

Confucian Relational Hermeneutics, the Emotions, and Ethical Life

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Ruist (rujia 儒家) East Asian intellectual and cultural traditions stem only in part from the figure of Confucius (Kongzi 孔子).¹ What is called ‘Confucianism’ in the West has precedents prior to the life of Confucius and variations that extend beyond, and at points contradict, the recorded sayings gathered in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語). The *Analects* themselves do not point to one systematic unified doctrine but reveal the overlapping and divergent interpretations of the Confucian teaching that unfolded among the initial generations of students. Passages can support the priority of natural simplicity and the moral character of natural emotions, while other passages indicate the necessity and primacy of ethical and aesthetic cultivation in reshaping natural feelings into ethically oriented affects and the natural person into a properly ethical self. Such divergences and tensions between natural spontaneity and ethical cultivation, as we will see in the course of this chapter, reoccur throughout Confucian traditions. ‘Traditions’ in this context signify discourses partaking in overlapping sets of concerns, questions, and hermeneutical strategies. They share a ‘family resemblance’ that is an amalgamation recurrently achieved through adoption and reinvention.²

In Confucian discourses, emotion (qing 情) is perceived to be co-given or equiprimordial with human nature (xing 性). As Dongfang Suo describes, qing is in correspondence with xing.³ The genuine natural condition of human beings (xing) is revealed through experiencing and interpreting expressed and unexpressed emotions (qing). The Confucian idea of the unity of emotion and nature has sources in Chinese antiquity. According to the excavated Guodian text *Nature Originates from the Mandate* (*Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出), chapter one, the way (dao 道) is said to arise in emotion (qing) and emotion is born of nature (xing).⁴ In variations of Confucian and related discourses, emotions are interpreted as co-arising with human nature. Emotion is taken to be a constitutive (i.e. non-accidental and non-eliminable) structural condition of human praxis (e.g. thought and action).⁵ The performative enactment and modification of human nature in concrete affective life indicate that the emotions are misinterpreted when construed to be expressions of human nature as such, in the abstract, in isolation from the interwoven practices and relational fabric of ethical life.

Confucius and the Confucian tradition can be described as advocating the social education and self-cultivation of ‘genuine feelings’ as well as sincerity and correct

naming in expression, indicating the mutuality of a pregiven naturalness, and the education and cultivation that would ultimately result in the realization of naturalness: 'At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right.'⁶ To this extent, there is a Confucian form of ethically inflected 'naturalness,' 'interiority,' and sense of self that challenges the stereotype of a merely external and customary following of conventions, habits, and roles. The emotions are neither purely natural, biologically fixed constants (i.e. in the reductive or limited sense of 'natural') nor are they merely social-cultural constructions that can be reshaped in any imaginable way. The emotions are psychosomatically and intersubjectively enacted lived realities: neither naturally given and fixed nor artificially constructed and malleable. Cultivation and education require therefore an adequate moral psychology, as they work with, and at times against, the conditions and limits of human nature.⁷

In the work attributed to Mencius (Mengzi 孟子), Confucian relational virtues from filial piety (xiao 孝) to benevolence (ren 仁) are based in natural feelings (described as sprouts, duan 端) that call for attentive care, cultivation, and the proper pedagogical and social environments to grow. The emotions cannot be isolated from one another, much less from their whole developmental nexus. The sense of self presupposed in this context is not atomistic; the self is relationally interdependent with others and the environing natural and social lifeworlds. The goodness of Mengzi's four natural affective sprouts (siduan 四端), encompassing feeling responsive to the other's suffering (ceyin zhixin 惻隱之心), serves as the source of a relational moral anthropology and psychology in which the natural and ethical cannot be bifurcated. Not to be able to feel emotions and sense their ethical import, for instance, in responding to the suffering of others, is in a sense to be inappropriately human, as in the familiar examples of the immediate inclination to respond to the crying ox and the child about to fall into a well: all humans have a heart-mind that cannot bear the suffering of others.⁸

In this chapter, I offer a strategy for responding to the following question: to what extent can Ruist discourse indicate a non-dualistic emotional awareness or holistic affective intelligence within the relational nexus of everyday ethical life? By addressing this question, I argue that Confucian discourses are relational and holistic in how they understand the emotions and Confucian interpretive strategies suggest significant models for a relational hermeneutics of affective life.

Once more, with feeling

Confucian discourses from early Ruist to later Neo-Confucian sources offer complex and nuanced interpretive strategies for articulating and engaging the emotions in the context of ethical life. In Confucian approaches to moral psychology, elemental 'natural feelings' are developmentally unfolded (e.g. Mencius) or morally reconfigured (e.g. Xunzi 荀子) through extended lifelong processes of education, self-cultivation, and self-examination.

The concern with moral psychology has been at the centre of key disagreements and interpretive conflicts in Confucian and Neo-Confucian traditions. This tradition of reflection and debate about the role of the emotions is evident in – to mention a

few familiar examples – the divergent interpretations of the relational nexus of nature, feeling, and culture in the *Analects* attributed to Confucius, Xunzi's critique of Mencius concerning the goodness and badness of elemental natural feelings, and arguments over whether the Confucian sage (shengren 聖人) is influenced by the five feelings (wuqing 五情) or is emotionless (wuqing 無情 or wu xinu aile 無喜怒哀樂) in the eclectic wei 魏 thinkers Wang Bi 王弼 and He Yan 何晏.⁹ There are, furthermore, the differences between Song 宋 and Ming 明 dynasty advocates of the primacy of patterning principle (lixue 理學) and the primacy of the heart-mind (xinxue 心學), the Korean Joseon (조선; 朝鮮) era debate concerning the relationship between the four sprouts from the *Mencius* and the seven feelings (sadan chiljeong lon 사단칠정론; siduan qiqing lun 四端七情論) from the *Book of Rites (Liji 禮記)*, and contemporary intercultural and transnational Confucianisms that articulate sophisticated moral psychologies on the basis of inherited Confucian sources.¹⁰

Given the phenomenological significance of the emotions for how the world is disclosed and experienced, and their relational, potentially self-reflective, and alterable character, forms of Confucian thought and practice offer a number of critical models for considering how the emotions can be cultivated and reformed, even if not completely reconstructed. It can be argued that this need to face and deal with the emotions and other conditions of human life steered the practice of Confucian thinkers away from abstract argumentation towards reflection on the concrete ritual (li 禮) and interpretive logic of appropriateness (yi 義) within what Western philosophers have described as everyday ethical life and the intersubjectively reproduced lifeworld.

One aspect of the emotions in Mencius is that they are the seeds and sprouts of our moral possibilities for responding and caring for ourselves, others, and our community. A second aspect is that the emotions are linked to the vital forces of human life. The emotions reflect powerful flood-like forces that can lead to personal and social antagonism and destruction. Because of the prevalence and power of destructive emotional states (including resentment, jealousy, hatred, envy, and anger, which Confucians often associate with the petty person or xiaoren 小人), the example of the exemplary person (junzi 君子) indicates how to regulate, cultivate, and educate the emotions and integrate them into an attuned and well-balanced moral life. This is true for the text attributed to Mencius as much as Xunzi.¹¹

Confucian sources define the exemplary person and the sage (shengren 聖人) as orienting models of the embodiment of an ideal human character.¹² Confucian discourses have stressed the role of classical exemplars and patterns to attune, inform, and orient dispositions and practices through working with the emotions and critical self-examination. Confucian texts presuppose that self-examination, critical self-reflection, and other techniques of the self can have a transformative effect. Historical cases and canonical texts offer ways of mimetically and reflectively orienting behaviours in their emotional valiance through the pedagogical means of ethical, historical, and cultural examples, and they situate reflection on one's concrete form of life. Feelings are in the Confucian context not a secondary aspect of ethical life, or merely a negative impediment to it to be overcome and eliminated. The emotions are understood to be the medium through which an emotionally attuned and well-adjusted ethical life can be established and maintained.

The emotions have a constitutive role in the moral flourishing of communities and individuals even as those relations modify and rewrite them in their performative enactment and repetition. However, as the Daoist *Zhuangzi* 莊子 indicates, there is a paradox in rewriting the original goodness of nature (shanxing 繕性) or achieving it through a regiment of techniques of the self.¹³ The spontaneity of naturally arising goodness is inevitably transformed in being transcribed and rewritten in the context of practices and techniques of the self that transpire according to concrete relational situations and circumstances. Confucian ethical self-transformation might achieve a much different self (one created by technique and discipline) than the one (natural and ethically spontaneous) it intends, revealing reasons to be suspicious of the statement attributed to Confucius in *Analects*, 2.4, to ‘follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right’.

Exemplary emotions

The *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) is a key text that has been traditionally interpreted as introducing principles for enacting and practising natural goodness. It refers to (1) avoiding extremes in temperament and action; (2) promoting harmonious interpersonal relationships; and (3) enacting an encompassing harmonizing attitude in the midst of the cacophony and trials of ordinary ethical life.¹⁴

One interpretive tendency, evident for instance in He Yan 何晏 and in later Neo-Confucian thinkers who have overemphasized the role of principle (li 理), downplays the role of feelings. They emphasize the sage’s neutralization of the emotions. A locus classicus for this position appears in the opening paragraph of the *Doctrine of the Mean*: ‘While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of harmony.’¹⁵ One gloss on this passage is that the exemplary person’s condition of centring equilibrium (zhong 中) appears to be – and I will argue is not – separate from or prior to the stirrings of the four kinds of emotions: happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy. It thus suggests a separation or distance from the emotions that was identified with the position of heaven and earth (tiandi 天地), nature, or – in later Neo-Confucianism – with principle. The *Zhongyong* here does not relate so much to the feelings of being happy, angry, sorrowful; it refers to affectively inflected appropriateness in the pace and management of human affairs.

The passage stresses harmonizing (he 和), which – according to Xu Gan 徐幹 (171–218) in his *Discourse on the Mean* (*Zhonglun* 中論) – is more like the balanced blending of contrasting and discordant sounds in a musical composition or of contrasting flavours in cooking a dish.¹⁶ Xu Gan’s conception extends the basic conception found in the *Zhongyong*. Harmony (he) refers to a balanced affective state after achieving centring or the mean (‘zhong’). *Zhong* (centring) and *he* (harmonizing) are practices that the exemplary person aspires to become constant at performing. When the emotions have been stirred, harmony is the balancing that gives each element (e.g. taste or sound) its proper measure. As this text describes centring as the root and harmonizing as the path, it can be read less dualistically as suggesting the coordination of nature and feeling in practice that allows nature and the myriad things to flourish.

This coordination of diverse and contrary elements can be said to be precisely the role that a classic such as the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) plays in *Zhongyong*, chapter 33, as well as related Confucian texts. *The Book of Odes* is here credited with stirring complex moral emotional dispositions such as sincerity and reverence (dugong 篤恭).

Confucius is described as praising the opening ode 'The Cry of Osprey' (guanju 關雎), which 'is pleasing without being excessive, is mournful without being injurious'.¹⁷ The quality of *zhonghe* becomes one of the quintessential characteristics of traditional Chinese literature, music, and art in terms of its emotional expression of an aesthetic–ethical ideal. Confucius is described in the *Analects* as seeing a model of living in each poem, which enacts an aesthetic–ethical pattern to be enacted and deepened by the listener.

In at least one significant tendency of early Confucianism, artistic sensibility and cultivation are not merely aesthetic phenomena as they are interpreted in relation to ritual propriety. Two examples are the early Confucian reading of the *Book of Rites* and the *Book of Odes*. In the former, rites and ritual propriety (*li*) are compared to dikes (*fang* 坊) that curb and control through learning appropriateness and teaching the water-like flow of excessive emotions that threaten the destruction of the everyday common life of the people.¹⁸ In the 'Great Preface' (*Shi daxu* 詩大序) of the *Book of Odes*, inner emotions are depicted as manifesting themselves in outer correspondences. The *Book of Odes* offered in the Confucian interpretation paradigmatic expressions of feelings to be employed as exemplars in the process of moral education.¹⁹

The exemplary role of music and poetry, among other arts, is that of a 'classic' in the sense that it helps one mimetically and reflectively model and potentially modify a situation. In this case, it suggests giving pleasure and mourning their proper due or appropriate measure without excess or deficiency. The emotions are consequently not elements to be eliminated in an emotionless state of indifference.²⁰ Feelings are the medium of realizing harmony in the midst of the cacophony, pleasure, and suffering of the world that threatens to overwhelm the self and requires the establishment of constancy.

The promise and risk of the emotions

The heart–mind (*xin* 心) has diverse and contradictory roles in Confucian discourses. The contestation concerning how to understand naturalness and cultivation and the roles of the emotions is evident in the differences between Mencius and Xunzi and in the Korean Neo-Confucian Four-Seven debate (사칠논변, 四七論辨, or 사칠논쟁, 四七論爭). The emotions are simultaneously the medium of moral life even as they potentially undermine and destroy it. Mencius sought to show how natural emotions are the sprouts of moral dispositions that are necessary for and constitutive of ethical life. Emotions are the medium of moral education; yet they are also flood-like and threaten to undermine that education and lead to antagonistic and destructive behaviour. Such behaviours are systemically connected with emotions that are typically described as negative.

Careful interpretation is needed here, since negative emotions can have a positive role such as indignation for the sake of justice or the moral feeling of shame in the

Confucian tradition. Shame is a negative self-directed feeling that ought to lead one back to ethically directed practices. Indignation at and condemnation of morally wrong behaviour is also part of the moral judgement of the exemplary person. In *Analects* 14:34, injury is owed justice rather than kindness: “What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?” Confucius replied, “With what then will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness.”²¹

A distinction consequently needs to be made between (1) emotionally neutral and even negative emotional states that are part of moral judgement such as appropriate shame at one’s own failures or justified indignation at injustice and (2) negative emotions that consist of destructive experiential states such as resentment, jealousy, hatred, and envy. It is legitimate to ask at this point whether these two categories can always be adequately distinguished and whether there might be cases in which seemingly destructive emotions might further justice or the good more than a positive emotional comportment. Confucian discourses have accordingly included praise of a kind of impartiality of judgement even as they reject egalitarian conceptions of impartiality as applying the same moral rule or norm to all persons in the same way. Furthermore, there are passages in early Confucian texts that speak positively of negative emotions such as anger and hatred when they are properly or morally directed.

Analects 4:3 and 4:4 reveal possibilities for humane benevolence (ren) in relation to both overcoming and appropriately using hatred: on the one hand, the benevolent person alone is said to know how to love others and how to hate them (A 4:3: 唯仁者能好人，能惡人。); on the other hand, those who sincerely strive to become benevolent abstain from hatred. (A 4:4: 苟志於仁矣，無惡也。). In *Analects* 17:24, Confucius tells his student Zigong that the exemplary person hates the haters who dwell on what is hateful in others.²² Roger Ames notes that ‘certain attitudes and conduct, such as hatred and disrespect, fall beyond the pale.’²³ How then can we interpret the positive uses of hatred in the *Analects*? Do negative emotions like anger, grief, and fear have a role in – as Stephen Angle and Michael Ing argue – ‘a holistic response to certain situations?’²⁴ Is there a noble joy and noble hatred, as there is in the works of Aristotle or Nietzsche or Lu Xun, or does the discourse of the *Analects* speak of the exemplary person’s hatred of x or y in a different – perhaps more metaphorical or impartial – sense in such passages?

One additional issue with clarifying a number of these remarks is the ambiguity between (1) e 惡 as evil, vicious, coarse, or harmful and (2) wu 惡 understood verbally as to hate, to despise, to be ashamed, or to fear.²⁵ In this light, the exemplary person might morally disapprove or despise without entering into a destructive hateful or resentful emotional state of mind. If this latter is the case, as seems likely, does it suggest a state of emotional neutrality or rather the appropriate balancing and due measure of negative effects and emotions? In terms of its ethically oriented understanding of the political, Confucian discourses elaborate how to be exemplary persons, serving as officials and educators, who cultivate the ‘five beautiful’ and discard the ‘four bad’ behaviours in order to achieve the middle way in regulating oneself and governing others.²⁶ In the context of Confucius’ idea of governing and regulating bad behaviour, badness (e 惡) is more related to action and its affective disposition than an interior emotive state.

Before we move too quickly to a conclusion, it should be noted that ‘negative’ emotions are not necessarily negative either politically or morally. Xunzi noted in his discussion of music how people need to be allowed ways of expressing their love and hatred, joy and anger, and the full range of positive and negative emotions, in order for them to be well ordered.²⁷ Xunzi maintains that ‘if the people have emotions of love and hatred, but no ways in which to express their joy or anger, then they will become disordered’, and concludes that having music is as essential to the political sphere as having armies. Music allows a spectrum of emotions from happiness and sadness to be expressed and at the same time harmonized, just as war allows for the expression and resolution of anger.

The emotions expressed in music become an indicator of the social situation of the age:

All tones are generated from the human mind. The affections (qing) are moved within and take on form in sound. When these sounds have patterning (wen), they are called ‘tones’. The tones of a well-managed age are at rest and happy: its government is balanced (he). The tones of an age of turmoil are bitter and full of anger: its government is perverse. The tones of a ruined state are filled with lament and brooding: its people are in difficulty. The way of sounds and tones (shengyin) communicate (tong) with [the quality of] governance.²⁸

The *Analects* indicate that negative emotional states (such as being sorrowful or angry) for the sake of others can be readily transformed into affirmative affective states. A number of passages in the *Book of Rites* and the *Mencius* speak of the righteous anger of rulers and teachers: a negative emotion such as anger can be appropriate if it is like the sage-king’s anger that, for example, gives repose to the people.²⁹ However, this must be a special case as the general condition of the exemplary remains one without negative socially oriented emotions such as anger and resentment. According to the *Liji*, the ruler employs courage to overcome anger.³⁰ A cultivated affective state can counter and balance uncultivated emotional forces. The *Mencius* noted how ‘the benevolent person does not accumulate anger, nor bear resentment against others, but only regards them with affection and love.’³¹ Along with *Analects* 4:3 and 4:4, such remarks in the *Mencius* indicate how morally cultivated emotions such as love and benevolence outweigh negative emotions such as anger and hatred. Even if one momentarily acts out of justified anger and disdain, perhaps against injustice for the sake and good of the people, such emotional states are not to be retained and intensified into a fixed disposition or state of being.

It is accordingly the benevolent humane person who knows how to appropriately feel and limit dangerous emotional states such as anger and hatred by directing them without being negatively influenced by them. The correction of excessive like and dislike, love and hatred, is called for rather than the elimination of emotion.

According to the *Great Learning* (*Da Xue* 大學), self-cultivation shows one how to recognize the faults of those one loves and the merits of those one despises.³² Love and hatred are biased and partial; yet recognizing the faults of those one loves requires correcting the affective–cognitive heart–mind (zhengqixin 正其心) rather than abandoning love. Correcting the heart–mind cannot occur in affective states of

anger (fen 忿), fear (kong 恐), desire (le 樂), and anxiety (huan 患). Even as afflictive emotional states undermine the constancy of the heart–mind, it cannot be described as being without affective valiance. King Wen’s virtues are described relationally in chapter seven as consisting of humaneness (ren 仁), reverence (jing 敬), filial piety (xiao 孝), loving compassion (ci 慈), and trustworthiness (xin 信).³³

A relational hermeneutics of the emotions

Confucian discourses offer rich and varied phenomenologies of affective intelligence and its interpretive roles in everyday life. Confucian descriptive expressions and categorizations of the emotions encompass, in two classical models from the Confucian tradition, the four sprouts from the *Mencius* and the seven emotions from the *Book of Rites*. We can speak of phenomenology in this context to the extent that it can mean description in the interactive and intersubjective first- and second-person perspectives without presupposing the radical Cartesian separation of the subject from its world. The genetic phenomenological description of the emotions in their temporal development is indicated in the *Mencius*.³⁴ The portrayal of the four sprouts, or natural moral feelings that call for appropriate cultivation to flourish, attributed to Mencius, discloses the potential and risk of the fragile natural feelings of human beings.

In his recent work, *Embodied Moral Psychology and Confucian Philosophy*, Bongrae Seok has stressed the environmentally reactive character of the four sprouts as they flourish or fail to flourish in response to their environments and circumstances.³⁵ The basic moral emotions of the Confucian tradition, such as shame, are interpreted as having a negative and reactive affective tendency that furthers moral cultivation: the feeling of shame motivates a moral transformation against performing shameful actions. This transformative account contrasts with European philosophical discourses, notably those of Spinoza and Nietzsche, in which the reactive is understood as a characteristic associated with negative emotions whereas activity and spontaneity are characteristics of positive emotions.

In this context, it might be asked whether the four sprouts are reactive or do they also involve a kind of spontaneity, responsiveness, and creativity? Can these two categories of the reactive and responsive be adequately distinguished? One way of addressing the question of the reactivity or responsiveness of the four sprouts is provided by the Korean Neo-Confucian thinker I Hwang (이황; 李滉), often called by his pen name Toegye (퇴계; 退溪). Toegye maintained in the exchange of letters with Gobong (고봉, 高峰; Gi Dae-seung 기대승; 奇大升), in the first phase of the Four-Seven debate that the four sprouts of the *Mencius* and the seven feelings of the *Book of Rites* are not both variations on feeling, as Gobong and Yulgok argued, but rather require a distinction between principle and feeling.³⁶ This is Gobong’s response to Toegye who distinguished the four sprouts as the issuance of the principle (li; Korean: ri) from the seven feelings as issuing from dynamic material energy or psycho–physical force (Korean: ki 기; Chinese: qi 氣).

The seven feelings (qiqing 七情) from the *Book of Rites* are pleasure, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire (gippeum, bunno, seulppeum, dulyeoum, sarang, sileum, and

yogmang 기쁨, 분노, 슬픔, 두려움, 사랑, 싫음, 욕망; xi nu ai ju ai e yu 喜怒哀懼愛惡欲). According to Toegye, as he was compelled to modify his thinking in response to Gobong's critique of the dualistic separation of principle and emotion in the name of the unity of the four and the seven emotions, both need to be related to forms of feeling. The seven feelings are primarily reactive in Toegye's account. Like the reflected moon, they are reactions to external stimuli accompanied by external physical changes such as crying, laughing, and so on.³⁷ They are thus related to human nature, which is the heavenly endowment. Toegye relates them to the moral mind, as opposed to the human mind that is precarious, instable, prone to error, and partial. Whereas the moral mind is attuned to goodness, the human mind is inconsistent. It is sometimes good and sometimes bad. The four sprouts, deriving from the portrayal in Mencius, are forms of feelings that are integrally related to reflection and principle. The four sprouts are immediate reflexive moral feelings and are consequently not merely reactive to their environments; they are natural in the sense of being spontaneous internal feelings that form the source of and – through their creative responsiveness in experiencing the world and myriad things – allow higher forms of complex emotions to arise.

A common paradigmatic insight of the Cheng-Zhu school is the restraint of emotion by principle (li). Toegye commented in this vein how the psycho-physically generated feeling of anger can be corrected by looking away from it and turning towards principle. Toegye claims: 'Anger is the thing most easily expressed and hardest to control within the human mind'; and yet 'if one can forget one's anger when angered and contemplate what is right and wrong according to principle, then one will see that such external temptations are not worth hating'.³⁸ It was initially Gobong who claimed that both principle and feelings (emotion) are forms of feeling. For Gobong, the key point is that li (Korean: ri) and qi (Korean: ki) cannot be separated from one another in theory or practice. While Toegye recognizes this point in theory, being a follower of the orthodox Chung-Zhu school of principle (lixue), he wants at the same time to hierarchically prioritize ri.³⁹ Feelings cannot be separated from principle in this understanding of their hierarchical relationship, revealing how they sought to undo the tension between nature and cultivation that is constitutive of Confucian discourses. The dualism of reason and emotion typical of multiple discourses of Western philosophy cannot have a place here, even when speaking of the rationalistic school of principle. Emotion, or feeling, is a response to external stimuli; even intellectual responses continue to be affectively coloured responses, as explained in the beginning of the *Zhongyong (Doctrine of the Mean)* and maintained throughout the Four-Seven Debate.

In the long history of Sino-Korean Neo-Confucian debates about the role of emotions in human life, the relation between qing (emotion) and li (principle) is convoluted to the extent that there are varying degrees of emphasis on qing, li, or an intermediate state. The Cheng-Zhu school (chengzhu lixue 程朱理學) promoted the onto-cosmological state of heavenly principles. Consequently, in their formulations, qing is typically restrained by principle even as it cannot be eliminated or overcome.

Toegye was compelled through their ongoing argumentative exchange to agree to Gobong's claims that both the four and the seven are feelings because they react and respond to external stimuli. In Toegye's account, however, all feelings are fundamentally responsive and arise in the same way, with ethical responses conforming to ri (the source

of the patterned fit) and externally motivated reactions conforming to ki (unstructured dynamic material energy) that they succumb to as a source of distraction. Toegye's argument is that there must be more than merely a reference to the distinctive roles of the components, since there are actually different sorts of feelings, and so there must be some difference in the way they actually originate.

In the first phase of his philosophical development, Toegye claims that the four originate from principle (ri, li) but the seven originate from dynamic energy (ki, qi). However, in his later phase, in response to Gobong's arguments, he revises his original theory and conceptualizes the doctrine of ho-bal-seul (互發說): the reciprocal co-arising of modelling principle and dynamic material force. According to this revised account of the mutual inspiration and complicity of ri and ki, principle arises and energy rides principle in the case of the four sprouts; while energy arises and it is principle that rides on energy in the case of the seven feelings. Ri and ki, patterning principle and material energy, are always distinct (in line with his earlier conception), and principle is given hierarchical priority as ethically motivated nature, even as they cannot be separated in their mutual co-arising and inspiration.

More subtle emotions are ethically mediated spontaneities that are holistically and relationally cultivated through moral, intellectual, and aesthetic practices. The mediating role of the emotions and the cultivation of emotional intelligence moderates the apparent duality of principle and psycho-physical force in the teaching of principle (lixue) in Sino-Korean Confucianism. The debate between Gobong and Toegye should not be interpreted as one between holism and dualism. Despite differences in their assessment of the import of the emotions, both are holistic relational thinkers who articulated two different perspectives of the emotions in relation to the dynamically mediated nexus of nature and human life.

I have argued for a less dualistic and more feeling-friendly reading of Toegye based on Toegye's increasing emphasis on the mediating role of the emotions between principle (ri) and psycho-physical nature (ki). The rationalistic side of the Confucian tradition represented by Zhu Xi and Toegye, which privileges principle over energy, retains a significant role for the emotions and their interpretation in human life. Despite the different understandings of Mencius, and interpretations of the relationship between principle and the emotions in Gobong and Toegye, the Four-Seven debate indicates the centrality of the emotions and appropriately educating and cultivating the emotions.

The four emotive sprouts lead to moral virtues in Mencius. In Mencius' dialectic between the natural goodness of the four sprouts and the 'flood-like' forces of human nature that threaten to overwhelm their appropriate cultivation, in the interpretations of Wang Bi and Xu Gan of the balanced emotional comportment of the Confucian sage that blends and harmonizes a cacophony of emotions, and in the Four-Seven dispute between Toegye and Gobong concerning ethically orienting and harmful emotions, emotions are revealed as constitutive and positive if fragile and potentially destructive for the cultivation of a benevolent and attuned disposition in the midst of practical life.⁴⁰ The ethical character of the emotions is undermined and misdirected through excess and deficiency. It is the role of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic classics in learning and self-reflection to orient and re-orient our emotional life that at times is threatened by an excess of its own vitality, responsiveness, and creativity.

Hermeneutics and the emotions in Confucianism and Heidegger

In this concluding reflection, I consider whether Confucian relational hermeneutics allows for the reconsideration and formulation of an alternative to the overly subject-centred phenomenological tradition that still reverberates in its post-Husserlian forms.

In his writings and lecture courses of the second half of the 1920s, Martin Heidegger analysed the world-formative and world-disclosive character of fundamental affective moods. A grounding-mood (*Grundstimmung*) such as radical anxiety (in *Being and Time*) or profound boredom (in *What Is Metaphysics?* and *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*) is disclosed in a crisis boundary situation that interrupts the average self-understanding of everyday existence. Mood as a complex underlying affective state orients and its shifts can re-orient cognitions; moreover, it discloses the world in a particular concrete way to the subject (*Dasein*). Whereas moods happen to *Dasein*, Confucian thinking maintains that self-cultivation can shift moods and their associated affective-cognitive states. Affective states are not to be understood as discrete unalterable conditions of human nature nor overwhelming forces of being, much less irrational passions determining human practice. They are modifiable according to how individuals and groups respond to and work with them. The way emotions are interpreted within their larger context of significance is part of what it means for it to be an emotion. Insofar as they are relational and interpreted realities, emotions are not given as independent units of joy or anger that can be calculatively predicted and controlled or as moods that inflict themselves as destinies onto human existence. The affects are contextually interpreted from their sources, such as seen in the image of the four sprouts, and transformed through how they are practised and performatively enacted, that is, through how they are felt, understood, and interpreted.

Phenomenologically speaking, basic emotions and moods have a world-disclosing and life-orienting character. In primordial moods or states of attunement such as anxiety and boredom, according to Heidegger, the world as a whole appears and slips away through the prism of that affective state. Heidegger did not attend to the ethical dimensions and implications of moods. We find this insight better articulated in Confucian moral psychological discourses, in which basic emotional states can prove to be debilitating or destructive to emotional balance and moral life itself. Confucian thinkers have accordingly warned how positive emotions like joy and happiness can become excessive as a distortion of the world and the self. The emotions are assessed, then, not according to a hedonic measure of pleasure and pain, but through their moral qualities that are interwoven with, to use a more Aristotelian language, sustainable human flourishing.

Heidegger proposed reactivating the significance of past models and exemplars through a destructuring (*Destruktion*) that would free them from their reification by the tradition. In a sense this process could be interpreted as a form of the 'rectification of names' (*zhengming* 正名). Heidegger stressed the ontological perspective of being to the point of deemphasizing the ethical, psychological, and anthropological considerations as the ontic concerns of beings. Heidegger posited the primordial

disruptive power of existential moods in reorienting human existence from mundane intra-human relations to a more fundamental disclosure of and attuned understanding of being (*Sein*). Finally, Heidegger dismissed any ontic understanding and lived experience of the emotions for the sake of an analysis of emotion as part of the analytic of the 'being-there' (*Dasein*) or existential constitution of human existence.⁴¹ All of this points towards the deep differences between the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and the ethical relational hermeneutics of Confucian discourses.

Conclusion

As analysed in this chapter, emotion, phenomenologically speaking, has a special sense of openness. In Chinese philosophy, *qing* 情 has the openness to the world that is similar in multiple ways to Heidegger's account of the disclosure of the world and being. Notwithstanding overlapping points of convergence concerning affective intelligence, and the importance of the affective dimension in thought and knowledge, there are irreconcilable differences between these two models of the relational hermeneutics of emotional life. Offering an ethical and pedagogical hermeneutics of the emotions, one that is lacking in Heidegger with all its problematic political and ethical consequences, Confucian 'moral psychological', and 'philosophical anthropological' discourses articulate the ethical character of the emotions and – implicitly or explicitly – their moral psychological relationship in the context of human nature. Confucian discourses offer a variety of historical exemplars and cultural models of bringing the cacophony of the emotions into balance and harmony as part of promoting stable and expectable patterns of human flourishing through ritual propriety that orients the repetition and reproduction of familial and communal relationships.

Chapter 14

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, Chinese texts are from the Chinese Text Project:
<http://ctext.org/>.
- 2 On the notion of 'discourse' in the Confucian context, see Dongming Zhao, 'Neo-Confucian Theory of Mind as a Discourse of the Infinite', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 1 (2015): 75–94.

- 3 See Dongfang Suo 東方朔, 'Xing zi min chu pian de xinxing guannian chutan' 《性自命出》篇的心性觀念初探, in *Guodian Chujian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 郭店楚簡國際學術研討會論文集 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 2000), pp. 322–9.
- 4 'dao shi yu qing, qing sheng yu xing 道始於情，情生於性': On the conception of nature in *Nature Derives from Mandate*, see Shirley Chan, 'Human Nature and Moral Cultivation in the Guodian 郭店 Text of the Xing Zi Ming Chu 性自命出 (Nature Derives from Mandate)', *Dao* 8, no. 4 (2009): 361–82.
- 5 Despite the hermeneutical–phenomenological dimensions of Confucian philosophy, it would be anachronistic to designate this condition as transcendental and inappropriate insofar as it suggests a structural and interpretive moral psychology at odds with transcendental reflection.
- 6 *Analects*, 2:4: 'qishi er congxinuoyu, bu yu ju 七十而從心所欲，不踰矩'. I have relied on and modified the following translations of the *Analects*: Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1998), Raymond Dawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Charles Muller (<http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/analects.html>), and Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003).
- 7 Michael Slote's critique of the idea of cultivation overemphasizes the fixity of human states and disregards the changes that are possible through techniques of the self. See Michael Slote, 'Moral Self-Cultivation East and West: A Critique', *Journal of Moral Education* (2016): 1–15.
- 8 *Mencius* 2A:6: 'ren jie you buren ren zhi xin 人皆有不忍人之心'; *Mengzi: with selections from traditional commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008), pp. 45–6.
- 9 As noted in Chapter 28 of Weishu 魏書 in *The Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi 三國志)*: '何晏以為聖人無喜怒哀樂，其論甚精，鍾會等述之。弼與不同，以為聖人茂於人者神明也，同於人者五情也，神明茂故能體沖和以通無，五情同故不能無哀樂以應物，然則聖人之情，應物而無累於物者也。'
- 10 See Bongrae Seok, 'Moral Psychology of Shame in Early Confucian Philosophy', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 1 (2015): 21–57. Also see Bongrae Seok, *Embodied Moral Psychology and Confucian Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013).
- 11 On the significance of resentment and negative emotions in early Confucian moral psychology, see Michael D. K. Ing, 'Born of Resentment: Yuan 怨 in Early Confucian Thought', *Dao* 15, no. 1 (2016): 19–33; Eric S. Nelson, 'The Question of Resentment in Western and Confucian Philosophy', in Jeanne Riou and Mary Gallagher, eds., *Rethinking Ressentiment: On the Limits of Criticism and the Limits of its Critics* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), pp. 33–52; and Eric S. Nelson, 'Recognition and Resentment in the Confucian *Analects*', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 41, no. 2 (2013): 287–306. On the problem of negative emotions, see Owen J. Flanagan, 'Destructive Emotions', *Consciousness and Emotions* 1, no. 2 (2000): 259–81.
- 12 '孔子對於此即做過論述，子貢曰：「如有博施於民而能濟眾，何如？可謂仁乎？」子曰：「何事於仁！必也聖乎！堯舜其猶病諸！」' 《雍也》，30; '孟子稱「聖人，人倫之至也」' 《述而》，37.
- 13 Zhuangzi, chapter 16, 'Mending Nature': '繕性於俗，俗學以求復其初，滑欲於俗，思以求致其明，謂之蔽蒙之民。' *Zhuangzi* (莊子) passages are cited by chapter. I consulted the Chinese translation and James Legge's translation available at <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi>, the Library of Chinese Classics Chinese-English edition of the *Zhuangzi* by Wang Rongpei, Qin Xuqing, and Sun Yongchang (Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House and Foreign Language Press, 1999); and Yang Liu-qiao 楊柳橋, *Zhuangzi yigu* 莊子譯詁 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991);

- Liu Rongxian 劉榮賢, *Zhuangzi waipian yanjiu* 莊子外雜篇研究 (Taipei: Lianjing, 2004).
- 14 Chinese text and Legge's translations of the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* are available on <http://ccontext.org/>; see also *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung: The Highest Order of Cultivation and on the Practice of the Mean*, trans. Andrew Plaks (London: Penguin, 2003).
- 15 *Doctrine of the Mean*, 1, James Legge's translation; the whole passage reads in Chinese: '天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教。道也者，不可須臾離也，可離非道也。是故君子戒慎乎其所不睹，恐懼乎其所不聞。莫見乎隱，莫顯乎微。故君子慎其獨也。喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和；中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。'
- 16 Compare Xu Gan, *Balanced Discourses: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. John Makeham (Beijing and New Haven: Foreign Language Press and Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 9 and 25.
- 17 'le er bu yin, ai er bu shang 樂而不淫，哀而不傷。' *Analects*, 3.20; see Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998), p. 86; and E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 79.
- 18 Compare Michael Ing's discussion of Angle's point in *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 158; Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 122.
- 19 See Stephen Owen's discussion of the 'Great Preface' in his *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 38–40.
- 20 Differences over the role of the emotions in moral life play a role in intra-Confucian debates, as we have seen, as well as in Neo-Confucian/Buddhist arguments. See, for instance, Eric S. Nelson, 'Suffering, Evil, and the Emotions: A Joseon Debate between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism', *International Journal of Korean Studies* 16 (2016): 447–62.
- 21 或曰：'以德報怨，何如？'子曰：'何以報德？以直報怨，以德報德。'
- 22 子貢曰：'君子亦有惡乎？'子曰：'有惡：惡稱人之惡者，惡居下流而訕上者，惡勇而無禮者，惡果敢而窒者。'曰：'賜也亦有惡乎？'惡微以為知者，惡不孫以為勇者，惡訐以為直者。'
- 23 Ames, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 27.
- 24 Compare Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism*, 75.
- 25 Also compare expressions such as *yanwu* 厭惡 and *henwu* 恨惡。
- 26 子張曰：'何謂四惡？'子曰：'不教而殺謂之虐；不戒視成謂之暴；慢令致期謂之賊；猶之與人也，出納之吝，謂之有司。'
- 27 *Xunzi*, 20.3. '且樂者、先王之所以飾喜也；軍旅鈇鉞者，先王之所以飾怒也。先王喜怒皆得其齊焉。是故喜而天下和之，怒而暴亂畏之。'
- 28 Owen, 1992, 52; *Book of Rites*: '凡音者，生人心者也。情動於中，故形於聲。聲成文，謂之音。是故治世之音，安以樂，其政和；亂世之音，怨以怒，其政乖；亡國之音，哀以思，其民困。聲音之道，與政通矣。'
- 29 *Mencius*, 1B: '而武王亦一怒而安天下之民。今王亦一怒而安天下之民：'
- 30 'yongren zhi yong qu qi nu 用人之勇去其怒：'
- 31 *Mencius*, 5A: '仁人之於弟也，不藏怒焉，不宿怨焉，親愛之而已矣。'
- 32 *Great Learning*, 9: '故好而知其惡，惡而知其美者、天下鮮矣。'
- 33 *Great Learning*, 7.

- 34 Compare the argument presented in Eric S. Nelson, 'Levinas and Early Confucian Ethics: Religion, Rituality, and the Sources of Morality'. *Levinas Studies* 4 (2009): 231–7.
- 35 Bongrae Seok, *Embodied Moral Psychology and Confucian Philosophy*, 62.
- 36 Michael C. Kalton and Oaksook Chun Kim, *The Four-Seven Debate: An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
- 37 Kalton and Kim, *The Four-Seven Debate*, 81–82. Compare Edward Y. J. Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oebye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the 'Four-Seven Thesis' and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 49.
- 38 Kalton and Kim, *The Four-Seven Debate*, 74.
- 39 On the problematic of equality and hierarchy in Confucianism, and its sources in the interpretation of the *Yijing* 易经, see Eric S. Nelson and Liu Yang, 'The Yijing, Gender, and the Ethics of Nature', in Ann Pang-White, ed., *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy and Gender* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 267–88.
- 40 Compare Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oebye and Yi Yulgok*, 182; and James R. Averill, Kyum Koo Chon, and Doug Woong Hahn, 'Emotions and Creativity, East and West'. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 4, no. 3 (2001): 175–9.
- 41 Attunement and mood are never to be understood as lived experience or feeling, according to Heidegger: 'Die Gestimmtheit (Stimmung) läßt sich jedoch nie als "Erlebnis" und "Gefühl" fassen...' in Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (GA 9). (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 192.