

The Man Behind: Luo Qinshun and the Four-Seven Debate

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present a few remarks on the work of Zhengan Luo Qinshun 整庵¹ 羅欽順 (1465-1547) and its reception in 16th century Korea. Although Zhengan was (with the exception of Wang Yangming) the greatest figure of Ming Confucianism, there has been relatively little research focused on the reception of his ideas both in China and Korea. This fact only reflects the historical development of Confucian discourse during the Ming and Qing periods when Zhengan, an exponent of the traditional branch of *daoxue*, was overshadowed and ignored by new trends and schools and we can thus find very few references to his work and ideas. On the other hand, he played an important role in the development of Korean Confucian school which avoided contemporary philosophical changes in China and adhered to Zhu Xi's orthodoxy. In this sense, Zhengan remained an important source of inspiration during the whole Chosŏn period and inspired many Korean thinkers including Yulgok Yi I 栗谷 李珥 (1536-1584) and Nongmun Im Sŏngju 鹿門 任聖周 (1711-1788) but he also provoked a significant disagreement and for many scholars served as an example of a heretic scholar of the fallen Ming dynasty. These two approaches mirror the possible modes of reception concerning Ming Confucianism by Korean literati and provide a fascinating example of a dialogue between a Chinese scholar and his Korean readers.

Surprisingly, among the most important texts related to Zhengan are the letters of the famous Four-Seven Debate, the most important philosophical dialogue in the history of Korean thought. Through the analysis of the texts of the Debate (i.e. the correspondence between T'oegye Yi Hwang 退溪 李滉 (1501-1570) and Kobong Ki Taesŏngem 高峰 奇大升 (1527-1572) and later between Yulgok Yi I and Ugye Sŏng Hon 牛溪 成渾 (1535-1598)), I would like to demonstrate that although Luo Qinshun's name appears scarcely in the course of the Debate, many of the arguments presented by both parties form an indirect dialogue with his teaching. The Four-Seven Debate thus provides an excellent example of both rejecting and accepting the Ming Confucian discourse and, in a broader sense, shows the limits of Confucian universalism within the Far Eastern context.

Although the quantity of research related to Zhengan can not be compared to hundreds of studies (and an academic journal) devoted to Wang Yangming and his relation to Korean scholars, since the ground-breaking studies of Yu Myŏngjong 劉明鍾² the research dealing with Zhengan and his work has expanded significantly in many directions.³ From the numerous Zhengan's crucial theories, the aim of this study is to analyze his views on the relation between *li* and *qi* described among the Chosŏn literati as "li and qi are one thing" 理氣爲一物. After reading Zhengan's crucial work *Kunzhiji* 困知記, we may successfully doubt that this narrow thesis represents the real stance of this Ming scholar on the most fundamental question of *daoxue* philosophy. We would like to offer a description of the use and evaluation of his ideas among the participants of the Four-Seven Debate instead of searching for the relevant reading of Zhengan's work. In other words, through reactions of various Korean thinkers we intend to trace the process by which an *image* of one of the most important Ming scholars was created.

¹ Hong Chŏnggŭn 洪正根 in his important study 任聖周와 羅欽順 學說의 對比의 考察, in 儒教思想研究 vol. 18, 2003 points out that Chosŏn scholars often used the character *am* 菴, which has to be bore in mind for search in electronic versions of their works.

² Many of them were later collected in his 退溪와 栗谷의 哲學, 東亞大學敎出版部, Seoul 1987.

³ For their methodological overview see for example 홍정근, 한,중사상 비교 연구방법 시론 - 조선학자와 나훤순학설의 비교 연구성과를 중심으로, in 東洋哲學研究 vol.43 2005, p. 151-188.

Kobong and T'oegye

Both authors of the first part of the Four-Seven Debate composed a significant number of texts which give us a very detailed account of their attitudes towards Zhengan and his basic teachings including the thesis that “*li* and *qi* are one thing.” Given T'oegye's notorious aversion towards false learnings which, in his opinion, included the vast majority of Ming scholars, it is no surprise that most of his references to Zhengan are strictly negative. A mere glimpse at the list of his heresiographical works collected in his *chapchŏ* 雜著 reveals the title of the treatise “Demonstration that it is not so that *li* and *qi* are one thing” *Pi igiilmul pyŏnjŭng* 非理氣一物辯證⁴; this represents clearly his primary attitude towards Zhengan's theory. Although this text is not focused exclusively on Zhengan and T'oegye's criticism is also targeted at Hwadam So Kyŏngdŏk 花潭 徐敬德 (1489-1546), other references to Zhengan clearly reveal that in T'oegye's eyes this scholar was merely a disguised Buddhist despoiling the Way in the same manner as other arch-heretics, most notably Lu Xiangshan⁵ and Wang Yangming.⁶ The following T'oegye's comment on Zhengan in his *Ŏnhaengnok* 言行錄 well illustrates his antipathy and shows that these attitudes were (later) shared also by his younger colleague, Kobong.

The Teacher claimed that Zhengan's teaching considered itself a rejection of heresies but while he refused them in *yang* and supported them in *yin*, it used them on one side and forbade them on the other. In reality, Zhengan was an offender against Masters Cheng and Zhu. (The Teacher) got into an intense argument with Sojae about it and did not accept it as true until the end. It was only Kobong Ki Taesŭng who shared the Teacher's opinion and wrote *Non Konjigi*, the postscript, which refuses this teaching. When the Master read it, he said: These arguments are clear and specific. It is really not easy, it is really not easy.⁷

The emphatic sigh at the end of the quote assures us that T'oegye was well aware that refuting Zhengan's teaching is complicated because of its seeming resemblance to orthodox stances. Nevertheless, it may be said that Kobong's resolute attack against *Kunzhiji*⁸ and its author fulfilled T'oegye's expectations.

Kobong's criticism (except numerous insults aimed at Zhengan) may serve as an excellent survey of the neuralgic points of Zhengan's teaching which are summarized in the following statement: „ This book says that the Mind of the Way is nature and Human mind are feelings, that *li* and *qi* are one thing and that *liangzhi* is not the principle of Heaven etc. etc.“⁹). Although *Non Konjigi* is an elaboration of the attitudes and arguments of both T'oegye and Kobong, we should not forget that this treatise was produced relatively late (1564) and had been (especially in Kobong's case) preceded by long process, a part of which is well preserved in the letters of Debate.

The first reference to Zhengan's theory of the relation between *li* and *qi* appears in the second T'oegye's letter to Kobong and serves as a good example of the *argumentum ad hominem* against Kobong.

Consequently, you consider *li* and *qi* as one thing and there is nothing what distinguishes them. Recently, Luo Zhengan used the argument that *li* and *qi* are not different things and concluded that Master Zhu's explanation was wrong. I search for what is the standard and cannot grasp

⁴ TGCS 41:20a.

⁵ As in remark “*Kunzhiji* is considered to express his opinion of later years and it is identical with Xiangshan” 困知記以爲其晚年所見。乃與象山合。

⁶ See for example TGCS 13: 5b, 13: 5b- 6a, 21: 3a- 3b.

⁷ TGCS, T'oegye sŏnhaeng ŏnhaengnok 5: 13a 先生以整庵之學。自謂闢異端。陽排陰助。左遮右攔。實程朱之罪人也。與蘇齋力辨之。終不以爲然。獨高峯奇大升。與先生合謂作論困知記跋以斥其學。先生見之曰這議論極明快。甚不易甚不易。

⁸ Kobong worked with the edition of *Kunzhiji* consisting of four *quan* and a supplement. See KBJ 2:45b.

⁹ KBJ 2: 45b 其書所稱道心。性也。人心。情也。及理氣爲一物。及良知非天理云云者。

what his intention was, which is not to say that the meaning of your explanation is also similar.¹⁰

This comparison of Kobong and Zhenguan is among the last arguments targeted at Kobong's theories in the letter and clearly demonstrates that for T'oegye anything even remotely similar to Zhenguan's works is completely erroneous. Errors in Kobong's interpretation were provided not only by T'oegye's counter-arguments but also by their similarity with Zhenguan's teaching.

Kobong's reply thus necessarily responds to both types of accusations, factual (he considers *li* and *qi* as one thing) and "heterodoxical" (his theory is similar to Zhenguan's). With respect to the factual aspect, Kobong repeatedly assured of his acknowledgement of the distinction and separation of *li* and *qi* and stresses that "concerning these two, there exists a division,"¹¹ and that "in my crude explanation, from the very beginning I distinguished *li* and *qi* as each having their boundaries and not being mixed together...and did not consider them as one thing."¹²

As to the latter aspect of T'oegye's accusation, Kobong absolutely rejects any inspiration or similarity with Zhenguan's theory.

As for the theories of Luo Zhenguan, I have not yet seen them and I do not know what they are but taking into account this one sentence, he is seriously at fault. I certainly do not consider *li* and *qi* as one thing, nor do I say that they are not different things. In my vulgar explanation from the beginning I had never such intention, nor did I say such words.¹³

Although the quotation is in compliance with the negative attitude towards Zhenguan and rejects his ideas, it creates more questions rather than providing answers in terms of the relation between Zhenguan and Kobong. If we rule out the possibility that T'oegye's accusation was simply an unfounded personal attack, we have to ask whether the similarity of Kobong's and Zhenguan's attitudes was incidental or not. Kobong's statement that he was unaware of any Zhenguan's ideas opens a broad field of historical research whether it was possible for him to be ignorant of the content of *Kunzhiji*, a frequently discussed text in the literati circles around the time of T'oegye-Kobong dialogue. A nearly detective investigation¹⁴ of how the newly imported *Kunzhiji* was spread among Chosŏn literati based on collecting references and allusions scattered in the works of various authors gives us a vivid picture that *Kunzhiji* was the real issue around 1560 together with Wang Yangming's *Chuanxilu* 傳習錄.

Given the fact that many references to Zhenguan's work were written by persons in close contact with Kobong,¹⁵ it would be rather surprising that he had no idea about this controversial topic. Even Kobong admits in a letter to Kim Hoesuk 金晦叔 (Kim Kye 金啓 1528-1574) written in 1566 that he became acquainted with *Kunzhiji* "ten years ago"¹⁶, which casts a doubt on the above-mentioned

¹⁰ *KBJ* 1:5a-6b 是則遂以理氣爲一物。而無所別矣。近世羅整菴倡爲理氣非異物之說。至以朱子說爲非。是混尋常未達其指。不謂來喻之意亦似之也。

¹¹ *KBJ* 1:2a 二者固有分矣。

¹² *KBJ* 1:20a-b 鄙說。當初分別得理氣。各有界限。不相淆雜。...非以理氣爲一物也。

¹³ *KBJ* 1:21a 羅整庵所論。不曾見得。不知如何。若據此一句。則其悞甚矣。若大升則固非以理氣爲一物。而亦不謂理氣非異爲也。鄙說初無是意。亦無是語。

¹⁴ Part of this task for the early period of the dissemination of *Kunzhiji* in Korea was done by Yu Myŏngjong but there is still a lot of bibliographical research to do. Standard data for *Kunzhiji* history in Korea use the transmission date 1553 and the first publication date 1560 (for the two *quan* edition). See 김용재, 양명학의 형성과정에 관한 역사, 철학적 고찰 - 명과 조선의 사상사를 중심으로, in 한국철학논집 vol.12 2003, p. 331.

¹⁵ A good example of the intensity and multitude of communication canals among literates of that time is the story of *Ch'ŏnmyŏngdo* 天明圖, a diagram which gave an impetus to the beginning of the Four-Seven Debate. Within a few years, this simple chart on a sheet of paper went through the hands of almost every important scholar of this period and provoked a large number of comments and alternative versions which show the intensity of intellectual exchange within literati circles.

¹⁶ *KBJ* 3:59b-60b, this letter is devoted to the experiences of Kobong and other Korean thinkers with *Kunzhiji*.

claim. Another example can be found in the *yǒnbo* 年譜 of another influential thinker associated with the origins of the Four-Seven Debate, Hasō Kim Inhu 河西 金麟厚 (1510-1560); although the information is not first-hand and was recorded in a later period, Hasō biography states that in winter 1559 Kobong and Teacher (Hasō) discussed Luo Zhengan's opinion on the Mind of the Way and Human mind¹⁷, which clearly preceded his dialogue with T'oegye.

Although the research of the beginnings of Kobong's contacts with Zhengan's "one thing" theory inevitably remains a pure hypothesis due the lack of documents, we know that even before the Four-Seven Debate Kobong was exposed to ideas similar (if not identical) to this theory. This is evident in the records of Kobong's discussion on the relation of *taiji* and *yin* and *yang* in which Iljae Yi Hang 一齋 李恒(1499-1576) presented the opinion that *taiji* and two modes, in other words *li* and *qi*, are one thing. But can the existence of these contacts of Kobong and the discussed theory support the claim that he was influenced or inspired by this idea?

Certainly not, because Kobong was well aware what the hidden warning of T'oegyees criticism was. Zhengan's theory was originally designed as a counter-balance to Zhu Xi's overly dualistic view on the relation between *li* and *qi*, well demonstrated in his famous quotation "*li* and *qi* are definitely two things."¹⁸ In this sense, any consent or similarity with the theory that "*li* and *qi* are one thing" inevitably mean to accept the criticism of Zhu Xi. At the same time, whoever criticizes Master Zhu is automatically excluded from the orthodox discourse of Korean scholars. For this very reason we can hardly find any Chosŏn literati¹⁹ who would openly agree with Zhengan's thesis which challenges the basic paradigm of the orthodox view on *li* and *qi*, based on Master Zhu's authority.

Two or one

It would be rather misleading to interpret these two views, i.e. that *li* and *qi* are one thing or that they are two things, as an antithesis because their relation is far more complex to be defined just by a few characters.

Although criticized by T'oegye, Kobong's views on *li* and *qi* were fully in accordance with Zhu Xi's theory on which Kobong founded his interpretation just as T'oegye did. We should not forget that although T'oegye argued that his basic thesis in the Debate is correct because of its striking similarity with Zhu Xi's statement on Four beginnings and Seven emotions²⁰, Kobong was able to support his own contrary opinion by quoting the same author, Zhu Xi.²¹ This, of course, does not mean that Zhu Xi contradicts himself but it simply shows the broad range of possible interpretations concerning his crucial theories. This is demonstrated by the variability of points of view taken by Zhengan²², T'oegye and Kobong who were connected only by the respect to the same orthodox authorities. How is it then possible that Zhengan's theory was considered unorthodox although it did not methodologically differ from its Korean alternatives?²³

The understanding of differences between acceptable and unacceptable interpretations could begin by the analysis of T'oegyees reprimand of Kobong which preceded the allegation of similarity with

¹⁷ *Hasō sōnsaengjip purok* 3: 25b.

¹⁸ *Zhuzi yulei* 4:8a 理氣決是二物.

¹⁹ Iljae faced a strong criticism for his statement on *taiji* and revised his radical stance. The legendary Sojae No Susin 蘇齋 盧守愼(1515-1590) remained the only real advocate of Zhengan.

²⁰ *Zhuzi yulei* 53:17b.

²¹ A good comparison of Zhu Xi and Kobong from this perspective is provided in 최영찬, 朱子哲學에서본 四七論, in 傳統과 現實 1991, p.91-122.

²² The biased interpretation of Zhengan as an enemy of Zhu Xi's teaching does not reflect the fact that Zhengan designed his theories to be fully in accordance with orthodox sources including Zhu Xi. A good example of his cautious approach towards the voluminous work of Master Zhu could be seen for example in *Kunzhiji* I: 13.

²³ We have to repeat that although Zhengan and his *Kunzhiji* was met with criticism among Chinese scholars from various sides, it has never reached the heights of Korean attacks and Zhengan was considered as the distinguished scholar of his time. Unbiased account of Huang Zhongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-95) in his *Mingru xuean* 明儒學案 lists him among important Ming scholars with significant praise and even stressed his contributions in refuting Buddhism (indeed a very different evaluation from Korean accusations of the opposite).

Zhengan's theory: "You like sameness and hate difference, you find delight in mixing things together and detest analytical distinctions."²⁴

The correct approach is, in this case, not the opposite of the fault, i.e. to hate differences and find delight in sameness, but a balance between both of them. Indeed, most of misunderstandings concerning the Four-Seven Debate and general ideas of *xinglixue* come from the fact that modern readers tend to search for antagonism instead of trying to find a common theoretical ground underneath opposing concepts. Yi Ūrho²⁵ or most recently Ch'oe Yōngjin²⁶ show that the difference between T'oegye and Kobong or Yulgok is not based on the fact that one sees things in holistic and the other in analytic way or that one advocates *li* and the other *qi* but in that they stress different aspects of a common paradigm. Simplified definitions of their ideas are products of the modern desire for a black-and-white categorization or criticism of their contemporary colleagues, which should never be trusted, most typically represented by accusations that a certain author considers *li* and *qi* as one thing or divides them improperly in two. One or two, holistic or analytic, adherence to authority or search for an original point of view are not features which represent an opinion of a thinker but rather two sides, approaches or extremes of philosophical and moral goal of true Confucians, balanced and unbiased understanding of the Way and of ten thousand things.

In the case of *li* a *qi* it means that the correct interpretation of their relation is not that they are one thing or two things but that they are one and two, two and one *yi er er, er er yi* 一而二 二而一²⁷. This famous saying²⁸ is a "mathematical" analogy to another description of their relation: that they are inseparable but also not mixed 不離不雜. In this sense, one or two are just two aspects of the same fact and do not exclude one another. A common error, of course, is to accept only one of them and thus fall into one-sidedness and partiality. Both of these mistaken interpretations are very well described by Iljae's elucidation of the thesis that *li* and *qi* are one and two, two and one.

Although *li* and *qi* are two things, their substance is one and it is not correct to divide them in two. Scholars of both ancient and modern times sometimes overly divided them and made them two and sometimes overly united them and made them one. In fact, they did not know that they are one and two and two and one in them.²⁹

The reason why T'oegye and Kobong agreed that Zhengan's theory does not belong to the orthodox discourse was that they believed that although *li* and *qi* are inseparable, the statement that they are one thing is exaggerated because it does not take into account the second feature of their relation i.e. that they, are at the same time, two things. It is possible to emphasize one aspect (sameness or difference, one or two etc.) as do both T'oegye and Kobong in their dialogue but one has to be aware of the other aspect.

Yulgok

²⁴ *KBJ* 1:5b 今之所辯則異於是。喜同而惡離。樂渾全而厭剖析。

²⁵ 이을호, 高峰學 序論, in 傳統과 現實 1991, p. 9-30

²⁶ 최영진, 조선 학사상의 양상, 성균관 대학교 출판부 2005 p.11-32.

²⁷ The translation of this expression is rather difficult because it plays with the ambiguity of *er* in the same manner as does the famous *wuji er taiji*. I am rather reluctant to use the existing Western translations as none of them grasps the problem in grammatically correct way. For the problem of the translation of *er* in *wuji er taiji* we can find a list of translations in Wing-tsit Chan's *Reflections on Thing at Hand* (p. 369-370). The best academic amusement is the criticism of Georg von der Gabeltz by Alfred Forke which offers a wide range of Western translations of *er* ranging from Jesuit "est" to German *dabei, ist zugleich, und doch* etc. See Georg von der Gabelentz, *Thai-kih-thu, des Tscheu-Tsi Tafel des Urprinzipes* p. 32 and Alfred Forke, *Geschichten der neueren chinesischen Philosophie* p.49-50.

²⁸ Wing-tsit Chan offers in *Chu Hsi: new studies* (p. 311-314) brief but superb introduction to the origins and uses of this saying beginning with Song masters continuing with Luo Qinsun and finally quoting even T'oegye.

²⁹ *Iljaejip* 18a 理氣雖是二物。而其體則一也。二之則不是。古今學者。理與氣。或太分而爲二。或太合而爲一。殊不知一而二。二而一焉。

The rejection of Zhengan's theory by T'oegye became a precedent for later generations of scholars, however, not in the absolute sense. An example of an alternative view on Zhengan can be found in the work of the second giant of the Four-Seven Debate, Yulgok. Yulgok's attitude towards unorthodox ideas was relatively tolerant compared to T'oegye's (who even expressed his concerns about Yulgok's ideological purity³⁰) and besides Yulgok's frequently mentioned experience with Buddhism, his works include even a commentary of *Daodejing*, something rather unusual for an orthodox Confucian. But although Yulgok showed a more lenient attitude towards "false learning" and claimed that it is better to study unorthodox Lu Xiangshan rather than spend days in laziness and debauchery (like many literati of Eastern country did),³¹ he was always an advocate of correct learning. Also, his interest in Zhengan's work was not a matter of pure curiosity for unorthodox learning, it was rather a serious attempt to justly evaluate ideas of the Ming author. Most of studies dealing with the relation of Zhengan and Yulgok are introduced by the quotation of Yulgok's letter to Ugye which described the author's relation to three of the most important thinkers of his times.

Recently, I looked at the explanations of three masters, Zhengan, T'oegye and Hwadam. Zhengan is the best, T'oegye comes after and Hwadam is the last. Among them, it can be sensed that Hwadam and Zhengan in many cases achieved something on their own while T'oegye makes the impression that he largely depended on the form and he only followed Zhu Xi's explanations. The way Zhengan understood the complete substance was, in some cases, not absolutely brilliant and he was not able to deeply trust Master Zhu... That is the reason why there were cases when his words crossed the boundaries and slightly slid into the error that *li* and *qi* are one thing. However, he did not really consider *li* and *qi* as one thing.³²

Such total disagreement with the previous evaluations of Zhengan who is described as superior to T'oegye shows that in spite of the critical stance of his predecessors Yulgok was independent enough to formulate his own opinion. In order to understand the real meaning of Yulgok's statement, we have to analyse other references to Zhengan in the letters of the debate between Yulgok and Ugye and formulate two questions arising from the previous quotation: why did Yulgok value Zhengan more than T'oegye and why did he state that Zhengan "did not really consider *li* and *qi* as one thing" contrary to the widely accepted image of the Ming author?

There is a simple answer to the former question; Yulgok liked Zhengan exactly for the same reasons for which T'oegye disliked him. Both thinkers participated in the philosophical tradition of *xinglixue* which accentuated certain views on *li* and *qi*, derived authority from slightly different scholarly tradition and logically came to conclusions which they considered as being orthodox and true but were frequently at odds with other scholars. This tradition followed a subtle distinction in the basic framework of *daoxue* which was already noticeable among the Song masters, Shao Yong and Zhang Zai, in their speculations about *qi*, on one hand, and in Zhu Xi's elucidations of *li* on the other. Chang Hao and Cheng Yi can be used as a good example of this distinction. However, this tradition should not be understood as being in opposition to the rest of *daoxue* (as *qi*-monism versus *li*-monism) but rather as an alternative in the spectrum of possible interpretations.

Both Zhengan and Yulgok belonged to this tradition, shared their appreciation for the same authors, and frequently quoted the same sentences (like Mingdao's "concrete things are the Way and the Way

³⁰ *TCHS* 14:18a-b 往聞人言。足下讀釋氏書而頗中其毒。心惜之久矣。日者之來見我也。不諱其實。而能言其非。今見兩書之旨又如此。吾知足下之可與適道也。

³¹ *YCHS* 13:33a-34b

³² 近觀整菴,退溪,花潭三先生之說。整菴最高。退溪次之。花潭又次之。就中整菴花潭。多自得之味。退溪多依樣之味。一從朱子之說整菴則望見全體。而微有未盡瑩者。且不能深信朱子。...故言或有過當者。微涉於理氣一物之病。而實非以理氣為一物也。所見未盡瑩。故言或過差耳。

is concrete things³³) or metaphors and exhibited slightly critical attitude toward some usual interpretations of Zhu Xi's theses.³⁴

In spite of the fact that many of these similarities found in Yulgok's work could be considered as derived from his reading of *Kunzhiji*, it is rather problematic and superfluous to search for similarities (after all, they both share the same theoretical background) or for difference (because every interpretation of this theoretical background is different). One of these differences is obviously Zhengan's "one thing" theory which Yulgok (although with the remark that Zhengan did not really consider *li* and *qi* as one thing) labeled as an obvious mistake. The following two references to Zhengan in the letters to Ugye will provide answers to all these questions.

Master Cheng said: "concrete things are the Way and the Way is concrete things". Here he said that *li* and *qi* cannot be separated but those who read it finally understood it that *li* and *qi* are one thing ... But even a man of Luo Zhengan's lofty intelligence and sophistication also had a slight problem regarding taking *li* and *qi* as one thing. And even though there is nowadays no match for the exactness and careful precision of T'oegye, his thesis that "*li* gives issue and *qi* follows it" likewise had a slight problem regarding *li* and *qi* having priority and posteriority.³⁵

Of the Confucians of recent times, Luo Zhengan stood out as the most knowledgeable and keen-minded. He knew something of the Great Foundation, but, on the contrary, he questioned whether Master Zhu might have an (excessively) dualistic view; in this, although it was a misunderstanding of Master Zhu, there was, however, an understanding as regards the Great Foundation. But his regarding the Human mind and the Mind of the Way as a matter of substance and function was a misinterpretation of the meaning of the terms, and that likewise is regrettable. Nonetheless, Zhengan's mistake was at the level of terminology, while T'oegye's mistake had to do with the nature and principle. T'oegye's error was thus far more grave.³⁶

Yulgok knew very well that Zhengan's statement was merely a rhetorical attack against the false interpretation of Zhu Xi's definition of *li* and *qi* as "two things" and that, in fact, Zhengan's stress on the unity of the two entities was a reaction to the overly dualistic interpretation of the relation between *li* and *qi*. Yulgok's idea was almost identical; he preferred his own interpretation that focused on the interdependence of *li* and *qi* as an antipode to T'oegye's dualistic theory of "mutual issuance" *hobal* 互發 which was inadequate in separating them. In this sense, Yulgok's theoretical perspective was closer to Zhengan's than to T'oegye's and he naturally considered T'oegye's mistakes as methodologically more serious than Zhengan's. Despite that he thought that Zhengan's point of view was theoretically correct, he considered it unbalanced because it includes only one aspect of the basic

³³ See *Jinsilu* 1:19 道亦器 氣亦道。Although I use Wing-tsit Chan's translation, Michael Kalton has the very nice translation for *qi* 器, "The [concrete] implement is also the Tao; the Tao is also the [concrete] implement." *Qi* has many possible meanings, best of them is, of course, used by Confucius in *Lunyu* 3:22 管仲之器小哉。

³⁴ The variety of methods how to deal with suitable interpretation of Zhu Xi is very broad, ranging from the looking for "final conclusion" used by Wang Yangming and also by Zhengan (*Kunzhiji* 1:11) to correcting of improper exegesis used by later scholars. Compare for example Zhengan's statement that concerning Master Zhu's thesis that "*li* and *qi* are definitely two things" in *Kunzhiji* 1:11 where he states that "there are slight differences in Master Zhu's view ... one does not know which to take as his final conclusion" and Yulgok's approach to the same quotation in *YGCS* 10:8a "Master Zhu said: „*li* are *qi* definitely two things.“ Here he said that *li* and *qi* are not mutually mixed, but those who read it understood it that *li* and *qi* have priority and posteriority. 朱子曰。理氣決是二物。此言理氣之不相挾雜。而見者遂以理氣為有先後。

³⁵ *YGCS* 10:8b 程子曰。器亦道。道亦器。此言理氣之不能相離。而見者遂以理氣為一物。... 至如羅整菴以高明超卓之見。亦微有理氣一物之病。退溪之精詳謹密。近代所無。而理發氣隨之說。亦微有理氣先後之病。

³⁶ *YGCS* 10:13a 羅整菴識見高明。近代傑然之儒也。有見於大本。而反疑朱子有二岐之見。此則雖不識朱子。而却於大本上有見矣。但以人心道心為體用。失其名義。亦可惜也。雖然。整菴之失。在於名目上。退溪之失。在於性理上。退溪之失較重矣。

paradigm “one and two, two and one”. Zhengan and T’oegye made the same methodological mistake and Yulgok underlined this similarity in the above-mentioned (YCGS 10:8a) parallel criticism; one belonged to those who “finally understood that *li* and *qi* are one thing” and the other to those who “understood that *li* and *qi* have priority and posteriority.”

It is rather surprising that in spite of this theoretical affinity to Zhengan’s teaching the letters to Ugye quoted above are the only references to Zhengan in his whole work. Given Yulgok’s surprisingly high evaluation of Zhengan in his letters to Ugye we would expect more such references in *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*. This omission may be caused by the fact that *Kunzhiji* had already been labeled as unorthodox and it would have been probably futile to defend Zhengan with the argument that his thesis about “one thing” is only a part of his theory and that he did not mean it in the sense as majority of Chosŏn scholars understood it. Yulgok was already preoccupied with a defense of his own (in the opinion of many colleagues) unorthodox views and he could not afford to defend Zhengan whose situation was even more problematic. It is also true that besides his view on *li* and *qi* Zhengan was the author of many other theories which were clearly beyond the boundaries of orthodox interpretation (for example his theory of *suoyiran* 所以然 etc.). However, the strategy of not mentioning *Kunzhiji* and Zhengan did not prevent Yulgok from attacks targeted at his attention to and sympathy for the Ming scholar. Udam Chŏng Sihan 愚潭 丁時翰 (1625-1707) thus described Zhengan as the one who “thought that *li* and *qi* are one thing and did not differ from the opinion of Xiangshan ... and openly insulted the established explanations of Master Zhu”³⁷ and with academic animosity he stated that “Yulgok thus took Zhengan as his teacher.”³⁸

Conclusion

It may be concluded that Zhengan’s work profoundly influenced the development of Chosŏn literati discussion about *li* and *qi*. However, from the very beginning its reception was marked by a heated debate whether Zhengan’s theories (especially the summarized thesis that “*li* and *qi* are one thing”) are orthodox or not. In this environment, Zhengan’s name became quickly associated with one extreme of the debates concerning *li* and *qi* and served as an ideological image which some favoured (such as Yulgok) and others used it as an insult (T’oegye). The question why Zhengan’s work received various, yet never absolutely positive, reception is answered by the fact that Zhengan’s work entered an already sophisticated and intensive discourse of Korean *daoxue* scholars and there was no time and space for an “objective” debate.

We should not be surprised that Zhengan was accused that he considered *li* and *qi* as being one thing, because even Yulgok himself with his stress on their inseparability was accused that “at the end he did not avoid the mistake of [considering them as] two things”³⁹ and we can see that these accusations were very frequent. But why did Chosŏn literati treat the work of the leading Ming scholar in such a way and why did all of them consider themselves to be more or less superior to him? The official version of *daotong* prevalent among Korean literati claimed that the Genealogy of the Way, i.e. the orthodox transmission of the Confucian teaching, ended with Zhu Xi. Ming scholars were thus not “teachers” as were their Song predecessors but rather colleagues whose thoughts are to be disputed.

³⁷Udamjip 7 以理氣爲一物者。不外於象山之見。...。顯斥朱子之定論

³⁸Udamjip 7 栗谷則祖述整庵。

³⁹Nongmunjip 19:7a 終未免於二物之疑