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Jeong Hagok on Emotions and the Korean Four-Seven Debate: A Confucian, Comparative, and Contemporary Interpretation

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Abstract: This article presents Jeong Jedu (Hagok; 1649–1736) on the topic of emotions and its comparative and contemporary relevance. It discusses this leading neo-Confucian thinker's thought-provoking Four-Seven thesis and its vital implication for self-cultivation and ethics. This important topic has not been discussed in current scholarship on Korean Confucianism. The article begins with the Confucian notion of emotions (*jeong/qing*, 情), according to its textual and philosophical background in the Chinese tradition, and then covers key issues regarding the "Four Beginnings" of virtue, the "Seven Emotions", and leading neo-Confucian perspectives by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and Wang Yangming (1472–1529). The article also provides a brief comparative analysis of Toegye's and Yulgok's leading Korean opinions on the nature, role, and problem of emotions. The third section focuses on Hagok's interpretation in the same context. The fourth section discusses Hagok's ethics and spirituality of emotions in terms of the mind's original essence (*bonche/benti*) and innate knowledge (of good) (*yangji/liangzhi*) in connection to Wang Yangming's doctrines. The final section concludes by considering the originality and distinctiveness of Hagok's holistic interpretation. It also presents my contemporary reflections to articulate how Hagok's groundbreaking insights compare with certain Western theories of emotions and why they offer a worthwhile resource for comparative philosophy, religion, and ethics.

Keywords: Hagok Jeong Jedu; contemporary; emotions; ethics; Four-Seven debate; Four Beginnings; holistic mind; innate knowledge; mind; self-cultivation; Seven Emotions; Toegye; Wang Yangming; Yulgok; Zhu Xi

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1. Introduction

This article[1] presents Jeong Jedu 鄭齊斗 (Hagok, 霞谷; 1649–1736) on the topic of emotions and its comparative and contemporary relevance.[2] It discusses how this leading Korean neo-Confucian thinker developed a holistic, thought-provoking interpretation of the so-called Four-Seven debate.[3] Hagok is as important as Korea's three most eminent Confucians, Yi Hwang 李滉 (Toegye, 退溪; 1501–1570), Yi I 李珥 (Yulgok, 栗谷; 1536–1584), and Jeong Yagyong 丁若鏞 (Dasan, 茶山; 1762–1836). Hagok's Four-Seven thesis is an interesting and engaging topic that has not been discussed in Korean or Western scholarship on Korean Confucianism in general or on Hagok's thought in particular.[4] I have articulated similar topics on Toegye and Yulgok in my books on Korean neo-Confucian and comparative philosophy.[5]

The first section presents the Confucian notion of emotions (*jeong/qing*, 情) according to its textual, philosophical, and ethical background in the Chinese tradition, a necessary section on key questions of ambiguity regarding the "Seven Emotions" (seven feelings, or *chiljeong/qiqing* 七情), such as anger and desire, as well as the "Four Beginnings" of virtue (four roots; *sadan/siduan*, 四端), including compassion. It discusses Confucian classics and leading neo-Confucian perspectives by Zhu Xi (朱熹; 1130–1200) and Wang Yangming (王陽明; 1472–1529). The second section outlines the general Korean background of the

Four-Seven debate, providing a comparative analysis of leading perspectives by Toegye and Yulgok with respect to the nature, role, and problem of emotions in terms of human nature, good and evil, and self-cultivation. It discusses how they also developed new interpretations in relation to Zhu Xi's Four-Seven statements in terms of *i*/*li* (理; principle/ground of being; pattern) and *gi*/*qi* (氣; vital/physical energy; material force). The third section presents Hagok's original interpretation in the same context. It also compares him with Toegye and Yulgok in this regard, while articulating the extent to which Hagok critically dealt with the Korean Zhu Xi school's mainstream theories and, especially, Toegye's interpretation. The fourth section presents Hagok's ethics of emotions as unique in terms of the mind's original essence (*bonche*/*benti*, 本體) and innate knowledge (of good) (*yangji*/*liangzhi*, 良知) in connection to the Mencian and Yangming doctrines.

The final section considers the originality and distinctiveness of Hagok's Four-Seven interpretation by presenting its *holistic* and engaging system of Korean thought that emphasizes *practical* action. Since its insights resonate with certain Western theories of emotions, I offer contemporary reflections on their groundbreaking dimension and also develop comparative perspectives in relation to Western philosophers and scholars.

2. Textual, Philosophical, and Ethical Background: The Chinese Tradition

The Chinese Confucian notion of emotions (feelings; *jeong*/*qing*, 情)[6] is mainly mentioned in terms of the Four Beginnings (of virtue) (or four roots; *sadan*/*siduan*) and the Seven Emotions (seven feelings; *chiljeong*/*qiqing*). Since the 16th-century in Joseon Korea, Toegye and Yulgok, their debaters, and later generations, such as that of Hagok, discussed this topic.

2.1. Seven Emotions

The *locus classicus* for the Confucian term "Seven Emotions" is the *Book of Rites*:

> Pleasure (*hui*/*xi* 喜), anger (*no*/*nu* 怒), sorrow (*ae*/*ai* 哀), fear (*gu*/*ju* 懼), love (affection; *ae*/*ai* 愛), hatred (disapproval; *o*/*wu* 惡), and desire (*yok*/*yu* 欲) . . . are not acquired through learning from the outside. (Legge 1970, vol. 1, p. 379)

In other words, the Seven are basic human emotions because nobody learns them externally or "acquires" them from external things or phenomena. As Korean neo-Confucians confirmed, they are therefore innately associated with the physical and psychological dimension of human nature.

Since the list of the Seven is somewhat lengthy, the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸; Chap. 1) abbreviates it by paying attention to the first three of these emotions and adding "joy" (*rak*/*le*) as follows:

> Before [the emotions of] *pleasure*, *anger*, *sorrow*, and *joy* (*rak*/*le* 樂) are aroused (*bal*/*fa* 發), it is called centrality (equilibrium or the Mean; *jung*/*zhong* 中). After they are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony (*hwa*/*he* 和). Centrality is the great foundation of the world, and harmony is its universal Way....[7]

In other words, the Seven belong to the natural feelings and emotions that represent the aroused state (*bal*/*fa*, 發) of the mind (and body) in response to external things or phenomena.[8] According to the *Doctrine of the Mean*,[9] self-cultivation therefore requires a measure of self-control over the Seven: it is to attain the state of "harmony" "after they are aroused (*bal*/*fa*)." As I discussed elsewhere, this topic became a key issue in the Korean Four-Seven debates on the mind and emotions.[10]

The *Book of Rites* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* confirm that human emotions arise from within the self. The Seven refer to common physical–psychological emotions as the "aroused" states of the mind. The ethics of emotions requires daily self-cultivation and action by attaining the state of emotional "harmony," a key topic rigorously discussed by Toegye and Yulgok.

And how should the Seven be understood in terms of the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin*, 心), and in terms of their difference or relation to the Four Beginnings? The Korean Four-Seven debates rigorously discussed these key questions and issues as well as their implication for self-cultivation and ethics.

2.2. Four Beginnings of Virtue

The *Doctrine of the Mean* deals more with emotional control and harmony—as I discussed above—but the Mencian ethics of emotions focuses on a theory of original human goodness and moral practice. The *locus classicus* of the Four is a famous passage in the *Mencius* (2A: 6). This passage was frequently quoted by leading Korean neo-Confucians, such as Toegye and Yulgok, and then by others, such as Hagok and Dasan, in the 18th century. It reads:

> The heart-mind (*sim*/*xin* 心) of compassion (*cheugeun*/*ceyin* 惻隱) is the beginning of *human-heartedness* (*injidan*/*renzhiduan* 仁之端); the heart-mind of shame and dislike (*suo*/*xiuwu* 羞惡) is the beginning of *righteousness (euijidan*/ *yizhiduan* 義之端); the heart-mind of courtesy and modesty (*sayang*/*cirang* 辭讓) is the beginning of *propriety* (*yejidan*/ *lizhiduan* 禮之端); and the heart-mind of [discernment of] right and wrong (*sibi*/*shifei* 是非) is the beginning of *wisdom* (*jijidan*/*zhizhidaun* 智之端). All human beings have these Four Beginnings [of virtue] just as they have their four limbs.[11]

Compassion, shame and aversion, courtesy and modesty, and discernment of right and wrong do not come from the outside because these moral intuitions and emotions are originally innate in the heart–mind. Mencius referred to these "Four Beginnings [roots]" (*sadan*/*siduan*, 四端) as the fourfold foundation of what Confucius emphasized as the cardinal virtues of human-heartedness (benevolence), righteousness, ritual propriety, and wisdom.

For Mencius, then, the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin* 心) of compassion and three other beginnings are indeed moral emotions (*jeong*/*qing* 情) as well. They are the origin of human goodness and the starting point of our innate moral virtues. The following passage from the *Mencius* (6A: 6) articulates the same point further:

> Regarding what is genuine in our emotions and feelings (*jeong*/*qing* 情), we are capable of being good. This is what I mean by [saying human nature is] good . . . . All human beings have the heart-mind of compassion, the heart-mind of shame and aversion, the heart-mind of courtesy and modesty, and the heart-mind of right and wrong . . . . Human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom . . . . originally exist in me [my nature].[12]

This famous Mencian theory of original human goodness (*seongseon ji seong*/*xingshan zhi xing*, 性善之性) emphasizes universal access to the virtuous practice of innate intuitions and emotions such as compassion (*Mencius*, 2A: 6; 6A: 6). This central doctrine means the foundation of natural moral knowledge and action, insofar as Mencius spoke of moral "emotions" in terms of the human "heart-mind". It is a debatable ontological claim on the innate goodness of human beings in the heart–mind which, according to Mencius, universally justifies self-cultivation and self-perfection for everyone, as mandated by Heaven.

Each and every person naturally possesses "the heart-mind of compassion" toward fellow human beings that "cannot see the suffering of others" (*Mencius*, 2A:6). With this moral–spiritual heart–mind (*sim*/*xin*), all human beings spontaneously feel compassion to save "a little child who was on the verge of falling into a well" (*Mencius*, 2A:6). For Mencius, the "original goodness of human nature", consisting of the Four, should therefore be "fully developed" for self-cultivation: "neglecting your own potentials is to destroy yourself." (*Mencius*, 2A: 6).[13]

Leading Chinese neo-Confucians, such as Zhu Xi and the eminent Korean thinker Yi Toegye, discussed self-cultivation by frequently quoting the Mencian doctrine of original

human goodness.[14] Korean thinkers confirmed that the Four, including compassion, are indeed innate moral emotions in the heart–mind for self-cultivation and our ethical life.

In Ming China, Wang Yangming (1472–1529), the founder of the school of mind (*simhak*/*xinxue*, 心學), cherished and elaborated on the Mencian teaching that the Four as virtuous emotions confirm "innate knowledge [of good]" (*yangji*/*liangzhi*, 良知) and "innate ability [to do good]" (*yangneung*/*liangneng*, 良能).[15]

In Korea, Hagok, in particular, articulated that this bold moral claim is also backed up by the Mencian doctrine of "the original heart-mind" (*bonsim*/*benxin*, 本心) and innate pure heart–mind (*yangsim*/*liangxin*, 良心).

Without making any clear or strict distinction between feeling (emotion) and thinking (reason), Mencius intended to mean that the Four are our natural moral emotions as well as one's innate "knowledge" and "ability" to do good based on some level of cognitive awareness and judgments regarding one's discernment of right (good) and wrong (evil).

2.3. Zhu Xi's Four-Seven Statements

Song Chinese neo-Confucians transmitted and expanded the Confucian and Mencian line of classical Confucianism. They also developed new metaphysical and ethical ideas partly in competition with Daoist and Buddhist influence. The idea of *jeon*g/*qing* (emotions and feelings) continued to be discussed on an advanced level.

The great neo-Confucian synthesizer Zhu Xi briefly commented on Mencius's notion of the Four (*Mencius*, 2A: 6) as follows:

> Compassion, shame and aversion, courtesy and modesty, and [discernment of] right and wrong are emotions (*jeong*/*qing* 情). Human-heartedness (benevolence; *in*/*ren* 仁), righteousness (*eui*/*yi* 義), propriety (*ye*/*li* 義), wisdom (*gi*/*zhi* 智) are human nature (*seong*/*xing* 性).[16]

In other words, the Four represent our innate moral "emotions" aroused from human nature. Zhu Xi did not articulate the Four and the Seven specifically. His *Zhuzi yulei* (classified conversations of Master Zhu) provided a brief statement in terms of their origins:

> "The Seven Emotions cannot be separated from the Four Beginnings," and "the Four Beginnings can be understood from the standpoint of the Seven Emotions."[17]

Therefore, Zhu Xi probably meant that the Four do not belong to an entirely independent group of human emotions (*jeong*/*qing*). Interestingly, Toegye, Yulgok, and others in Korea did not quote these two statements at all in their Four-Seven philosophies.

Zhu Xi also mentioned the Four and the Seven briefly in terms of his philosophical system of *i*/*li* (理; principle/ground of being; pattern) and *gi*/*qi* (氣; vital/physical energy; material force)[18], without explaining the Four-Seven relationship clearly: "The Four Beginnings are manifestations of *i*/*li*; the Seven Emotions are manifestations of *gi*/*qi*,"[19] which can also be translated as follows: "The Four Beginnings are aroused by *i*/*li*; the Seven Emotions are aroused by *gi*/*qi*."

Does this unexplained statement by Zhu Xi imply some ontological and conceptual distinction between the Four and the Seven? This question was rigorously debated by Korean scholars such as Toegye, Yulgok, and others, including Hagok.

2.4. Wang Yangming on Emotions, Original Essence, and Innate Knowledge

In his most famous work, *Chuanxi lu* (傳習錄, instructions for practical living),[20] Wang Yangming addresses emotions (*jeong*/*qing*) more specifically than Zhu Xi did. This is a unique and more detailed Four-Seven interpretation in terms of the mind, innate knowledge, and *simhak*/*xinxue* (心學; mind cultivation; learning of the mind), which is a key to understanding his entire neo-Confucianism.

Wang, like other neo-Confucians, affirmed that emotions refer to the "aroused" states of the mind in light of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (Chapter 1). However, Wang introduced his innovative idea of the mind-in-itself (*bonche*/*benti*, 本體; literally, original essence of

the mind). The Four, including compassion (beginning of human-heartedness), represent the *bonche* essence (or goodness) of the mind.[21] Unlike others, Wang spoke about ordinary emotions, especially those included in the Seven, such as sorrow, specifically: "Ordinary people . . . . bring upon themselves a great deal of sorrow [*ae*/*ai*] and grief and, in addition, confusion and self-abandonment."[22] In other words, Wang means that ordinary people's problems require a measure of proper control over selfish emotions and cravings after their arousal.

In this regard, the problem of the Seven, including craving and sorrow, is mainly their selfish "excessiveness": "As soon as it is excessive, it does not accord with the original essence of the heart-mind (*sim ji bonche*/*xin zhi benti* 心之本體)."[23] If any of the Seven, such as anger, is excessively expressed, it needs to be controlled. Uncontrolled emotions tend to "abandon" the heart–mind's *bonche*/*benti*.[24] Accordingly, the idea of overcoming *selfishness* is strongly embedded in Wang's ethics of mind and emotions.

Wang explains the nature and problem of the Seven, specifically, in contrast to the innate knowledge of good (*yangji*/*liangzhi*, 良知):

> Pleasure [happiness; *hui*/*xi*], anger [*no*/*nu*], sorrow [*ae*/*ai*], fear [*gu*/*ju*], love [*ae*/*ai*], hatred [dislike; *o*/*wu*], and desire [*yok*/*yu*] are also natural to the mind. But you should understand innate knowledge [*yangji*/*liangzhi*] clearly. . . .When the seven feelings [Seven Emotions; *chiljeong*/*qiqing*][25] follow their natural courses of operation [without selfishness or excessiveness], they are all functions of innate knowledge....However, we should not have any selfish attachment to them. When there is such an attachment, they become selfish desires and obscurations to innate knowledge.[26]

This key passage gives a complete list of the Seven and confirms the *Book of Rites'* assertion that they are indeed the "natural" human emotions that "do not learn from the outside." However, Wang argued that the Seven can become bad when they have "any selfish attachment." As mentioned above, anger is a natural emotion but when its "excessive" selfishness is not properly controlled by the mind, it can certainly lead to evil. It is the negative emotion of wrath deviating from the good *yangji*/*liangzhi*, i.e., the *bonche*/*benti* of the heart–mind. This is why self-cultivation is crucial.

In short, Wang's ethics emphasize emotional control and moral practice; that is, extend the good heart–mind to others by "making the will sincere" to "do good and remove evil."[27] It justifies the Mencian doctrine of virtuous emotions as the innate knowledge and innate ability to do good.

Wang Yangming did not have a major impact on the Korean Confucian philosophy of emotions, mainly because the Yangming "school of mind" (*simhak*/*xinxue*, 心學) was effectively opposed by the only orthodox Zhu Xi school, known as Seongnihak (性理學, learning/school of human nature and principle)[28], and officially persecuted by the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) for centuries in Korea. [29] However, Hagok, arguably the founder of the Korean Yangming school, accomplished "the great synthesis of Wang Yangming No-Confucianism in Korea" (E. Y. J. Chung 2020).[30] Hagok liked Wang's philosophy of mind and articulated it further in discussing the Four-Seven topic as well as the nature and problem of emotions by integrating it with the Korean Seongnihak philosophy of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, as we will see in Sections 3 and 4.

3. The Korean Legacy of the Four-Seven Debate before Hagok

In Joseon Korea (1392–1910), the historic Four-Seven debate on emotions powerfully contributed to the distinctive development of neo-Confucian metaphysics, ethics, and moral–spiritual practice, especially relating to Zhu Xi's thought. Korean thinkers rigorously discussed key textual, conceptual, philosophical, psychological, and ethical issues of the Four-Seven relationship in terms of difference and separability as well as similarity and connection.

For Toegye, Yulgok, and other Korean neo-Confucians such as Hagok, one critical issue was whether the Four and the Seven are merely different "names" or, rather, two "distinctive" types of emotions with different "origins," "meanings," and roles. Should the Four be viewed as moral emotions, intuitions, and will, whereas the Seven are ordinary physical and psychological feelings and sensations? Why did Mencius describe the Four as "emotions" (*jeong*/*qing*) pertaining to the "heart-mind" (*sim*/*xin*)? In other words, how should the Four and the Seven be understood in terms of *jeong*/*qing*, in general, as well as in terms of the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin*)? Another rigorously debated issue focused on Zhu Xi's philosophy of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, and of good and evil.[31]

All of these issues were associated with Mencius's moral philosophy and psychology, the *Zhongyong*'s ethics and spirituality of emotional control, and Song Chinese neo-Confucianism. The goal of the Four-Seven debate was, therefore, to understand the implication of these issues for body–mind dynamics, self-cultivation, and daily moral practice—most of which were not explained clearly in the Chinese tradition of classics and neo-Confucian texts and commentaries.

Korean thinkers and their debaters built the constructive meaning of the Four-Seven relationship by covering various texts and ideas comprehensively and systematically. This was indeed necessary to practice the vital role of emotions in daily human life and experience. Toegye and Yulgok similarly confirmed that the Four Beginnings, including compassion, are indeed moral *jeong*/*qing*. For Mencius, the "original goodness of human nature" consisting of the Four should be fully developed for self-cultivation: "neglecting your own potentials is to destroy yourself." (*Mencius*, 2A: 6).[32] In the Korean tradition, the moral emotion of compassion (sympathy; empathy) is an innate virtuous feeling.

Regarding whether or not the Four and the Seven are two separate or distinctive types of *jeong* emotions, Toegye emphasized that the Four, including compassion and the discernment of right and wrong, definitely belong to a special and separate group of moral emotions. It is also important to note that Toegye discussed Mencius's teaching of self-cultivation. In particular, he frequently quoted the Mencian doctrine of the Four and original human goodness, which is emphasized in Toegye's ethics and spirituality of emotions and self-cultivation.[33]

By contrast, Yulgok insisted that the Seven represent the "totality" of emotions and feelings, which includes the Four as their "good side [subset]." He emphasized "the oneness of emotions" ontologically and ethically. There is a "mutual relationship" of continuum: as good moral emotions, the Four are included in the Seven.[34] As Yulgok states, "Mencius selected good [moral] emotions out of the Seven Emotions, thereby calling them the Four Beginnings."[35] For example, when true love, one of the Seven, is expressed properly, then it is a moral emotion that is no different from compassion, one of the Four.[36] The Four do not exist outside the Seven, the "totality" of emotions: in other words, it is impossible for the "good side" (the Four) and the "totality" (the Seven) to be divided into two kinds of emotions.[37]

Compassion and other moral emotions were discussed by Toegye and his supporters with admiration and care for their significance in self-cultivation and ethics. Furthermore, moral and spiritual self-cultivation not only involves the Mencian teaching of nurturing the Four as the moral essence of human nature but also has to maintain what the *Zhongyong* (*Doctrine of the Mean*) refers to as "[emotional] harmony after [the Seven such as] pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused" (Chapter 1).[38] Leading Korean neo-Confucian such as Yulgok and Hagok confirmed that if the Seven are properly expressed or harmonized (according to moral principles), they are good emotions and not different from the Four. However, as Toegye emphasized, these emotions, such as anger and hatred, can lead to evil due to "selfish" cravings as well.

With respect to moral virtues and emotions, the opening passage of the *Analects* also teaches that Confucius believed that true emotions, such as "joy" (*rak*/*le*, 樂) of learning and '"joy" of friendship, were essential to sincerity and virtuous human experience (1: 1; Lau 1975, p. 59). Joy is one of the Seven; in other words, basic Confucian belief is that

genuine human emotions play a vital role in the process of self-cultivation.[39] This insight, therefore, inspired later generations of eminent neo-Confucian thinkers.

Toegye, Yulgok, and others also argued that Zhu Xi's ambiguous comment on the Four-Seven relationship, in terms of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, meant to be understood in terms of "[moral] purity," and there must be moral distinction or continuum. According to Toegye, the Four and the Seven are definitely different, in terms of their origins, meanings, and roles, because Zhu Xi's Four-Seven statement meant that the Four are aroused by universal *i*/*li* whereas the Seven are aroused by individual *gi*/*qi*. Toegye, therefore, emphasized that the Four and the Seven are different from each other ontologically, conceptually, and ethically, in terms of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, respectively.[40] The Four are virtuous emotions whereas the Seven are our ordinary physical and psychological emotions.

Toegye also argued that in the arousal of the Seven "what is spoken of refers principally to *gi*/*qi*."[41] For example, anger, hatred, and desire, three of the Seven, are aroused by (originate from) *gi*/*qi*. Their origin would be *gi*/*qi* because they are not moral emotions, as compassion is. In other words, one should overcome dehumanizing tendencies, such as the potential selfishness or evil of these emotions that are stimulated by individual *gi*/*qi* in response to external phenomena; in Toegye's view, this can be done by practicing moral virtues and emotions, such as the Four, backed up by *i*/*li*.

Yulgok and, later, Hagok, also discussed the whole issue rigorously in terms of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*.[42] According to Yulgok, Toegye misunderstood the Four and the Seven as two distinctive groups of human emotions.[43] The Four are not independent of the Seven and in the arousal of the Four and the Seven, "*gi*/*qi* [not *i*/*li*] is what actually becomes manifested."[44] There is moral–emotive continuum between the Four and the Seven, for which reason Toegye *misinterpreted* them as two separate groups of feelings.[45] As Yulgok states, "what is manifested is *gi*/*qi*, and the reason for its manifestation is *i*/*li*." In the arousal of all emotions and feelings including the Four, *gi*/*qi* as active vital energy actually becomes manifested and *i*/*li* as passive metaphysical principle does not have its self-manifesting power.[46]

Toegye, Yulgok, and other Korean neo-Confucians such as Hagok generally confirmed the Mencian belief that the Four, including compassion, are purely good because they are backed up by the original human goodness human inherent in the heart–mind. Yulgok, in particular, argued that ordinary emotions and feelings, such as the Seven, are *potentially* good if they are properly expressed or harmonized according to moral principles (*i*/*li*). According to Toegye, however, ordinary emotions such as pleasure, anger, and hatred can easily become precarious or evil due to their selfish cravings that are stimulated by daily things or phenomena (E. Y. J. Chung 1995, 2021, chps. 4 and 8).

Another controversial issue of the Korean Four-Seven debate dealt with Zhu Xi's doctrine of "original human nature" (*bonyeon ji seong*/*benran zhi xing*, 本然之性) and "physical human nature" (*gijil ji seong*/*qizhi zhi xing*, 氣質之性) in terms of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, respectively.[47] This is because Zhu Xi remained silent on explaining emotions such as the Four and the Seven in this regard. Toegye and his followers generally argued that by original human nature Zhu Xi meant the Mencian notion of "original human goodness," including innate moral virtues such as human-heartedness (benevolence) as well as moral emotions such as the Four (e.g., compassion). By contrast, the Seven belong to physical human nature that includes all ordinary physical or psychological feelings, sensations, and desires; in other words, the Seven Emotions of the physical human nature are conditioned by individual *gi*/*qi* and can, therefore, lead to good or evil.

For Yulgok, the Four and the Seven should rather be understood in terms of the oneness of human nature and *jeong* emotions.[48] Just as the reality of the heart–mind is "one," the wholeness of emotions and feelings is also one and not divided into the Four and the Seven. In this regard, Yulgok also criticized Toegye for dualistically misinterpreting the Four and the Seven as two distinctive groups of emotions.

4. Hagok on the Four-Seven Relationship: A New Interpretation

Hagok developed an interesting Four-Seven philosophy with respect to classical doctrines, Zhu Xi neo-Confucianism, and its Korean version known as Seongnihak ("school of human nature and principle"). As I wrote in the introduction, this interesting topic has not been discussed in Korean or Western Confucian scholarship.

Like his predecessors Toegye and Yulgok, Hagok comprehensively presented various textual, theoretical, and practical questions about emotions and rigorously discussed those regarding the Four-Seven relationship as well as its implications for self-cultivation and ethical and spiritual practice. Part of this discussion was not only to interpret the conceptual, moral, and psychological distinction or connection between the Four and the Seven, but also to provide a critical reinterpretation of Korean neo-Confucian metaphysics, ethics, and psychology in terms of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, human nature, mind, emotions (*jeong*/*qing*), and good and evil.

A major essay in the *Joneon* (存言, testament),[49] Hagok's most significant work, is "Sadan chiljeong seol" (四端七情說, an explanation of the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions).[50] It presents the Four-Seven topic as follows:

> In regard to aroused emotions and feelings (*jeong*/*qing*), pleasure, anger, love, and joy
>
> > [Hagok's note:] and hatred, fear, and desire[51]
>
> are the emotions of human nature. [The heart-mind of] compassion and [that of] shame and dislike
>
> > [Hagok's note:] and the heart-mind of courtesy and modesty and that of
> >
> > the moral discernment of right and wrong
>
> are human nature (*seong*/*xing*) consisting of these emotions (*jeong*/*qing*).

Regarding the Seven Emotions (*chiljeong*/*qiqing*), Hagok abbreviates their formal list as "pleasure, anger, love, and joy", accepting the short list mentioned in many Confucian and neo-Confucian writings. Note that Hagok's footnoted list of four additional emotions such as "love, hatred, fear, and desire" is not quite accurate, because he repeated the emotion of "love"; it should have been the emotion of "sorrow" (*ae*/*ai*, 哀) *instead of* love (*ae*/*a*), according to the *Book of Rites*.

Nobody learns these human emotions externally from things or phenomena. As Hagok states, the Seven belong to the natural feelings and emotions. According to the *Doctrine of the Mean*, self-cultivation therefore requires a measure of self-control over the Seven in terms of attaining "harmony... after they are aroused". The *Book of Rites* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* confirm that human emotions arise from within the self. The Seven refer to common physical–psychological emotions as the "aroused" states (*bal*/*fa*, 發) of the mind (and body).

In this passage Hagok refers to the "heart-mind" of "compassion" and to "shame and dislike" as two of the Four Beginnings of virtue, thereby confirming the Mencian moral conviction that the Four are naturally good insofar as they are rooted in the innate heart–mind. Like Toegye and Yulgok, Hagok refers to the heart–mind of compassion and the heart–mind shame and dislike as moral emotions/feelings (*jeong*/*qing*).

Hagok cites Mencius' claim that the "original goodness of human nature" (*seongseon ji seong*/*xingshan zhi xing*, 性善之性), consisting of the Four, should be "fully developed" for self-cultivation and universal harmony (*Joneon* I, Sec. 2). "All human beings have the Four Beginnings of virtue . . . . To neglect their potential is to destroy oneself" (*Mencius*, 2A: 6) (See also Lau 1970, pp. 82–83). Hagok specifically refers to the mind–heart (moral feeling) of compassion as identical to the "beginning of human-heartedness (*in*/*ren*)" (*Mencius* 6A: 6). He confirms Mencian ontological belief that the Four are the innate moral seeds of self-cultivation, which justifies original human goodness inherent in the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin*).

In his Four-Seven essay, Hagok also writes about the Seven in terms of *i/li*, 理:

> There is either good or evil in [the Seven Emotions such as] pleasure, anger, love, and joy, depending on whether or not *i/li* (moral principles) exists in them. Compassion and shame-and-dislike are all good emotions (*jeong/qing*) because they are all [based on] *i/li*.
>
> (*Joneon* I, Sec. 13)

In the same essay, Hagok also states: "Should these emotions [the Seven] originate from *i/li* (moral principles), they would be truly pure as the highest good" (*Joneon* I, Sec. 13.). Unlike Toegye, Hagok therefore argues that the Seven—including anger, love, and joy—are good emotions if they, like the Four, are aroused by (*bal/fa,* 發; originate from) *i/li*.

Hagok's argument is indeed an interesting change. The conventional teaching is that the Seven, including anger and desire, are aroused by (originate from) *gi/qi*. According to Toegye, this is because the Seven are our ordinary physical and psychological feelings,[52] and one should overcome the dehumanizing selfishness of these emotions and cravings stimulated by *gi/qi*. For Yulgok as well, *gi/qi* is what actually becomes manifested in the arousal of all emotions and feelings.[53]

In other words, Hagok seems to affirm the role of *i/li* in the arousal of any good emotions of the Seven. However, he takes the idea of *i/li* as the moral will of the mind *rather than* metaphysical principle or the ground of being, as understood in Zhu Xi's metaphysics. Hagok, therefore, *differs* from Toegye by arguing that if the Seven are grounded in moral principles (*i/li*), anger or any other example of the Seven may also be a justified good emotion. Another example: When love is properly expressed and controlled, it is no different from the heart–mind of compassion, one of the Four.

Hagok's key essay on the oneness of the mind, body, and phenomena eloquently articulates the same point as follows:

> Some people [possibly such as Toegye] say that the Four Beginnings [of virtue] among our emotions and feelings come from human nature, whereas the Seven Emotions come from *gi/qi* 氣 . . . . Simply put, the Four and the Seven are mentioned in terms of purity, but some scholars point to the fact that *i/li* is mixed with *gi/qi*, not that *i/li* and *gi/qi* are distinguishable. If discussed in terms of *i/li* and *gi/qi*, then purity in human nature is the Four but the human nature also depends on the [reality of] *gi/qi* . . . . If the Seven are pure according to *i/li*, they can become the Four as well. (*Joneon* III, Sec. 10)

From Hagok's holistic perspective, the Four-and-Seven relationship is to be understood in terms of "[moral] purity", and there ought to be *moral continuum* between the Four and the Seven. If anger or another example of the Seven is pure according to moral principles (*i/li*), we express it as a good emotion "like the Four." That is, if any of the Seven is grounded in *i/li* (moral principles), it would be a justified, moral emotion as well.

If the Seven, including anger, are activated by *gi/qi* and remain "unbalanced and biased," then they will not be good emotions (*Joneon* I, Sec. 13). As Hagok states:

> It is easy for [the Seven such as] pleasure, anger, love ["sorrow" in the *Zhongyong*'s list], and joy to follow *gi/qi* and become outrageous due to the individual *gi/qi* of 'selfish cravings' (*sayok/siyu*) (*Joneon* I, Sec. 13)

In his essay "Seonghak simhak" (聖學心學, sagely learning as mind cultivation), Hagok also comments on both the Four and the Seven, as follows:

> [The Seven] emotions such as pleasure, anger, love, and joy are also human nature, so the issue of "attaining their due measure and degree" or "not attaining . . . ." is due to our [selfish] cravings that are embedded in these emotions. (*Joneon* III, Sec. 4)

Hagok basically agrees with others that self-cultivation and moral practice require a measure of control over the Seven or their related selfishness or excessiveness. In light of

the *Doctrine of the Mean*, one can remain in a state of harmony by "attaining due measure and degree" after they are aroused. Hagok was likely aware of the fact that this topic became very important in the Korean Four-Seven debate and was discussed by Toegye, his debater Gi Gobong, and others, such as Yi Yulgok.

Hagok opposes Toegye's "dualistic" Four-Seven theory in terms of *i/li* and *gi/qi*. However, as I discussed elsewhere (E. Y. J. Chung 1995, 2016), Toegye's Four-Seven theory is the foundation of his moral thought; that is, the Four are always good moral emotions because they are backed up by universal moral *i/li*, whereas the Seven can become selfish and lead to evil because they are aroused by individual *gi/qi* as stimulated by external things or phenomena.

Hagok's argument here is similar to Yulgok's basic Four-Seven theory. According to Yulgok, the Four are the "good (moral) side" of the Seven, as selected by Mencius,[54] and any of the Seven, if properly harmonized (controlled), is a good feeling like the Four.[55] Our ordinary physical or mental feelings, such as the Seven, are *potentially* good if they are controlled and *harmonized*. Anger, love, and joy are natural human emotions even if they are not harmonized due to selfish cravings.

5. Emotions, Innate Knowledge of Good, and Mind Cultivation: A Sagely Yangming Way

In short, compared to Toegye's and Yulgok's interpretations, Hagok's ethics of emotions is unique because Hagok incorporates Wang Yangming's neo-Confucianism, and especially its key doctrine of the heart–mind (*sim/xin* 心), original essence (*bonche/benti* 本體), and innate knowledge of good (*yangji/liangzhi* 良知). Hagok also emphasizes the ultimate meaning of the Four in terms of the "original essence" of the mind as well as the Mencian doctrine "innate knowledge" and "innate ability" (*yangneung/liangneng* 良能) (*Mencius*, 7A: 15). This is because Hagok, like other scholars, liked this classical teaching because its "child" metaphor of the pure heart–mind justifies the ontological and moral foundation of original human goodness.

This was a key to critically re-examining Zhu Xi and Korean neo-Confucianism through the Yangming way of mind cultivation and moral practice. In his essay on principle (*i/li*) and the mind (*Joneon* III, Sec. 3), Hagok, therefore, explains Wang's belief in the mind's *bonche/benti* ("mind-in-itself" or original essence (substance)) regarding "innate knowledge [of good]."[56] Hagok's essay "Seonghakseol" (聖學說, an explanation of sagely learning) also quotes Wang Yangming: "According to Wang, 'the mind is principle (*i/li*) means *innate knowledg*e [of good] (*yangji/liangzhi*), so the innate knowledge of the mind (*sim ji yangji/xin zhi liangzhi* 心之良知) is the essence [of mind]'" (*Joneon* III, Sec. 8).

Hagok continues: "The mind-heart of [discerning] right and wrong is [the virtue of] wisdom . . . . This is called innate knowledge and innate ability [to do good]" (*Joneon* I, Sec. 8). He, therefore, sees the Four Beginnings, including the heart–mind (emotion) of right and wrong, as none other than the innate knowledge of good (*Joneon* I, Sec. 9). On the whole, Hagok affirms that the mind's *yangji* universally enables moral awakening and action.

In his *Chuanxi lu* (instructions for practical living), Wang emphasized the *bonche/benti* of the mind *as well as* the Mencian teaching of *yangji/liangzhi* and *yangneung/liangneng*.[57] Hagok was, therefore, quite aware of the fact that Wang certainly liked Mencius's ontological belief in original human goodness in the heart–mind of virtuous emotions. Hagok also liked Wang's point that the Four refer to the mind-in-itself and confirm its innate knowledge of good, which universally enables moral mind cultivation (*simhak,* 心學) and the Confucian path to sagacity.

According to the *Chuanxi lu*, Wang articulated uncontrolled ("excessive") anger as a deviation from the heart–mind's pure essence/goodness:

> When one shows a little bit of feeling of wrath, his anger is excessive, and his mind is no longer the original substance [*bonche/benti* 本體] that is broad and extremely impartial [quoting Cheng Hao]. Therefore, whenever one is affected

> by wrath to any extent, his mind will not be correct... [even though] we all feel angry in our minds at the party who is wrong.[58]

Here it is interesting to note that Hagok also identifies the innate knowledge of the Four with what Lu Xiangshan (1139–1193)[59] and Wang call "the original mind" (*bonsim*/*benxin*, 本心):

> Mencius taught that all human beings have the Four Beginnings [of virtue] . . . [*Mencius*, 2A: 6]. We all refer to this essence [of the mind]; that's all. Lu Xiangshan called it "the original mind" . . . as well as innate knowledge. For this reason, it is called . . . the goodness of human nature . . . "becoming a sage like Yao or Shun."[60] (*Joneon* III, Sec. 11)

This passage justifies the Four, including compassion, in light of the shared Lu-Wang insight that our "original mind" has its dynamic moral essence.[61] In other words, "everyone can become a sage" by nourishing the original mind.

In his major essay "Chijiseol" (致知說, an explanation of the extension of knowledge), Hagok eloquently writes further:

> Mencius taught that "the heart-mind (emotion; *sim*/*xin* 心) of [moral discernment of] right and wrong" is the knowledge (*ji*/*zhi*) that "all human beings have" . . . . Hence, this [moral] knowledge originally exists in the human heart-mind. It is not what we know after seeking it in things, learning from books, or remaining outside [the mind]. Simply put, this is truly what human beings innately [originally] have.... We [naturally] know to be *filial to parents*, . . . and to like good and hate evil. (*Joneon* I, Sec. 9)

This statement concurs with the Mencian doctrine of the Four Beginnings that anyone "without the heart-mind of right and wrong" is "not human."[62]

The fourfold seed of human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom already exists in the heart–mind for self-cultivation. This, therefore, means "innate human goodness" in the pure "child-like" heart–mind (*sim*/*xin)*, which Wang Yangming emphasized as the "innate knowledge of good" and the original moral essence of the mind.[63]

According to Wang, sages all have natural human emotions. Hagok was familiar with Wang Yangming's point that they not only control and overcome selfish emotions and desires but also perfected their heart–minds as "bright mirrors" without any "impurity" or selfishness. In other words, the sages practice virtuous emotions in harmony with the heart–mind's *bonche*/*benti* (original essence/goodness) through their "innate knowledge [of good] as clear as a bright mirror...."[64] Hagok likely appreciated this part of Yangming's thought.

With respect to mind cultivation (*simhak*), Hagok, therefore, concludes his Four-Seven thesis in terms of sagely learning as follows:

> The way of Confucius and Mencius was definitely as follows... It illuminated [what Mencius called] the "original goodness of human nature" by discussing the Four Beginnings of virtue. Through this method, we can explore the [Confucian] sages' intended teaching and also get to know sagely learning (*seonghak*/*shengxue* 聖學). (*Joneon* II, Sec. 25)[65]

Here, Hagok has in mind the line in the *Mencius* (2A: 6) that states that original human goodness consists of the fourfold foundation of human virtue. This enables anyone to pursue the universal Confucian way of sagely learning.

In developing his Four-Seven philosophy, Hagok critically examined and reinterpreted the Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucian system of metaphysics and ethics of human nature, emotions, and *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*, particularly by means of emphasizing the Mencian and Wang Yangming doctrines of the heart–mind, innate knowledge and ability, and moral practice.

6. Conclusions: Comparative and Contemporary Reflections

Let us now consider the distinctiveness of the Korean Four-Seven debate as well as the originality and contemporary relevance of Hagok's interpretation. First of all, Hagok's Four-Seven philosophy is an insightful and engaging topic; that is, a key component of his unique ethics and spirituality of emotions as well as a vital example of his innovative efforts to reconcile and integrate Wang Yangming, Zhu Xi, and the Korean Seongnihak version of Zhu Xi neo-Confucianism.[66]

As we know, the word "emotion(s)" pertains to the dynamic and interrelated levels of human existence, knowledge, and experience, whether we speak of Korean, Asian, Western, or cross-cultural perspectives. Various traditions of philosophy and religion developed a number of ideas and insights and each of them embodies its own context and examples of emotions. For example, the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions commonly tend to emphasize the control of the physical and psychological side of the self. Similarly, they taught against the "selfish," "precarious," "afflicting," or "self-damaging" potential of ordinary feelings, desires, or attachments. Certain emotions, such as moral–spiritual virtues, are cherished and recommended, whereas many ordinary emotions are repudiated and, therefore, must be controlled or eliminated.[67] In other words, it is necessary to understand or discuss the nature, role, and problem of emotions in the holistic context of rationality, emotionality, ethics, and spirituality.

In this regard, the Korean Four-Seven debates, including Hagok's interpretation, contributed to understanding the notion of emotions (*jeong*/*qing*) and its manifold and multilevel roles and problems in self-cultivation, humanistic ethics, moral psychology, and social relationships. It championed moral emotions while criticizing the precarious "selfishness" of negative emotions and, therefore, influenced many generations of Confucian thinkers and ordinary Koreans. As a result, it has also developed its comprehensive context and scope of emotion common to human life and experience.

We cannot deny the essential influence of Chinese Confucian texts and doctrines—for example, the *Book of Rites*, *Zhongyong*, *Mencius*, and Zhu Xi's ideas of *i*/*li* and *gi*/*qi*—on Korean discussion about emotions. However, it is wrong to argue simply that Korean Confucians merely copied or followed the Chinese tradition because Hagok, like Toegye and Yulgok, not only discovered the fundamental ambiguity and limitation of these Chinese texts but also creatively developed original Korean ideas, interpretations, and insights.

The unique common goal of the Korean Four-Seven debates was to explain the self rationally, psychologically, morally, and spiritually. This is why the holistic nature of Korean *jeong* seems to be more associated with or influenced by the Confucian tradition. Hagok and other Korean neo-Confucians comprehensively discussed this topic on emotions. In particular, they rigorously debated the Four-Seven relationship as well as its implications for self-cultivation and ethics.

Hagok, like other Korean Confucians before him, affirms that both the Four and the Seven all belong to the total reality of human emotions and feelings. They basically agreed that the Four and the Seven are different "names" (labels) for emotions. However, Hagok, like Yulgok, opposes Toegye's dualistic view that the Four and the Seven are actually two distinctive groups of emotions with clear differences of ontological origins and conceptual and moral meanings and roles. Another key question was why Mencius described the Four as "emotions" (*jeong*/*qing*) and, especially, in terms of the "heart-mind" (*sim*/*xin*).

Hagok basically supports Yulgok's point that Toegye incorrectly insisted that the Seven are not moral emotions, like the Four, because the Seven are potentially the "precarious" or "selfish" expressions of our physical and psychological nature as conditioned by individual *gi*/*qi* and external things. This is partly why Hagok implicitly criticized Toegye's dualistic Four-Seven theory. In my view, however, what he, like Yulgok, failed to grasp is the heart of Toegye's ethics and spirituality that emphasizes the *transcendent and virtuous* reality of *i*/*li*, representing the Four and moral principles, over the material, physical, and psychological reality of *gi*/*qi*, representing the Seven and cravings. This is what

Toegye ultimately inspired, for moral and spiritual cultivation, in his disciples and many generations of followers (see E. Y. J. Chung 2010a, 2010b, 2016, 2021 for more).

Overall, Hagok's Four-Seven philosophy emphasizes self-cultivation as moral awakening and practice; that is, the practice of "original human goodness" in the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin*). In Wang Yangming's terminology, this means "do good and remove evil."[68] Hagok also elaborated on the Mencian–Yangming teaching of virtuous emotions as innate knowledge (*yangji*) and innate ability (*yangneung*) to "think and do good." Hagok concluded that this moral claim is also justified by fundamental Confucian belief in "the original heart-mind" (*bonsim*/*benxin*) and "innate pure heart-mind" (*yangsim*/*liangxin,* 良心). For all human beings and especially ordinary people, Hagok seems to argue that this is the universal Confucian way of ethical action in the Yangming context that the Confucian sages originally emphasized. For Hagok, it is inclusively more productive than Zhu Xi's philosophy and its mainstream Korean version of Seongnihak that involves the rationalist understanding or knowledge of moral principles (*i*/*li*). I also note that contemporary Koreans frequently speak about both words, *bonsim* and *yangsim,* in their daily social and emotional lives or when they are concerned with moral education, social values, and ethical practice.

Despite Hagok's "great synthesis of Yangming Neo-Confucianism (*Yangmyeonghak*/*Yangmingxue* 陽明學) in Korea" (E. Y. J. Chung 2020), his *Yangmyeonghak* did not flourish either directly or textually, insofar as the Korean Yangming school was effectively prohibited by the Zhu Xi school (Seongnihak) and continuously persecuted by the Joseon dynasty at the same time.[69]

In the Western tradition of philosophy, the nature of emotions was criticized for centuries. This criticism is associated with the mainstream Platonic tradition of dualism that has emphasized rationality (reason) over emotionality (emotion) and maintained the antagonism between reason and emotion, as Plato and neo-Platonism cherished thinking over feeling based on the mind–body dualism. Emotion (or passion) was claimed to be the antithesis or opponent of reason; in other words, one's emotional tendency or inclination contradicts the intellectual enterprise of rationality. This centuries-old criticism of emotions, therefore, defended the ultimate meaning of philosophy as the "love of reasoning," not emotional experience and knowledge.

Nevertheless, the contemporary Western ethics of emotions has challenged this dichotomy of emotion (passion) versus reason (cognition).[70] In his study of emotive rationality, Ronald De Sousa (1987) notes that emotions enable our rational thinking about human life and experience (De Sousa 1987, pp. 1–20). Joel Marks's theory of "emotions as desires" and Robert C. Solomon's theory of emotions as "judgements" support the cognitive and rational nature of emotions: in the former case, "desiring" means knowing what to desire (Marks 1995, 2013) while the latter case affirms that judgements "need concepts," so one's judging engages in some level of reasoning (Solomon 1993, 1995a, 2001).

These contemporary endorsements of the rationalistic relevance of emotions variously resonate with Korean Four-Seven philosophy and Hagok's Confucian ethics of emotions. Hagok, like other leading neo-Confucians, insightfully discussed whether emotions are morally good or bad (evil), human or inhuman, honorable or precarious, altruistic or selfish, and so on. He, therefore, articulated *how* they function in interaction with the body and heart–mind, as well as in response to external stimulus by things and phenomena. This is also why Hagok—like Toegye, Yulgok, and famous Korean Buddhist masters such as Wonhyo (617–686) and Jinul (1158–1210)—did not distinguish emotion from reason, and vice versa. They were more used to their traditional belief that the heart–mind (*sim*/*xin,* 心) is one single, integrated faculty that coordinates, "apprehends," or "commands" rationality, emotionality, morality, and spirituality. Accordingly, Hagok affirms that emotions engage the entire holistic self, including the body, as in the case of Korean Buddhist ethics and spirituality as well.[71]

In my comparative view, Hagok's interpretation is also compatible with some Western theories of emotions. For example, his view of compassion—one of the Four, as the moral "root" of benevolence (*in*/*ren*)—is similar to what the Scottish moral philosopher

Adam Smith (1723–1790) saw as the moral significance of "sympathy" for "universal benevolence."[72] We can also relate it to Michael Slote's virtue ethics of "empathy" (Slote 2007, 2010) because empathy is a "moral motivation," and the moral virtues of "compassion and benevolence are best understood in relation to empathy" (Slote 2020, p. 61).[73] Solomon's theory of emotions as "judgements" based on "prior" knowledge or experience resembles Hagok's insight that the moral discernment of "right and wrong," the last of the Four, involves some level of ethical awareness through "innate knowledge of good" (*yangji*/*liangzhi*).[74] Furthermore, Hagok cared about the "heart-mind of discerning right and wrong" as a moral emotion or intuition for wisdom. When properly expressed, justified anger, one of the Seven, is, indeed, a good emotion, because of its moral attention to justice. Does this not also concur with Solomon's view that "passion for justice" is an emotional judgment that is ethically important for "the meaning of life"?[75]

In comparison with mainstream Korean neo-Confucianism, Hagok's approach to Four-Seven issues is innovatively unique because he interprets emotions in the context of Yangming philosophy as well. This is a significant example of Hagok's coherent efforts to build meaningful compatibility between Wang Yangming, Zhu Xi, and the Korean Seongnihak of Zhu Xi neo-Confucianism (E. Y. J. Chung 2020), regarding universal Confucian belief in the *human* foundation of virtue as the good heart–mind (*yangsim*/*liangxin*) of innate knowledge and ability to think and do good. From Hagok's perspective, this unifying way of moral awakening and action would be universal and, therefore, more Confucian than the rationalistic Zhu Xi way or its scholastic Korean Seongnihak (e.g., Toegye). I make this point although Hagok himself did not directly articulate this idea of reconciliation and integration.

Is Hagok's ethics of emotions relevant to us? In my view, their contemporary significance centers around the question of how "to be human" in the most genuine sense of its meaning. This affirms the *holistic* role of our heart–mind in cultivating the wholesome self and social wellbeing through the proper channelling and harmony of our thinking (reason), feeling (emotion), believing (belief), craving (desire), passion, and moral–spiritual dimensions of human experience. Emotions inspire the ultimate meaning in life.

On the whole, Hagok, the greatest systematizer of Yangming philosophy in Korea, developed an original *Korean* version of neo-Confucianism in the context of being ecumenical in theory and practical in action. Hagok's interpretation of emotions embodies a groundbreaking tendency that developed such a distinctively *Korean* style of Confucian ethics and spirituality emphasizing *practical* action. It also offers contemporary insights into East Asian and global Confucianism as a whole. It is an engaging topic for our cross-cultural discussion of emotions.

I conclude by stating that Hagok's thought-provoking insights offer us a holistic intellectual and ethical system of emotion and action as well as a worthwhile resource for our interdisciplinary understanding of emotions in the field of comparative philosophy, ethics, and religion.

7. Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Citation

Korean names, terms, and titles are transliterated according to the Revised Romanization of Korean (National Academy of the Korean Language, Ministry of Education); Chinese counterparts are transliterated according to the Pinyin system. In indicating Korean or Chinese names, the standard format I follow is the family name and then other names, unless otherwise designated. Furthermore, I use the literary name if it is better known nationally and internationally: e.g., "Hagok" for Jeong Jedu, and "Toegye" for Yi Hwang.

For the primary and secondary Korean sources cited, only the Korean titles are provided, as is the standard style: e.g., Hagok's *Joneon* (testament]). To avoid confusion, the titles of primary Chinese sources, such as leading neo-Confucian writings, are presented in Chinese only: e.g., Wang's *Chuanxi lu* (instructions for practical living). With some exceptions, the Romanized philosophical terms are provided in both languages in parentheses.

I present the Korean pronunciation first, followed by the Chinese, with a slash between them: e.g., *yangji/liangzhi* (innate knowledge), *i/li* (principle), *sim/xin* (mind or heart–mind), and so on.

As is well known, consistency in the translation of (neo-)Confucian philosophical terms is a challenging goal due to their subtlety or flexibility of meaning, involving diverse implications according to the context. Therefore, my approach to this task is to maintain the *standard* English renderings of most terms as much as possible.

For example, the Confucian term *jeong/qing* (情) generally means "emotions" and "feelings," engaging the body as well as the heart–mind. I therefore use two English words, "feelings" and "emotions," interchangeably. In the West, the term "emotion" refers to "a moving, stirring, agitation and perturbation," whereas the term "feeling" means "the sense of touch in the looser acceptance of the term, in which it includes all physical sensibility not referable to the special senses of sight, hearing, taste, and smell" (*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 1971, s.v. "emotion"). The flexible notion of this particular term is also associated with what we refer to in English as "passion," "sensation," "sentiment," "affection," "attitude," and so on. Emotions are what all human beings feel, experience, and/or know, universally; hence, they can be compassionate or cruel, pleased or angry, afraid or brave, joyful or sorrowful (resentful), proud or shameful, and so on.[76]

As for the idea of *seong/xing* (性), which Hagok and other neo-Confucians considered to be full of truth and goodness, I use the term "human nature". Another key term, *yangji/liangzhi* (良知) is translated as "innate knowledge (of good)," the most widely accepted translation, although we can also translate it as "natural moral knowing," "innate moral intuition," and so on.

I also use variations when appropriate. Some key words are translated according to their different contexts. For example, the term *sim/xin* (心), the most important term in Wang's and Hagok's philosophies, is translated as "mind" or "heart-mind," thereby using them interchangeably; in fact, this idea points to Confucian belief in the intellectual, ethical, psychological, and spiritual interaction of the mind–heart as a whole. I translate the compound term *bonche/benti* (本體) as "original essence (substance)." When referring to the mind (*sim/xin*), it also means the mind-in-itself or the fundamental goodness of the heart–mind. Lastly, see Note 17 on two key neo-Confucian concepts, *i/li* (理, principle, metaphysical ground of being; moral order) and *gi/qi* (氣, vital/physical energy; material force).

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Abbreviations

Chuanxi lu	Wang Yangming, 1955 (see Chan 1963a, in the translations section)
TJ	*Toegye jeonseo* (see Yi Toegye, 1985, in the Other Korean Neo-Confucian Works section)
YJ	*Yulgok jeonseo* (see Yi I (Yulgok), 1985, below)
ZZYL	*Zhuzi yulei* (see Zhu Xi, 1880, below)

Notes

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[2] Toegye, Yulgok, and Dasan do not need any introduction here because they are well-known in current Western scholarship on Korean Confucianism or philosophy. However, Hagok may be an unfamiliar name. Hagok is the literary (pen) name of Jeong (family name) Jedu (given name), the founder and most eminent scholar in the unorthodox Korean school of Wang Yangming neo-Confucianism *or* the so-called school (learning) of the mind (*simhak/xinxue*, 心學). Current literature in English on Hagok

is limited. E. Y. J. Chung (1992) wrote the very first article: "The Wang Yangming School of Neo-Confucianism in Korean Intellectual History"; see also S.-Y. Chung (2019 a book chapter on Hagok's thought and the Korean Yangming school); Lee (1996, pp. 277–84, a one-page translation; a 3-page introduction, "Wang Yangming in Korea"; and a short translated letter); Sciban (2005 a journal article). E. Y. J. Chung (2020) wrote a pioneering full-length book on Hagok's life, scholarship, and thought. For details, see the bibliography.

[3] For books on the Korean Four-Seven debate, see Kalton et al. (1994) (an edited translation of Toegye's and Yulgok's Four-Seven letters); E. Y. J. Chung (1995) (a full-length comparative discussion of Toegye's and Yulgok's Four-Seven theories and ethics). For books chapters and articles, consult Ching (1985); Ivanhoe (2015, 2016); Kim (2015); Seok (2018); Tu (1985b); E. Y. J. Chung (1998, Yulgok on human nature, mind, and emotions; 2004; 2016, introductory chapter on Toegye's thought; 2019a, on Yulgok's philosophy of gi/qi; 2019b, about the history, philosophy, and spirituality of the Korean Four-Seven debate; 2020, introduction, section on Hagok's thought; 2021, Chp. 4 on the moral and spiritual significance of Toegye's Four-Seven thesis; 2022, Chp. 4 on Yulgok's ethics of emotions and political reform).

[4] See the books written in Korean by the following authors: Jeong (1972); Yun (1982); Yu (1983, 1994, 2002); Keum (2008); Kim (1981); Kim (1995); Yi (2008); Bak (2007); Choe (2017), none of which provide a chapter or section on Hagok's Four-Seven philosophy.

[5] E. Y. J. Chung (1995, 2016, Part I: Introduction), (2020, Introduction), (2021, chp. 4), and (2022, chp. 4). See also E. Chung's discussion of emotions in the Indian, Chinese, and Korean Buddhist traditions in Chung and Oh (2022, introductory chapter).

[6] The Korean–Chinese Confucian term *jeong/qing* generally means "emotions" as well as "feelings." I, therefore, use two English words, "feelings" and "emotions," interchangeably. For its flexible meaning and translation, see my note on Transliteration, Translation, and Citation at the end of this article.

[7] My translation; examples of the Seven are *italicized*.

[8] This issue was debated by Toegye, his debater Gi Gobong (1527–1572), and other Korean thinkers such as Yi Yulgok. They also quoted the key teaching concerning "before arousal" ("unmanifested"; *mibal/weifa,* 未發) and "after arousal" ("manifested"; *ibal/yifa,* 已發) throughout his Four-Seven debate.

[9] Tu (1989) is still an excellent discussion of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

[10] For more discussion, see E. Y. J. Chung (1995, Chp. 1: philosophical background) or E. Y. J. Chung (2016).

[11] My translation; see also Lau (1970, pp. 82–83).

[12] My translation; see also Lau (1970, p. 163) or Chan (1963b, p. 54).

[13] See notes 11 above.

[14] For this particular topic, see Kalton et al. (1994); Ivanhoe (2015, 2016); Seok (2018); E. Y. J. Chung (1995, 2016, 2021).

[15] As Mencius states,

> what human beings are able to do without having to learn it is innate ability [to do good] (*yangneung/liangneng*); what they know without having to reflect on it is innate knowledge [of good] (*yangji/liangzhi*). All young children [innately] know loving their parents. As they grow up, they will know respecting their elder siblings. Loving one's parents is human-heartedness (*in/ren*), and respecting one's elders is righteousness. We have to extend these virtues to the world; that's all. (7A: 15; my translation; see also Lau 1970, p. 184 or Chan 1963b, p. 80)

[16] See *Mengzi jizhu daquan,* 孟子集註大全 (great compendium of commentaries on the *Book of Mencius*), in *Gyeongeo,* 經書 (Four Books) (1972), 516; my translation. See also Zhu Xi (1880), *Zhuzi yulei,* 朱子語類 (classified conversations of master Zhu Xi) (hereafter abbreviated *ZZYL*), 53: 9a.

[17] *ZZYL* 87: 16a–b; my translation.

[18] Zhu's philosophy of *i/li* and *gi/qi* is extensively discussed in current scholarship, so it does not need to be rehearsed here In short, *i/li* means metaphysical "principle" or the "ground of being" present in each thing or phenomenon in its fullness. We can also consider it the ultimate or omnipresent principle (or "pattern" or "order" of nature) of all things in full goodness and truth. In relation to human nature and emotions, *i/li* represents moral order or the original human nature that is purely good. By contrast, *gi/qi* refers to the "material force" or "vital energy/stuff" that actually brings each phenomenon into concrete existence and also determines its transformation, which may lead to either good or evil. In relation to human nature and feelings, *gi/qi* represents physical dispositions and psychological matters as well.
The current literature on this topic includes Chan (1963b, 1967, 1986); Ching (2000); de Bary (1981, 2004); Gardner (1990); Tu (1985a, 1985b); and so on. For Yi Toegye, Yi Yulgok, and Korean Neo-Confucianism on this topic, see Ro (1989, 2019); Chan (1985); Kalton (1988, 2019); (E. Y. J. Chung 1995, 2016, 2019a, on Yulgok; 2019c, Toegye on evil and self-cultivation in relation to i/li and gi/qi; 2021). E. Y. J. Chung (2020, pp. 38–44, 52–56) presents a detailed discussion of Hagok's systematic critique of Zhu Xi's and Toegye's philosophies of *i/li* and *gi/qi* according to Hagok's creative synthesis of Wang Yangming Neo-Confucianism in Korea.

[19] *ZZYL* 53: 17b.

[20] (Chan 1963a) is an excellent full English translation of *Chuanxi lu* (hereafter abbreviated as *CXL*) with annotation and commentary.

[21] See *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. III, Sec. 290; Chan (1963a, p. 229).

[22] *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. II, Sec. 166; Chan (1963a, pp. 147–48).

[23] *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. I, Sec. 44; Chan (1963a, p. 38). For more statements on Wang's doctrine of the mind-in-itself (original substance of the mind), see *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. I, Sec. 3; Chan (1963a, p. 7). As indicated in this quotation, Chan translated the term *bonche/benti* (本體) as "original substance," but I note that it is also translatable as "pure essence" or "ultimate goodness." Wang basically meant the pure/original essence or goodness of the heart–mind, which also confirms the Mencian doctrine of original human goodness (6A: 6, 2A: 6).

[24] *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. II, Sec. 167; Chan (1963a, p. 148).

[25] Chan translated the term *chiljeong/qiqng* as "the seven feelings," but I prefer "the Seven Emotions," as I have done for many years.

[26] See notes 21 above.

[27] *Chuanxi lu*, Pt. I, Sec. 129 and Pt. III, Sec. 315; Chan (1963a, pp. 86, 244). See also "Inquiry on the Great Learning"; Chan (1963b, pp. 664, 666). Furthermore, consult E. Y. J. Chung (2020) for a detailed discussion of this topic in the Korean and comparative context of Hagok's Yangming neo-Confucianism.

[28] The orthodox Korean tradition of neo-Confucianism is identified as Seongnihak (*xinglixue* in C., 性理學) because it emphasizes the learning (*hak/xue*) of *seong/xing* ((human) nature) and *i/li* (principle), two of the most important concepts in neo-Confucian metaphysics and ethics. In Song China, Zhu Xi and his followers established this school of thought. Korean Seongnihak is, therefore, used interchangeably with "Jujahak" (朱子學, Zhuzi school), because "Juja/Zhuzi" (朱子) refers to the famous Chinese neo-Confucian's honorific title, "master" (*ja/zi*, 子), and his family name, Ju/Zhu (朱). I also note that Yi Toegye and Yi Yulgok, Korea's two most eminent Confucian scholars, belonged to this school of thought.

[29] In Ming China, the Wang Yangming (1472–1529) "school of the mind" (*simhak/xinxue*) was a main outgrowth of neo-Confucianism and became the most powerful rival to the Zhu Xi school of human nature and principle (*seongnihak/xingli xue*). By contrast, Joseon Korea rigorously promoted and protected Seongnihak as the one and only orthodox school on the Korean peninsula while its established academic–political power strictly prohibited Wang Yangming's philosophy or its school of the mind until the 19th century. This interesting historical topic is beyond the limited scope of this journal article focusing on my textual and philosophical study. For my detailed and systematic discussion of this topic, consult E. Y. J. Chung (2020, pp. 4–5, Introduction, Part 1, Sct. 1; Hagok's reputation, pp. 6–13, Introduction, Part 1, Sct. 1; Hagok's biography, 15, 37, 94n.132, 107n.344, 279n.365, 286n.410).

[30] Hagok's philosophical and scholarly reputation represents the persecuted tradition of Yangming neo-Confucianism (*Yangmyeong-hak/Yangmingxue*, 陽明學) or the school of the mind (*simhak/xinxue*), in contrast to the Korean Seongnihak, as I already mentioned. For other details, see n. 28 above.

[31] Toegye's three famous Four-Seven letters are included in Yi Hwang (Toegye) (1985), *Toegye jeonseo* (退溪全書, complete works of Yi Toegye), 16:8a–30a; hereafter, this primary source is abbreviated as *TJ*. See also (Kalton et al. 1994, pp. 7–104), for a full translation of these letters. For Yulgok's letters, see Yi Yulgok (1985), *Yulgok jeonseo* (栗谷全書, complete works of Yi Yulgok) (hereafter abbreviated as *YJ*), 9:32b–10:40a; I, 192–216, which is fully translated in Kalton et al. (1994, pp. 109–83).

[32] E. Chung's translation; see also Lau (1970, pp. 82–83).

[33] For details on this topic, see E. Y. J. Chung (2016, 2019c, 2021).

[34] See *YJ* 9: 34b; I, 192. This statement is almost identical to the original thinking of Gi Daeseung (Gobong; 1725–1572) who rigorously debated with Toegye.

[35] *YJ* 20: 56b; I, 455; my translation.

[36] This opinion basically corresponds to Gobong's original view; see *TJ* 16: 13b; I, 408.

[37] Yulgok's argument indirectly concurs with Zhu Xi's unquoted statement that "the Four can be understood in the context of the Seven." See *ZZYL* 87: 16a–b. Note that Yulgok, as well as Toegye and Kobong, were not familiar with this statement by Zhu Xi.

[38] For more discussion of this topic on the Korean interpretation of "aroused emotions" and emotional harmony according to the *Zhongyong*, see Seok (2018, 2022); E. Y. J. Chung (1995, Chp. I; 2021, Chp. 4). Jeong Yagyong (Dasan) was another eminent Korean Confucian thinker who provided a unique, in-depth study of the *Zhongyong*, including his interpretation, emotions, and self-cultivation; see Baker (2022, Chp. 5) in Chung and Oh (2022) and Baker's forthcoming book (Baker 2023), which also discuss why Dasan opposed the orthodox line of the Korean Seongnighak (Zhu Xi school's) interpretation of *i/li* and *gi/qi*.

[39] For details on my latest discussion of this topic, see Chung and Oh (2022, Sct. 2b-I Confucius: true emotions and human character).

[40] For more on Toegye's Four-Seven thesis in terms of *i/li* and *gi/qi*, consult Ivanhoe (2015, 2016); Kim (2015); Seok (2018); E. Y. J. Chung (1995 Chp. II; 2019b; 2021, Chp. 4).

[41] *TJ* 16: 10a and 16: 30a; I: 406, 416.

[42] See Note 17 for details on Zhu Xi's philosophy of *i/li* and *gi/qi* and current scholarship on this topic.

[43] *YJ* 9: 35b; I, 192; see E. Y. J. Chung (1995, 2019b). For a full translation of Toegye's and Yulgok's Four-Seven letters, see Kalton et al. (1994).

44 *YJ* 10: 5a; I, 198.

45 *YJ* 9: 35b; I, 192; see E. Y. J. Chung (1995, 2019b) for my discussion of Yulgok's critique of Toegye's Four-Seven thesis. For more on Yulgok's philosophy, including his Four-Seven thesis, consult Ro (1989, 2019) (a new edited anthology, including Ro's article on Yulgok), Ching (1985); Kim (2015); Ivanhoe (2015, 2016); Seok (2018); and E. Y. J. Chung (1998, 2019a, 2022).

46 See notes 44 above.

47 Consult Seok (2022); E. Y. J. Chung (1995); or Chung and Oh (2022, Chp. 1, Sec. 2c, on Zhu Xi neo-Confucianism) for details of this topic on "dual" human nature.

48 *YJ* 10: 7b; I, 199.

49 The *Joneon* is Hagok's most significant work in the Korean Yangming school of neo-Confucianism and consists of three main parts representing the heart of Hagok's life and thought. It is a thought-provoking text on Hagok's "great synthesis" of Wang's philosophy of mind, self-cultivation, and moral practice in relation to the classical teaching of Confucius and Mencius as well as Hagok's critical analysis of Zhu Xi neo-Confucianism and Korean Seongnihak. See E. Y. J. Chung (2020) for a pioneering annotated translation and in-depth discussion of the *Joneon*, including a *comprehensive* introduction to Hagok's life, scholarship, and thought (109 pages).

50 This major essay is Section 13 of the *Joneon* I.

51 Hagok added a brief footnote in a smaller font here in order to indicate "love," "hatred," "fear," and "desire" as other examples of the Seven Emotions. Note that Hagok also adds other examples of the Seven here.

52 See note 41 above.

53 See note 44 above.

54 See Yulgok's first Four-Seven letter, *YJ* 9:34b; I, 192.

55 See note 44 above.

56 For Wang's theory of the mind's original essence, consult his *Chuanxi lu* (instructions for practical living), Part I, Sec. 3; Chan (1963a, p. 7). For innate knowledge, see *Chuanxi lu*, Part I, Sec. 8 and Part II, Sec. 152; Chan (1963a, pp. 15, 132). See also Wang's influential essay *Daxue wen* (*Inquiry on the Great Learning)*; Chan (1963b, p. 665). In the *Joneon,* Hagok quotes or paraphrases these key ideas, for which reason some Korean specialists point out that Hagok was definitely influenced by Wang's philosophical language; see Yun (1982); Kim (1981, pp. 14–15, 390–40); Yu (2002); Yi (2008); and Kim (1995).

57 For the original Mencian doctrine of *yangji* and *yangneung*, see *Mencius*, 7A: 15; Lau (1970, p. 184); or Chan (1963b, p. 80).

58 See note 24 above.

59 Xiangshan is Lu's literary name; his given name is Jiuyuan. In Song China, he opposed the Cheng-Zhu philosophy of human nature and principle. As Chan (1963b, p. 572) pointed out, Lu emphasized mind cultivation in the practice of self-cultivation while criticizing the Cheng-Zhu school's rationalistic study of the principles of things. Lu's moral idealism had a strong influence on Wang Yangming as well.

60 The ideal of "becoming a sage like Yao or Shun" is based on the *Mencius*, 6A: 2, 2A: 6, and 6A: 6.

61 For this part of Lu's philosophy of the mind, consult *Xiangshan quanji* (complete works of Lu Xiangshan), 1:3b-4a and 1:6b; see also Chan (1963b, 574–75).

62 The full text reads,

> [Mencius:] A person without the heart-mind of compassion is not human; a person without the heart-mind of shame and dislike is not human; a person without the heart-mind of courtesy and modesty is not human; and a person without the heart-mind of right and wrong is not human... All human beings have these Four Beginnings of virtue just as they have their four limbs. For anyone possessing the Four Beginnings to neglect his own potentials is to destroy himself. (*Mencius*, 2A: 6, my translation; see also Lau 1970, pp. 82–83)

63 E. Y. J. Chung (2020, introductory chapter) discusses more details on Hagok's interpretation of Wang's thought regarding innate knowledge and innate ability.

64 See notes 24 above.

65 This essay is titled "Yangji yangneung" (良知良能, innate knowledge and innate ability (to do good)).

66 Regarding other key examples of Hagok's coherent efforts to integrate Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming in Korea, see E. Y. J. Chung (2020, Part II-3 and Sct. II-1f of the introduction).

67 Elsewhere, I discuss a comprehensive and comparative topic on emotions in the East and West, emotions (*jeong*/*qing*) in the Chinese and Buddhist traditions, and Korean philosophical and religious perspectives. See Chung and Oh (2022), especially the introductory chapter (93 pages) and concluding chapter.

68 *Chuanxi lu*, Part I, Sec. 129, and Part III, Sec. 315; Chan (1963a, pp. 86, 244). See also Wang's "Inquiry on the *Great Learning*," Chan (1963b, pp. 664, 666).

69 This was also due to Hagok's own concern with being politically purged by the Joseon dynasty. For more etails on this interesting historical topic, see n. 28 and E. Y. J. Chung (2020, pp. 4–5 (Hagok's reputation), pp. 6–13 (Hagok's biography), 15, 37, 94n.132, 107n.344, 279n.365, 286n.410).

[70] Some prominent thinkers already spoke out passionately against this criticism. For example, David Hume [1740] (Hume [1740] 1978) proclaimed reason as "the slave of the passions." We also know G. W. F. Hegel's eloquent saying (Hegel 1956), that there could be no great accomplishment in the world "without passion."

[71] For my discussion of the Korean Buddhist ethics and spirituality of emotions according to two eminent monks, Wonhyo and Jinul, see Chung and Oh (2022, Scts. 3c and 4c of the introductory chapter).

[72] See Smith [1875] (Smith [1875] 2009, pp. 10–13 (Sct. I, Chps. I and II), pp. 345–49 (Sct. II, Chp. III)).

[73] Slote emphasizes this point in Chapter 5 ("many roles of empathy") of his new book, *Between Psychology and Philosophy: East-West Themes and Beyond* (Slote 2020, pp. 61–92).

[74] This partly concurs with Solomon's contemporary theory that (moral) emotions are or based on rational (moral) judgements (Solomon 1995b, pp. 253, 276).

[75] For this particular theory and ethics of emotions, see Solomon (1993, 1995a, 2001).

[76] For an in-depth comparative discussion of this topic, see Chung and Oh (2022, Chp. 1 (introduction: emotion, East and West), Sct. 1a (theories of emotions) and Sct. 1d (diversity of emotions)).

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