Yi Hwang, *li* cannot be cognized because it cannot be seen, heard, or perceived in any way possible. Nevertheless, Yi Hwang claims that *li* is a movable being. How can he claim that the unseen, unheard, unperceived *li* is a movable being? Yi Hwang's *li* seems to harbor a contradiction as well. The *li* is a movable, active being. Therefore, I claim that Yi Hwang's *li* is not a contradiction at all.

Yi Hwang thinks that *sangze* which, like *li*, is shapeless, soundless, and odorless controls over all things as well as over man. Thus, *li* and *sangze* share activeness in common. However, Yi Hwang does not argue that *li* is *sangze*. As far as I know, he thinks of *sangze* whose *li* is *ki* (氣, matter-energy). In other words, Yi Hwang thinks that *sangze* controls over all things as if *li* controls in *ki*. This is the difference between Yi Hwang and Zhu Xi.

Still, it remains an open question whether *sangze* actively controls over all things because *sangze* cannot be seen, heard, or perceived through our senses. Still it does, even if we relate *li*'s activeness to *sangze*. It is as if one believed that a thing uncertain of its being to be an absolute Being, when Yi Hwang thinks of *sangze* controlling over man and everything there is. However, Yi Hwang still believes in *sangze* as an active controller because, he believes, *sangze* should practice morality (善, *son*) for fear of *sangze*.

Yi Hwang writes that *li* controls in *ki*. The good *li* controls in a half evil *ki*, and therefore man's action is supposed to be good in principle. However, there are many cases in which man does evil, rather than good, deeds. Yi Hwang says that *sangze* delivers verdicts and punishes man's evil deeds through disasters. Therefore, he emphasizes reverence (敬, *kyong*) in which man should clean and control his

mind correctly as if before *shàngdì*. Therefore, Yi Hwang suggests that *sangze* as moral *li*, controls immoral *ki* perfectly. Thus, he believed *sangzeto* be the ground for man's moral action.

## 1. Introduction

Toegye Yi-Hwoang (李滉: 1501-1570, Confucianist at Choson dynasty in Korean history)<sup>1</sup> considers *li* (理, metaphysical being) essence to be active. However, *li* is shapeless and odorless. Therefore, I may interpret his *li* as motionless. In addition, I may interpret his *li* as illogic. However, I cannot establish his *li*, which is illogic. I can understand his *li*, which is a movable being, because he was aware of the shapeless, odorless and movable being concerning *sangze* (上帝, the god). Therefore, I will study the relation between *li* and *sangze* regarding Yi Hwang. Also, I will study subordinately the difference and commonalties between Yi Hwang and Zhu Xi's (1130-1200, neo-Confucianist at NánSòng dynasty in Chinese history).

Researchers have studied Yi Hwang's movement of *li* and *che-yong* (體用, body and limbs)<sup>2</sup>. However, I will study the relation between the *li* and *sangze* of Yi Hwang. I will study why he interpreted the shapeless *li* as a movable being.

## 2. The relationship between *li* and *shàngdì* in Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi writes about *li* (理, principle) which means controls<sup>3</sup>. His control means movable management. However, he writes about *li* which was not feeling and willingness, not thinking, operating. It means moveless<sup>4</sup>. However, he writes which is movement and non-movement within *li*<sup>5</sup>. That is, *li* means a movable being. Therefore, it is a contradiction<sup>6</sup>. He thinks as *li* controls *ki* (氣, energy) similarly to how a man controls a horse. Here, he compares it to a man riding on a horse.

“*Taekuk* (太極, supreme being) is *li* and *donzong* (動靜, move and stop) is *ki*. If *ki* moves, *li* moves. Both are not separate as they always depend on each other. *Taekuk* is compared to a man and *dongzong* is compared to a horse, thus a horse is ridden by a man and a man rides on a horse.”<sup>7</sup>

The man on the horse does not move, the horse moves. Also, the man does not run directly, the horse runs for itself. Furthermore, as the man controls the horse, he can arrive at his destination. If there is no control of the horse, it will run on its own accord, which will make arriving at ones destination

quite difficult<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, moveless *li* should control *ki* actively. Zhu Xi says that *chi* is controlled by *li* and is created all things.<sup>9</sup> He considers *li* as inherent in all things. Therefore, *li* controls all things. Thus, his logic establishes difficult contradictions. However, if I interpret his letter, there are a few logical contradictions in his letter.<sup>10</sup>

He considers the controller not only in *li* but also in *sangze* (上帝, the god) as well. Therefore, both *li* and *sangze* control all things. Nevertheless, Zhu Xi considers *li* and *sangze* differently. He writes that the substance of *li* is *sangze*.

“Ze (帝, the god) is become the substance of *li*.”<sup>11</sup>

Then His students say that *sangze* is *ze*.<sup>12</sup> He was considering *ze* (帝, The god) not the king of man but rather, the controller of all things in heaven. Thus, *ze* isn't the same as *li* but the substance of *li* is *ze*.

“*sangze* produced people”, “Heaven sincerely produced all things.”, “Heaven informs beforehand in order to produce extraordinary people when it imposes disaster on people.” “Heaven imposes people with many indications when he carries good. However, heaven imposes people with many disasters when he carries evil.”<sup>13</sup>

This is proof that *sangze* controls over all things actively. Zhu Xi says it as follows.

“*Ki* repeats between growth and decay. *Ki* manages to rotate this like. Heaven (*sangze*, the god) imposes disaster on mankind because it forces him resolve it and as a result, produces extraordinary man.”<sup>14</sup>

Zhu Xi interpret *sangze* who controls over all things, as expressions in classic books. He considers that *dongzong* causes *ki* to move and *li* takes control of *ki*. Sure. *li* does not control *ki* actively but rather, *li* naturally controls *ki* because *li* is inherently central in *ki*. Therefore, someone asked him, ‘who controls *ze* over all things?’ and he answered ‘all things of himself control’<sup>15</sup>. He argues *li*, which controls all things within all things itself. This is revealed by *ki*'s *dongzong*.

### 3. The relationship between *li* and *sangze* in Yi Hwang

#### 1) Movement of *li* and *sangze*

First of all, I will interpret the meaning of *li* and *sangze* regarding Yi Hwang. He argues about *li*, which is the principle and ethic that should be practiced. He analyzes the *li* as *che-yong* (體用, body and limbs) theory. He thinks about the movable being concerning *li* because the *che* (體, body) of *li* has no feeling but the *yong* (用, limbs) of *li* is movement and production (能發能生, *nunghbalnungsaeng*). This is a different point between Yi Hwang and Zhu Xi. Thus, I could interpret Yi Hwang, which overcomes a contradictory concept of *li* in Zhu Xi's neo-Confucianism<sup>16</sup>. He argues that *sangze* had control over all things. He says *sangze*, becomes angry and imposes disaster on mankind, if he demonstrates immoral action. There, he argues about *sangze* as a lively being and an absolute being.

"If man does not know the heavenly mind and demonstrates immoral action, all these influence *sangze*. Therefore, *sangze* gets angry and imposes disaster on man."

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Thus, the mean mind of heaven, which is *sangze* is not only shapeless but also odorless. Nevertheless, it becomes angry and imposes disaster on man. Therefore, his expression is not a logical sentence. However, he interprets angry *sangze*, which recognizes an unusual change in the weather. He interprets climatic disasters as angry *sangze*<sup>18</sup>. He thinks of *sangze*, which controls climate and man altogether. Thus, his *sangze* view is a religious theory.

Both *li* and *sangze* are shapeless and odorless<sup>19</sup> and they control actively<sup>20</sup>. They are metaphysical beings because they are shapeless, odorless, and soundless. Therefore, he considers them to be metaphysical beings because they cannot be felt through the sense organs. Thus, *sangze* is *li* as a metaphysical being. It is presented as *sangze*, which becomes angry and imposes disaster on man by its position of power regarding *li* and *dongzong* (動靜, movement and stopping) of *ki*. Action of *sangze* is had by *li* controlling *ki*. It is *li*, which isn't only movement. Also, it is *li* that controls the *dongzong* of *ki*. He might mention *dongzong* of *ki*, if *li* is only movement. Therefore, he might believe *li* to be *sangze*. However, he thinks the movement of *li* is made through the *dongzong* of *ki*. He compared both *li* and *ki* as Zhu Xi did in regards to man and horse. The *li* controls in *ki* actively as if man controls a horse. The man is unable to run quickly if he does not ride a horse, and the horse cannot run to its destination effectively, if it isn't ridden by a man. Hence, they need each other. Therefore, he thought that *li* cannot move alone.

He believed *li*, which controls *ki* to be the same as the way a man controls his horse. This is the same as Zhu Xi. Yi Hwang says that *li* is movement and production (能發能生, *nunghbalnungsaeng*)<sup>21</sup> but

Zhu Xi writes it as movement in *li* (理有動靜, *liyudongzong*)<sup>22</sup>. Thus, Yi Hwang and Zhu Xi have different views. Actions of *sangze* ismovable *li* andcontrols *ki* perfectly. It is a moral action. On the other hand, man appears to be evil because *li* cannot perfectly control *ki*. Therefore, he writes that man should practice *kong*(敬, reverence)<sup>23</sup>. *Kong*of Yi Hwang means to practice as if man faces *sangze*. The nature of man is *li*, whichcontrols *ki*, because it is *sunson* (純善, pure morality). Yi Hwang believed *sangze* (上帝, the god) was the nature of man. In man, evil appears from the strong *ki* in him because strong *chi* arises from his desire for possession. Thus, evil arises from man's desire for possession.

Yi Hwang thought the *che* (體, body) of *li*, which has no feeling and the *yong* (用, limbs) of *li* to be movement and production (能發能生, *nunghalnungsaeng*)as previously mentioned. This was the difference between the *li* of Zhu Xi. However, the *li* of Yi Hwang is a problem point, where *li* cannot feel, is shapeless, and odorless. Nevertheless, it can move as *nunghalnungsaeng*. This means to present itself and to produce itself. It has to invigorate life because life cannot move on its own. He argues that *li* produced *ki*. Therefore, he argues *li* to not be dead but rather alive. Consequently, he argues *li*, which is shapeless, soundless, odorless and *nunghalnungsaeng*. It is presented by *dongzong*. He says the *dongzong* of *li* is the movement of *chonmyong* (天命, command of the god)

“*dongzong* is in *taekuk* (太極, supreme ultimate).It isthe movement of *chonmyong*”<sup>24</sup>

He says *taekuk* is *chonmyong* (天命, command of the god). This is a living being because it means the command of god. Thus, it expresses a living being and *taekuk* is another term for it. In addition, Yi Hwang argues *li*, which is a living *chonmyong* because *taekuk* is *li*. Hence, he interpreted the *liyudongzong* (理有動靜, movement is within *li*) of Zhu Xi, which is *living li*. This was the difference between Yi Hwang and Zhu Xi. He respected Zhu Xi<sup>25</sup> and tries to correct the interpretation. However, he isn't the same as Zhu Xi. He thoughtthat *li* is alive, because man should practice morality on it<sup>26</sup>. He tried to imitate the Zhu Xi's *li* but he couldn't. In addition, he discovered the *lido* (理到, *li* responds to me itself when I research *li* in the thing) theory<sup>27</sup> after years. This letter was written by Yi Hwang in the year 1570. He sent it to Ki Daesung (奇大升, 1527-1572)<sup>28</sup> just before his death. He have interpretations of *muzongu* (無情意, cannot feel) and *muzozak*(無造作, cannot operate) concerningZhu Xi's *li*, but he knows the movement of *li*. His movement (能發能生,

*nunghalnungsaeng*) of *li*, *libal* (理發, movement of *li*), and *lidong* (理動, movement of *li*) was based on Zhu Xi's *liyudongzong* but his *lido* (理到, *li* responds to me itself when I research *li* in the thing) theory was founded on different views between Zhu Xi's *li* as *muzonguand muzozak*. His views differ from Zhu Xi's *li* not only in the *lido* theory but also in the movement (能發能生, *nunghalnungsaeng*) of the *li* theory, *libal*, and *lidong*. He found a theoretical difference in Zhu Xi's *li*. He says *dongzong* (動靜, movement and stopping) of *taekuk* itself concerning the movement of *li*. He interprets *chonmyong* (天命, command of the god) as movement itself. Such interpretations were indicative of the movement of *li*.

“*dongzong* in *taekuk* means the *dongzong* of *taekuk*. The movement of *chonmyong* means *chonmyong* as movement itself. Who do they make?”<sup>29</sup>

He interpreted *li* as a movable being. The *li* controls actively on *ki*. It is an original being. *Sangze* controls over man actively and different things. The movable *li* is not *sangze*. The act of *sangze* appearing from *li* control on *ki*.

2) *Li* (理) and *sangze* (上帝, the god) control actively

Yi Hwang believes *li* controls in *ki*. He thinks *li*, which manages in *ki* actively the same as *sangze* controls over all things. The *li* and *sangze* are movable beings. He writes about *chon* (天, shape of heaven), which is shape, *kon* (乾, nature of heaven), which is nature, and *sangze*, which is the controller.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, he writes about *chonsim* (天心, mind of heaven)<sup>31</sup>. Yi Hwang believed the four seasons, which is *chon* and *sangze* actively control it. He writes about *sangze* as the controller of all things actively.

“*Mukuk* (無極, ultimate of nonbeing) and *umyangohaeng* (陰陽五行, two and five elements) interact with each other and thus produce all things. It is controlled by *hwangsangze* (皇上帝, the god) and the *hwangsangze* produced mankind. It is presented in *shūjīng* (書經, Confucius collected materials and then wrote his book). Chéngzi (程子, neo-Confucianist at Běi Sòng dynasty in Chinese history) interprets *ze* (*hwangsangze* is presented in *shūjīng*) as the controller of all things.”<sup>32</sup>

*Mukuk* is *li* and *umyangohaeng* is *ki*. He believes that *Mukuk* and *umyangohaeng* interact with each other and thus produce all things. It is *sangze* that is presented in *shūjīng* and *di* in Chéngzi's book. *Sangze* actively controls all things, that arises from *li* actively controls *ki*. The *ki* follows *li*'s command well. He believed *li* and *sangze* to be the movable controllers.

The *li* and *ki* interact with each other and thus command all things. It is the same as the movement of god.<sup>33</sup>

Even though *guisin* (鬼神, gods), heaven and earth (天地), and *sangze* are named different, the reality is the same.<sup>34</sup>

He explained gods' actions and *sangze*'s (the god, absolute being) commands by saying that all of them arise from the interaction of *li* and *ki*. He believed *li* controls *ki* actively within *chi* itself. Nevertheless, both *li* and *ki* demonstrate movement. The *li* actively controls *ki* and *ki* follows *li*'s commanding. Therefore, the controlling of *sangze* appears from *li* controlling *ki*. However, *sangze* cannot be seen or heard. Therefore man cannot know it through the sensorium. The *li* cannot be seen or heard but *ki* can be known through the sensorium.

Therefore, Yi Hwang writes the same for both *sin* (神, one of gods) and *sangze* (上帝, the god). In addition, he writes to divide *gui* (鬼, one of gods) and *sin* (神, one of gods). Therefore, he thought *sin* to be in *guishén* (鬼神, one of gods). Therefore, he believed the same action for both *sin* and *sangze*. He argues that *guisin* and *sangze* are, in fact, the same entities. He thought the action of *sangze* as *li* controls *ki* actively. Moreover, he thought *sangze* was shapeless. However, *sangze* appears as the climate changes. This is because the change in climate appears when *li* controls *ki* actively.

#### 4. Conclusion

Yi Hwang writes about *li* that *che* (體, body) of *li* is not feeling and *yong* (用, limbs) of *li* is *nunghalnungsaeng* (能發能生, movement and production). He believes in the relation between *yong* of *li* and *sangze* (上帝, the god). However, he did not write that the *yong* of *li* is *sangze*. He believed that *sangze* who presides over all things to be the same as *li*, which controls *chi* actively. Nevertheless, man cannot know *sangze* through the sensorium because *sangze* is shapeless, soundless, and odorless. He believes that *sangze*'s actions are presented as the climate changes. However, it isn't an objective viewpoint. It cannot prove the being. Nevertheless, he believed *sangze* to be an absolute being and is morality (善, *son*). In addition, he also believed that *li* controls *ki* actively. If the good of *li* controls the evil of *ki*, man should commit moral actions. However, man may commit more evil

actions instead of good actions. Therefore, Yi Hwang writes *sangze*, which becomes angry in regards to the evil actions of mankind. As a result, the climate commits climatic disasters when man acts evil. Therefore, man should act accordingly and control their mind in the face of *sangze*. Such an action is known as *kong* (敬, reverence). This was Yi Hwang's thought.

He believed that mankind can practice morality through *kong* (敬, reverence). This is the *li* which controls *ki*. Therefore, he believes *li* and *sangze* to be the movable controllers, which man cannot know through sensorium. Thus, he believed that *sangze* is the basis for man's moral actions.

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<sup>1</sup> His nickname is Toegye(退溪, 1501-1570 year). He belongs to the School of neo-Confucianism in Choson(朝鮮, 1392-1910) dynasty in the Korean history. He is the founder of Youngnam School(嶺南學派) of neo-Confucianism. Youngnam and Kiho Schools(畿湖學派) are the two representatives of neo-Confucianism in Choson (朝鮮) dynasty.

<sup>2</sup>Study about logic structure in Yi Hwang (Zhāng Lìwén, *A Study of logic structure in Yi Hwang*, Toegye studies journal, vol 45, Toegye studies Institute, 1985, The Chinese language ; Yi Kwangho, *The Structure of substance-function in Yi T'oegye's notion of study*, Seoul National University, Doctoral paper, 1993 year, The Korean language)

Study of movement of Yi Hwang (Mun Sokyun, *presentation of li, movement of li, reaching of li*, Toegye studies journal, vol 110, Toegye studies Institute, 2001. Korean language ; Kim Kihyon, *A Study of libal of Toegye*, Philosophy, vol 60, Korean Philosophy, 1999. The Korean language)

<sup>3</sup>*Zhuziyulei*(Conversations of Master Zhu arranged topically), 1999 year. Peking: *Zhonghuashūjú*, China, Peking: Central China Publishing Co, 1999, pp.4

<sup>4</sup> We can see that Zhu's *taekukor li* is very similar to Aristotle's 'unmoved mover', when it is given the metaphorical interpretation, as several Aristotle scholars have suggested. according to which, "the Unmoved Mover has nothing whatever to do with any creator of motion. It is logical explanation, not a physical cause, a natural law, not a force"(Randall, J.h. *Aristotle*, New York: Columbia University Press. 1960, pp.135)

<sup>5</sup>*Zhuzquánshū*(Collected works of Zhu Xi(Shànghǎi in China : shànghǎigǔjíchūbǎnshè, 2002, pp.2687

<sup>6</sup> This feature of Zhu Xi's system warrants further study and reflection. His position entails a humility and tolerance based upon cognizance of the inherent limitation of one's own, presumably short of sagehood, point of view, rather than the radical "anything goes" implication of a thoroughgoing perspectivism, such espoused by Nietzsche. ...Philosophically, Zhu Xi's aesthetic *li-ki* system is more interesting when detached from this narrowly defined orthodox Way, for apart from the moral humility mentioned above, the concept of *li* connotes impartiality, fairness, balance, and equilibrium, which all must be reflected in any valid perspective; that is to say, any human perspective to be ethically legitimate must accommodate these features of *li*.(Kirill Ole Thompson, *How to Rejuvenate Ethics: Suggestion from Zhu Xi*, Philosophy East and West, Vol.41, Number4 October 1991, University of Hawaii Press, pp. 512)

<sup>7</sup>*Zhuziyulei*, pp.1376



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*Taekuk* is *li* and *dongzong* is *ki*. Man is *li* and the horse is *ki* because man is *Taekuk* and the horse is *dongzong*. Therefore, the horse is ridden by the man and the man rides on the horse the same as *ki* is ridden by *li* and *li* rides on *ki*. Thus, the *li* controls on *ki* the same as man controls horse.

<sup>8</sup>Zhu Xi thinks that good *li* should control a few evil *ki*. Ivanhoe does not translate “the moral truth” about *li* because Zhu also use *li* to refer to non-moral truth(Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 2000. pp. 46-7). However, I cannot agree Ivanhoe’s interpretation about Zhu Xi’s *li*, because Zhu’s *li* is moral being but his *ki* is both moral and non moral being.

<sup>9</sup>*Zhuziyulei*, pp.3

<sup>10</sup>Zhāng Liwén interpreted Zhu Xi, which is a logical contradiction as *li* cannot feel and controls all things.(*A Study of logic structure of Yi Hwang*, Toegye studies journal, vol 45, Toegye studies Institute, 1985, The Chinese language)

<sup>11</sup>*Zhuziyulei*, pp.5

<sup>12</sup>libd, pp.5

<sup>13</sup>libd, pp.5

<sup>14</sup>libd, pp.5

<sup>15</sup>Chéngyí(1033-1107, neo-Confucian at BěiSòng dynasty in Chinese history) write which shape of *konkoe* (乾卦) is *chon*(天, heaven) and *sangze* controls *chon*. But Zhu Xi says *li* controls itself. Chéngyí consider lively *sangze* but Zhu Xi considers not lively *sangze*. This is difference.

<sup>16</sup>*Zhuziyulei*, pp.1684. Zhāng Liwén interpreted Yi Hwang, which founded the theory of substance-function (體, 用, *yong*) about contradiction of *li* of Zhu Xi (*A Study of logic structure of Yi Hwang*, Toegye studies journal, vol 45, Toegye studies Institute, 1985, The Chinese language)

<sup>17</sup>*Tosgyezib*(退溪集, Collected works of Toegye, Yi Hwang), Seoul in Korea: Institute for the Translation of the Korean Classics, 1989, pp. 183

<sup>18</sup> Libd, pp.183

<sup>19</sup> libd, pp.72 ; libd, pp. 405 ; libd, pp.95 ; libd, pp.86

<sup>20</sup>Controlling *li* means that command to *ki* (libd, pp.310)

<sup>21</sup> libd, pp.382

<sup>22</sup>*Zhuzquánshū*(Collected works of Zhu Xi, Shànghǎi in China : shànghǎigǔjíchūbǎnshè, 2002, pp.2687

<sup>23</sup>*Zhuziyulei*, pp.371, zhu Xi writes about *kong*(敬)which mean *zhūyìwúshì*, control oneself perfectly and do not confuse in mind

<sup>24</sup>*Tosgyezib* , pp.355

<sup>25</sup> libd, pp.413

<sup>26</sup>Yi Hwang insisted to move about *li* in an attempt to practice moral behavior (Yu Sungkuk, Fundamental study of Toegye’s philosophy, Study of Asian philosophy, Institute Asian Theory, 1988. The Korean language)

<sup>27</sup> libd, pp. 466

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<sup>28</sup>His nickname is Kobong (高峰). He has studied neo-confucianism and was a student of Yi Hwang. He had debated about the Four-Seven feelings (四端七情, *sadanchilzong*) with Yi Hwang for eight years, from 1559 to 1566.

<sup>29</sup> libd, pp.355

<sup>30</sup> libd, pp.391

<sup>31</sup> libd, pp.183

<sup>32</sup>libd, Pp.355

<sup>33</sup> libd, pp.355

<sup>34</sup> libd, pp.391

*Lúnyǔ*, Seoul in Korea: Sungkyunkwan University Press, 1970, pp.269, “Jǐlù asked to Confucius *guisin* (鬼神, one of gods). Confucius answers him: I do not even know about man, then how do I know about *guisin*?” Confucius thought that it is more difficult to know *guisin* than to know man. This is a sentence in *lúnyǔ*. Yi Hwang interpreted what divides *gui* (鬼, one of gods) and *shén* (神, one of gods).

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