

# Dasan's Approach to the Ethical Function of Emotion as Revealed in His Annotations of Chinese Classics: *With a Focus on His Maengja youi*\*

CHOI Young-Jin and HONG Jung Geun

## Abstract

*This article aims to investigate the issues of the ethical function of emotion in Dasan's annotations of Confucian classics. Defining nature as "preference," Dasan argued that the specific content of nature is to "like good and dislike bad." Verifying the existence of such nature based on his own psychological experiences and the existing canon of literature, he attempted to prove the presence and universality of moral emotions, especially in ordinary dialogue, relying on psychological responses to specific events and the notion of human nature. Since identical emotions can lead to contrasting actions, depending on whether they "achieve harmony in moderation," emotions should be properly adjusted. To achieve this, Dasan stressed the importance of sincerity and proposed that people, as sincere actors, exert every effort for religious cultivation by serving Sangje (Lord on High). Dasan's theory on emotions offers a basis for empirically resolving the fundamental problems of Confucian ethics, and his notion of emotions has significance in shifting philosophical concerns from the metaphysical sphere to the everyday lived world.*

**Keywords:** Dasan, ethics, Silhak, emotions, semiotic

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## Introduction

Human nature (*seong* 性) is the core concept of the Confucian theoretical system. How to prove the goodness or evilness of human nature and how to restore and realize the goodness of human nature are two themes that have been consistently discussed within Confucian circles since the pre-Qin era (before 221 BC).

The importance of emotion (*jeonggam* 情感) in the study of ancient Confucianism has been brought into sharp relief since the Guodian Chu Slips (Guodian Chujian 郭店楚簡) were unearthed in 1993 in the Guodian tombs in Jingmen, Hubei province in China. A review of the original texts of *Xingzi mingchu* 性自命出 (Nature Derives from Mandate) and *Xingqingglun* 性情論 (Discourse on Human Nature and Emotions), in particular, revealed the importance that the concept of emotion carried (Lin 2011, 33). The excavation of the original texts prompted a new study on the development process of Confucian thoughts from the perspective of emotion (Kim et al. 2011, 19).<sup>1</sup>

In earlier philosophical studies, emotion was regarded secondary to reason. However, recent neuro-physiological results have revived the study of emotion in psychology and other related fields, which also led the field of philosophy to investigate emotion from a new standpoint (Kwon 2012, 288-289). The author also recently observed that emotions such as liking, disliking, and shame constitute a core mechanism in the formulation of Confucian ethical and political theories (Choi 2011).

This trend is nothing new, however. Scholars ranging from Aristotle to Adam Smith have emphasized the fact that emotions play a basic role in motivating ethical deeds. It is also well known that emotions play an important role in the theory of ethics of advanced Confucianism, involv-

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1. The term "emotion" used in this article mainly denotes feeling, among the three functions of the human mind, namely thinking, feeling, and wanting. Therefore, it is not equivalent to the meaning of the Chinese character *qing* 情. Emotion, as is already well known, mostly means the entire function of the mind (Choi 1977, 45-49). On issues involving the term "emotion," see Kim et al. (2011, preface).

ing the motives behind ethical judgment and deeds (Evans 2001, 64). In Korea, the Four-Seven debate (*sadan chiljeong nonbyeon* 四端七情論辨) between Toegye Yi Hwang and Gobong Ki Dae-seung in the sixteenth century was a dispute over moral emotions, called the Four Beginnings, and another set of emotions dubbed the Seven Feelings. This would be the first dispute over emotions in the history of Confucian thought.<sup>2</sup>

When Dasan's annotations of Chinese Classics are reviewed with these factors in mind, it is noticeable that he defined true human nature, namely innate human attributes, such as the liking of good and the disliking of evil (*hoseon i oak* 好善而惡惡) (*Jungyong jajam* [Moral Lessons Drawn from the *Doctrine of the Mean*], bk. 1). This human nature, if expressed in terms of Song Confucianism, belongs to emotion, a function of mind. Dasan argued that the basis of humanity could be found in humanity's concrete moral emotions being oriented toward goodness. This is clearly distinguished from Neo-Confucianism that defined emotions as metaphysical principles of ethics under the theory that human nature is *i* 理 (principle; *li* in Chinese).

Furthermore, Dasan's emphasis on emotion can be confirmed by the fact that he presented pleasure, comfort, and uneasiness as evidence of the doctrine that human nature is fundamentally good. It is also illustrated by the fact that Dasan criticized Zhu Xi's interpretation of *qinmin* 親民 as *xinmin shuo* 新民說 (renewing the people) in *Daxue* (The Great Learning), and stressed that the phrase should be read, true to the text, as "loving the people" (*Daehak gongui* [Imperial Discussion on *The Great Learning*], bk. 1).

Based on this argument, this article analyzes Dasan's annotations of Chinese classics, focusing on his *Maengja youi* (Essential Meanings in the *Book of Mencius*), interprets them from the standpoint of ethics, and delves into their philosophical significance.

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2. Even before the Four-Seven debate, there existed arguments about the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings based on *li* 理 and *qi* 氣 theories, but they remained fragmentary (Takahashi 2001, 105-107).

### **Intrinsic Ethical Sense of Good and Evil: *The Problem of Ethical Foundation***

The “Teng wengong” (Duke Wen of Teng) chapter of the *Mengzi* (Book of Mencius) begins with the duke meeting Mencius on his trip to the country Chu 楚. During the meeting, Mencius, citing Yao and Shun, asserts that man is good by nature. The duke, still suspicious of the assertion, meets Mencius again on his way home. Alluding to historical events, Mencius again justifies his assertion and maintains, “[t]he country Teng, small as it is, can become an ethical country.” This episode is the first reference to the idea of human goodness by nature in the *Mengzi*, an indication that the theory that human nature is inherently good lacked persuasiveness at the time.

Mencius demonstrated that human nature is inherently good by citing emotional reactions to specific situations,<sup>3</sup> diverse metaphorical expressions,<sup>4</sup> and the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes),<sup>5</sup> the traditionally authoritative document. Dasan's demonstration of man as inherently good takes an only slightly different approach. In the “Deung mungong” (Duke Wen of Teng) chapter of his *Maengja youi*, Dasan asserted that human nature refers mainly to one's likes and dislikes (*giho* 嗜好), such as liking goodness and disliking evil, loving virtue and being ashamed of ignominy. Dasan illustrated that these are very intrinsic attributes, through the following examples:

- (1) A pilferer is pleased when he succeeds in running off with stolen goods. However, when he sees the acts of a man of integrity the next day, he will naturally feel shame. An ancient saying has it that even the thief on the attic can be moved to do good deeds with oth-

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3. “Buren ren zhi xin 不忍人之心,” in “Gongsun Chou shang 公孫丑上” (Gongsun Chou, Part 1), in *Mengzi*.

4. “Xing you qiliu 性猶杞柳” and “Xing you tuanshui 性猶湍水,” in “Gaozi shang 告子上” (Gaozi, Part 1), in *Mengzi*.

5. “Zhengmin 蒸民,” in *Shijing*, as cited in “Xing wu shan wu bushan 性無善無不善,” in *Mengzi*.

ers. This is clear proof that a man is good by nature.<sup>6</sup>

- (2) Take, for example, the case of Yun's son, a thief. When I tried to bring him to reason with benevolence, the thief shed tears and cried. Also consider the case of Jeong's son, a wicked man. After catching fish in the stream and asking him to slice them to eat, he knelt down humbly with his face turning red, and recounted the crimes he had committed, reiterating, "I'm a villain. No one would regret if I died." If human nature is inherently evil, why would they have such responses?<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted here that the goodness of human nature is demonstrated through emotional and physical responses when a man who has committed unethical acts showed signs of remorse, such as feeling ashamed, shedding tears, and becoming red-faced. Dasan defined such reactions as a mind that feels ashamed of and disgusted with wrongdoing (*suo ji sim* 羞惡之心). He also argued for critical mindedness in the same manner:

Human nature inherently loves doing goodness in the same manner that water flows downward and fire spirals upward. As Heaven provides such a nature at birth, this nature never changes, even if men are liable to commit all sorts of evil deeds like greed, debauchery, cruelty, and murder. Such people, just like ordinary people, praise loyal subjects and filial sons to be beautiful and good, and criticize corrupt officials for being evil. This is how we can say that human nature is inherently good.<sup>8</sup>

However evil a man may be, it is argued that it is universal for a man to admire a virtuous man and detest an immoral man. Critical mindedness can be said, then, to be the ability to love good and hate evil. This is a spe-

6. “穿窬之盜 負贓而走 欣然善也 明日適其鄰 見廉士之行 未嘗不油然而內作 古所謂梁上君子 可與爲善 此性善之明驗也” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

7. “此地有尹氏子爲盜 余令其兄弟論之以仁義 盜泫然以泣.’ 又有鄭氏子惡人也 余臨溪打魚 使之切脰 鄭長跪赧色 而自數其罪曰 我惡人也 我殺無惜者也. 縷縷言不已 苟性不善 豈有是也? (此以羞惡之心 明性善)” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

8. “人性之必好爲善 如水性之必好就下 火性之必好就上 賦生之初 天命之以此性 雖賓淫虐殺 無所不爲 而此性仍然不變 見忠臣孝子 則美之 爲善也與國人同 見貪官污吏 則疾之 爲惡也與國人同 此所謂 ‘性善’ 也 (此以是非之心 明性善)” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

cific revelation of the innate human nature of loving goodness. The poem titled “Zhengmin 蒸民” in *Shijing*, in which Dasan presented a documental proof of good nature, is also based on the emotion of loving.

The *Shijing* says, “The general public loves such beautiful virtues because they have clear conscience.” As the book argued that human nature has a clear conscience, it explained human nature as bound to love virtuosity.<sup>9</sup>

Dasan presented his argument that nature is determined by inborn preferences (*seong giho seol* 性嗜好說)<sup>10</sup> on the grounds that in the poem, “loving virtues” meant the moral emotion of loving good and hating evil, which he argued is the innate nature of humanity.<sup>11</sup> Liking good is embodied in compassion and hating evil in shame (Ham 2011, 88). But men lust for material wealth, love affairs, and easygoingness as well. As these are liable to cause unethical deeds, they are subject to restraint. Dasan differentiated them from the above mentioned “emotion of loving good and hating evil” by identifying the former as the “tastes of human mind” while the latter as the “tastes of moral mind” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).<sup>12</sup>

Dasan's theory, dividing human nature into two contrasting categories, is also found in his *Maengja youi* as follows:

- (1) Human nature consists of morality and temper. Bestly nature consists of only temperamental nature (*gijil ji seong* 氣質之性). Regarding human nature, man has two kinds of intent, which, although conflicting, are exhibited together. When someone offers you a gift, if it is not just, you are inclined to reject it while wanting to accept it at the same time. When you face a hardship, you want to accept it if you intend to receive benevolence in the future while at the

9. “詩云：民之秉彝 好是懿德 性之謂秉彝 而必以好德爲說” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

10. “孔子原以嗜好言性。口詩口云：‘民之秉彝，好是懿德’，孔子曰 爲此詩者，其知道乎！秉彝非性，好德非嗜好乎？” (*Maessi seopyeong* [Verification of Mei's Book], bk. 4).

11. “集曰：人之情 無不好此懿德 鑄案詩人孔子論性 專主好惡而言 於此可驗” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

12. On the relationship between the theory of inborn preferences and the moral emotions of loving good and hating evil, see Ham (2011, 86).

same time wishing to avoid it. Intending to accept a gift and avoid a hardship is the desire of temper; intending to reject a gift and accept a hardship is the desire of morality.<sup>13</sup>

- (2) In general, there isn't much difference between man and beasts in sensing, exercising, and seeking food and sex. Only the ethical heart is activated, and something that is shapeless, spiritually bright, and penetratingly wise infiltrates into temper, thus making man a sage. Hence, it has been theorized that the human mind is a moral mind since ancient times. Temper prevails in the human mind; morality prevails in the moral mind. Man may have both of these two minds.<sup>14</sup>

In passage 1 above, Dasan divided human nature into moral nature and temperamental nature, presenting two kinds of intent, and then classified desire into the desire of temperament and the desire of morality. In passage 2, he presented two minds: the human mind in which temperament reveals itself, and the moral mind in which morality prevails. Beasts have only the former; man possesses both. Dasan stressed in many places that man can be human because of the latter.

Judged from such assertions, Dasan seems to have partially accommodated Neo-Confucian theory of nature, arguing for the difference between human and things (Choi 2005, 199-229). The above passages can be charted as in Table 1.

Dasan also called moral nature "Heaven-mandated" nature in the sense that it is innate.<sup>15</sup> Heaven-mandated nature, he said, "loves goodness and righteousness and hates evilness and greed," while the temperamental nature "loves sweetness and fragrance and hates bitterness and

13. "蓋人性子 合道義氣質二者而爲一性者也; 禽獸性者, 純是氣質之性而已 今論人性 人恒有二志 相反而發者 有餽而將非義也 則欲受而兼欲不受焉 有患而將成仁也 則欲避而兼欲不避焉 夫欲受與欲避者 是氣質之欲也 其欲不受而不避者 是道義之欲也" (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

14. "大抵人之所以知覺運動 趨於食色者 與禽獸毫無所異 惟其道心所發 無形無質 靈明通慧者 寓於氣質 以爲主宰 故粵自上古 已有人心道心之說 人心者氣質之所發也 道心者道義之所發也 人則可有此二心" (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

15. "氣質之性 既以嗜好而得名 則天命之性 亦當以嗜好求之" (*Maessi seopyeong*, bk. 4).

Table 1. Dasan's Categorization of Human Nature

Temperamental nature ( <i>gijil ji seong</i> 氣質 之性)	Intent of temperament ( <i>gijil ji ji</i> 氣質之志)	Desire of temperament ( <i>gijil ji yok</i> 氣質之欲)	Human mind ( <i>insim</i> 人心)
Moral nature ( <i>doui ji seong</i> 道義之性)	Intent of morality ( <i>doui ji ji</i> 道義之志)	Desire of morality ( <i>doui ji yok</i> 道義之欲)	Moral mind ( <i>dosim</i> 道心)

stench.”<sup>16</sup> Defining human nature in terms of the comprehensive emotion of “liking and disliking” (M. Kim 2008, 163), Dasan again classified human nature into moral and natural (or physiological) natures.

What comprises emotion and how to classify it are an essential task of emotion theory. David Hume classified emotion into basic emotion and calm passion (Yang 2008, 98). Basic emotion refers to pleasure and displeasure, which is a natural propensity to seek pleasure and avoid displeasure (Yang 2008, 95). Direct emotions stemming from such basic emotions are reflected in emotions like desire and hatred.<sup>17</sup> Calm passion is a type of instinct inborn in our original nature, like compassion, attachment to life, or kindness toward children, as well as the general desire for goodness and the hatred of evilness (Yang 2008, 102-103). This emotion is continuous and pure and can be corrected through others' emotional reactions.

Dylan Evans (2001, 7) classified emotions into basic emotion and higher cognitive emotion. Basic emotion, being universal and inborn, constitutes a base that unites mankind and transcends cultural differences. These emotions are generated instantly and last several seconds. Joy, pain, anger, fear, surprise, and hatred belong to this category. Higher cog-

16. “曰: 氣質之性 嗜甘而惡苦 嗜香而惡臭; 天命之性 嗜善而惡惡 嗜義而惡貪” (*Maessi seopyeong*, bk. 4).

17. Direct emotion is called so because it immediately arises with regard to good or bad and pain or pleasure. It motivates one to move toward or escape from an object or behavior (Yang 2008, 97).



nitive emotion is universal and inborn, but has cultural variations.<sup>18</sup> Falling under the category of higher cognitive emotion are such emotions as love, guilty conscience, shame, pride, and jealousy. Since such emotions have to undergo more cerebral cortex processes than basic emotions, they are influenced by thoughts. They have a social nature and reveal moral characteristics.

Such systems of classification differ from that of Dasan, which categorized emotions into moral emotion or Heaven-mandated nature and natural emotion or temperamental nature.<sup>19</sup> But the calm passion or general desire for goodness and hatred of evilness, which Hume expounded upon, and the higher cognitive emotion, which Evans argued for, have in no small part something in common with the moral emotion of loving good and hating evil. Because this moral emotion is universally intrinsic in human beings, “the horizon of the moral world” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2), belonging to a dimension different from the natural world, can be opened, based on this moral emotion (Jullien 2004, 28).<sup>20</sup>

### The Universality of Emotions: *The Problem of Ethical Standards*

For Dasan, loving goodness and hating evilness are essential human attributes. The origin of such an idea can be seen in chapter 10 of the *Daxue*: “To love what others hate and hate what others love runs counter to human nature and it is bound to invite a disaster.” Zhu Xi, annotating this, explains, “To love goodness and hate evilness is human nature.”<sup>21</sup> The following passage in the *Daxue* shares its view with the *Shijing*, which says, “Rejoiced are superior men, who are the parents of the general public. To

18. This is less innate than basic emotion, but more innate than emotions that are culturally particular (Evans 2001, 30).

19. For instance, envy and jealousy, belonging to higher cognitive emotion, do not correspond to moral emotion, as referred to by Dasan.

20. Dasan saw free will, called weighing and balancing, as the foundation of ethics, along with moral emotions (Baik 2007, 403-405).

21. “好善而惡惡 人之性也” (Zhu Xi, *Daxue jizhu* 大學集註 [Collected Commentaries on *The Great Learning*], ch. 10).

love what the general public loves and to hate what the general public hates make parents of the general public.”<sup>22</sup> Noticeable in these passages is that the criterion for judging good and evil is what the general public loves or hates.<sup>23</sup> Dasan clearly reconfirmed this in his advocacy of the way of criterion (*hyeolgu ji do* 絜矩之道):

Don't make a junior work in a way that a senior hates. Don't serve a senior in a way that a junior hates. Don't walk ahead of someone behind you in a manner that the one ahead of you hates. Don't catch up with someone ahead of you in a manner that the one behind you hates. Don't make a friend with someone left of you in a manner that the one right of you hates. Don't make a friend with someone right of you in a manner that the one left of you hates. This is called the “way of criterion.”<sup>24</sup>

Here, the dislike of others is set as the criterion for judging whether one's deeds are right or wrong.<sup>25</sup> Most noticeable in Dasan's *Maengja youi* is his reference to the passage, “all things are prepared within me” (*wanwa jie bei yu wo* 萬物皆備於我) in the “Jinxin 盡心” (Exhausting All His Heart) chapter of *Mengzi*, based on the way of criterion. This is a critical passage, containing Mencius' philosophical thought. Dasan cited the following annotation of this passage by Zhu Xi and Jeong Bok-sim, “All principles are contained in the original nature of a man or a thing.”<sup>26</sup> Dasan defined the passage as a metaphysical interpretation that implies, “Of all the principles of all creation in the world, there is not one that does not reside in my mind.”<sup>27</sup> He then criticized, “This is too broad and endless and makes

22. “詩云：‘樂只君子，民之父母’ 民之所好好之，民之所惡惡之，此之謂民之父母” (*Daxue*, ch. 10).

23. “是道也 得之 則爲父母；失之 則爲天下戮” (*Daxue beizhi* 大學備旨).

24. “所惡於上 母以使下；所惡於下 母以事上；所惡於前 母以先後；所惡於後 母以從前；所惡於右 母以交於左；所惡於左 母以交於右 此之謂絜矩之道也” (*Daxue*, ch. 10).

25. Dasan, after citing Zhu Xi's annotation that the criterion is the mind, said that the ethical mind is the criterion for value judgment. The mind referred to here can be regarded as ethical heart.

26. “集曰：此言理之本然也 大小當然之理 無一不具於性分之內 程復心曰：一物之中 莫不有萬物之理 見通考” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

27. “通天地萬物之理 而無一不具於方寸之中” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

it impossible for our juniors to find where to begin. How lamentable this is!”<sup>28</sup> Theoretical foundation of this criticism is found in his theory of the nature of human beings and other beings (*inseong mulseong ron* 人性物性論), which contended, “The principles of all creation in the world reside in all creation itself. How can I possess all of them? Dogs have their principles and cows their own. It is evident that I don’t possess the principles that they do.”<sup>29</sup> This theory of Dasan is a qualitative reinforcement of the theory of difference between the nature of humans and animals (*inmul seongi ron* 人性異論), which holds that man’s true nature fundamentally differs from that of beasts. This clearly diverged from the stance of established Confucianism, built on the premise that man is united with nature. Then, it becomes necessary to examine what Dasan meant by his argument, “All things are prepared within me”:

If I engage in philandering, the general public would soon learn of it. If I lust for material wealth, the people would soon find out. If I favor easy-goingness, that fact would soon be known to everyone in the country. If I hate to be vulgar and get insulted, the public would soon be aware of it. By nature, people want to take the road ahead of others. They want to be the first to get inside the gate. They want to take the seat ahead of all others. In winter, they want to get warm before everyone else, and in summer, they want to be the first to get cool. When hungry, they want to be the first to eat. When thirsty, they want to drink water before all others. The full range of emotion-driven desires involving all the things and acts of daily life is inherent in me.<sup>30</sup>

The emotions and acts in this passage do not pertain to all of creation, including beasts, trees, and plants, but are confined to people. And the basic homogeneity between all of creation and the self is secured not by *i*

28. “浩浩蕩蕩 摩有涯岸 使後學茫然不知入頭著手之處 豈不恨哉?” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

29. “天地萬物之理 各在萬物身上 安得皆備於我? 犬有犬之理 牛有牛之理 此明明我之所無者” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

30. “我好色 使知民亦好色; 我好貨 使知民亦好貨; 我好安逸 知民之亦好安逸 我惡賤侮 知民之亦惡賤侮 路欲先行 門欲先入 階浴先登 席欲先座 冬欲先溫 夏欲先涼 飢欲先食 日用常行 萬事萬物之情之慾 皆備於我” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

(principle) but by emotions like hatred and desires. Emotion-driven desires, which exist in all of creation, are also inherently in oneself, thus confirming the universality of emotions and desires. Based on such universal emotions and desires, an ethical judgment can be made as to whether actions are right (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2). The question of whether an ethical judgment based on emotions, not reason, can attain objective universal validity is one of the most controversial issues of ethics.<sup>31</sup> Recently, attempts have been made to prove the rationality of emotions based on theories of cognitivism, but the problems are yet to be solved.<sup>32</sup>

Emotions are essentially subjective and can vary enormously. Therefore, it is difficult to overcome such differences of emotions among individuals and establish one universal set of criteria for *good* and *bad*. How can this problem be resolved within the theoretical systems of Confucianism, expounded by Mencius and Dasan? As is well known, Mencius attempted to prove that man is essentially a moral being based on moral emotions, through the argument known as “All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others” (*buren ren zhi xin* 不忍人之心) and the doctrine of Four Beginnings. He proved the validity of his argument by citing man’s psychological reaction to seeing a cow being taken to a slaughterhouse or a child about to fall into a well, as an objective and empirical reaction.<sup>33</sup> Asserting the universality of the Four Beginnings, he said, “Man has Four Beginnings just as he has four limbs.” At the same

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31. The traditional view argues that the propriety of moral judgement depends on pure rational criteria, irrespective of emotions. To be understood in the same context is Kim Tae-gil’s criticism, “Hume’s contention that classification of good and bad stems from moral sentiment made unbearable the proper moral task of establishing universal yardsticks of moral values” (T. Kim 1963, 73). Park Jungsoon’s following criticism of Michael Slote’s emotionalism-tinted virtue ethics can also be understood in a similar context: “If a judgment on whether something is good or bad morally depends on our subjective feelings, how can we get an objective criterion for whose feeling is right or wrong? Aren’t our feelings biased in many cases?” (Hwang 2012, 226).

32. Controversies over whether emotions should be interpreted from the perspective of cognitivism or non-cognitivism are still underway (Kwon 2012, 308).

33. “Lianghuiwang shang 梁惠王上” (Lianghuiwang, Part 1), chs. 1, 7, in *Mengzi*; “Gongsun Chou shang 公孫丑上,” chs. 1, 6, in *Mengzi*.

time, in the “Gaozi shang” chapter of the *Mengzi*, based on the fact that individuals’ liking and disliking, with regard to the senses of taste, vision, hearing, etc., are universal, he asserted, “loving principles and righteousness is an emotion universal to man”:

Since it is said that the mouth is pleased with taste equally, that the ear hears sound equally, and that the eyes find colors beautiful equally, can we claim that the same phenomenon doesn’t occur with the mind? What is it that makes the mind equal? It is principle and righteousness. Wise men have merely realized that the mind is equal earlier than others. Therefore, principle and righteousness please my mind as fish pleases my mouth.<sup>34</sup>

This chapter essentially discusses universality and particularity. Here, Mencius explains that all men are born with identical Heaven-mandated nature but have different characters, depending on the situation. Dasan’s annotation of the paragraph can be classified as follows:

- (1) Principle and righteousness mentioned here refer to natural laws and morality. That which agrees with natural laws cannot but be good; that which is done in morality cannot but be good. Good things and acts make a man pleased. What pleases my heart pleases the hearts of many others, not merely the heart of a saint.<sup>35</sup>
- (2) If one does something good, even a robber is pleased; if one completes good deeds, even a debauched woman cannot but be pleased. Doesn’t this show that principle and righteousness please my mind? This is exactly how the mind rejoices in good, in the same manner that the mouth and the tongue enjoy taste, and the ears and the eyes enjoy sights and sounds.<sup>36</sup>

34. “故曰：口之於味也 有同者焉；耳之於聲也 有同聽焉；目之於色也 有同美焉；志於心 獨無所同然乎？心之所同然者何也？謂理也 義也 聖人先得我心之所同然耳 故理義之悅我心 猶芻 拳之悅我口” (“Gaozi shang,” chs. 1, 7, in *Mengzi*).

35. “此云理義者，天理也道義也。合於天理者無非善事，成於道義者無非善行。善事善行，人心之所悅也。悅我心者，悅衆人之心，非悅聖人之心也” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

36. “作一善事 盜賊亦且愉快；修一善行 淫婦莫不忻樂 理義之悅我心 非是之謂乎？此心之所同悅 加口舌之同所嗜 耳目之同所好” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

- (3) Be they barbarians, men of cunning or licentiousness, thieves or fools among the multitude of people in the world, they are exactly the same in that they have received Heaven-mandated nature. There is not the slightest difference among humans in that they are pleased with principle, favor righteousness, and are ashamed of crime and evilness. Through this, it can be determined that the hypothesis of the goodness of nature is certain.<sup>37</sup>

Passage 1 above notes that men, both saints and commoners alike, find pleasure in good things and deeds. The phrase “what pleases my heart pleases the hearts of the masses” stresses the universality of the emotion of pleasure.

Passage 2 demonstrates the universality of emotions in specific psychological experiences. Even immoral people like thieves and debauched women show the psychological reaction of pleasure and happiness when they have conducted good deeds. In the same vein, when they have committed evils, on the other hand, everyone feels shame, shrinking, and uneasiness. This can be understood in the same context that likes and dislikes, in regards to senses like taste and hearing, are universal.

Passage 3 asserts that everyone has moral emotions, as even barbarians and immoral people inherently possess a Heaven-mandated nature. The theoretical basis of this assertion can be found in the *Jungyong jajam*: “When a man is conceived, Heaven gives him or her sacred and formless substance that likes goodness and virtue and dislikes evilness and filth. This is called nature and it is said that nature is good.”<sup>38</sup> Not only Dasan but all Confucians argued as a basic theory that nature is pure and good because everyone is given this nature from Heaven. The universality of moral emotions is secured on the premise of the universality of human nature, by defining human nature as loving good and hating evil.

What is the most noticeable is that Dasan attempted to prove the

37. “舉天下林林蔥蔥 夷狄蠻羌 奸淫竊盜下愚之人 其受天命之性既同 則其悅理好義 愧罪恥惡 亦皆毫髮不差 可知性善之理 若是其確” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

38. “蓋人之胎既成 天則賦之以靈明無形之體 而其爲物也 樂善而惡惡 [余有先諱 每云樂善] 好德而耻污 欺之謂性也 欺之謂性善也” (*Jungyong jajam*, bk. 1).

existence and universality of moral emotions in his writings, as can be seen in following passages:

- (1) Why do I perceive human nature as liking and disliking without fail, while others regard it as a spiritually bright entity? People always say, “I like raw or roast fish by nature,” “I hate rotten or spoiled food by nature,” “I like music by nature,” or “I hate the sound of frogs croaking by nature.” Thus, people essentially regard their likes and dislikes as their nature. Accordingly, Mencius always argued that human nature is good based on the reason of liking and disliking.<sup>39</sup>
- (2) It suddenly occurs to me that since ancient times, man has frequently discussed the topic regarding likes and dislikes, which constitute human nature. Xie An [320-385] mentioned that nature likes music, Du Fu [712-770] remarked that nature likes poems, Wei Zheng [580-643] said that nature likes frugality, and Wang Wei [699?-759] stated that nature likes hills and streams. People arbitrarily talked about food taste, sexual desire, and easygoingness with some going as far as saying that it is the nature of pigeons to like mountains and forests and the nature of ducks to like ponds. All have regarded likes and dislikes as human nature. In discussing human nature, however, they ignored that such likes and dislikes brought, without fail, far-off and deep theories like the Great Ultimate, *li-qi*, and the *yin-yang* and Five Elements (*yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行). Why, then, can't you agree with Mencius's argument regarding human nature?<sup>40</sup>

The phrases “[p]eople always say” and “man has frequently discussed” in the above passages can be understood to mean “the way of speech used by

39. “箴曰：人方以靈明之全體爲性 其必以嗜好爲性者 何也？人有恒言曰：我性嗜膾炙 曰：我性惡鱸敗 曰：我性好絲竹 曰：我性惡蛙聲 人固以嗜好爲性也 故孟子論性善之理 輒以嗜好明之” (*Jungyong jajam*, bk. 1).

40. 忽又思之 嗜好爲性 自古及今 爲吾人茶飯話頭 謝安性好絲竹 杜甫性好詩律 魏徵性好儉素 王維性好山水 以志稚性好山林 覺性好水澤 食性色性安逸之性 順口直說 都以嗜好爲性 獨於論性之席 去嗜好 必蒼蒼然玄遠 太極理氣 陰陽五行 別作難深之論 豈孟子論性之法 不足憑信歟” (*Maessi seopyeong*, bk. 4).

the general public in their daily lives.” Dasan believed that speech commonly used by the general public was evidence that was more trustworthy than the elaborate metaphysical theories Confucian scholars employed.

Dasan proved the existence and universality of moral emotions through the psychological phenomena that men experience in their daily lives and the way they talk, like “people always say” and “man has frequently discussed,” along with his theory of human nature. He saw this evidence as more trustworthy than Confucian scholars’ elaborate theoretical systems like the Great Ultimate, *li-qi*, and the *yin-yang* and Five Elements.<sup>41</sup> He was unshakably convinced that the scholarship of Confucius and Mencius is true, ordinary, and nearby.<sup>42</sup>

### Emotions as Causes of or Obstacles to Ethical Deeds and the Unperturbed Mind: *The Problem of Cultivation*

As discussed thus far, emotions are the foundation of morality and can be a universal criterion for ethical judgment. But the *Daxue* warns:

Men are biased, toward what are dear to them, what they hate, what they fear and revere, what they pity, and what they are arrogant and lazy about. Therefore, few are able to acknowledge bad aspects of something they like and beautiful aspects of something they hate.<sup>43</sup>

Men can thus be biased, and a warped judgment may weaken the power of making moral decisions. Dasan interpreted the passage:

If bias is exercised toward people friendly to you, cunning people are employed; if bias is employed toward people you despise and hate, men

41. This view seems to have something in common with Michael Slote’s statement: “The sympathy that has been normally developed in ordinary people, this is the standard for right and wrong in my theory” (Hwang 2012, 227).

42. 孔孟之學，其真切卑近如此” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

43. “人之其所親愛而辟焉 之其所賤惡而辟焉 之其所畏敬而辟焉 之其所哀矜而辟焉 之其所 惰而辟焉 故好而知其惡 惡而知其美者 天下鮮矣” (*Daxue*, ch. 8).



of benevolence and virtue are rejected. Should this be the case, it runs counter to what the general public like or hate. And therefore the misfortune is bound to occur in which many people are lost.<sup>44</sup>

This means that if one indulges in such emotions, the emotion involved deprives it of its universality. Furthermore, emotions hamper ethical actions in specific instances.

Thus, emotions possess the ability to motivate both morality and anti-morality simultaneously. We can find an example in the emotion of fear. On the sentence “superior men guard against and refrain from things unseen and fear what is not heard” in *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean), Dasan made the following annotation:<sup>45</sup>

The general public cannot be free from greed in their lives. If they want to pursue and satisfy their greed, they cannot help but do what they want to do without hesitation. But the general public also doesn't dare openly commit wrongs because they guard against and refrain from them out of fear.<sup>46</sup>

Fear can keep one from committing an unethical action and also encourage one to do an ethical deed. But the chapter titled “Gongsun Chou mun budongsim 公孫丑問不動心” (Gongsun Chou Asks about Unperturbed Mind) in *Maengja youi* sees fear as an emotion that can hamper good deeds by causing one to hesitate, “Because fear is the most difficult emotion to control, a steady mind considers a lack of fear as paramount.”<sup>47</sup> How can the same emotion function both ethically and unethically?

There have always been two types within emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure: those within bounds and those out of bounds. Because just joy, just anger, just worry, and just fear arise in line with Heaven's

44. “僻於親愛而姦邪進 僻於賤惡而賢德黜 如是則違民之好惡 其禍必至於失衆” (*Daehak gongui*, bk. 1).

45. “君子 戒慎乎其所不睹 恐懼乎其所不聞” (*Zhongyong*, ch. 1).

46. “民之生也, 不能無慾. 循其慾而充之, 放辟邪侈, 無不爲已. 然民不敢顯然犯之者, 以戒慎也以恐懼也” (*Jungyong jajam*, bk. 1).

47. “特以諸情之中 恐懼之情 最難裁制 故不動心者 以無懼爲首” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

precepts, they would not disease the mind and lead one astray. Even if one lets such joy and anger run their course, they would not impair one's innate pure soul. Even if one lets such worry and fear take their course, they would not break one's brave and magnanimous spirit. It is only when joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure involve such mundane matters as material wealth, love affairs, and lucky and unlucky happenings that they would first make a ripple. This would eventually cause all the water to boil in a deep pot. At the beginning, only a foot-tall column of mist would rise from the pot, but soon it would grow into a thick fog covering and darkening the entire sky. In a similar manner, emotions without boundaries would furiously swirl around mundane things, creating confusion that would make one lose one's sense of right and wrong. How can it be said that there is only one kind of each emotion?<sup>48</sup>

Even the same emotions can be classified into two, depending on whether they are within or outside of the boundaries. Emotions within bounds are public and ethical, as they originate in Heaven's precepts. Emotions out of bounds, originating from the private mechanisms of material wealth, love affairs, and evils, are unethical.<sup>49</sup> The four mental diseases mentioned in the "Zhengxin 正心" (Cultivation of One's Heart-Mind) chapter of *Daxue* are caused not because the emotions of anger and fear themselves are evil, but because they are out of control (*Daehak gongui*, bk. 1). Therefore, if such emotions are brought back into check, they are again reverted to within the bounds and secure universality. This differs only slightly from the logic of Mean that joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, if kept within bounds, achieve harmony, which is the universal way of mankind. To that end, Dasan emphasized solitary discretion and proposed "sincerely serving the Lord on High" as a means of achieving it (*Jungyong jajam*, bk. 1). In this respect, Dasan differs from Zhu Xi.

48. "喜怒哀樂 原有二種 其中節者爲一種 其中不節者爲一種 凡公喜公怒公憂公懼 其發本乎天命 故不爲心病 亦不陷身 彌喜彌怒而不損其赤子之心 彌憂彌懼而不挫其浩然之氣 唯其喜怒哀懼之發於財色禍福之私者 一波纔動而全泓鼎沸 尺霧初起而長天漆黑 遂不免隨物亂動而身失其正 斯豈一種一類之物乎?" (*Daehak gongui*, bk. 1).

49. This theory of Dasan seems to be a synthesis of his theory of moderation and harmony and his theory that human mind equals ethical mind.

The emotion drawing attention from Dasan's theory of self-cultivation is fear. Fear, as shown in the above passage, is the emotion that is the most difficult to control. Vocabularies denoting fear, such as *oe* 畏 (awe), *gu* 懼 (dread), and *choe* 惴 (anxiety), appear in the chapter. This dread agitates one's mind and keeps one from conducting good deeds (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2). The chapter's main theme, accordingly, is how to conquer fear and reach the state of the unperturbed mind.

Dasan, in the "Gongsun Chou mun budongsim" chapter of his *Maengja youi*, described "how to free oneself from fear":

The unperturbed mind, in fact, does not end at eliminating fear. What senior Confucians have said appears not to be what they originally meant. Why? If my great virtue is capable of implementing great virtue by receiving a great task, fear naturally disappears by itself.<sup>50</sup>

In this passage, Dasan argued that fear disappears when one receives a major task and performs acts of major moral principles, but it does not discuss how to achieve moral principles. It is necessary, then, to examine how the method of freeing oneself from fear is explained:

Zhao Qi made a grave mistake in his annotations to the *Mengzi*, and Zhu Xi regarded it as a correct reading. The phrase "*wubu zhuiyan* 吾不惴焉" in the *Mengzi* ought to have been interpreted as "how can I not fear them?" The above two paragraphs discuss how to free oneself from fear. Both passages pertain to the way to remove fear from one's mind. How could the passages have been so erroneously interpreted as asking a question about whether or not one's opponents fear them? When a *junzi* 君子 (virtuous man) reflects upon himself and finds himself in the wrong, he cannot but fear even a few weak adversaries and try hard to correct himself. This way of freeing oneself from fear would certainly require great courage.<sup>51</sup>

50. "其實不動心 不止於無懼而已。至若先儒之所言 恐非本旨 何也? 我之大德 有足以受大任行大道 則自當無懼" (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

51. "趙註大謬 而朱子因之也 吾不惴焉者 吾豈不惴焉也。上下節 論無懼之法 皆我心之無懼也 敵人之懼與不懼 豈所問哉? 自反而不直 敵雖寡弱 君子當恐懼自修 此大勇無懼之法也" (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

The above passage argues that genuine courage helps one to conquer fear. One can possess this sort of courage when he feels fear even toward a weak person when he fails to reflect upon himself and becomes honest with himself. Namely, courage to conquer fear emerges only when one feels fear towards his own mistakes. Dasan criticized the annotations of Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi because he perceived that they failed to realize that fear is not the problem of fearing others, but oneself.

The best method of overcoming fear and reaching the state of the unperturbed mind Mencius offered is nourishing *qi* or acquiring brave and magnanimous spirit.<sup>52</sup> On this, Dasan gave the following explanation:

Brave and magnanimous spirit by nature cannot be nourished carelessly or by force. Only if you conduct deeds of righteousness based on ethical principles and repeat them day by day and month by month, is your mind broadened and your body nourished. You are then freed from fear, whether you look up the sky or down at the earth. Then even poverty and a humble station in life are unable to make you anxious; neither power nor force can make you succumb. As a result, the spirit reaches to the sky and earth.<sup>53</sup>

Dasan explained that conducting deeds of righteousness based on ethical principles and repeating them are the way to nourish a brave and magnanimous spirit. He emphasized that this cannot be achieved overnight but only gradually, through persistent efforts. This was not the belief of Dasan alone. However, he differed from Zhu Xi in criticizing Zhu's assertion that the nourishment of the spirit is a subsidiary means of conducting acts of righteousness, and vice versa that conducting acts of righteousness is a method of nourishing the spirit.

Here it should be noted that Dasan strongly emphasized that a brave and magnanimous spirit, once nourished, can overcome negative emotions like shame, anxiety, and fear. It is also necessary to note that he

52. “養氣則有以配夫道義 而於天下之事 無所懼 此其所以當大任而不動心也” (“Gongsun Chou 公孫丑,” *Maengja youi*, bk. 1).

53. “原夫浩然之氣 不可徒生 不可強養 唯是由道行義 日積月累 則心廣體胖 俯仰無愧 於是乎賓賤不能威 威武不能屈 以至於氣塞天地” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

asserted that changes in such emotions arise not only mentally but also are linked to physical phenomena:<sup>54</sup>

A brave and magnanimous spirit (*hoyeon ji gi* 浩然之氣) cannot be created overnight. It can be built only after one has steadily performed acts of benevolence one after another and also acts of righteousness one after another, until their cumulative results add up to a great solid mass that cannot be broken up. . . . Since, however, the mind and the body are in an exquisite union, mind-body interactions determine, for example, whether one becomes fat or thin. When one's mind grows broader, one's body will also grow stronger. When one becomes greedy, one's pupils will grow cloudy. When one cherishes beautiful thoughts within one's heart, one's complexion will become shiny and one's back will straighten up. When one harbors feelings of shame, one will sweat and become red-faced. These phenomena are clear evidence of the exquisite mind-body union. Even if one performs an act of righteousness day after day, their cumulative effects nourish the *gi*, and accordingly, the massive vital energy emitted by the strengthened body fills the space between the sky and the earth. This energy cannot be called *gi*, unless the exquisite mind-body union continues to hold together, firmly embedded in one's body.<sup>55</sup>

This assertion is based on his exquisite mind-body union theory,<sup>56</sup> where he argued that both negative emotions, like greed and shame, and positive ones, like generosity and righteousness, are reflected in one's complexion and physical appearance. This can be understood in the same context as the aforementioned proof of the goodness of nature through the shedding of tears or becoming red-faced. Following such assertions, it may be argued that a strong power of implementation can be attained when the conquest of fear and the unperturbed mind are achieved amid the exquisite union of the body and the mind.

54. On relationships between emotion, expression, and body, see Yang (2008, 79).

55. “浩然之氣 非一朝之所能生。必積仁累義 養之無害 然後其氣乃成。然神形妙合 肥瘠相關 心廣則體胖 忿盛則眸眊 美在中則睟面而盎背 愧在內則汗出而色赧 皆神形妙合之明驗也。今日行一義 明日行一義 義之既積 氣以之養 是其體力之廣大 雖可以塞天地 而其妙合之所常寓 終不離於形軀之內 欺其所以名氣也” (*Maengja youi*, bk. 2).

56. On Dasan's exquisite mind-body union theory, see Ham (2011, 37-48).

## Conclusion

The exploration of the ethical foundation and the universal criteria for ethical judgments and ethical character building are pivotal tasks of Confucian ethics. This article attempted to search for answers to those questions based on Dasan's annotations of Chinese classics.

Confucianism's general theory bases the foundation of ethics on the inherent goodness of human nature.<sup>57</sup> Dasan defined human nature as the taste of liking and disliking and, specifically, as liking good and disliking evil. He proved the existence of such nature based on experiential psychological phenomena and documents, and asserted that they are the evidence of human's good nature. The innate moral emotion of liking good and disliking evil provides the foundation for an ethical world, distinct from the natural world. This differs fundamentally from Neo-Confucianism, which was grounded on the metaphysical foundation of ethical world on nature as *li* (principle).

Dasan classified man's true nature into a temperamental nature that likes sweet things and dislikes bitter things and a moral or Heaven-mandated nature that likes good and dislikes evil. The former may be called natural emotion and the latter moral emotion. Similar classifications are found in Hume's basic emotion and calm emotion and Evans' basic emotion and higher cognitive emotion. Based on the established ethical world, it can be verified here too that, for humans, moral emotions are innate.

Moral emotions, being universal, provide a criterion for ethical judgment as a way of criterion, according to the *Daxue*. Based on this argument, Dasan interpreted the passage "all things are prepared within me" in the *Mengzi*. Confining all of creation to humans, Dasan maintained that what is inherent in man is not *i* but likes, dislikes, and desires. In particular, he demonstrated the existence of moral emotions and their universality through psychological reactions to specific occasions, theories

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57. On the Confucian historical significance of Xunzi's belief that human nature is fundamentally evil, refer to Choi (2002, 108-109).

regarding the goodness of nature, and examples of how people talk in their daily lives. He maintained that this basis of an argument is more trustworthy than Neo-Confucian metaphysical theories.

As discussed above, emotions both cause and hamper ethical deeds. Identical emotions, depending on whether they are within or out of bounds, can function contrary to one another. Therefore, they must be adequately adjusted. To that end, Dasan suggested solitary discretion and proposed the religious character-building formula of sincerely serving Sangje as a means of nurturing solitary discretion.

To be noted in Dasan's theory of self-cultivation is the method of freeing oneself from fear, an emotion that hinders moral deeds. One can overcome fear by true courage, which recognizes one's own errors, and the nourishment of a brave and magnanimous spirit, by constantly conducting deeds of righteousness. It is particularly interesting that, through his exquisite mind-body union theory, he asserted that emotional changes reveal themselves in facial expressions and physical changes.

What is the significance of Dasan's emotion-oriented ethical theory? Research has already been accumulated on the importance of emotions in ethical living. It is already well known that a lack of ethical and social capabilities arises from a deficiency of emotional capacity in many cases, that happiness and success in public and private lives are determined more by emotional capacity than by cognitive capacity, and therefore that education on emotions is urgently needed (Kwon 2012, 289). From this framework, there is sufficient need to reexamine Dasan's theories stressing the ethical functions of emotions and consider their relevance in today's society.

Dasan's emotion theory can also be the foundation for resolving the basic issue of Confucian ethics, whether man is ethical and by what means can man behave ethically, in a more empirical method. His emotion theory, coupled with the Four-Seven debate, can also play an important role in searching for a possible switch from theoretical ethics to behavior ethics (Lee 2011, 96).

Observed from the perspective of the history of Confucian thought, we can find the significance of Dasan's emotion theory in that the theory removed the theme of philosophy from metaphysical realm to the world

of daily life. Neo-Confucianism, Dasan criticized, is characterized by metaphysical founding. The Four-Seven debate, based on emotions, had its core on building the metaphysical foundation of moral emotions. In contrast, Dasan sought man's essential attributes by examining the emotions men experience in their daily lives. Dasan asserted that among the evidence certifying man's morality, psychological reactions and ways of speech, manifested in daily life, are more trustworthy than the elaborate theoretical systems of Neo-Confucianism. His conviction was that Confucianism is not lofty but close to us in our daily lives.

Dasan's assertions do not differ from the essential pursuits of Confucianism. Zhu Xi criticized Taoism and Buddhism as hollow ideologies and defined Confucianism as *shixue* 實學 (practical learning). Yi Eon-jeok, a Confucian scholar during the early Joseon dynasty, also asserted that *i*, which is extremely close to reality and substantial while being extremely high and exquisite, becomes real *i* in terms that it is the practical existing base of all things and that it is inherent in the real world (*Hoe-jaejip*, bk. 5).

Viewed from such a perspective, attention is drawn to downgrading phenomena in a series of developments in Neo-Confucianism of the Joseon period. In the sixteenth-century Four-Seven debate, *i* that existed in the level of nature in Neo-Confucianism was downgraded to that of emotion. Yi Gan, a key proponent of the eighteenth-century Horak debate, asserted that the mind is in union with nature, and thereby downgraded *i* to the level of *mibal* 未發 (the state where thoughts and emotions have not yet been aroused). In the nineteenth century, Yi Jin-sang maintained that the mind is *i*, thereby downgrading *i* to the level of the mind.

The task of building an ethical community by resolving social problems, with truth serving as the keyword, is universal among Confucian scholars. Varied theoretical systems were established, depending on the causes of social troubles each era suffered from and the problem consciousness of each Confucian scholar.



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