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The Issue of Newness Viewed through Korean Aesthetics

Joosik Min

Abstract

In Korean traditional aesthetics, discussions on newness are rare. The tendency to value old things and recognize them as standards is deeply rooted in Korean culture, and such customs seem to be no exception in aesthetics. It cannot be denied that Korean arts also has a social tendency towards tradition, which has been dominated by morality, and thus reflects past-centered or past-recalling ways of thinking rather than dynamic or forward-looking ways of thinking. Then, what does artistic creation mean in Korean culture? Is creation possible? In my view, the logic of change and development does not seem to gain much support in Korean thought. I will examine the ideas of newness by two Korean literati, Lee Gyubo and Park Jiwon, and reconsider the meaning of artistic creation. In Korean culture, artistic creation is focused on the preservation and transmission of valuable standards, rather than new changes or developments, and looked-for encounters with prominent personalities.

Key Words

creation; freshness; Korean aesthetics; newness; novelty; originality

1. Introduction: meaning of newness

Korean aesthetics, as used here, refers to indigenous aesthetic thinking that has been created and developed in our history without the influence of Western philosophy, that is, as aesthetic thinking was before Western philosophy was introduced into our society. Newness contains the meaning of originality, that is to say, the quality of being created or thought for the first time, without imitating others.

The dictionary definitions of 'new' include (1) having not existed before; (2) feeling vivid and fresh unlike before; and (3) very desperately needed or missed.^[1] Synonyms include afresh, novel, unique, and so on. Definition (1) seems to be understood from an existential perspective; definition (2) from an emotional perspective; and definition (3) from a practical perspective.

An antonym of the word is 'old,' which refers to (1) things that are old and worn out, and (2) thoughts, institutions, or cultures that are outdated and not fresh. Another antonym of 'new' is 'aged,' which means that the length of time that has passed is long. There is an old saying in Korea, "Aged men have wisdom, but aged things are ghosts." The more aged a person is, the more experienced he or she is, and this makes the aged person understand the reasons behind things and gain wisdom. This is a proverb that highlights the wisdom of those who are old and experienced.

However, in Korean traditional aesthetics, discussions on newness are rare. The tendency of valuing old things and

recognizing them as standards is deeply rooted in East Asian cultures, and such old customs seem to be no exception in aesthetics.

So, what does creation mean in this East Asian culture? Is creation possible? In my view, the logic of change and development does not seem to gain much support in East Asian thought. One of the areas of study that was developed in the modern West is art history. The concept that crucially contributed to the establishment of modern art history as a field of study was style, and thus art history has been often discussed as a history of style. This is based on the view that different ages and regions show different features of art. In my opinion, however, the Western concept of art history as a history of style cannot be applied to Korean or East Asian art history. In Korea, literary art, in particular, is focused on the preservation and transmission of valuable standards rather than new changes or development, and looked-for encounters with prominent personalities. The understanding of dignity in an artist's works is more important than other aspects.

Thinkers who have raised issues related to newness in the history of Korean aesthetics, in my humble opinion, include Lee Gyubo in the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) and Park Jiwon in the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910). They advocated the importance of decisively breaking from old-fashioned conventions and ways of thinking in order to break through problems in their time. Lee Gyubo highlighted new words and new intention in creating poetry and prose, and Park Jiwon put an emphasis on "Take the old, create a new." Unfortunately, scholars who have paid attention to the issue of newness in the history of Korean aesthetics are rare. What is the reason behind this omission? Before answering this question, the views of Lee Gyubo and Park Jiwon will be discussed.

2. Newness found in Lee Gyubo: *Shin-ui* (New Intention) Theory

Lee Gyubo (1168-1241) was a scholar of the Goryeo Dynasty and is widely known for his work, *Dongguk-yisangkuk-jip* or *Collected Works of Minister Lee of Goryeo*. He was one of the few scholars who survived under the military regime. His pen name, White Cloud Hermit, compared his freewheeling character to clouds, describing well the world of his works that pursued novelty and personality.

Lee Gyubo had the opposite philosophy of literature from Lee Inro, one of the renowned writers of the time. In his *Yong-sa* Theory (Citation Theory), Lee Inro encouraged poets to quote good verses from classics, while Lee Gyubo insisted that poets should write creative verses using their own voice and personality. That is why we can find in his works very creative and ingenious verses that were not seen in earlier poems.

The following text described Lee Gyubo's own opinion on the *Shin-ui* or New Intention Theory.

Those who want to emulate the styles of ancient writers must learn and read their poems first, and follow their styles. Otherwise, it would be even difficult to follow them. ...When I was young, I was immature and just wandered around. I was

not good at reading books thoroughly. I just read through classics like the *Six Books*, and *Writings and History* only, but I did not try to search for their origins. Then, how could I even try to emulate the stanza and verse of great scholars? How could I imitate and follow the styles without being familiar with the texts? Therefore, inevitably I had to create new words.[2]

Yong-sa and *Shin-ui* are two different views that collide with each other. Lee Inro said, "I sat in my room with the door closed, and read the books of Huang Tingjian and Su Shi, who are the famous Chinese writers. After that, I was able to make powerful words and clear sounds, and gained the wisdom to write poems." On the contrary, Lee Gyubo said, "I did not follow ancient people, but I created new intentions."

People thought the two walked into different doors. But Choi Ja, a literati of that time, insightfully thought that they walked into the same door but came out from different doors. They did the same reading and learning of the ancestors' words and intentions. Lee Inro practiced the words and styles of the ancients until they came out naturally as his own, and Lee Gyubo tried to express new intentions beyond just imitating them, even if the new would be unfamiliar to the reader.

Lee Gyubo disapproved of the trend of the time of just imitating Su Dongpo and being proud of it. He criticized this trend, saying that expressing intentions is the most difficult thing in writing poems, followed by embellishing verses, but that people lacking talent work hard only to embellish words. Without hesitation, Lee Gyubo even called *Yong-sa* the thief of writing.

The two methods of creation, *Yong-sa* and *Shin-ui*, did have more implications than just their methods, at least at that time. For Lee Inro and Lee Gyubo, the two methods were ways to describe the world to which they belonged. Lee Inro, whose family was once a noble family, could not help but censor himself for government posts and be satisfied with the conservative *Yong-sa* Theory while he wanted to deny reality. On the contrary, Lee Gyubo, who emerged as a new class of scholar-official, was able to be positive about reality and wield his sword of *Shin-ui*.

Unlike those ancient poets, I am not accustomed to the books of the sages, and I even feel ashamed to follow their styles. I have not accumulated many things from them to use. Thus when I create something unexpectedly, I have to make new words, which in turn are often strange and ludicrous. Ancient poets did create the content of poems, but not the words, but I create both content and words, and do not even feel ashamed of it. I know many people look at me sideways and exclude me. Despite all these things, why are you praising me so much? Ah! People in the world are seriously blinded, and rush into anything desirable without realizing that it is something stolen. No one cares about the origin of things. After hundreds of years, if someone like you tries to distinguish what is true

from what is false, those who stole others' writing could be considered as thieves, and the ludicrous words in my writings could be praised, as you did today.[3]

Emulating the styles of ancient poets after reading their poems is a very difficult task and, as such, people often decide just to follow them. Lee Gyubo viewed this as the most serious ill in poetry and excluded it from consideration. For this reason, the only choice left for him was to create new words. The reason why he said that he could not search for the origin of classics was simply to speak humbly, and refrain from being overly proud of himself.

According to Lee Gyubo, the reason why writers should create new words is not because of a lack of learning but because following is an act equivalent to stealing. People say that they follow phrases because the words are beautiful. However, Lee Gyubo never agreed that such imitated words were beautiful. Here, we can find a key issue in the aesthetics in literature associated with the origin of beauty. According to Lee Gyubo, people think that copied phrases are beautiful due to old custom. Creative phrases must be arrogant and simple from the perspective of old custom, but Lee Gyubo holds that the arrogant and simple phrases are rather beautiful. From his perspective, the standard of beauty does not come from habits but is based on a living reality.

He pointed out nine undesirable styles of writing poems that he experienced and learned after profound contemplation, and insisted that poetry should be discussed only after addressing these issues.[4] He listed these maladies in detail and emphasized the necessity of overcoming all of these maladies. They are styles that describe unskillful and inappropriate quotations of ancient poems; styles that use inappropriate rhymes; styles that use difficult or indecent words that are not carefully selected or polished; and a style that is an act of insulting the sages. All of these maladies run counter to the literature philosophy of Lee Gyubo, who cherished creative personality and intended spirit.

Since intention is most valued in poetry, setting intention is most difficult, and making words is next. Since intention values spirits most, the order of spirits determines shallowness and profoundness. Since such spirits are given by God, they cannot be acquired by learning. Therefore, people with shallow spirits work hard only "to embellish words," and do not value intention from the outset. Such embellished sentences and phrases are often beautiful. Yet without profound, implied intentions in them, they will be attractive at first, but when you try to enjoy the poems repeatedly, the first taste will have already disappeared.[5]

Lee Gyubo maintained that the first thing that poets should do in the process of creating poems is "to establish their intentions." He believed that there were spirits at the center of intentions, and that they could not be achieved artificially because they were given by God and are genuine characters and temperaments. So, he emphasized the importance of

sincerity to put the utmost energy into every piece of work to realize poetic images. The most difficult task in creating a poem is to make sure poetic words and intended images realize beauty together. The more profound the implied intentions are, the more profound the taste that can be continuously appreciated. However, if there are only profound intentions without mature poetic words, then the words in the poem will only suffocate the profound intentions. The aesthetic philosophy of Lee Gyubo is based on his theory of creation, which held that the personality and originality of poets can be expressed only when new intentions and words are created, and the words and intentions acquire maturity.

3. Newness found in Park Jiwon: Beopgo Changshin (To Follow Old Things, To Create New Things) Theory

Yeonam Park Jiwon (1737-1805) was a thinker of *Shilhak* (the Practical Learning Movement) and a novelist in the late Joseon Dynasty. *Shilhak* flourished during the Yeongjo and Jeongjo periods and was developed to seek evidence based on actual facts. Based on this foundation, he tried to recognize objects in detail, with scientific approaches to the universe and nature, and developed his philosophy from a practical perspective. As such, his philosophy of art started from the practical point of view, with an emphasis on reality.

At the time, the literary community tended to cherish writings from the Han and Tang Dynasties of China only, and imitated and indiscriminately copied these writings from the past. Park thought that genuine works of art would never be achieved just by imitating works from the Han and Tang times. Words for 'similarity' have the meaning of evaluating something in comparison with some others.^[6] The fact that something is similar to another means that it looks the same as the compared object, but this never means that it is the same. For instance, an article written now will be called an ancient document later. From the perspective of the writings of the past, the present may seem to be immature, but the past was the present at the time and our present will become the past later. Because of this, he said that only writing that described the reality and the customs of the time could express the genuine atmosphere of the time. When he stated that "genuine atmospheres are right in front of your eyes," the word 'genuine' means the reality of Joseon in the eighteenth century, when he lived.^[7]

Therefore, Park thought that to achieve genuine writing, conventional and fixed points of view towards objects must be broken first. He also said that even ordinary objects must be examined with fresh eyes. In his words, no matter how old the sky and land are, they always exist as new sky and land, and no matter how old the sun and moon are, they are renewed every day.^[8] That is why he highlighted the importance of writing creatively and freshly, following changes over time.

Park believed that a certain prejudice within our mind was the obstacle that prevented us from rightly recognizing objective reality and that by removing this obstacle we could secure a new frame of thinking. In other words, to create a new frame of thinking, the relation with existing frames of thinking must first end. He went on to state that this is also the case for the recognition of the objects that we ordinarily see. For instance,

believing that the eyes of crows are all black is one kind of fixed idea. Since an object has no fixed color, the colors of a crow's eyes can sometimes be light yellow or smooth green and sometimes purple or jade green. Thus the crow can be called a green crow or a red crow.^[9]

According to Park Jiwon, our ears and eyes cannot correctly recognize the genuine images of objective things, and this is because prejudice or certain senses in our heart hinder appropriate recognition. It is hard for adults dominated by fixed ideas to see through the genuine images of objects but innocent children see objects as they are. The true images of the world can be seen through the eyes of children, not through those of adults. Therefore, writers must look at objects with the innocent eyes of childhood.

Park also believed that creative writing must start from imitating nature. Park himself observed very closely, even unprecedentedly, as nobody would follow him at the time, the sound, color, emotion, and boundary of various objects and actions, including wind, clouds, thunder, lightning, rain, frost, flying, hiding, running, laughing, shouting, and whistling. He never regarded objects as ordinary things. He once said, "Those who are not interested in the feelers of insects or flower petals lack the capacity to express objects. Those who do not closely question all moving shapes will not know the amount of letters, as you did not question."^[10]

As pointed out above, while Park criticized the trend of the time of indiscriminately imitating and following ancient styles, such as the writings in the Han and Tang Dynasties, he urged writers to write creatively based on reality and to show their personality in their work. Here, we need to think what the writings of the past mean to him.

How do we write?...For those who emulate old things, one of the pitfalls is being restricted to the ancient things, and for those who create new things, the pitfall is acting disrespectfully. If you truly emulate old things and create new things flexibly at the same time, and they are well grounded, then writings of this time will be treated like the writings of the past that you praise today.^[11]

Park was concerned about the two maladies of *Beopgo* (to create new things) and *Changshin* (to emulate old things): confinement to ancient things and disrespect. First, he criticized the indiscriminate imitation of ancient things. As truth is not a fixed concept but changes depending on time and the environment, art itself should capture the specific objects of its time to express the truth of the time. Imitating the writings of the past leads to homogeneity, not the pursuit of truth. He also criticized the act of using ungrounded, nonsensical things. Disrespect, which means showing a lack of respect for customs, is a behavior of improvising all the time, like a duckweed without any objective grounds or proper customs, and making self-centered decisions in the name of creating new things.

However, we should not exclusively choose between *Beopgo* and *Changshin*, and must not prioritize one over the other.

Park Jiwon once said, "Instead of creating new things and thus being unnatural unexpectedly, it would be rather better to follow old things and thus become old-fashioned," and also clarified that this did not mean one needed to prioritize between *Beopgo* and *Changshin*. Similar to *Beopgo-Changshin*, "Wen gu zhi xin," in the chapter Weizheng, in the *Analects of Confucius*, means to review the old and learn the new. Park developed the concept further into *Beopgo-Changshin*, viewing the mechanism of creation as a more dynamic process.

Good writing can be achieved only when both being flexible while emulating traditional things, and being grounded while creating new things, are pursued simultaneously. This means inheriting the writings of the past but using them flexibly to meet the reality of the present. Here, the condition of meeting the reality shows that *Beopgo* and *Changshin* are not just matters of technique but can be truly achieved only when they reflect reality.

4. The mythology of newness

As pointed out above, newness in Korean traditional aesthetics has gained little attention, and there have been only a few studies and discussions on this topic. So, is our topic "The Issue of Newness Viewed through Korea's Traditional Aesthetics" valid? The issue of newness is viewed from our perspective today. Even if such discussions on newness itself were not seen in traditional thought, it is still believed that similar context associated with newness can be found. The reason why we reviewed classic books, though limited to those written by Lee Gyubo and Park Jiwon, is that reading such differences in context and concepts can help us to find answers to our questions. Similarly, the methodology that we try and seek is reconstruction of context.

The art of modernism in Western culture sought an ideology of newness. Modern art seeks newness through experimental or avant-garde spirits. As Robert Hughes described the center of culture and art in the twentieth century as "the shock of the new," looking back at the history of art in the twentieth century, we can easily see that artists of the time did their best to only write a myth of newness in an extreme rush toward newness, along with the avant-garde movement.^[12] They felt that they had been charged with the mission of creating something that had never existed before, something different from what had been created.

On this question, Boris Groys provides an insightful point of view. He says that newness is not a better thing, but just newness itself.^[13] This means that newness today is no longer revealing true things. Here, he straightforwardly overturns the key proposition of the art of modernism, that the new is always the better. Furthermore, he points out that so-called modernism, which has been long been believed to exclude tradition, is indeed relying on tradition for its existence. According to Groys, innovation is the opposite of tradition. The concept, however, is one of the strategies within the system to manage cultural values, that is to say, the system to distinguish and manage secular spaces from cultural archives. Modernism that seems to depend highly on innovation is in fact relying on tradition. It archives everything that passed and uses it as a standard for the new. It brands repeating the old

as surplus and unnecessary but, for exclusion, modernism rather requires tradition. So in this case, what is the new that is given value? It does not include the strange, the forbidden, or the taboo. This is just a new thing in comparison with cultural archives that have been accumulated till now. For instance, the new refers to the fruit of collective evaluation, not the quality of the objects themselves.

These days, we can easily find the phrase “new release” in advertisements that are used to express unconditional power. Something new is news, and the new itself expresses its value. Everybody knows, even unconsciously, that being new has value. If someone says, “Oh, it’s new,” it is equivalent to saying “That’s good.”

The reason why the value of newness was stable was that people believed that things like culture, civilization, and the economy would become better over time. In other words, they believed that new things were better than things that had existed before. This made people feel strongly about the possibility of the future being better, and thus made them believe that newness had its own value. Things, however, do not necessarily become better over time.

Winifred Gallagher delivers an interesting insight on one attribute of humans indulging in newness, that the instinct of humans to seek out newness created things and ideas that changed civilizations, and art.^[14] At this point, it is necessary to think whether such indulgence in newness is indeed good or not. The act of being interested in the new is called the effect of curiosity. This helps us adapt ourselves to new environments and build our ability to survive. Reactions to the new are generally manifested in the forms of approach, avoidance, or consideration. These three ways of reacting to the new can differ depending on genes, environments, and learning effects. As intellectual challenges, exercise and social participation to learn new things are important for adults to maintain their health; accepting newness is closely related to training our brain. Brain scientists have found that this is the 7R gene. Over 25% of Westerners and 80% of American Indians have this gene, but it was not found in Chinese people, which I think could be connected to their cultural characteristics.

At this point, we need to briefly discuss boredom. The word ‘bored’ is a product of modern times. Things that had been natural to people through medieval times faced a turning point as we entered the modern age. As products emerged at the center of culture, humans’ desire for the new became stronger than ever before. If it can be said that until medieval times evolution was focused on biological evolution, the focus has since shifted to the next stage, cultural evolution.

We take our desire for the new for granted so naturally, but there are serious side effects of the unconditional acceptance of newness. One notable side effect is the meme, which Richard Dawkins coined in his book, *The Selfish Gene*.^[15] ‘Meme’ is a generic term for media that duplicates and spreads cultural elements, and the spread of the meme has led to the online space being flooded with wasteful, unproductive data, reducing information’s value through oversimplification. It is possible that the intention to appeal to public opinion may only generate worthless waste. Therefore, it is necessary to develop

data filtering skills that can control wasteful data through moderation. Although human civilization started from searching for newness, I think at this time it is necessary to ponder about it.

The mythology of newness directly collides with the classical view of art or the world of handed-down crafts. Can we say that craftsmanship or the artisanal spirit that believes in the value of continuously making things for a long time because they are good is really wrong? I believe creative tradition is the new direction in which twenty-first century art should go. The biggest reason why products made by Louis Vuitton have long been used and loved by many is due to the company's traditional but forward-looking attitude that upholds its own tradition and absorbs new things simultaneously.

5. A new understanding of newness

In this section, the questions discussed above, "Is it right to just emulate old things?," a question raised by Park Jiwon, and "Then, is it important to create new things?" will be reviewed from a different angle to prove their logics.

The appeal to novelty that believes the new is the good is a logical fallacy. It is grounded in the logic that its topic is suitable for current or future popularity and trends. If the argument that the new is good is not persuasive, then it would be more convincing to rephrase the argument to "it does not work because it is old," or "existing ways are old-fashioned, and thus new ways are right."

The argument of the appeal to novelty goes like this. Even if the value of a certain tradition was proved when it was introduced, its grounds are no longer valid because circumstances have changed. Once the public starts to feel tired of existing ways, this develops into a crowd mentality, spreading throughout society like infection.

An appeal to tradition is also a logical fallacy and a logic that entities regard as right by judging from tradition, that is, custom, convention, and practice, of the past or the present, for example, thinking we have always done this, so this is right. Of course, the conclusion that tradition is right is not always wrong but still it is not always right. If presuming that such appeal to tradition is validly deduced, everything cannot be changed.

There is no guarantee that either an appeal to novelty or an appeal to tradition will always be right. There is a phrase, "daily renewal, constant progress," in the *Great Learning*, one of the classic books in the East. This originates from the words that King Tang of Shang, China, engraved on his bathtub. The phrase means that if you really want to renew yourself one day, you should do so from day to day, and renew yourself daily. In other words, you should make efforts constantly if you want to see progress in your life day after day.

The original meaning of this phrase is that you must be strict with yourself and not forget your first resolution, but it can be mistakenly interpreted as a progress-oriented way of thinking. The key here is not just being better day after day but reminding yourself of your original resolution. Since our minds

are different from our bodies, our five senses work freely and have various forms. There is no such thing as a uniform mind. I think the natural landscape is similar to our mind. Trees change and wear new clothes in the different seasons of the year but they are still trees. Our mind is similar to this. It is meaningful to remind ourselves of this phrase so that we do not mistakenly put our minds into a uniform box.

The Chinese character 新 (new) means “cutting down (斧) a tree (木).” New (新) is composed of a meaning-part (斤, axe) and a sound-part (親), and the character 親 is composed of a meaning-part (木, tree) and a sound-part (辛). Both characters are compound ideographs and phono-semantic compounds. This means to take down a tree with an edged tool, highlighting `axe (斤).’ Later, the meaning “new,” from the freshness of trees, was added to 新, and 薪 had the meaning of “gathering firewood.”

Likewise, the Chinese character 新 has an image of a small green bud growing out of where the branch has been cut. For example, after pruning away branches from a plum tree, the same plum branch buds will grow out of the tree next year. Apricot or peach buds would never grow out of the plum tree. This sounds natural to anyone, and indeed has a very important implication for people who aspire to create. New branches respect the life that old branches carried on before and breathe like they are cherishing the young lives for old branches. When we see these breathing lives, we feel freshness from them. If a different branch abruptly grows out of the plum tree, then this is nothing like newness, only strangeness.

Based on this, we learn that being new is not being different from one root yesterday and today but instead must inherit the rationality of the past from the same ground. Likewise, in the creation of art, some advocate strokes of the brush that were not seen in the classics, calling it the avant-garde movement. Without the strength that the classics back up, however, this will be simply frivolous and bizarre and will never capture people’s hearts. From the East Asian ways of thinking, tradition and newness should exist together, like the buds growing out of a tree. Because there were ancestors, there are descendants. Remember that descendants were born because there were ancestors and, likewise, that there are students because there are teachers. The question of creation should be understood not as artificial, material products but as through the principle of Mother Nature and life.

In creating a piece of work, this fact must be kept in mind. Otherwise, the finished piece of work will become nothing but a bizarre and pitiful persistence. We do not feel any persistence at all in new branches growing out of a plum tree that inherited from the past but rather may find modesty in this sight. When you keep transcribing classic literature and copying classic paintings, you should not neglect to accumulate skills. This is because someday newness will naturally come out of you. This is the wisdom on newness that is found in Korean traditional aesthetics.

It is needless to say that creativity is important in art and craft. But the world of modern art puts too much emphasis on creating something different or something that has not been

seen before. Because of this, trends depend on the effect of de-familiarization, and only curiousness is popular these days. These works, strictly speaking, are not pursuing artistic perfection. Amid such trends, you can easily find alleged works of art that are no more than play in the sandbox. For work to be written in the history of modern art, it must have sufficient value, including artistic perfection, dignity, and beauty. Therefore, we cannot help but ask again what creativity is, why it is needed, and how it can be achieved?

6. Conclusion

The meaning of newness that was discussed in Korean aesthetics, either by Lee Gyubo or Park Jiwon, is close to freshness rather than strangeness or novelty in English. It rarely has the meaning of creating things that did not exist before and it is also far from curiousness or strangeness. It is more like freshness. It has something in common with the "daily renewal, constant progress" in the *Great Learning*, meaning that you should newly remind yourself of your original resolution.

Then, how should creativity be interpreted? What are the creative examples in Korean aesthetic thought or artistic activities that are historically different from Chinese culture? In what ways are the examples creative? In the West, the term 'creativity' also started to be widely used in the nineteenth century, and it is still doubtful whether the Western and the Korean concepts of creativity coincide. At this point, however, it would be better to view creativity as an attitude or a way of thinking to observe ordinary objects or acts from new and various angles and seek new meanings within the process. People often regard creativity as a unique ability to think, creating novel ideas, or even as a miraculous ability to make something out of nothing. This kind of creation, however, is evaluated as impossible in reality.

Based on the discussions above, though it may be a slight jump in logic, the power of creation found in Korean artistic activities seems to have the following two features. First, it has a converged way of thinking. Many people say that Poongryu or elegant life in the Shilla Dynasty is peculiar to Korean thoughts, but the thought of an elegant way of life is actually found in China and Japan. Thus, the originality of Poongryu-do in Korea is its own way to connote three religions, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and establish it as the aesthetic educational philosophy of the Hwarang, an elite group of young men in Shilla period. We can find a creative mind within this way of convergence.

The second way to demonstrate creativity is the opposing variants. This concept was first suggested by Professor Dietrich Seckel, an art historian in Germany, in the discussion of the characteristics of Korean art.^[16] Korean art was historically influenced by encounters with Chinese art but it digested and refined them in its own way and evolved in a different direction from Chinese art. Inlaid celadon and Buddhist paintings of Goryeo and paintings of Jeong Seon and Kim Hong-do in Joseon are examples.

From the perspective of creation in aesthetic thought, breakthroughs can be considered in two directions. The first is,

as Lee Gyubo himself showed, attention to one's identity, and the other is, as Park Jiwon showed, attention to the reality of myself here, right now. These two scholars lived their lives, seeking insightful answers to questions like "who am I?" and "what does reality look like?"

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Endnotes

[1] Naver Korean Dictionary, <http://krdic.naver.com/>.

[2] Lee Gyubo, "Answer to Jeon Liji's Theory," in *Collected Works of Minister Lee of Goryeo*. (Lee Gyubo, DB of Korean Classics), <http://db.itkc.or.kr/itkcdb/mainIndexIframe.jsp>.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Park Jiwon, "Document on Floating Boat in Ryeon River," in *Collected Writings of Yeonam Park Jiwon* (Park Jiwon, DB of Korean Classics).

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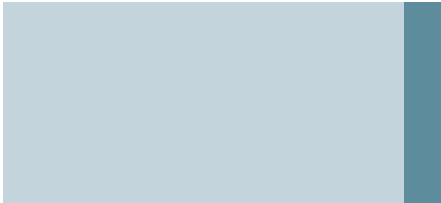
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