



# Thinking Through the Emotions with Korean Confucianism: Philosophical Translation and the Four-Seven Debate

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

*Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it.*

—John Dewey, *Art as Experience*<sup>1</sup>

*Distinguishing things as two does not necessarily prevent their never being separated, and when they are combined as a unity, it may actually come down to their not being muddled with one another.*

—Yi Toegye, *Reply to Kobong's Critique*<sup>2</sup>

The Korean Confucian concept of *jeong* 情 has played a profoundly significant role in the context of the Four-Seven philosophical debate occurring

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<sup>1</sup> Dewey (1934: 43).

<sup>2</sup> Kalton et al. (1994: 55); translation slightly modified.

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throughout the Joseon Dynasty and continues to shape a distinctively Korean cultural politics of emotion into the present. Foregrounding the transformative philosophical potentials of *jeong* as an embodied and relational affective experience via translingual practices of cross-cultural comparative thinking is a good place to begin collaborative and sustained philosophical projects aimed at unraveling and dismantling a host of pernicious dualisms still casting a long orientalist-imperialist shadow over so much philosophizing about the emotions and ethical-political subjectivity formation. This is particularly true when taking seriously the continued significance of Confucian texts and cultural contexts within diverse Asian modernities unfolding in a rapidly transforming cultural, economic, and political world order.

Much contemporary moral philosophy tends to operate within a dichotomous cognitive/conative framework of a specious folk psychology which can be genealogically traced to certain deep and pervasive dualistic metaphysical assumptions stemming from a Western-centric philosophical canon. I am referring primarily to certain assumptions that presuppose an ontological chasm between pure and distinct faculties of Reason on the one hand, and a relatively messy field of emotions on the other. Given this traditional view of practical agency, a view that Antonio Damasio has dubbed “Descartes’ Error,”<sup>3</sup> emotions and desires can only serve to provide the raw materials or motivational impetus for engaging in rationally determined action. Whether or not we conceive of the effective use of reason as being the provenance of deliberative standards of historically contingent communities, or as the deployment of a supposedly universal and transcendently constituted rationality, the very idea that moral objectivity must be tethered to a dispassionate reasoning capability in order to be effective, as some kind of *a priori logos* or as a working ensemble of “first principles” operating in sharp contrasts to our historically constituted embodied subjectivities and affective sensibilities, remains a deeply sedimented notion for many. It is by no means a stretch to suggest that this bifurcation of Reason/Emotion still operates as a dominant component of an ongoing residual “common sense” inherited from our perhaps not all that “exceedingly remote” Platonic-Christian-Kantian ancestors.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Damasio (2005).

<sup>4</sup> See James (1907: 79) for more on this idea of a deeply sedimented philosophical grammarology as “common sense” always already shaping our thinking and perceiving in a historically constituted cultural-linguistic ground.

Current tendencies to maintain a healthy skepticism regarding “gut feelings” and other viscerally experienced emotions guiding so many moral orientations and immediate intuitions might indeed derive from entirely noble intentions—for instance, in recognizing that forms of implicit bias operate as basic enabling conditions for systemic racism and other forms of institutional oppression and cultural hegemony, which in turn depend largely upon the creation and maintenance of relatively subconscious customs and habits of perception rendered latent or made explicit within individual and social bodies, are very good reasons to challenge the inertia of sedimented structures of feeling.<sup>5</sup>

To what degree the major theoretical traditions of Western moral philosophy (consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, to name the usual suspects) are in part responsible for maintaining and reinforcing such a devaluing of emotional life, as just so much inert material to be conquered with rational clarity is a complicated issue. But taking a cue from thinkers, such as Freud, Marx, Dewey, and Wittgenstein, who apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to dominant epistemologies privileging a hyper-individualized quest for rational certainty over the recognition of intersubjective values of shared social living, we might come to realize that that so much of the received canonical histories of Western philosophy are a *reflection* of deeper and more expansive social antagonisms and contradictions marking the various “conceptual personae” and “planes of immanence” shaping the horizons of intelligibility that animate possible interpretations of philosophical texts in an always provisional process of traditional (re)authorization.<sup>6</sup> It is vital then to be responsibly foregrounding and (re)contextualizing Asian texts and philosophical contexts, such as the classical Korean Confucian debates regarding moral metaphysics and non-dualistic, relational and intersubjective psychology

<sup>5</sup> See Nussbaum (2004) for a disturbingly wide variety of ways that visceral emotions like shame and disgust, perhaps even more so than anger and fear, can be morally misleading to put it mildly. And Sullivan (2015: 162–184) for creative and critical ways to be pragmatically foregrounding our embodied emotional selves for engaging in anti-racist praxis and ameliorative sociocultural transformation more generally.

<sup>6</sup> For the fecund idea of “conceptual personae” and “planes of immanence” as a non-dualistic way of thinking through conceptual creation and the history of philosophy, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1994: 24, 36) And for a recent classic example of enacting a paradigm shifting conversation in Western analytic philosophy of mind and epistemology, see Rorty (2009: 45ff.) for a deconstructive account of the predominantly received narratives of Western philosophy regarding Mind as a immaterial and potentially disembodied “glassy essence.”

of persons, in order to be moving away from any overly reductionistic or dualistic accounts of emotion. Intercultural comparative philosophy might begin in a hermeneutics of suspicion but can also disclose potentials for more encompassing and creative practices of cultivating translingual trust. Such a regulative ideal as ends-in-view involves an ethical aim of reconstructing a Confucian thinking through affective experience, a kind of embodied *habitus* drawn from “non-Cartesian” traditions—a real attempt to be thinking and feeling otherwise.

Regarding the philosophical salience of emotions, Roger Ames has related that “with occasional although important respite, emotion—like rhetoric, imagination, experience, and woman—has, by and large, been on the wrong side of an entrenched dualism in the history of Western philosophy” (Ames and Marks 1995: xi). Wanting to reverse and transform the pernicious effects of this long-standing dualism that systematically devalues the “affective aspect of human flourishing ... in celebration of the more cognitive aspects of personal realization,” we should be continuing to be strive with hermeneutic sensitivity and moral imagination to draw out the implications of certain paradigm shifting “sea changes” in (post)modern philosophy (e.g., feminist care ethics, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, process metaphysics, critical theory and pragmatism) while also recontextualizing the important contributions that classical sources from non-Western traditions offer in expanding the horizons of our interpretive possibilities and cultural self-understandings. Such comparative philosophy as translingual practice creates real possibilities for epochal cultural transformation via redescription and reimaginings of inherited “common sense.”<sup>7</sup>

## 6.2 *ARS CONTEXTUALIS* AS PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSLATION

Ludwig Wittgenstein’s provocative claim that the limits of one’s language are isomorphic with the hermeneutic possibilities of their worldviews<sup>8</sup> can perhaps best be understood as a claim about the cultural *habitus* of diverse forms of life. Rather than appealing to a transcendental reason or an ideal

<sup>7</sup>For a more expressly critical account of “common sense” and its double-edged potential to uphold cultural hegemony and class-based oppression or to aid in epochal cultural transformation by making explicit the affective life of the subaltern as organic intellectual knowledge, a Gramscian-inspired perspective that arguably goes much further than a classically pragmatist-liberal Jamesian advertisement of maintaining a “healthy skepticism” toward common sense, see Crehan (2016: 52–58).

<sup>8</sup>Wittgenstein (1922: 151): “That the world is *my world*, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (*the language which I understand*) mean the limits of *my world*” (5.62)

of a homogenous enlightenment universalism, we do better to be striving with imagination to be more effectively engaging in transformative communicative praxis within the interstices of received cultural *habitus* and the interpretive in-between spaces of translingual practices. Such interpretive ethical practice can help in achieving forms of universality that are more encompassing and conducive to forms of social solidarity and creative democracy that hold open real possibilities of worlds to come. Moreover, resisting and reversing the historical asymmetry of a Eurocentric philosophical hegemony, wherein a dominant canon has been taken as a universal “gold standard” for what counts as legitimate philosophical texts and contexts, we can be challenging and dismantling, piecemeal if not whole-sale, the machinations of ethnocentric cultural arrogance that make such philosophical double-standards possible. To do this, it is important to facilitate transformative intercultural conversations as part of a caring hermeneutic that mindfully dwells in *communicative in-betweenness*—an ongoing relational and deliberative communicative praxis that engages unfamiliar philosophical traditions and patiently foregrounds the uniquely persistent cultural grammatologies in the interest of possible world-transforming understanding without rushing to reach a final vocabulary.

Talal Assad has argued that the very *untranslatability* of certain traditional religious idioms and iterative embodied practices into a modern discourse of secular values championing liberal neutrality and foundational individualism offers a powerful resource for unsettling the pernicious forms of ethnocentrism hiding under the guises of a supposedly rational necessity and paraded as part of a depoliticized “end of history.”<sup>9</sup> Destabilizing the cultural imperialism at the heart of such views of secular modernity, Assad takes an “indirect” approach to locating *secularism* as an entangled and contested set of practices by “being aware that the object to be reached is not fully known” and recognizing that “secularism is not only an abstract principle of equality and freedom that liberal democratic states are supposed to be committed to” but also references “a range of sensibilities—ways of feeling, thinking, talking—that make opposites only by excluding affinities and overlaps” (Assad 2018: 3).

<sup>9</sup> Assad (2018: 91–96). Here the productive slippage between linguistic registers and traditions (namely secular modernity and Al-Ghazali’s writings on the embodied practice of prayer) generates an “anxiety about authenticity,” resulting in an untranslatable tension that yet demands “resolution.” The idea that “genealogical critique is not a rejection of *all* grounding” but rather returns us to the ground as “this moment” can also, I suggest, provide a powerful heuristic for approaching the moral phenomenology of emotional experience as articulated in the Four-Seven debate.

This chapter will also take a somewhat indirect approach to engaging the Four-Seven debate in Korean history and appreciating its ongoing significance for fostering more convivial and transformative cosmopolitical possibilities. It is my contention that by returning to this debate as part of an important history of the present, namely as a translingual practice or pragmatic method for doing comparative philosophy, we can destabilize the arrogantly secular and perniciously ethnocentric aspects of Western philosophical modernity. With this more general methodological interest in view then, here we will be taking up aspects of the Korean philosophical tradition of “Learning of Nature and Coherence” (*songnihak* 性理学)<sup>10</sup> in one of its major consummatory events—the Four-Seven debate, a debate regarding the optimal way to conceive of cultivating a moral heartmind and the sources of a *Dao*-focused ethical awareness (*dosim* 道心). An important part of approaching this debate is the foregrounding of an ensemble of Confucian bodily-spiritual practices engaged in for the purposes of *somaesthetic cultivation*, which in turn contributes to the ongoing religious project of contributing to the preservation and meliorative transformation of an intergenerational communicating community of ritual interpretation that promotes life- and world-affirming cosmopolitical subjectivity.<sup>11</sup>

The debate was carried out via a series of letters between four major philosophers—Toegye (Yi Hwang, 1501–1570), Kobong (Ki Taesung, 1527–1572), Yulgok (Yi I, 1536–1584), and Ugye (Song Hon, 1535–1598), and many other subsequent commentators and interlocutors spanning into the present. It is significant that the debate is a continuation and fine-tuning

<sup>10</sup>I would like to thank Bongrae Seok for pointing out the term “Way Learning” (*dohak* 道学) that I originally used here to refer to “Neo-Confucianism,” which is a modern European moniker for a metaphysical systematization carried out over several generations, with the philosophical corpus of Zhu Xi in particular playing a major role. But this term can be confusing in a Korean context, as it was later used by Jo Guangjo’s (趙光祖 1482–1520) political philosophy of Neo-Confucianism. A thinker that in early Joseon Dynasty triggered a major political struggle and subsequent literati purge due to its being associated with a rather rigid and uncompromising vision of “way-focused political order” stemming from a rather idealistic Neo-Confucian political philosophy. So *songnihak* is a more apt designator for the “orthodoxy” that was being translingually “practiced” by the Four-Seven interlocutors.

<sup>11</sup>The neologism “somaesthetics” was coined by Richard Shusterman to talk about a type of neo-pragmatist thinking that takes seriously the body as foregrounded in a post-linguistic turn set of questions and issues involving how to better perceive and appreciate (*aesthesis*) in order to better appreciate and ameliorate (*aesthetics*) the lived body (*soma*). Shusterman’s work serves as an exemplary model for engaging in translingual philosophical practice that pays heightened attention to bodily experience and practices of self-cultivation involving the visceral affects and moral emotions. For a tour-de-force statement of this path-blazing field of philosophical research, see Shusterman (2012).

of some of the themes and questions raised in a Song Dynasty philosophical vernacular that at the time of Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) writing was deemed heterodox and banned by a repressive Court-Literati faction that had many Northern “barbarian” incursions to worry about. The suppressing of Zhu's writings was likely due in part to a perception, from a certain standpoint within the ruling Southern Song aristocracy, that they produced an overly idealistic and “metaphysical” interpretation of the Confucian classics, and moreover harbored uncomfortably “democratic” interpretations of the Confucian persuasion that gave precedence to transformative education as (inter)personal cultivation applicable to all alike from the Son of Heaven to every commoner.

In approaching the Four-Seven debate we are faced with many complicated issues of translation in both a political register and a linguistic one. For the Korean Neo-Confucians were writing and reading often in *hanja* 漢字, but also thinking with an indigenous Korean language that in many ways creatively reorients any supposedly fixed or sacrosanct cultural “centers” of Confucian world-civilizing projects promoting an ideal of ethical universality as “all-under-heaven” (*cheonha* 天下).

The initial Four-Seven debate occurred immediately after the reign of King Yeonsangun (1495–1506) who descended from paranoia into actual madness and carried out one of the most extensive and violent “literati purges” in Korean history. Hence, the move to seemingly more esoteric or “scholastic” concerns in clarifying the terms and concepts of the Four-Seven debate becomes more understandable employing as it does sophisticated metaphor, analytic rigor, and existential-pragmatic reasoning to justify one position in terms of not only its conceptual clarity, but also its ability to lead to a transformative ethical truth as confirmed by cultivating a ethico-political subjectivity in a ritual communicating community of interpretation. In the back and forth inquiry of the Four-Seven interlocutors we can detect a real urgency felt at the time to be defining their terms and glossing effective vocabularies for ethical-political Neo-Confucian *praxis*, which is so much more than just metaphysical “scholasticism” brought about by a retreat from engaged transformative inquiry as a result of the “literati purges” and subsequent fallouts in the then recent histories of Confucian political cultures.

In any event, due to the complicated hybridity of the historical Four-Seven debate and its ongoing significance for the present as a philosophical conversation that calls for recontextualization in so many ways, the importance of revisiting the debate with an intercultural hermeneutic should be readily obvious. A significant task for the “philosophical

translation” of the Four-Seven discourse then is the methodological abjuring of conceptual clarity and the intentional embrace of the fecund ambiguities found in the “in-between” spaces of translanguaging practice. Learning to live with this philosophical “in-betweenness” and even untranslatability, is part of what is entailed in appreciating the radical alterity and uncommon assumptions of distinctive philosophical grammars when it comes to theorizing persons and the diverse cultural worlds of value that they inhabit. If we want to be ethically expanding the limits of our world into a more encompassing cosmopolitan sensibility, then we need to keep unsettling ourselves from the stifling limits of our inherited vocabularies and persistent philosophical grammars.

A touchstone for the type of philosophical translation I have in mind here can be found in Roger Ames and David Hall’s collaborative translation and glossary of the Confucian classic *Focusing the Familiar: A Philosophical Translation of the Zhongyong*.<sup>12</sup> Ames and Hall identify a basic problem of recognizing classical Chinese texts (both traditionally received and more recently archeologically excavated) as distinctively philosophical as opposed to say merely literary, religious, historical, scientific, or any other genre. In discussing this problematic, they locate a pervasive double obfuscation in much previous translations of Chinese “philosophy” into Western languages: namely, the often wholesale, and usually unacknowledged, “Christianization” of classical Chinese texts, in many cases thanks be to the pioneering work of Sinologically trained Jesuits and the Presbyterian missionary-translator James Legge. The common method here is to use familiar terms from an Abrahamic tradition in making sense of the unfamiliar conceptual clusters in pre-Qin Confucian, sources—leading to a depiction of Confucius as a kind of second-rate Messiah at best or a hopelessly naive and muddle-headed moral educator at worst. They also highlight the uncritical reliance upon a kind of Eurocentric philosophical sensibility grounded in an inherited contextualizing grammar of *substance ontology*. When “theologically freighted” terms of translation are coupled with “substance-oriented conceptions of “discreteness, objectivity, and permanence,” we get such renderings of *tian* 天 as “Heaven” *yi* 義 as “Righteousness,” *li* 禮 as “Rites,” and *de* 德 as “Virtue,” while more relationally dynamic process-oriented sensibilities are entirely lost to the uninitiated English reader.

<sup>12</sup> Ames and Hall (2001: 61–87).



Ames and Hall's work reminds us that so many heretofore existing translations of Confucian texts have tended to promote a fixed and univocal characterization of "objects or essences emergent from a language rooted in a substantialist perspective" (Hall and Ames 1998: 6). So it is always incumbent upon any hermeneutically responsible philosophical translator to be striving with imagination and rigor to provide a more context sensitive set of interpretive glosses as part of a conceptual constellation that nudges readers away from a language of quantitative and fixed discreteness, toward a dynamic process-oriented vocabulary more capable of letting the texts "speak" to present concerns on their own terms.

Indeed, the translational method of *ars contextualis* suggests a "this-that" or focus-field rather than a "one-many" or "part-whole" model of interpretation. Drawing inspiration from A.N. Whitehead's distinction between rational and aesthetic orders, Ames and Hall argue that the very idea of an *arche* or *principium* as ontological or metaphysical "First Principle" is a daunting roadblock to inquiry indeed for achieving any effective intercultural translation. And since there can "be no overarching context determining the shape of other contexts, the world is an open-ended affair comprised by "thises" and "thats" construable from any number of distinct perspectives" there should be no appeal made to an all-encompassing One behind the many. Rather there are only so many plurisingularities of radical becoming as "many particular foci that organize the fields about them." In a world of pure becoming the myriad things can only be experientially "mapped" (as opposed to re-presented for consciousness) in terms of "patterns of deference" (*shu* 恕), "relational caring" (*ren* 仁), and "optimal symbiosis" (*he* 和). The vital function of moral imagination cannot be overemphasized in achieving a plurisingular, yet resolutely role-focused ethical agency, in an always changing and precarious world. For the Confucians, exemplary persons are simply those paying sufficient reverential attention to the tasks at hand that require somaesthetic cultivation of embodied virtuosities, and the caring "body-heartminding" as part of an affective disposition that emerges *pari passu* with the efficacious performance of ritual practice in an ongoing and open-ended communicating community of interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The terms "bodyheartminding" and "vital bodyminding," though perhaps prone to confuse any word processor, are most translingually transformative renderings for referencing the non-dual continuity of "mind/feelings" *xin* 心 as a fully gerundive process wherein the lived and performative body (*soma*, *shen* 身) is the dynamic center of the field of ritually communicative praxis. See Ames (2015: 167–180).

Indeed, the perennial philosophical problem of the “self” might not even be thematized at all as something to be overcome in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophy. And this deeply relational and correlative cosmology animating the philosophical grammar of the early Confucians requires a gerundive sense of *Dao* entailing a way-making wherein *Dao* is “both ‘*what* is’ (things and their various attributes) and ‘*how* things are’ (their actions and various modalities), and since there is no clear line between what we might take to be putative things and events: a ‘thing’ is a distinctive, dynamic focus located within an unbounded field of experience that is holographically implicated within this focus, requiring a focus-field rather than a part-whole language to give it expression.”<sup>14</sup> Bongrae Seok, in a recent work on embodied moral psychology, has coherently situated Confucian thinking through the emotions within a language of dynamic holism and focal-field discourse:

Qing [cheong 情] is an open space (field) where the world is felt directly and engaged interactively. It is not an enclosed theater where the world is only translated or, at best, transplanted. As qing is cultivated and properly governed, it is tuned to the world and it presents the world to us because it is the embodied feeling that gives us the direct sense of what the given situation really means to us. As far as we live in this world, we cannot be neutral and cool to the world; we are inescapably emotional to and interactive with the world because the world is not a physical location but a meaningful place to us.<sup>15</sup>

Philosophical translation as *ars contextualis* then doesn’t just seek semantic equivalency across clear and distinct linguistic and cultural registers, nor need it posit a fusion of horizons wherein seemingly incongruous or incommensurable grammars of experience are shoe-horned into an overarching and homogenizing mediating hermeneutic framework. Of course, *translation* as a “carrying across,” a true *meta-phorein* as it were, conceptually and practically requires more than just moving from a source to target languages of expression, but nevertheless, it must be carefully concerned with accuracy and truth of re-presentation. Indeed, the very idea of a “source” and “target” language governing translation schema might be more obfuscating than we think. Lydia Liu has suggested that we operate with the conceptual metaphors of a “host language” and

<sup>14</sup> Ames and Rosemont (2016: 161).

<sup>15</sup> Seok (2012: 139).

“guest language” rather than the fixed identity implicit in the territorialized and teleological notions of “source” and “target”:

The idea of source language often relies on concepts of authenticity, origin, influence, and so on, and has the disadvantage of re-introducing the age-old problematic of translatability/untranslatability into the discussion. On the other hand, the notion of target language implies a teleological goal, a distance to be crossed in order to reach the plenitude of meaning; it thus misrepresents the ways in which the trope of equivalence is conceived in the host language, relegating its agency to secondary importance.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophical translation then can best be conceived of as a practice that seeks to responsibly foreground the uncommon assumptions of distinctive cultural grammars thereby creating the conditions for the possibility of a transformation of any received common sense.

So what I am suggesting is that we need a hermeneutic of translingual practice to be reimagining optimal translation schema for the present that challenge any easy one-to-one correspondence theory of meaning conveyance, with more nuanced debates regarding moral perception, the emotions and the mind as mirror in the Platonic-Cartesian-Lockean canon of Western philosophy. Without challenging any preexisting translation schema directly, I want to suggest a cluster of concepts with associated glosses that will help considerably in approaching the Four-Seven debate on its own complex terms of philosophical hybridity and process-relational thinking. In fact, I fully appreciate the work of pioneering translators who all have reasons for preferring one “standard” or another. And just as we are free to put new wine in old wineskins with terms like “principle” or “reason,” I find Edward Chung’s strategy of beginning with a received standard translation schema only to rely less frequently on these terms after they are introduced, deploying instead transliterated Korean concepts. This can best help make the adjustment to a more dynamic understanding of the concepts animating the debate about the status and significance of natural and moral emotions in a life project of Confucian self-cultivation.<sup>17</sup>

The following brief glossary of select terms is a good place to start unravelling and unsettling the problematic inheritance of substance ontological assumptions undergirding a transcendental-rational universalist rendering of Neo-Confucian thinking about persons and their moral

<sup>16</sup> Lydia Liu (1995: 27).

<sup>17</sup> Chung (2019: 78–80).

potentials to be overcoming selfish desires in achieving a kind of attentive clarity marked by embodied “reverence” (*gyeong* 敬) as *Dao*-focused heartminding (도심 *dosim*):<sup>18</sup>

*I* 理 as ‘coherence’ or ‘coherent values’ rather than ‘principle’ or ‘reason’. This is an important translational choice, because of the repeated non-dual claims made regarding coherent value patterning that is understood gerundively in shaping possibilities for realizing valuable worlds as creative ethical agents *and* references our always provisional achievements as contributing to historically constituted communities of interpretation.

*Ki* 气 as “vibrant matter”, a term I borrow from a New Materialist thinker Jane Bennett.<sup>19</sup> Terms like ‘vital force’ or ‘psychophysical stuff,’ although both of these standards might provide less anxiety as viable translations than thinking of *i* as non-material “principle.” The idea that mind and matter could be ontologically juxtaposed makes little sense in a cosmos animated by always shifting *ki* configurations, rhythmically punctuated one hopes by life-affirming ritual and music. Even the animate/inanimate ontological difference can be elided altogether with a “vibrant” conception of matter mattering.

*Sim* 心 as “heartminding” without a hyphen and understood as a process continuous with the whole of nature and so many insistently particular human natures coming to realize their non-fungible valuable worlds. In any event, as an emotional and cognitive core of embodied experience *sim* does not depend upon any mind/body substance or reason/emotion dualistic binary, and is the faculty that when properly attuned with “reverential attention” makes possible an integral unification of moral “nature” and the “emotions” (心統性情).

*Seong* 性 as “nature” but not as a fixed metaphysical given, totalizing or transcendental entity, but as a way of referring to the nature-culture eventful process of becoming more fully human. It is both what is *aspirational* in experience and *inspirational* insofar as the ideals as “ends-in-view” always come back to circulation within experience to call us out of ourselves—indeed, what Heaven invokes is called “nature” (天命之谓性).

<sup>18</sup> I will say more about *gyeong* as “reverent attention” and an affective-somaesthetic style of ethical comportment. For a detailed and lucid overview of the role of *gyeong* in Confucian agent-based virtue ethics, see Suk Choi’s chapter in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Bennett (2010: 20–24). The perspective of vital materialism allows for us to get past anthropocentric conceptions of foundational agency and imagine a more inclusive assemblage of creative energies as distributed agential becomings as an ecological humanism. It is my contention that this fits quite well with the ontology of the Korean Neo-Confucians.

I will say more about the non-linear temporal and circulatory dimensions of this conceptual constellation in the conclusion.

*Jeong* 情 as “emotion” or “feeling” but not a static sentiment or mental state, but referencing the relatively immediate experience not yet filtered through rational deliberation or. Although we can see from the *Mengzi* and other early excavated texts that “emotionally integrative thinking” *sa/si* 思—an embodied activity to be sure—is key to “getting it” (*deok/de* 得) in terms of cultivating a transformative ethical agency within one’s role-encumbered patterns of *qi* configuration and nature-culture, the Korean Neo-Confucians tended to expand the Mengzian notion of “situational characteristics” into an expression of an immanent ethical transcendence.

*Gyeong* 敬 as “reverential attention” not just “seriousness” or “reverence” because for the Neo-Confucians it is not just a sense of religious awe or respect for ghosts and spirits, but a transformation of the very kind of ethical subjectivity as an embodied *attentional economy* that one brings to the act of constituting a world of value patterning in a ritually generated deliberative space.

### 6.3 THE FOUR-SEVEN DEBATE AS TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICE

I cannot possibly hope to provide a comprehensive overview of the cultural, political and religious history and philosophical significance of the Four-Seven debate in Korean Confucianism, so I will only be focusing on aspects of the debate that I see as particularly poignant in terms of calling into question certain forms of prevailing “common sense” regarding the ethical salience of emotional experience.<sup>20</sup>

Imagine, using your currently embodied *habitus* as a somaesthetic schema of sensibility, that you suddenly encounter a situation in which a toddler is crawling toward an open well. The immediate affective reaction that you surely have (and the intensity will vary depending upon how vividly your imaginative efforts function here), is likely a mixture of shock, fear, and anxious concern coupled with an overwhelmingly action-driving motivation to immediately, without having “one thought too many,” be

<sup>20</sup> For a good place to get an overview there is the translated and annotated *The Four-Seven Debate* by Michael Kalton et al. (SUNY, 1994). And for thought-provoking detailed discussions of the historical and ongoing philosophical significance of the debate, see Philip J. Ivanhoe (2016) and Edward Chung (2019).

moving to save the child from looming danger. One can also imagine that in certain precarious situations giving rise to such immediate affective-driven ethical action, that deficiencies and excesses in the emotional networks of communication could lead to various forms of *akrasia* or to other ethically debilitating conditions—for example, what if one faints or goes into cardio-pulmonary arrest as a result of the initial shock of such dramatic ethical encounters? So as far as the “logic of imagination” style argument in *Mengzi* 2A6 makes abundantly clear in thinking through the normatively universal category of “human becoming” it is important to fully countenance the vast breadth and complexity of emotional experience and consider ways that immediate affective perceptions can be both truth-tracking and action-guiding when appropriately “patterned” as heavenly-coherent (*tianli* 天理) configurations of *qi* energy.<sup>21</sup>

The Four Beginnings (*sadan*) come from the *Mengzi*, wherein the text insists that the moral nature of persons, as long as given the proper environing conditions in family-born feeling and non-coercive and non-violent ethical development can take shape as robust ethical virtuosités—*ren* as “consummate conduct,” *yi* as “optimal appropriateness,” *li* as “ritual deference,” and *zhi* as “wisdom.” Although the root-and-branches (*ben/mo*) concept is certainly applicable to the notion of moral expansion of spontaneous sensibilities and biological affect, as found in the *Mengzi*, but such root-and-branches analogical thinking should be situated in a larger context of the frequent Mengzian reliance upon botanical metaphors, and not read as signaling some reified “substance” or metaphysical given as experiential “sprouts” of pure ethical consciousness. In any event, the Mengzian claim that without the appropriate spontaneous affective responses induced by environing conditions one is not human is taken as basic in all subsequent Neo-Confucian debates. To not immediately experience the heartminding of empathy and commiseration (*ciyin zhi xin*), shame and disgust (*xin e zhi xin*), yielding and deference (*cirang zhi xin*), and a sense of right and wrong (*shi fei zhi xin*) in situations which quite viscerally “command” such an affective response is to be beyond the pale of humanity for the ethical vision as articulated in the *Mengzi*.

<sup>21</sup> In *Mengzi* 6A6 we also get a phenomenal description of the Four Sprouts and the phrase “when it comes to the emotions, natural capacities can’t be to blame” (乃若其情，非才之罪也) in the context of differential accomplishments and outright failures to develop or thrive as moral agents. For more on the unique style of logic grounded in affective experience animating the *Mengzian* approach to thinking about ethical universality, see Chen Shaoming (2017: 68–79).

The Seven Feelings (*chil cheong*) are derived from the *Book of Rites* “Ritual Flow” chapter, wherein the authors list seven basic emotions to describe the basic characteristics of human persons:

What is the basic characteristics of persons in terms of emotional experience? Happiness, anger, sadness, fear, love, hate, and desire. These seven as capabilities don’t require any study to be realized.”<sup>22</sup>

The Four-Seven debate in picking up with the Cheng-Zhu dynamic of thinking places these seven alongside another chapter of the *Book of Rites*, the “Focusing the Familiar” (*Zhongyong*), opening chapter that has:

What Heaven commands is called our nature, following this nature is a path of education, and refining this path is called Way-making. ... The condition before happiness, anger, grief, joy (*le*) are aroused is called nascent equilibrium (*zhong*); after they are aroused and each is appropriately rhythmically stylized, it is called harmony/optimal symbiosis. This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong*) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way (*dadao*) in the world. (Ames and Hall 2001: 89)

In addition to problematizing a condition of heartminding that would be in some sense unaroused or unexpressed by external ethical conditions, this and related passages raised many complex questions for Neo-Confucian thinkers working within a dipolar “root body-gesture” *che-yong* 體用 modality of thinking of a complementarity between coherent values and vibrant matter. The debate enters into many different philosophical registers from the ethico-political to the psychological, semiotic and religious, but perhaps it can be optimally approached as being concerned primarily the “sources of normativity” in interpersonal experience. Is it possible to attune oneself to a

<sup>22</sup> 《礼记·礼运》：“何谓人情？喜、怒、哀、惧、爱、恶、欲，七者弗学而能。The very idea of translating *qing/cheong* simply as “emotion” or “feeling” is far from an obvious choice in many contexts in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophical texts. Although there are some cases, in the *Book of Rites* in particular and in several passages in the *Mengzi*, that would seem to call for such an interpretative move. However, the term is semantically expansive in a way that elides any easy subjective/objective dichotomy of experience. *Qing* is as much the way “situations” are unfolding as it is how we “experience” them. On the non-analytic and situationally contextualized semantic evolution of *qing* 情 as can be read from pre-Buddhist texts and creatively through to Neo-Confucian metaphysics, see Michael Puett’s “The Ethics of Responding Properly: The Notion of *Qing* 情 in Early Chinese Thought” in Eifring (2004: 37–68).

transcendent ethical source? Or are the ideals of an “pre-expressed nascent equilibrium of emotional experience” something that should be sought in an ethical consciousness embedded in concrete situations, historical dialectic, a world of entangled affects and vibrant materialism?

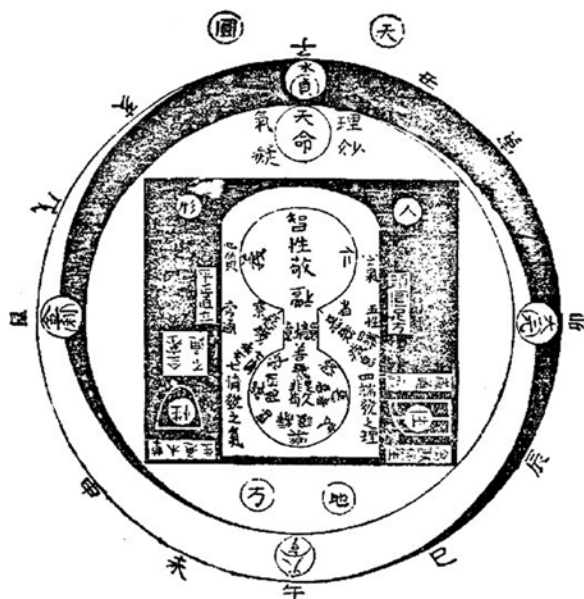
Philip Ivanhoe has offered a helpful heuristic in thinking about a *developmental* model found in *Mengzi* 2A6 versus a *recovery* or *discovery* model found in the moral metaphysics of Cheng-Zhu *dohak* 道学 and Lu-Wang *simhak* 心学, respectively.<sup>23</sup> I think that taking a certain pragmatist-inflected “existentialist” approach and following Huang Zongxi’s cue that “cultivated experience just is root-nature” (*gongfu jishi benti* 功夫即是本体) we can better grasp Toegye’s promotion of “reverent attention” as a way of talking about the correlative constitution of “nature and *cheong*” can function as a “mutual issuance” (*hobal* 互發) stemming simultaneously from *i* 理 and *ki* 氣 sources. Simply put, thinking about relationally constituted ethical agents requires that we foreground the embodied *moral imagination* rather than any form of rationally foundational universalism. The somaesthetic moral imagination both as an individual capability of subjective moral agency and as a ritually generated critically reflective *habitus* lets us think again about source, root, and potential in a more communicative framework of ritual and role enactment rather than as dependent upon some transcendent or supernatural framework. Perhaps we should think here of a *disclosure* model within a hermeneutic framework of pragmatist existentialism that is capable of integrating the ethical insights and lures for feeling found in a dynamic symbiosis of both a *developmental* and *recovery* model of moral experience.<sup>24</sup>

The initiation of the Four-Seven philosophical debate is historically located at the moment when Toegye decided to amend an anthropocosmic moral psychology diagram of Chong Chiun’s (1509–1561) depicting the temporalization and spatialization of the “Heavenly Invoked Order Diagram” (天命圖). Part of the diagram involved an experiential and practical distinction drawn between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings as basic ways of describing an embodied moral psychology as emerging within the *Tobak* lineage of Neo-Confucian thinking.

<sup>23</sup> Ivanhoe (2016: 73).

<sup>24</sup> For more on the idea of moving from potted “doctrines” (orthodoxy) to enacted “roles” (orthopraxy) in Confucian theorizing about persons, that is, moving from moral first principles to imaginative narratives of “becoming [more fully] human,” see Ames (2020: 94–106).





Chon Chiun's diagram of the heavenly mandate. (Cf. [http://db.history.go.kr/item/bookViewer.do?levelId=ma\\_013\\_0160\\_0060](http://db.history.go.kr/item/bookViewer.do?levelId=ma_013_0160_0060) [Accessed December 30, 2020])

The diagram as originally composed had language that Toegye found too dualistic in terms of splitting apart a “Heavenly” constitution of the moral potential of human persons (*daoxin* 道心) and the more mundanely materialistic composition of persons as desiring subjects (*renxin* 人心). In order to temper the possibility of deriving a dualist understanding from the diagram, Toegye suggested that it be emended to say only that “pure goodness” “issues” (*bal* 發) from “valuing coherence” (*i* 理). This diagram involves both temporality and spatiality in representing the emergence of moral consciousness and transformative ethical agency. The outermost part of the circle has the twelve “earthly punctuations” used to mark seasonal transformation and daily fluctuations of *ki*-based configurations and patterns of vital energy condensation. The outer circle is mixed between the bright *yang* 阳 and the dark *yin* 阴 blending and the four circles has four of the five basic elements (water, fire, wood, and metal) corresponding with the four primordial virtuosities marking the “first sentence” of the *Great Treatise* 系辞大专 of the *Book of Changes* 易经:

all-encompassing, sustainable, profiting, secure 元亨利贞.<sup>25</sup> “Earth” (*to/tu* 土) as an elemental *ur*-ground is conspicuously absent in the spatialized-temporalization of ethical consciousness here, but appears as a centering agency wherein the transformations of nature coalesce to create a novel subjectivity. The elemental soil of ethical subjectivity is recognized at the bottom of the graph with the phrase “earthly location,” which is correlated with “heavenly mandate” at the top of the graph that also articulates the non-dual intertwining of the “wondrous cohering value” (*cheonli/tianli* 天理) and the “condensation of vibrant matter” (*qining* 气凝). As we move into the center of the graph the space of “human appearance” (*renxing* 人形) is situated as the “*yang* space” between the two *yin* poles of a vertically growing “nature” (*xing* 性) on the left that is a “stable equilibrium and straightforward uprightness” (平正直立) characteristic of botanical growth toward a heavenly light source, and on the right an expanding “nature” that analogically resonates with the fecund, more horizontal vital proliferation, of “birds and beasts” (禽兽横生).

At the center of this graphic depiction of the emergence of an ethically focused human subjectivity are again a clearly non-dual contrasting of two distinct circles with a chiasmatic connecting center of *cheong* 情. Above there are the four virtuosities of Mengzian moral psychology: “relational virtuosity” *ren* 仁, “optimal appropriateness” *yi* 义, “ritual practice” *li* 礼, and “wisdom” *zhi* 智. At the center is “nature made reverent” (*xing jing* 性敬) which through the *gongfu* practice of bringing “pragmatic investigation” (*cha* 察) and “phenomenological introspection” (*sheng* 省) to the somaesthetic field of ‘emotional experience’ (*cheong*) there is realized a possibility of recognizing “right and wrong” (*shifei* 是非) conduct in situations. Moreover, at the consummation of this *gongfu* process the arising of the “seven natural emotions” can be rendered as so many “efficacious triggers” (*shanji* 善機) for realizing the virtuosic development of the “four sprouts” of Mengzian moral psychology with “reverent attention” (*gyeong* 敬) at the center. And it was precisely this part of the diagram that initiated the Four-Seven debate as the right half of the lower circle has the

<sup>25</sup> For more on the idea of a “first sentence” that might stand in productive contrast with cosmogonical *logos* in Western (Greek and Abrahamic) traditions, see Jullien (2015: 24–30) for the provocative translingual claim that this open-ended and productively ambiguous grammatical sentence (as certainly no clear and distinct punctuation could exist in the original text) points to a vision of conceptual *coherence* rather than fixed *meaning* in making sense of human experience.

expression “the four sprouts are an issuance of *i*” and the left half “the seven feelings are an issuance of *ki*.”

It was here that Toegye emended Chon Chiun’s diagram to sound less dualistic, and this provoked Kobong to put forth his critique that the commitment to non-dualism was not sufficiently strong. The first letter that Toegye wrote to Kobong was somewhat self-deprecating in setting the stage for a conversational inquiry aiming at a closer approximation of truth:

I have heard from scholar friends something of your discussion of my thesis regarding the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings. I was already dissatisfied myself with the imprecision of the wording, and, having gotten word of your helpful critique, I am even more aware of its error. So I have revised it to read: “The issuance of the Four Beginnings is purely a matter of principle and therefore involves nothing but good’ the issuance of the Seven Feelings includes material force and therefore involves both good and evil.” I am not sure whether or not this way of putting it is acceptable.<sup>26</sup>

Toegye presents many reasoned responses to overcoming any dualistic assumptions inherent in a naïve naturalism or “*ki* monism” that would have the four purely good moral sprouts emerging from some incorrigible and immediately intuited set of innate feelings. For Toegye the importance of “reverent attention” 敬 as a daily *gongfu*—involving practices like quiescent sitting (静坐) and collaborative philosophical research (读书)—was key to realizing the “predominant elements” (*sochu* 所主) within emotional experience. Kobong recognizes the need to differentiate between types of feelings, as Mengzi’s Four Sprouts represent an instance of “singling out” from a manifold of expressed emotions. For Mengzi and Zisizi each had a “predominant element, and it is up to the scholar to be subtle in discerning.” Kalton highlights the fecund ambiguity of this expression, “Chu is ambiguous, since its meaning can shift in differing contexts from something that one makes the “main or controlling thing” (*chu*) to something that is the “main or controlling thing” (Kalton et al. 1994: 26). This is an important point, as like the term “practice” *gongfu* 功夫 in Neo-Confucian discourse, *so chu* is a “double-barreled” concept insofar as it refers *both* to the process of cultivation *and* to any aspirational telos of ethical practice. *So chu* is a non-analytic and non-dualistic way of talking

<sup>26</sup> Kalton et al. (1994: 1). Here we can see the exemplary attitude of Toegye in promoting a kind of fallibilism and willingness to learn from junior scholars in conversational inquiry. The rest of the debate from this first 1519 letter is indeed still living history.

about experience that also elides any clear and distinct inner/outer dichotomy of mind and world. We do best to contextualize the Four-Seven debate within the living tradition of Confucian theorizing of persons as gerundive processes and potentially consummatory events (that in turn return to the community of ritual interpretation for as ongoing catalysts of epochal cultural and ethico-political transformation. Hence, it is being suggested here that the intercultural comparative hermeneutic horizon of pragmatic somaesthetics should replace reductive paradigms of anatomical neuroscience and otherwise foundationally individualistic notions of moral psychology for optimally theorizing emotional experience.

At one point in the conversation, Toegye “recklessly ventures” that “root nature” (本然之性) and “*ki* material nature” (氣質之性) are similar in kind to the Four Sprouts and Seven Feelings conceptual distinction in terms of the relative issuance from distinct *yi* and *ki* sources—the lived experience of having one nature but the conceptual distinction between two. According to Kalton, Toegye’s approach to the debate “could be viewed as a search for the consequences of the original nature in the phenomenal realm of the life of the feelings” (Kalton et al. 1994: 9). I think that if we opt for a phrasing of “root nature” rather than some ontologically pristine concept of “originality” and think about *ki* configurations as issuing from the same experiential milieu then the importance of the sustaining of an ontologically weak but ethically strong cosmopolitical ideals in a non-ideal and radically contingent and precarious world becomes clear that this is much more than an abstract “scholastic” debate. Kobong deploys Zhu Xi’s distinction between the “nature of Heaven and Earth” and “physical nature” to articulate the necessity of *ki* for realizing any value coherence: “That whereby Heaven and Earth produce creatures is coherence; its [actually] producing the creatures is a matter of vibrant matter. Human’s and other creatures must receive this psychophysical endowment in order to have concrete form, and coherence being in its midst is thereby called ‘the nature’” (trans. modified from Kalton et al. 1994: 28). And Toegye comes to endorse this non-dual stance in highlighting the role of reverential attention in not just selecting, but *constituting* the very order of normative coherence that comes to be recognized as a heavenly lure for feeling: “from this perspective, although neither of the two is separable from value patterning and vibrant matter, on the basis of their point of origin, each points to a predominant factor and emphasis (so chu 所主), so there is no reason why we cannot say that the one is a matter of value patterning and the other a matter of vibrant matter” (Kalton et al. 1994: 11, trans. modified).

In an early letter of the initial debate Toegye takes on Kobong's challenge to define clearly the difference between the Four and the Seven in terms of their phenomenology and orientation toward the good. And since former Confucians "only spoke indiscriminately of "feelings" (*cheong*) but no one has as yet differentiated the four sprouts and seven feelings in terms of "coherence and vibrant matter" it is important that they be avoiding a muddled approach to emotional experience here. In a follow-up letter Kobong sought to clarify, if not analytically define, "heart-mind," "nature," and "feelings" using Zhu Xi's *Collected Sayings*: "As soon as the nature activates, then it is the feelings. The feelings have both good and evil, but as for the nature, it is entirely good. And the heartmind is how the nature and the feelings are creatively integrated (*xin tong xing qing* 心統性情)." He also points out that Mencius and Zisizi had a different approach to conceptualizing moral psychology: "Mencius approached the wondrous combination of coherent values and vibrant matter and exclusively referred to what issues from coherent values as nothing but good"—that is, the Four Beginnings, while Zisizi "approached the wondrous combination of principle and material force and spoke in an undifferentiated way, so the feelings definitely combine principle and material force and have both good and evil—that is, the Seven Feelings. He suggests that the Four Beginnings are "within as pure value patterning" and at the "moment of issuance are not muddled with vibrant matter," while the "Seven Feelings are stimulated externally by physical form, and their issuance is not the original body (*ti* 體) of coherence" (Kalton et al. 1994: 21 modified). Kobong goes on to argue that the "perfectly measured" issuance of the Seven Feelings express a "nature" conferred by "Heavenly Invoked Order and the root body" and are as such but the "same reality with a different name" with the Mencian Four Beginnings. This is similar to how Yulgok later argued that the Seven Feelings can be "comprehending" of the Four Beginnings, but the Four Beginnings cannot comprehend the Seven Feelings.

Toegye also mobilizes "mutual issuance" *hobal* 互發 as a conceptual strategy for thinking about the interdependent entanglement of *yi* and *ki* without presupposing a transcendent monism or an undifferentiated field of experience and potential for ethically transformative cultivation. Indeed, in an explanatory note regarding a reply letter from Toegye to Kobong, Kalton highlights the productive "ambiguity" in the phrase *hobal* translated as "mutual issuance" because it is not clear whether it means both vibrant matter and cohering value "have an issuing function, albeit they

are interdependent in carrying it out, or whether ‘mutual’ is just another way of saying ‘interdependent,’ that is, that they jointly have a role in the issuing function” (Kalton et al. 1994: 63). The phrase found in many Cheng-Zhu writings, of Chan Buddhist provenance, “not separate yet not muddled” 不離不雜, is a very fecund expression for thinking about the non-dual yet differentiated fields and folds of emotional experience. The relatively unfocused and natural-mechanistic-like fluctuations of *ki* modalities as contrasted with the heightened somaesthetic awareness made possible by realizing “reverent attention” in daily routine and social *habitus* calls for embodied reflection upon the subtle inner workings of the “triggers” expressing the latent moral potentials of the unexpressed heartmind. For Toegye, the “distinguishing things as two does not necessarily prevent their never being separated, and when they are combined as a unity, it may actually come down to their not being muddled with one another” (12). Toegye calls this an “all-encompassing approach that avoids one-sidedness” or in other words, a way of preserving a universality of dynamic ethical principle without reliance upon a monistic reduction to material force or some supernatural principle as a myth of the metaphysically given. So, in an important sense Toegye is able to respond to Kobong’s challenge that Mengzi’s “singling out” and Zisizi’s “speaking of [feelings] in their entirety” led to a dualistic orientation in certain Neo-Confucian circles. For Kobong, the Four and the Seven are just the “same reality with a different name” (21). Kobong’s “humble position” is that

[b]oth the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings issue from the mind-and-heart. Since the mind-and-heart is a conjunction of principle and material force, feelings certainly combine both principle and material force. It is not the case that there is a particular distinctive kind of feelings that only issues from principle and not from material force. The point truly calls for one to distinguish the genuine from the false. (32)

However, in abjuring the language of substance ontology presupposing at it does discrete, permanent things and working instead with a process-oriented vocabulary that takes seriously change and contingency, how might these debates about the relative independence of *yi* and *ki*, the Four and the Seven, and related questions be taken up in our present? We do well to recall Roger Ames and David Hall’s promotion of a deferential (*shu* 恕) conception of language beyond rigid designation as static reference. Truth then, as a trait of communicative practice and somaesthetic self-cultivation is not fixed in some representational order of being, but is always a more or less

provisional affair of learning how to better cultivate *trust* (*xin* 信) in the context of our always transforming social roles and interpersonal relationships. Ethical transcendence then is an ongoing embodied activity, not a return to some pristine state of unencumbered freedom or a return to some ontological given; and engaging in creative philosophical redescription within translingual practices and holding space open for intercultural comparative conversations can be a real means for cultural transformation.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

What I have humbly attempted to do here is merely to present a few key aspects of an ongoing conversational inquiry that effectively foregrounds a unique philosophical “common sense” that can help engage us in a translingual in-betweenness because it doesn’t sit well with the received dominant tradition of mind/body dualism and the prioritizing of rationality at the expense of emotional experience. By making space for a Joseon philosophical vocabulary speak for itself, more creatively democratic and postcolonial imaginings of ethical subjectivity and transformative agency can be realized drawing from this uniquely Korean Neo-Confucian philosophical contribution to Asian (post)modernities. Many postcolonial and de-Orientalizing forces shaping nationalist discourses tend to operate with sharp conceptual dichotomies between the supposedly instrumentalist-rationalist aspects of highly centralized state bureaucracies and can result in law-and-order campaigns rhetorically positioned to be seen by certain segments of publics as heroically preserving institutions from the chaotically swarming masses of emotionally charged, and therefore volatile subjectivities, threatening the status quo. Such dualistic thinking about political subjectivity can be further “provincialized” and transformed by engaging carefully with the highly nuanced and meticulous embodied moral psychology of relational persons found in the Joseon Korean interlocutors and can help us further the project of dismantling via a new way of seeing and destabilizing the thoroughly contingent projection of Occidental arrogance as the byproduct of a Western imperialist imagination.

In his rethinking of most central concepts of transcendence, universality, and sustainability with Asian traditions, Prasenjit Duara has rearticulated a conception of “circulating history” that I think is helpful in imagining ways to be engaging with a philosophical periodization as significant as the Four-Seven debate in Joseon Korea. Duara suggests that, in a post-Cold War era, “the growing collusion between transnational capital and the nation-state means that the latter is not as capable of protecting

the interests of the community and the natural world in their territories,” but this is untenable for imagining a sustainable global order, as this would require a [ethically universal] “cosmopolitanism” that is able to transcend the zero-sum competitive and imperialist logics of nation-states.<sup>27</sup>

By returning to the Four-Seven debate with a renewed hermeneutic sensitivity informed by translingual practices appreciating the hybrid becoming or intimate “betweenness” of initially unfamiliar thinking about moral psychology and emotionally charged subjectivity, the very cosmopolitan ideals of a Confucian moral subjectivity opening the possibility of a universal *cheonha* 天下 ethical order as a “circulating” historical ideal can be affectively countenanced as a live option for the moral imagination. For as Duara notes, it is not just the material flows of capital and “Asiatic modes of production” that shape our history of the global present:

The Asian maritime networks of the pre-colonial era ... involved a wide variety of merchant communities at different points who did not speak the same languages or trade in the same currencies ... In many ways, contemporary Asian regional interdependence resembles the maritime Asian trade networks, because of the separation of political, economic and military levels and power .... Although the actual products flowing through the Asian maritime networks were miniscule compared to today’s figures, the cultural flows they enabled—packaged in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Islam—were nothing short of world-transforming ... the older Asian models of cultural circulation without state domination of identity presents us with a historical resource to explore new possibilities.<sup>28</sup>

So, just as some are interested in exploring concepts like Henri Bergson’s *durée*, William James’ “stream of consciousness,” or Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology of “internal time consciousness” in order to reimagine possible subjectivities outside of imperialist logics of domination and colonized consciousness, we should be equally able, given enough collaborative research and ongoing translingual practice be more readily countenancing the varieties of approaches to theorizing ethical subjectivity and cosmopolitan universalism on offer in a recontextualized Four-Seven debate. It is my hope that this chapter can make a small contribution in this direction as part of this most important volume urging us to be taking seriously the rich legacy of Korean philosophies of emotion in the present age.

<sup>27</sup> See Duara (2014: 241).

<sup>28</sup> Duara (2014: 277).



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