

Overcoming Dualism and Unifying Korea: A Process View

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1. Introduction

The primary philosophical and religious reason why Korea is divided is the dualism that originated from a Newtonian and Cartesian paradigm. This dualism, which divides the world into matter and mind, is deeply rooted in western philosophical and religious traditions. Marxist materialism and Hegelian idealism have become two major streams in philosophical and political history. Korea is the only country still divided by such a dualistic ideology. I will attempt to overcome this dualism by introducing “fuzzy logic” and Han philosophy. Fuzzy logic was founded in 1965 by F. Zadeh. I believe it to be the best tool to overcome reductionism and dualism. Han philosophy is a unique, non-dualistic, and ancient Korean belief system.

Han is deeply rooted in the Korean mind, just as the concept of Yahweh is in the Jewish, Logos in the Greek, Brahman in the Indian, Tao in the Chinese, Shinto in the Japanese, and so on. Throughout history, the connotations of the word “Han” have increased over time. Han currently has 22 different meanings in Korean, which include “great”, “one”, “white”, “Korea”, “light”, “sky”, “god”, “high”, and “full.”

My primary interest concerns the five most general and popular meanings of Han found in the dictionary. According to the Korean-English dictionary, the word “Han” implies valuable concepts related to fuzzy logic as follows:

<u>Meanings of “Han”</u>	<u>Fuzzy Signs</u>
Universality or One-ness	U or X
Particularity or Many-ness	X
Middle-ness	Membership
Sameness of Identity	Membership Degree
About-ness	Fuzziness

Fuzzy logic becomes possible when one becomes many and the many become one—the parts are in the whole, and the whole is in the parts. Traditional logic separated the part from the whole and the whole from the part in order to avoid vagueness. This separation resulted in reductionism. Whitehead said that the category of the ultimate is

many in one and one in many. Cultural concepts like Logos, Yahweh, Tao, and Brahman have failed to include such a category of the Ultimate. As a result, dualism was and is inevitable. However, despite the tendency of these cultural ultimates to lapse into dualism, Han maintains a balance between the one and the many, as can be seen above in the list of definitions. In other words, the single word “Han” includes set theory concepts such as “universal” (U), and “elements” (X) simultaneously.

According to *Juchaesasang*, which is the primary ideological doctrine of North Korea, “Whole is in part, and part is in whole.” This doctrine echoes the insights of Han philosophy. *Juchaesasang* was created in order to overcome the dualism between Marx’s materialism and Hegel’s idealism. Although some South Korean Marxists argue that *Juchaesasang* is only a type of idealism, *Juchaesasang* has successfully overcome the material/ideal dualism. This sentiment of overcoming dualism is repeated by great Korean Buddhist and Confucian thinkers like Wonhyo and Yulgok, who saw past the dichotomy of Eternalism and Annihilationism (*Li* and *Ki*). Since ancient times, Korean thinkers have excelled at assimilating foreign concepts (Buddhism, Confucianism, Marxism, etc) into their own way—the way of Han. One can view Han as a function (f), while foreign ideals remain variables (x):

<u>f(x) = x1, x2, x3</u>	<u>The Korean Mind</u>
Han (Chinese Buddhism)	Korean Buddhism
Han (Chinese Confucianism)	Korean Confucianism
Han (Marxism)	Juchaesasang
Han (foreign dualist paradigms)	Non-dualistic Korean mind

North Korean thinkers have successfully incorporated Marxism into the Han mind, whereas South Korean thinkers have failed to do so. The single reason why North Koreans achieved this transformation of Marxism is that they have preserved the Korean national identity. South Korea however, has lost its Korean identity (Han identity) and is falling into the trap of *Sadaesasang* (worshipping the powerful). In order to unify Korea, South Koreans must first recover their own Han identity. Only when both North and South Koreans possess the Han mind will unification become possible.

Buddhism, Confucianism, and Marxism are nothing but variables. The important thing is the function in the equation: the Han mind—that unique Korean belief system

which digests and transforms all imported foreign systems of thought. If Koreans return to the Han mind, the unification of the country will follow naturally.

Most traditional tools for formal modeling, reasoning, and computing are highly deterministic—they are crisp. By “crisp,” I mean dichotomous. In set theory, any element x can either belong to or not belong to a set A . In the former case, classical set theory would define the membership of A using the characteristic function, in which “0” designates non-membership and “1” indicates membership. That is, there is no mediate position between 1 and 0. Elements of a set are either members or not. However, for a fuzzy set, the characteristic function allows various degrees of membership for the elements of a given set. Therefore, we call traditional, or Aristotelian logic “crisp logic” because Aristotle’s law of non-contradiction proscribes any possibility other than 1 or 0.

The reason why Han implies so many different meanings in a single word can be explained effectively in terms of fuzziness. A common expression among the Korean people is “Let’s meet Han one o’ clock,” which means “let’s meet around, but not exactly at, one o’ clock.” It seems to me that many foreigners, Japanese and Americans included, do not properly understand the ambiguity of a Korean concept of time, and so the expression “Korean time” has come to imply irrationality and non-scientific thinking. However, Korean time might be justified by fuzzy logic.

The Han mind (as Korean mind) is spread over many areas, including the arts, literature, philosophy, politics, economics, etc. The major character of the Han mind is fuzzy or ambiguous. When Japan colonized Korea in 1910, she rationalized her colonization by arguing that Korean people are “Hapbaji,” which ambiguously means either “irrational” or “men’s trousers.” Japanese rule could only make the Korean people more scientific. When Europeans colonized all the Asian and African countries, they employed the same justification. Crisp logic, which is a trademark of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm, is the intellectual foundation of Western and Japanese colonization. Even Koreans and other Asians have been mostly brainwashed by Japanese and Western imperialistic crisp logic. However, the glory days of scientific rational exactitude are being blown away by the winds of fuzzy logic.

2. Non-dualistic Korean Culture

“*Han-sik*” is the word for traditional Korean foods like *kimchi*, *bibimbab*, and *bulgogi*. The nature of a race can be roughly measured by tasting what they eat. Just as Americans favor hamburgers, Koreans love *kimchi*. So, one could suggest that hamburgers and *kimchi* respectively indicate the national character of Americans and Koreans.

There is a unique story in the mythology of *Dangun*, which founded the nation of Korea, which states that a bear ought to spend 100 days alone in a cave eating wormwood and twenty cloves of garlic in order to become a human being. According to oriental medicine, wormwood is positive (yang), while garlic is negative (yin). In principle, an oriental pharmacist combines two or more herbs when preparing medicine. When a positive herb is added to a negative herb, the individual ingredients in the mixture disappear. The reaction converts the two ingredients into a totally new substance, with a new taste and effect. This reaction produces a tremendous geometric growth of enchantment. The effect of two contrasting elements combining to produce a more powerful unity is known as “synergism” or the effect-in-complex. The reaction produced by the wormwood and garlic allows the bear to live in a dark cave for 100 days. Finally, according to the myth, the bear emerges from the cave as a human female, who became the first Korean mother, thanks to the synergism effect.

The list of dictionary meanings of Han mentioned above indicates this synergistic effect. The term “synergism” in Korean may be translated as a sense of complexity, harmony, and unity. I think that most Korean food (*han-sik*) is cooked according to the principle of synergism. Dongshik Yu, former professor of Yonsei University, lists *kimchi*, *bibimbab*, and *gomtang* as the three major dishes in authentic Korean cuisine. *Bibimbab* is a thoroughly mixed dish containing rice, soybean sprouts, bracken, cucumber dressing, green seaweed, kelp, eggs, wild greens, soy paste, red pepper, and sesame oil. In this dish, elements from water, earth, and heaven are all mixed to complexity (Han), creating a totally new and unique taste that surpasses the individual tastes of each ingredient alone. Professor Kuk-hee Kang says that every Korean dish combines acid and alkali together. *Gomtang*, which is a beef leg bone stew, contains five internal organs associated with negative energy, and five cuts of meat that possess positive energies. This mixture is a miniature model of the cosmos. The most striking example of the synergistic

effect found in *han-sik* cuisine is that of *kimchi*, which is made from red peppers, pears, chestnuts, radish, garlic, and pickled shrimp.

The synergism effect is nothing more than the exemplification of fuzzy logic. In cooking, to mix positive and negative elements harmoniously, one must salt, ferment, and thoroughly cook the ingredients. This process results in a single unique taste. I think that this third taste is an example of a fuzzy membership category. It is neither 1 nor 0, but somewhere in between. Considering that all Korean foods are prepared using the synergistic effect, the Korean people might be considered champions of unity, harmony, and complexity—that is, fuzziness.