A Collection of Toegye Yi Hwang’s Words and Deeds. Series No. 5

[지경 (持敬) Maintaining Mindfulness]

[5.1] Yi Deokhong sent Toegye a letter containing questions about Reverence. The master copied the reply and hung it on the wall. Jo Mok was with the teacher and asked him, “Why did you do that?” the teacher replied. “It’s because I'm not in a position to teach others, but I'm not religious enough myself.”

-Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)

答德弘論敬書, 因寫一通, 揭之于壁。趙月川穆, 嘗侍左右, 問“何以若是?” 曰“我雖教人如此, 而反諸吾身, 猶未能自盡, 故然耳.”[李德弘. 〇論敬書, 見文集.]

[5.2] When discussing “Staying Reverent,” the master said. “Let's examine the case of people like me. When my mind is clear and my qi is stable in the morning and evening, my mind naturally becomes respectful and solemn. In that moment, I do not have to forcefully hold my mind or become polite. The old scholars must have been the same as me when they had a good situation. But I cannot last long in this state.”

-U Seong-jeon (禹性傳)

嘗論持敬工夫, 先生曰“如某者, 朝暮之頃, 或有神清氣定底時節, 儼然肅然, 心體不待把捉而自存, 四肢不待羈束而自恭, 謹意以爲古人氣象, 好時必是如此, 但不

1) [TN] Yi Deok-hong (李德弘, 1541-1596). His courtesy name is Goengjiung (宏仲) and his pen name (號) is Ganjae (艮齋).

2) [TN] U Seong-jeon (禹性傳, 1542-1593). His courtesy name (字) is Gyeongsun (景善) and his pen name (號) is Chuyeon (秋淵).
[5.3.1] One day, Yi Deokhong was sitting with Toegye in the Amseoho and the master said, “Before starting the sage learning, one should establish the mastery.” The disciple asked, “How can we establish it?” The master answered, “By mindfulness, we can establish the mastery.” The disciple asked, “There are too many theories on mindfulness. How can we avoid forcing or forgetting about it?”

[5.3.2] The master answered, “Among the theories, those of Cheng Zi (程子), Xie Liangzuo (謝良佐), and Yin Zhuo (尹焞). Zhu Zi (朱子) are important. Among the beginners, some people try to practice the method of always being clear-minded and alert, and others strive not to permit anything in their minds. If, however, someone dares to put his mind to something important or arrange various thoughts in his head here and there, he would be at risk of hurrying the growth of his crops along by forcing it and ending up harming it. At the same time, those who regard all effort as wasteful and do not even weed their crops would also harm them. For the beginners, nothing is better than the method of being properly ordered and controlled, grave and alert. Beginners should not put their minds to something important or arrange various thoughts in their heads here and there. At the same time, they should focus on being watchful when alone and not letting their minds go wild at will in accord with the norm. After exerting themselves in this way for a long time, they will naturally become always alert and permit nothing evil in their minds, free from bad habits of forcing or forgetting the learning.
[5.3.3] “Yi chuan (伊川) said earlier, ‘You should neither put your mind to it nor let it go.’ In his reply to Zhang Jingfu (張敬夫), Zhu Zi (朱子) said, ‘If you take the mastery (主宰) as the essential, both exterior and interior become alert and as a result you can preserve your mind without forcing or forgetting the sage learning. If, however, you try to preserve your mind without taking the mastery as the essential, it means that you are now trying to catch your mind with another mind of yours. In this situation, your mind becomes divided into two or three parts? and ends up incredibly distracted. Preserving your mind without taking the mastery as the essential is problematic in itself; but what is worse is that it is impossible for you to succeed in preserving your mind with this strategy.’ Teachings of Cheng Zi (程子) and Zhu Zi (朱子) are so desperate and clear that everyone should savor them deeply.”

- Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)

[5.4] Yi Deokhong asked the meaning of “Set your goal as to establish the
foundation. Stay in mindfulness as to hold onto your will.” The master answered by quoting the saying of Zhu Zi, “In order to handle everything in order, you must set your goal to establish the foundation. If you do not set your goal, you cannot handle everything in order. And even if you succeed in setting your goal, you will waste your time day and night without staying in mindfulness to hold onto your will. And each one of your big words will become meaningless gibberish. Whether you talk or act or sit, you always stay in mindfulness.” The master then kept on saying, “What Zhu Zi taught is so desperate and clear. We must engrave his teaching deeply in our hearts.”

-Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)

[5.5] Yi Deokhong said, “When I tightly hold on to my mind all day, it does not recklessly run away. However, sometimes my mind gets dark and distant, and loses its brightness.” The master answered, “That is because your practice of maintaining mindfulness is not enough. If you forcefully hold onto your mind then you would have those kinds of harms. It is as natural as waves sweeping the sand on the beach and fog rising from the valley.”

Yi Deokhong asked, “How can I get rid of these harms?” The master answered, “There is only one way. Cheng Zi (程子) said earlier, ‘Your will of trying to recover the errant mind is the way to recover the errant mind.’ As he said, your constant will to maintain mindfulness is the way to maintain mindfulness. The methods to maintain mindfulness are in the four teachings from the wise men of formal times. The reason you have these harms is that you force or forget them and the latter is more problematic. If you can remove habits to force or forget them, you will be free from those harms.”

-Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)
熟之故也．强而操之，则反有此病，如波浪沙谷腾雾，反以自昏．”问“何以则去此病?”曰“别無他方法．程子曰‘所以求收放心之心，是乃收放心之法．’然则所以求持敬，是持敬之法．持敬之法，偹在先儒四條之說．大抵有此病者，無他，助忘之所致，而忘病尤多．無此助忘之病，则無此昏冥之病矣．”

[5.6.1] One day, Gim Seong-il asked Toegye about the seated meditation (静坐) exercise of Yanping (延平) and the master answered, “Only after the seated meditation can you keep your body and mind in control, which leads to the gathering of all principles in you. If, however, you become lazy and lose control of your body and mind, you will hardly gather principles in you. That is why Zhu Zi sat with Yanping face to face all day, and kept his seated meditation when alone．”

问“延平靜坐之說．”先生曰“靜坐然後，身心收敛，道理方有湊泊處．若形骸放怠無撻，則身心混亂，道理無復有湊泊處．故考亭對延平靜坐終日，及退私亦然．”

[5.6.2] Gim Seong-il asked again, “There is an inconvenience of restraining the whole body. How can I cope with it?” The master answered, “You have not physically cultivated your flesh and blood since you were young and now you try to do that. How can you expect that there will be no side effect? Only long practice will lead you to be free from the inconvenience of restraining. Even if you want to feel comfortable naturally without a long practice, which is a sages’ stage where their bodies completely obey the orders of their minds; this does not apply to beginners. As a matter of fact, the reason for the inconvenience of restraining actually is that your practicing the maintaining mindfulness exercise is not enough and therefore you dare not to behave yourself. If you become really clear-minded and alert without laziness, your whole body will not wait to obey the orders of your mind．”

问“靜坐有拘束之病則如何?”先生曰“血肉之軀，自少全無撻束，一朝遽欲靜坐收敛，則豈無拘束之病?須是堅耐辛苦，無快活時節，更歷歲久，然後方無拘束之病矣．若厭拘束而待其自然，则是乃聖賢百體從令而恭而安之事，非初學所可能也．”

大抵拘束之病，實由持敬之工未至，安肆日偹故也．心若惺惺，無所怠放，則百體

The Journal of Toegye Studies Volume 4 Number 2 97
自然收而從令矣。”

[5.6.3] The master added, “The sage learning can only be achieved by your concentrating on principles for a long time. You cannot hope for the achievement if your mind is unstable and you stop practicing frequently. That is why Zhu Zi said to Teng Gong (滕珙), ‘If you focus on principles, you will achieve it, but in case you divide your mind into two or three, you will fail.’”

-Gim Seong-il (金誠一)3)

〇又曰“為學之道, 必須專一悠久, 然後乃成。而以一出一入之心為或作或輟之學,則學何由成? 故朱子告滕珙曰‘專一悠久為成, 二三間斷為敗.’”[金誠一]

[5.7] 선생은 말하기를, The master said, “Mencius said earlier, ‘You must be willing to work at it, understanding that you cannot have precise control over it. You can't forget about it, but you can't force it to grow, either.’ This sentence should be understood by four aspects: First, you must be willing to work at it. Second, you cannot have precise control over it. Third, you cannot forget about it. Fourth, you cannot force it to grow, either.”

-Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)

先生曰“必有事焉而勿正, 心勿忘, 勿助長, 當作四項看了。有事一也, 勿正二也,勿忘三也, 勿助長四也.”[李德弘]

[5.8] When Gim Seong-il asked the cause of a distracted mind, the master answered, “Li and qi combine to become a human mind. If Li gets to be a leader and qi is subordinate to it, your mind becomes tranquil and consistent followed by the absence of useless ideas. If, however, Li fails qi wins against it, your mind becomes distracted followed by rising of evil ideas. Your distracted mind is much like a spinning waterwheel where nothing can stick to it.” The master added, “It is impossible for you not to have a thought; rather,

3) [TN] Gim Seong-il (金誠一, 1538-1593). His courtesy name (字) is Sasun (士純), and his pen name (號) is Hakbong (鶴峰).
you should throw away useless ideas. To achieve this, maintaining mindfulness is the best way. If you constantly practice maintaining mindfulness, your mind becomes constant. And as a result, it will become tranquil.

-Gim Seong-il (金誠一)

問“思慮之所以煩擾，何也？”先生曰“夫人合理氣而爲心，理爲主而帥其氣，則心靜而慮一，自無閒思慮。理不能爲主，而爲氣所勝，則此心紛繭騷擾，無所底極。邪思妄想交至疊臻，正如翻車之環轉，無一息之定貼也。”又曰“人不可無思慮，只要去閒思慮耳。其要不過敬而已，敬則心便一，一則思慮自靜矣。”[金誠一]