



# The Heart of Compassion in *Mengzi* 2A6

Dobin Choi<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This essay examines the structural position of Mengzi's 孟子 heart of compassion (*ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心) within his theoretical goal of teaching moral self-cultivation. I first investigate KIM Myeong-seok's account that views *ceyin zhi xin* as a higher cognitive emotion with a concern-based construal. I argue that Kim's conclusion is not sufficiently supported by the text of the *Mengzi*, but is also tarnished by the possibility of constructing a noncognitivist counter-theory of *ceyin zhi xin*. Instead, I suggest that David Hume's causation-based approach to sentiment provides an alternative route to reach the theoretical core of Mengzi's *ceyin zhi xin*. People's uniform moral sentiment as the effect of mental causation implies that there is a natural cause universally engraved in the human heart. As Mengzi's practical teaching of moral self-cultivation begins with recognizing this heart of compassion, his focus is placed not upon the characteristics of the expressed emotion, but upon the universal presence of its natural cause in the human heart which demonstrates our moral potential to care for others.

**Keywords** Heart of compassion · *Ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心 · Moral sentiment  
Moral self-cultivation

## 1 Mengzi's *Ceyin Zhi Xin*

The heart of compassion (*ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心) is the bedrock of Mengzi's 孟子 theory of moral cultivation. This heart substantiates his thesis of the inherent

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✉ Dobin CHOI  
dobinphil@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, The University of Iowa, 572 English Philosophy Building, Iowa City, IA 52242, USA

goodness of human nature (*xing shan* 性善) against such doctrines that assess human nature as either neutral in value, or changeable by circumstances, or variable from one person to another.<sup>1</sup> People could become not good for various reasons, such as poor surroundings, deficient goods, and political oppression, but these do not suffice to deny one's inherent natural potential to become good.<sup>2</sup> Mengzi's belief in our good moral potentials corresponds to his belief that "all humans have a heart that cannot bear others' suffering (*burenren zhi xin* 不忍人之心)" (*Mengzi* 2A6; my translation). Our universal possession of *burenren zhi xin* is demonstrated by cases of our uniform expression of an emotion of compassion. Imagining seeing a baby about to fall into a well, we would spontaneously feel "the heart of alarm and compassion (*chuti ceyin zhi xin* 怵惕惻隱之心)" (*Mengzi* 2A6). This heart is aroused neither from our relationship to the baby's parents nor from our desires for reward and fame. With no external cause to arouse such a uniform emotion, Mengzi concludes that *ceyin zhi xin* represents what is unique in human nature and becomes a natural indicator for one's humaneness.<sup>3</sup> In Mengzi's teaching of moral self-cultivation, the recognition of the heart of compassion is the initial step toward achieving the supreme virtue of benevolence (*ren* 仁).<sup>4</sup>

Mengzi's teaching, however, sparsely depicts the characteristics of this heart of compassion. The exact phrase of "*ceyin zhi xin*" appears only five times throughout the *Mengzi*, and all are connected with "the sprout (*duan* 端) of benevolence" (*Mengzi* 2A6, 6A6). Similar affections in other chapters—King Xuan's 宣 compassion toward an ox and a Mohist's familial affection (*Mengzi* 1A7, 3A5)—do not offer much help, as they present the same level of information as the compassionate feeling upon seeing a baby in danger. Hence, to figure out what the heart of compassion actually is in Mengzi's mind, it is inevitable to adopt an auxiliary framework that enables us to enlarge the conceptual range regarding this heart.

As *ceyin zhi xin* is expressed and perceived as an emotion of compassion, highly developed contemporary emotion theories can provide relevant insight to delineate what *ceyin zhi xin* is. In this regard, relying on Roberts's theory of emotions as concern-based

<sup>1</sup> Gaozi 告子 claims the neutral value of human nature, saying "human nature is neither good nor not good," whereas others assume the changeability of human nature by environmental influences, saying that "human nature can become good, and it can become not good" (*Mengzi* 6A6; in this essay, I will mainly use Bryan Van Norden's translation of the *Mengzi* [Van Norden 2008], unless otherwise noted). Moreover, there could be multi-valued human natures from their origins: "there are natures that are good, and there are natures that are not good" (*Mengzi* 6A6). Irene Bloom wisely dubs each as "narrow biologism," "strong environmentalism," and "strong inegalitarianism" (Bloom 1997: 35–37).

<sup>2</sup> Mengzi says, "As for what they are inherently, they can become good... As for their becoming not good, this is not the fault of their potential" (*Mengzi* 6A6). He also reports the external influence that renders people not good: "In years of plenty, most young men are gentle; in years of poverty, most young men are violent. It is not that the potential that Heaven confers on them varies like this. They are like this because of what sinks and drowns their hearts" (*Mengzi* 6A7).

<sup>3</sup> Mengzi articulates, "If one is without the heart of compassion, one is not human" (*Mengzi* 2A6). In *Mengzi* 6A8, Mengzi admits that someone could become not human when losing the heart (also see 4B28, 6A10). In this essay, I use the phrases "*ceyin zhi xin*" and its translation "the heart of compassion" interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> In teaching the method of extension for cultivating *ren*, Mengzi grants that King Xuan's 宣 compassionate heart toward a sacrificial ox is sufficient to become a true king, which necessarily demands his accomplished *ren* (*Mengzi* 1A7).

construals, KIM Myeong-seok claims that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* is best explained as one of the “higher cognitive emotions” (Kim 2010: 410). He seeks the essence of *ceyin zhi xin* as an emotion from its cognitive part that construes the related situations of its intentional object, rather than its emotive content of painfulness.<sup>5</sup> However, we also see that given the central role of *ceyin zhi xin* for our *active* moral self-cultivation in Mengzi’s teaching, its theoretical core seems to be placed beyond a *responsive* emotion of compassion. An emotion of compassion certainly confirms this heart, but this does not entail that the essential role of *ceyin zhi xin* is necessarily derived from its characteristics as an emotion, regardless of whether they are mainly cognitive or noncognitive.

In this essay, I reconsider Mengzi’s *ceyin zhi xin* to argue that its essence resides not in its state as a cognitive emotion but in its demonstration of the natural moral pattern in the human mind. After discussing the limits of Kim’s emotion-based account of *ceyin zhi xin*, I propose a cause-focused naturalistic account as its alternative. In the first section, by examining the relation between the spontaneity of emotion and the motivation of action—perhaps involved in “the heart of alarm and compassion”—I argue that Kim’s attempt to divorce their connection is unnecessary, but takes the risk of misrepresenting Mengzi’s intention. Next, I show that Kim’s argument based on a cognitive theory of emotion is *insufficient* to pronounce that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* is a higher cognitive emotion. The limited instances of *ceyin zhi xin* in the text of the *Mengzi* not only render Kim’s argument inductive yet with insufficient samples, but also allow us to build a noncognitive account of *ceyin zhi xin* as an emotion with no constraint.

Lastly, I argue that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* resides in its being the natural mental cause of compassion, aside from its cognitive or noncognitive characteristics as an emotion. To provide an auxiliary framework for this cause-focused view, I refer to David Hume’s (1711–1776) sentiment-based theory of virtue, which would be the best companion to aid us in revealing the inner structure of Mengzi’s thought regarding *ceyin zhi xin*. While contemporary emotion theorists are principally interested in illuminating what an emotion is rather than its relation to morality, Hume considers “sentiment” from a moral perspective in association with human nature to answer the question of how we determine some character traits as virtues.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, we should note that modern Hume aimed to construct a scientific inquiry into morality, which takes sentiments as the observable effects in the causal process of perception. By contrast, given Mengzi’s aim to influence people to cultivate virtue from their recognition of *ceyin zhi xin*, its essence is rather found in the

<sup>5</sup> Relying on such references as Paul Ekman’s “affect program” and Robert Roberts’s theory of emotion as “concern-based construal,” Kim argues: “(1) *ceyin zhi xin* is primarily construing another being’s misfortune with sympathetic concern, and (2) the painfulness of *ceyin zhi xin* comes from this concern-based construal of the object of one’s compassion” (Kim 2010: 407).

<sup>6</sup> To represent both the moral and emotive quality of manifested *ceyin zhi xin*, I take “(moral) sentiment” among other varied terms such as emotion, feeling, passion, affection, and so forth. This choice of “sentiment” aims to: (1) underscore the parallel structure of Mengzi’s practical theory of moral cultivation with Hume’s sentiment-based theory of moral evaluation; (2) refrain from relying upon “emotion,” which is subject to epistemic and psychological discussion rather than moral discourse; and (3) conform to contemporary “moral sentimentalism.” The aptness of using “sentiment” for Mengzi’s practical teaching is indirectly supported by Antti Kauppinen’s assessment of the “two main attractions of [moral] sentimentalism,” which are “making sense of the practical aspects of morality” and “finding a place for morality within a naturalistic worldview” (Kauppinen 2017). Mengzi would agree with these attractions of a sentiment-based moral theory.

natural mental cause of compassion that all moral agents can adopt as their innate moral principle for their active self-cultivation.

## 2 Spontaneity, Compassion, and Motivation

As a preliminary step to examine Kim's cognitivist account of *ceyin zhi xin*, I explore the connection between its spontaneity and motivational force. From the combined feelings of alarm and compassion in the baby example, we can assume that the force of moral motivation is proportionate to the spontaneity of the arousal of *ceyin zhi xin*. This presumption may obstruct Kim's plan for identifying its core as a higher cognitive emotion, which is less likely to be spontaneous and impulsive. Since its core should engage in moral motivation, Kim first attempts to dismiss the presumed motivational role of the heart of alarm by applying Ekman's theory of "affect programs." In this section, I argue that it is unnecessary to be concerned with the motivational force of the heart of alarm since the spontaneity of *ceyin zhi xin* is not so tightly connected to motivating relevant moral actions. However, I show that Kim's reliance upon "affect programs" runs the risk of misrepresenting Mengzi's intention embedded in *ceyin zhi xin* for his teaching of moral cultivation.

In Mengzi's example, the startling image of a baby crawling around the edge of a well seems to amplify the significance of the heart of alarm, indicating the spontaneous arousal of *ceyin zhi xin*, especially in moral motivation. Perhaps, one's feeling of alarm upon seeing the baby in danger could immediately propel one to run toward it. Likewise, King Xuan's spontaneous feeling of compassion upon seeing a sacrificial ox could have prompted him to spare it, and a person's quickly covering his parents' corpses could be influenced by his spontaneous compassion for them. Our common sense also seems to show that motivational forces are to some extent in proportion to the spontaneity of moral feelings: the more spontaneous one's emotional response is, the faster one would act with certainty.

Regarding the heart's spontaneous reactions described in the *Mengzi*, SHUN Kwong-loi suggests that they are: (1) "not guided by ulterior motives but come directly from the heart/mind," (2) "lead one to see what is proper in an immediate context of action," and (3) "guide one's future behavior or behavior in other contexts" (Shun 1997: 140). The first two points are inferable from the *Mengzi*. Mengzi's confident exclusion of other ulterior motives in the spontaneous arousal of compassion toward the baby in danger evinces that *ceyin zhi xin* is a direct response from the heart. Also, King Xuan's immediate act of sparing the ox out of his compassion convinces us that one's emotional response directs one to a proper action. However, the last point about the spontaneous feelings' role of guiding future behavior stretches beyond available textual support. Shun seems to overemphasize the competence of spontaneous feelings in action guidance. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Kim's criticism of Shun's point regarding the motivational function of spontaneous feelings is adequately laid out. Charging Shun with confusing "the spontaneity of such reactions as alarm" with "the purity of motive in one's compassion for that baby," Kim attempts to show that "those spontaneous responses...cannot contribute to the motivational

purity of compassion” (Kim 2010: 415).<sup>7</sup> By dismissing the role of spontaneity in moral motivation, Kim aims to locate the motivational force solely at the compassionate—but cognitive—part of *ceyin zhi xin*.

Though I do not think that Shun seeks what Kim calls “the motivational purity” only in the spontaneous part, for further discussion it is worthwhile to examine Kim’s argument for substantiating the impotence of the spontaneous part of *ceyin zhi xin* for moral motivation.<sup>8</sup> For his cognitivist project, Kim distinguishes the heart of alarm from that of compassion in the instance of *ceyin zhi xin*, and treats the former merely as a prelinguistic response through one’s environment-specific psychological mechanisms.<sup>9</sup> Relying on “affect programs”—which are “adaptive responses to events that have a particular ecological significance for the organism” (Griffith 1997, in Kim 2010: 414)—Kim deems one’s heart of alarm as “the expression of affect programs naturally encoded in mature human beings in ancient China” (Kim 2010: 414). By attributing the spontaneity of emotion to locally constructed affect programs, he aims to claim that only the compassionate part of *ceyin zhi xin* would account for the *natural* potentials for moral motivation, universally embedded in human nature. As a price for achieving this aim, however, Kim’s cognitive project has to grant that the heart of alarm is correlated not with universal human nature, but with the singular psychological mechanisms uniquely embedded in the particular individuals of a certain era and area. While assigning the motivational force to the compassionate part is permissible, Kim’s reinterpretation of the heart of alarm is inadmissible for an apt reconfiguration of Mengzi’s moral theory.

There would be no necessary connection between the hearts of alarm and compassion, not because the one is derived from singular affect programs, but because *chuti ceyin zhi xin* can be a mere juxtaposition of two different feelings. The dramatic example of the baby in danger might have enhanced the presumed correlation between surprise and compassion, but this impression does not demonstrate that one’s astonishment necessarily accompanies one’s heart of compassion. In his other examples of *ceyin zhi xin*, Mengzi leaves no indication about the necessary connections between these two hearts, as well as between its spontaneity and motivational force. Rather, his repeated emphasis on gentlemen’s reflecting on the heart implies that their deliberated hearts of compassion can bring about strong moral motivation.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, it is plausible to think that for Mengzi the primary

<sup>7</sup> Kim represents Shun’s view above as follows: “The motivational purity of one’s compassion for the baby—in the sense that it is not tainted by one’s selfish desires to take advantage of one’s act of rescuing the baby—comes from the purported suddenness or spontaneity of one’s compassionate response to the endangered baby accompanied by one’s alarm and surprise in the situation” (Kim 2010: 414).

<sup>8</sup> Shun’s instances of “guiding one’s future behavior” show that he is relatively not concerned with motivational purity in discussing the heart’s spontaneity. Shun brings up the case of a beggar who would not accept food given with contempt in *Mengzi* 6A10. The beggar’s denial is ascribed to the spontaneous arousal of his heart of aversion toward the given contempt. Considering the motivational role of spontaneous reactions, Shun interprets this instance as follows: “The passage ... is geared to lead the audience to see that accepting the offer is improper in the same way that accepting the food given with abuse is, and thereby to motivate the audience not to so act in political context” (Shun 1997: 141). From this remark, it is difficult to draw a belief that Shun confuses emotional spontaneity with motivational purity.

<sup>9</sup> Kim pronounces that “Mengzi’s first sprout consists of two parts: spontaneous reactions of alarm and surprise (*chuti*) and some sort of painful feeling (*ceyin*) at the sight of the baby falling into a well” (Kim 2010: 421).

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Mengzi’s teaching of “preserving the heart (*cunxin* 存心)” and its implication of acting based on the preserved heart would indicate his belief that a well-examined sentiment can have a motivational force (*Mengzi* 4B28).

motivational source is the content of compassion rather than the degree of its spontaneity. We are also motivated to act by reflective and moderate compassion after deliberation.<sup>11</sup> Given that both spontaneous and deliberate compassions can motivate moral actions, it is not necessary to dismiss the role of the heart of alarm in moral motivation.

This disengagement of motivational force from the spontaneity of sentiments has already been speculated by Hume's empirical observation on sentiments and passions. Though he ascribes motivational force only to passions, he rarely counts on their spontaneity—provided its commensurability to Hume's notion of passion's *violence*—for their motivational roles.<sup>12</sup> Hume employs a common-sense distinction between calm and violent passions but does not assume that they have different capacities in motivation.<sup>13</sup> Violent passions can greatly influence the motive of the will, but calm passions—best represented by the “sentiment of approbation” that assesses morality—certainly motivate actions.<sup>14</sup> It is a common error, according to Hume, to think that only one kind of passion motivates.<sup>15</sup> Given that both calm and violent passions motivate, therefore, it is evident that “passions influence not the will in proportion to their violence” (Hume 2000: 2.3.4.1).

In fact, those who ascribe motivational forces to reason observe the cases where calm passions motivate. Calm passions are often confounded with reason because they “[tho’ they be real passions,] produce little emotion in the mind” and “cause no disorder in the soul” like reason (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.8). It seems admissible to confuse the effects of calm passions with those of reason, given that calm passions are “more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling,” and that reason and passion rarely oppose each other in directing actions (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.8).<sup>16</sup> By contrast, violent passions can form the motives for immediate actions regardless of their propriety to given situations. For example, my fierce resentment, a violent passion after receiving any injury from another, might make me “desire his evil and punishment, independent of all considerations of pleasure and advantage to myself” (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.9). However,

<sup>11</sup> I borrow “reflective” from Hume’s terminology. He views passions as “reflective” kinds of impressions that “proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or interposition of its idea” (Hume 2000: 2.1.1.1). In this essay all quotations from Hume 2000 are cited by book, part, section, and paragraph numbers). While the immediate reflective impression corresponds to Mengzi’s spontaneous *ceyin zhi xin* and Hume’s *violent* passion, both calm passion and moderate *ceyin zhi xin* can be regarded as a reflective impression proceeding through the interposition of ideas.

<sup>12</sup> Hume famously declares against rationalists that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will” (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.1).

<sup>13</sup> Hume takes advantage of a traditional but “vulgar” view on passions that they are divided into “two kinds, viz. the calm and the violent,” though he believes that “this division is far from being exact” (Hume 2000: 2.1.1.3).

<sup>14</sup> Hume’s calm passion is exemplified by “the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition and external objects” (Hume 2000: 2.1.1.3). This category of calm passions also involves his moral sentiment that defines virtue—“whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation” (Hume 1998b: Appx.1.3, original emphasis. In this essay all quotations from Hume 1998b are cited by section and paragraph numbers). For Hume, the sense of beauty is nothing but sentiment, since “[b]eauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them” (Hume 1985: 230). In like manner, virtues, so-called “moral beauty” (Hume 2000: 3.2.1.8), are “compar’d to sounds, colors, heat and cold, which ... are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind” (Hume 2000: 3.1.1.26).

<sup>15</sup> Hume believes that it is a “common error” to ascribe “the direction of the will entirely to one of these principles [of calm and violent passions], and supposing the other has no influence” (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.10).

<sup>16</sup> Hume claims, “’tis impossible that reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions” (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.7). However, he suggests two exceptions where passion and reason oppose each other: “A passion can never ... be call’d unreasonable, but when founded on a false supposition, or when it chuses means insufficient for the design’d end” (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.7).

this does not mean that the impulsive action caused by a violent passion is always inappropriate, as it can also indicate a proper direction for action more quickly.

Hume's distinction between calm and violent passions can be applied to Mengzi's combined hearts of alarm and compassion. If the feeling of alarm prevails in one's heart, the accompanying compassion would be regarded as violent; otherwise, it would remain calm, as in Hume's moral sentiment. A sudden feeling of compassion toward the baby in danger can be considered violent, but it is still able to moderate into a calm compassion after the baby's rescue or one's ceasing to imagine such a scene. Taking Hume's perspective as an alternative, we can suggest some other aspects of the spontaneous and compassionate parts of *ceyin zhi xin*.<sup>17</sup> First, the degree of its spontaneity does not critically influence our motivation for moral actions, given Hume's dismissal of the impact of passion's violence in motivation. The spontaneity of *ceyin zhi xin* is not necessarily associated with moral motivation, and both violent and calm *ceyin zhi xin* can motivate proper actions in given situations. Second, considering that by "strength of mind" Hume means "the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent," we can still entrust the significance of reflective and deliberated *ceyin zhi xin* with a crucial role in moral cultivation without losing its sentiment-based motivational force (Hume 2000: 2.3.3.10). In other words, *ceyin zhi xin* is linked respectively with the spontaneous arousal as well as with the subsequent moral actions, but there is no necessary connection between these two components.

This reinterpretation of *ceyin zhi xin*'s spontaneity renders Kim's adoption of the affect programs pointless. With the cases of spontaneous emotional responses, I believe, Mengzi intended to indicate more effectively the *universal* presence of the *natural* programs for morality—the four sprouts—in the human heart, and not to spotlight their inevitable association with spontaneous arousal. This theoretical design of Mengzi, however, is disintegrated by Kim's ascription of spontaneity to the *particular* reactions from the affect programs of those who lived in different times and places. Affect programs, as Kim remarks, could be naturally formulated in us through an empirical process, but this merely means that organisms are naturally capable of developing their affect programs by seeking adaptive advantages in their local conditions. Kim's application of environment-specific affect programs—evolved to respond more spontaneously to critical perceptual stimuli for survival—makes *ceyin zhi xin*'s spontaneity no longer integrated with what humans universally possess by nature for morality. Thus, Kim's account based on affect programs cannot avoid a conflict with Mengzi's intention to allocate our moral potentials to the *natural* programs universally installed in our hearts.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the heart of alarm is neither a necessary constituent for *ceyin zhi xin* nor the primary component that motivates our actions. To understand the

<sup>17</sup> This distinction between calm (deliberate) and violent (spontaneous) *ceyin zhi xin* does not necessarily correspond to the distinction between the cognitivist and noncognitivist aspects of emotion. As cognitivist theories of emotion view the nature of emotion in terms of the "cognitions" underlying emotion—described by such terms as belief, appraisal, judgment, propositional attitude, and so forth—they would also regard both violent and spontaneous *ceyin zhi xin* as cognitive. However, Hume's and Mengzi's distinctions of sentiment's characteristics are established at a different level of the cognitive and noncognitive division regarding emotion.

<sup>18</sup> Hume also refers to the natural programs in the mind for explicating *original* passions. For Hume, an original passion of benevolence can be regarded as "an arbitrary and original instinct implanted in our nature" (Hume 2000: 2.2.7.1).

theoretical core of Mengzi's *ceyin zhi xin*, there are no reasons for distinguishing its spontaneous arousal from the content of compassion as well as assuming the sway of the affect programs in the particular minds, which collides with Mengzi's emphasis on natural moral programs in our hearts.

### 3 Criticism on Kim's Cognitive Account of *Ceyin Zhi Xin*

Understanding *ceyin zhi xin* as a calm passion discourages a cognitivist project that hopes to see the essence of Mengzi's first sprout primarily involve a cognitive judgment. Even when the impulsive heart of alarm is removed from Mengzi's example, the heart of compassion can still be considered as a calm but noncognitive passion. Furthermore, if we agree with Hume's view, *ceyin zhi xin* as a calm passion can be confounded with the products of reason, such as a judgment. Contrary to Kim's plan, therefore, dismissing the necessity of spontaneous arousal from the instances of *ceyin zhi xin* does not directly lead us to consider it as "a kind of vicarious knowledge or perception of the suffering of another sentient being combined with a judgment" (Kim 2010: 413). One's particular feeling of compassion could imply an evaluative judgment about a miserable situation, and this judgment could influence the will to act in a certain manner to resolve the source of one's painfulness. These plausible facts, however, do not straightforwardly indicate that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* resides in its state as a higher cognitive emotion, judgment, or knowledge. In this section, I will examine (1) Kim's overall argumentative structure, (2) the truth of his empirical premise, and (3) the possibility of constructing a noncognitivist account of *ceyin zhi xin* with the same argumentative methodology as his. This examination does not aim to present a counter noncognitivist account but to show the limits of taking theories of emotion as the auxiliary framework for inquiring into *ceyin zhi xin*.

Kim finds his framework from Roberts's theory of emotions as concern-based construals. This theory of emotion first reduces the variety of our emotional arousals to the characterization of "a construal," which encompasses a large group of mental states from perceptions to concepts. Within this principal condition of making construals, an additional condition, "concern-based," invigorates the intensity of vibrant emotions.<sup>19</sup> If Mengzi's descriptions about *ceyin zhi xin* involve these requisites of concerns and construals, Roberts's concern-based construal theory of emotion could allow us to grasp more precisely what it is. Following this line of thought, Kim seeks the core of *ceyin zhi xin* in its being a higher cognitive emotion as a concern-based construal. However, I believe that his conclusive remark is not sufficiently supported.

<sup>19</sup> A passage taken by Kim aptly delineates the outline of Roberts's concern-based construal theory: "A construal ... is a mental event or state in which one thing is grasped in terms of something else. The 'in terms of' relation can have as its terms any of the following: A perception, a thought, an image, a concept .... All such synthetic crossings of percepts, images, thoughts, and concepts are construals; only some of these, however, are emotions. My formula is that emotions are concern-based construals or ... verisimilar concernful construals—that is, construals imbued, flavored, colored, drenched, suffused, laden, informed, or permeated with concern and possessing a certain verisimilitude ..." (Roberts 1988: 190–191; in Kim 2010: 421–422).



Kim's overall argument can be encapsulated as follows:

- (A) It is not arguable that *ceyin zhi xin* is compassion and thus an *emotion*.
- (P) All (most) instances that exemplify *ceyin zhi xin* in the text of the *Mengzi* can be interpreted to involve a person's concerns and construals.
- (C) Given that such exemplifications would be best explicated by Roberts's concern-based construal theory of emotion, the core of *ceyin zhi xin* as emotion resides in its state as a higher cognitive emotion.

If this simple reformulation does not distort the insight of Kim's argument, we should consider a few points regarding its argumentative structure.

First of all, it is notable that the truth of C is not logically entailed by P, regardless of P's truth. In fact, this argument is a kind of inductive reasoning. Simply put, given the assumption A, Kim seems to believe that his interpretive vindication of P leads to true C. Aside from P's truth, however, advancing from P to C is too abrupt with the limited instances of *ceyin zhi xin*. The three instances of compassionate feelings in *Mengzi* 1A7, 2A6, and 3A5 render Kim's inductive argument insufficient to establish C's truth securely. Moreover, merely from the attributes of *ceyin zhi xin* discoverable in *Mengzi*'s illustrations and analogies, it is difficult to confirm inductively how its core is ascribed to a concern-based construal, let alone to figure out *Mengzi*'s intention of establishing the foundation for moral cultivation upon this sentimental heart.<sup>20</sup> Given the insufficiency of this inductive reasoning, the force of Kim's argument fades away, since it merely takes a leaping advance from rejecting the significance of the spontaneous heart of alarm for moral motivation to endorsing a cognitive view of *Mengzi*'s *ceyin zhi xin* as emotion.

Second, the truth of P is still arguable, though we can be charitable to the cogency of Kim's inductive reasoning. Indeed, *Mengzi*'s examples of *ceyin zhi xin* could involve some "concerns" and "construals" about the intentional objects at the given situations. Concerns could be generated in the minds of the spectators who would see the baby in danger, King Xuan who perceived an innocent-looking ox, and the person who witnessed his parents' corpses being feasted on by insects and animals. Based on these concerns, they could make construals of the situations wherein, according to Kim, innocents would be wrongly endangered.<sup>21</sup> Such extraordinary cases might require our careful construal to figure out an appropriate action. This process, however, betrays that there are two prerequisites for assuming spectators' concern-based construals: a standard (or a source) of one's construal and power to induce one's concern. In other words, it is questionable how one determines the correctness of one's construal and what force brings about one's concern. Kim assumes that spectators already have the required knowledge for apt construal as well as desire to care for an intentional object. On seeing the baby in danger, he believes,

<sup>20</sup> We can be charitable to Kim's approach, but in theory it is unable to escape fully from the problem of induction, famously raised by Hume, who claims: "Not only our reason fails us in the discovery of the *ultimate connexion* of causes and effects, but even after experience has inform'd us of their *constant conjunction*, 'tis impossible for us to satisfy ourselves by our reason, why we shou'd extend that experience beyond those particular instances, which have fallen under our observation" (Hume 2000: 1.3.6.11; original emphasis).

<sup>21</sup> Kim believes that a "person's feeling of distress is primarily her construal of the situation as one where an innocent being is endangered, and such a construal is possible only when she is concerned about the welfare of the baby in particular or the welfare of other beings in general" (Kim 2010: 408).

spectators would take their recognition of its innocence as grounds for their construal and their natural desire to care for it as grounds for concern.<sup>22</sup>

In the text of the *Mengzi*, however, it is difficult to demonstrate this necessary conjunction of knowledge and desire, let alone the combined mental acts of “construal” based on a “concern” in one’s mind. *Mengzi* makes no remarks about the cognitive mental states of the spectators watching the baby in danger and the person who noticed his parents’ corpses being feasted on. King Xuan’s feeling of compassion might have something to do with his construal of the ox’s innocence, yet not as much as it would be invoked by an imaginative scene of an innocent person going to the execution ground. Reading the text of “innocent (*wuzui* 無罪)” as “an innocent person” could incite us to apply freely various psychological faculties—such as sympathy, empathy, imagination, and so forth—to describe the king’s mental states at the moment. However, “innocent” also stands for his description of the ox that goes to the execution ground in innocence rather than a personified image. This careful reading undercuts the reliability of Kim’s presumption that the king’s recollection of an innocent person from an ox’s frightened face attests to an occurrence of his construal.<sup>23</sup> In short, the text of the *Mengzi* hardly supports not only one’s cognitive act of construal but also its prerequisite of one’s preliminary knowledge. Furthermore, the other prerequisite of one’s desire to care conversely reveals that *ceyin zhi xin* has a deeper natural substratum that yields our desire to care for the baby in danger, which would be more significant for *Mengzi*’s understanding of human nature.

Third, the same inductive method as Kim’s equally enables us to formulate a noncognitivist counter account of *ceyin zhi xin*. This noncognitive account—which, of course, the heart of alarm would strongly substantiate—can embrace the significance of physiological changes described in the text, such as the sudden sweat on the forehead of the

<sup>22</sup> Kim remarks: “What is at the core of one’s compassion for the baby is one’s construal of the situation as one in which an innocent sentient being is endangered. As *Mengzi* clearly says .... ‘it is not the fault of the baby that it crawls toward a well [and eventually drowns in it]’ (*Mengzi* 3A5), and anyone who sees the situation this way and cares about the welfare of the baby cannot bear (*bürèn* 不忍), or would find it painful (*yīn* 隱), to let this disaster happen” (Kim 2010: 418). However, I am not sure that spectators in *Mengzi* 2A6 should be supposed to have knowledge about the baby’s innocence, as described in *Mengzi* 3A5.

<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, most translators anthropomorphize *wuzui* in *Mengzi* 1A7 as “an innocent person,” but this approach takes the risk of an inconsistent interpretation. The phrase *wuzui* appears three times. The first two appear in the king’s utterances, described by *Mengzi*, (“*wú bürèn qí húsì, ruò wúzui ér jù sǐdì* 吾不忍其黷，若無罪而就死地”), and the last is *Mengzi*’s restatement of them (“*wáng ruò yīn qí wúzui ér jù sǐdì* 王若隱其無罪而就死地”). In many translations, the former *wuzui* is understood as a personified image, but the latter as modifying the ox’s appearance. James Legge translates the former as “I cannot bear its frightened appearance, as if it were an innocent person going to the place of death,” but the latter as “If you felt pained by its being led without guilt to the place of death” (Legge 2011: 139–140). So do D. C. Lau’s and Bloom and Ivanhoe’s (Lau 1970: 55; Bloom and Ivanhoe 2011: 7–8). Van Norden’s translation is consistent, but blurs its exact sense by translating both as “like an innocent going to the execution ground” (Van Norden 2008: 8–9). Given that the third is merely *Mengzi*’s rephrasing of the king’s utterances, it is difficult to find any contextual or grammatical reasons for reading only the first two *wuzui* phrases from a personified viewpoint. I believe that an imaginary personification is redundantly put into the translations, even though WANG Fuzhi 王夫之 takes this reading of personification (Wang 1975: 514). Many discussions on the method of extension heavily rely on the image of an imaginative “innocent person” who might have walked to the execution ground without guilt. This translation would render us to assume that the king’s heart is already sensitive and sympathetic to the same humans, or that he would “have heard a story in the past about an innocent man wrongly put to death” and be “recalling his memory in youth of being wrongly punished by his father” (Kim 2010: 417). I am concerned not with the credibility of these inconsistent translations, but with adopting the text’s obscure part—about whether or not the king recalls the image of an innocent person—as critical evidence to advocate a theoretical account of *ceyin zhi xin*.

person who witnessed his parents' corpses.<sup>24</sup> Given the descriptions about the primitive physiological changes in Mengzi's examples, including the heart of alarm, Jesse Prinz's embodied appraisal theory of emotion would be a good alternative to Roberts's cognitivist theory of emotion for another auxiliary frame to explicate the heart of compassion as an emotion. As Prinz's aim is to demonstrate that "emotions are perceptions of patterned changes in the body. More informally, emotions are gut reactions," his view can embrace such bodily reactions as sweating, a phenomenon from the function of autonomic nervous system, in that person's feeling an emotion of compassion (Prinz 2004: viii).

Moreover, Mengzi's excuse for King Xuan's exchanging the ox for a sheep also indicates that *ceyin zhi xin* is distant from a higher cognitive emotion. The king's exchange was praised as "the technique for benevolence (*renshu* 仁術)" mainly because he cut off the direct perception of a sacrificial animal to maintain the ritual (*Mengzi* 1A7).<sup>25</sup> In this case, the king had only to refrain from perceiving the animal directly, as the arousal of *ceyin zhi xin* toward animals is confined to our direct encounters with them to perceive their sameness as us in being alive.<sup>26</sup> Contextually, this means that a stage of desympathizing, rather than active sympathizing with the intentional objects, is sometimes required both for proper social practice and individual moral cultivation. Seeing live animals and hearing their cries prevent gentlemen from eating their flesh because recollecting such direct perceptions gives rise to excessive and unnecessary instances of *ceyin zhi xin*. This reading further means that Mengzi views the spontaneous arousal of the heart of compassion as unavoidable to some extent due to the original constitution of human nature. If a stage of cognitive construal were indispensable to feeling this heart of compassion, well-cultivated gentlemen could actively avoid its arousal by construing the scene at the kitchen as inevitable for their family's survival and rather appreciate animals' service for public good.<sup>27</sup> In short, this "technique of benevolence" implies that one's compassion toward animals is associated not with a cognitive construal, but with a direct perception before a cognitive stage. Thus, the king's compassion toward the ox also supports that *ceyin zhi xin* is aroused as the heart's spontaneous response before actuating our cognitive construal.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Mengzi only describes physical conditions: "Sweat broke out on the survivors' foreheads," and "what was inside their hearts broke through to their countenance" (*Mengzi* 3A5). This person's "inside heart (*zhong xin* 中心)" seems to be a fundamental origin of emotions and physiological changes, but it is not necessarily extended to involve "the construal of the situation in question as one in which one's parents—not merely unconscious lumps of flesh—are eaten by animals and insects" (Kim 2010: 421).

<sup>25</sup> Mengzi seeks the reason for the permissibility of the king's exchange from his avoidance of direct perception: "You saw the ox, and had not seen the sheep." Mengzi's following remark about why "gentlemen keep their distance from the kitchen" also implies the significance of controlling direct perception to prevent excessive arousal of emotions (*Mengzi* 1A7).

<sup>26</sup> ZHU Xi's 朱熹 comment on *Mengzi* 1A7 is worth noting: "Now, humans are the same as animals in being alive, but are different categories of things. Hence, we use animals for rituals, and our heart that does not bear their suffering applies *only as far as they are seen and heard*" (Van Norden 2008: 9; my emphasis). This categorical classification of human beings is more important than it appears because it is deeply associated with the Confucian teaching of differentiated love.

<sup>27</sup> Kim seems to view this passage in this way: "The nobleman in *Mengzi* 1A:7 controls his compassion for the suffering of some animals by considering the larger benefit that consuming their meat will bring about for him and his fellow human beings" (Kim 2014: 53). However, the nobleman's capacity to control his compassion hardly correspond to Mengzi's advice to keep one's distance from the kitchen.

<sup>28</sup> I believe that the most economical approach to restore Mengzi's intentions is to allow the least intervention of extensive implications that go beyond the text. To identify *ceyin zhi xin* with "a judgment what is the right thing to do in that situation," we need to move too far away from Mengzi's descriptions, in which *ceyin zhi xin* is mostly considered as a responsive compassionate feeling (Kim 2010: 413).

#### 4 A Cause-Focused View of *Ceyin Zhi Xin*

Given the structural significance of *ceyin zhi xin* in Mengzi's practical theory for moral cultivation, it is admissible that we can assess an account of *ceyin zhi xin* from its suitability to represent the theoretical function of *ceyin zhi xin*. As we have seen, Kim's cognitive account basically treats it as the emotive outcome of one's "concern-based construal of the situation in question," and structurally presupposes a situation in need of our construal, in which "the welfare of an innocent being is threatened" (Kim 2010: 421). However, this interpretative structure seems to invert the priorities that Mengzi aimed to emphasize with his examples of *ceyin zhi xin*. They are designed not so much to show the necessity of our proper construal of the given circumstances as to stress our natural capacity to feel compassion regardless of situational factors. Mengzi would have placed endangered situations in his examples to validate efficiently the natural placement of moral potentials in the heart rather than to provide the sources for cognitive construals. Moreover, Mengzi's priority of our natural moral potentials is evidently demonstrated by our natural affections toward parents and family members, the foundation of Confucian differentiated love, but such emotions do not seem to require a stage of construal.<sup>29</sup>

*Ceyin zhi xin* is structurally far-reaching as Mengzi's moral foundation for self-cultivation rather than as an emotion. Its core should indicate the origin of *ceyin zhi xin*'s significance for moral practice that Mengzi would have had in mind.<sup>30</sup> Thus, investigating the essence of *ceyin zhi xin* requires not a theory of emotions showing how compassion as an emotion is best explicated, but a theory of virtue particularly founded upon human nature and moral sentiment, like Hume's sentiment-based theory of virtue. In other words, before discussing the cognitive or noncognitive quality of

<sup>29</sup> One of the major challenges to Kim's cognitivist view is the natural affection toward parents and family members. Does this affection always contain a cognitive construal? Though he seems aware of this problem, he simply interprets the origin of funerals in *Mengzi* 3A5 as containing concern-based construal with no further explication (see Kim 2010: 419–421).

<sup>30</sup> This essay focuses on Kim's account of *ceyin zhi xin* because it devotes an entire article to clarify what it really is. Other commentators seem to settle this heart's conceptual boundary for their discussions on different issues. For instance, Liu Xiusheng identifies *ceyin zhi xin* with "sympathy"—which involves a psychological capacity to communicate with others' sentiments such as Hume suggested in his *Treatise*—for an epistemological approach to Mengzi, so that the virtue of *ren* becomes "cultivated and thus consistent sympathy" (Liu 2003: 7). However, this reading seems too narrow, as it restricts the supreme virtue of *ren* to developed epistemic traits. David Wong treats this heart, despite its being an "innate moral feeling," as involved in "plastic and indeterminate" emotions (Wong 2002: 192). If this feeling remains indeterminate, we should summon ethical reasoning to make "further determination of the intentional object of compassion" to yield the proper and definite moral feeling (Wong 2002: 192). It seems that he would intend to give theoretical precedence to ethical reasoning over the spontaneous emotional responses in Mengzi's examples. In fact, Wong's view indirectly buttresses my causation-based structural understanding of *ceyin zhi xin* because his request of ethical reasoning can be recognized as an instruction to discern the mixed causes of a feeling to determine the proper cause for an apt moral sentiment.

It is the causal process of perception embedded in Mengzi's *ceyin zhi xin* that accounts for the origins of these various viewpoints. Kim develops an effect-based view that excavates the traits of cognition imprinted in the final effect of this mental causation, while Wong establishes a reflection-focused view that counts on our ethical reasoning which can intervene in this process, influenced by the complex causes, to bring about a desirable effect of apt moral sentiment. However, both views fundamentally require the natural infrastructure in the heart that causes not only "innate moral feeling" but also "concern" about others. Along with these views, we can construct a cause-focused view of *ceyin zhi xin* that seeks its core from its being the natural cause of compassion in the heart, similar to Hume's "primary constitution of nature" which is the fundamental but inexplicable cause of moral sentiment in the mind (Hume 2000: 2.1.7.5).

*ceyin zhi xin* as an emotion, we should figure out its exact position as the theoretical bedrock in Mengzi's teaching for moral cultivation. For this goal, I believe that Hume's approach to moral sentiment assists us in understanding *ceyin zhi xin* from an alternative viewpoint.

First of all, we should note that Hume aims to establish a new human science of morality by empirical observations about the mind. Following Newton, who discovered the explanatory principles of physical nature through empirical observations, Hume is convinced that his experimental philosophy can reveal the natural principles of the mind concerning the moral distinction between virtue and vice.<sup>31</sup> In his scientific moral inquiry, sentiments are considered as the observable effects of mental causations, from which his empirical survey induces the general principles of morals.<sup>32</sup> However, Hume's scientific mind is no more interested in elucidating the natural causes of such sentiments in the mind than in delivering a theory of self-cultivation.<sup>33</sup> Like Newton's concentration on observing the effects of natural phenomena, surveying the effects of human phenomena suffices for Hume to construct a reliable scientific moral theory with no scrutiny of their causes in the mind.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Hume's moral foundation of sentiment should be considered not as emotion *per se*, but as the observable effect of the causal process of perception.<sup>35</sup>

Hume's causation-based approach to sentiment leads us to ask a fundamental question about *ceyin zhi xin*. In the mental process of feeling compassion, would Mengzi consider *ceyin zhi xin* as the cause or the effect? To answer this question, Mengzi's philosophical goal should be taken into consideration, just as Hume's theoretical aim of proposing a scientific moral theory betrays the aspect of sentiment as the mental effect. Given Mengzi's practical goal of driving others into moral cultivation, it seems that he focuses on the natural cause of compassion engraved in the heart rather than its emotional quality. People's consistent feelings of compassion necessarily suppose that they share the same natural

<sup>31</sup> The full title of Hume's *Treatise* discloses his goal of the "science of MAN": *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (Hume 2000: Intro. 4). Also, Hume considered "the application of experimental philosophy to moral subjects" as the due course of philosophical development (Hume 2000: Intro. 7).

<sup>32</sup> Hume explicates the significance of this effect-based human science: "the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects ..." (Hume 2000: Intro. 8).

<sup>33</sup> Concerning moral inquiry, Hume writes: "It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general" (Hume 1998b: 5.17 n.19).

<sup>34</sup> Hume's effect-based scientific approach to morality distinguishes him from other British moral sense theorists, such as Hutcheson, though Hume was also listed as one of the moral sense theorists. Hutcheson assumed an innate *moral sense* in human nature—endowed by a benevolent Designer—which functions as the fundamental cause in the mind both for active approval of an object's moral quality and for motivation to act based on virtues. Hume regards this active role of moral sense, originated from its theological foundation, as less scientific. Juxtaposing Mengzi's virtue theory with Hutcheson's is a meaningful attempt at a *conceptual* comparison to show the similarities and differences in their common understanding of virtues (for an example of the comparative study between Mengzi and Hutcheson, see Mancilla 2013). However, I believe that Hume's scientific moral sense theory is a more appropriate partner of Mengzi for a clear *structural* comparison of their theoretical designs derived from the foundation of moral sentiment.

<sup>35</sup> Sentiment, the effect of mental causation, becomes the foundation for Hume's moral theory that aims "to provide a causal account of moral evaluation without appeal to any *sui generis* moral sense" (Baillie 2000: 24).

cause in the heart.<sup>36</sup> Then, this natural cause, implying the inherent goodness of human nature, can be appointed to the general foundation for people's moral cultivation. Of course, the aroused emotions of the four sprouts function as the indicators of the universal presence of the four moral causes in the heart.

This cause-focused view of *ceyin zhi xin* has some practical merits. As Mengzi would have assumed, the universal moral cause in one's heart can form a good starting point for one's self-cultivation, especially when its presence is explicitly acknowledged through one's subjective but definite feelings.<sup>37</sup> This subjective self-recognition of human goodness through aroused moral sentiments would be more effective for guiding people into performing virtuous actions than enlightening them through emphasizing either "words" or consequential "interest" for oneself and others.<sup>38</sup> Like King Xuan's immediate act of sparing the sacrificial ox, moral sentiment would have an additional function to lead agents to perform moral actions, perhaps by the motivational force of passions that Hume has emphasized. Thus, the primary method for self-cultivation applicable to all moral agents is to preserve such innate moral causes intact for their apt manifestation into moral sentiments and actions.<sup>39</sup> If *ceyin zhi xin* is the natural cause in the heart for moral sentiment, for its preservation and manifestation agents are to ponder all the conditions relevant to their actions. Moreover, the uniform moral sentiment that agents have experienced can function as the paradigmatic standard for their ethical deliberation.

In contrast, Kim's cognitive but responsive *ceyin zhi xin* as an emotion hardly embrace its practical role as Mengzi's moral foundation, as it does not structurally request agents' active participation in self-cultivation through their reflective thinking and moral actions. Emotions are considered as the final effect of the causal process of perception. Once expressed, emotions hardly allow our active participation for their amendment. Furthermore, this cause-focused view discredits Kim's fundamental assumption that *ceyin zhi xin* is an emotion. This also means that applying a theory of emotions to the four sprouts is less reliable for elucidating their structural roles for Mengzi's goal of moral cultivation. Though the uniformly expressed emotions confirm the universal presence of the four sprouts in the human heart, they are not necessarily regarded as emotions, but rather designate the natural moral causes placed in it.

<sup>36</sup> In *Mengzi* 6A7, Mengzi shows how people's uniform sentiment of approval proves the sameness of the human heart (for a detailed analysis of this chapter, see also Choi 2018).

<sup>37</sup> In theory, I believe that this cause-focused view can evade the problem of empirical justification for the presence of such a cause, as it seems safe to assume its presence in general. In his examination on the theoretical function of Mengzi's assertion about the heart of compassion, R. A. H. King casually remarks that "the scale of reflection can be applied to Mencius not in terms of justification, but in terms of exhibiting origins" (King 2011: 279).

<sup>38</sup> In the text of the *Mengzi*, we see some motivational sources for actions other than Mengzi's source of moral sentiment: interest (*li* 利) and words (*yuan* 言). As discussed in *Mengzi* 1A1, interest can provoke one's desire to act for it, and the difference of its beneficiaries leads us to see the two doctrines that Mengzi was against. Self-interest is the motivational source for Yangists, who teach "being 'for oneself' (*weiwu* 为我)," while others' interest is the goal for Mohists, who instruct "impartial caring (*jianai* 兼爱)" (*Mengzi* 7A26). In *Mengzi* 2A2, Gaozi believes that the *words* can lead us to accomplish virtues. For a more detailed discussion about Gaozi's maxim in *Mengzi* 2A2, see Choi 2019.

<sup>39</sup> As one's sprout of benevolence can serve as a pre-established natural standard in the heart, gentlemen are distinguished from others by their "preserving the heart (*cunxin* 存心)" (*Mengzi* 4B28). Moreover, great people (*daren* 大人) do not lose "the children's hearts (*chizi zhi xin* 赤子之心)" (*Mengzi* 4B12). With these teachings Mengzi would instruct us to maintain our hearts filled with vigorous and unimpaired moral sprouts.

This cause-focused view is unwittingly supported by Kim's placement of "concern" before "construal." As we have seen, his view assumes that one's desire to care, the prerequisite for "concern," not only precedes the cognitive construal in the process of feeling compassion but also forms the motivational source for moral actions.<sup>40</sup> Insofar as one's desire to care is indispensable in the manifestation of Mengzi's first sprout both for cognitive assessment and moral motivation, it seems that the essence of *ceyin zhi xin* lies adjacent to our spontaneous desire to care for others, rather than its feature of cognitive construal.<sup>41</sup> Given that emotions are the final effect of mental causation, the traces of cognitive assessment could be printed upon them and recognized as one of their central features. However, this does not necessarily mean that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* is placed at such cognitive features imprinted in its expressed emotion. Rather, Mengzi would see that our moral potential to become good is exposed by a natural desire to care for others, which directs us again to suppose the universal moral causes in our hearts.<sup>42</sup> I believe, therefore, that the core of *ceyin zhi xin* resides in its being the heart's primary cause for moral sentiment, presumably best translated as "the pattern (*li* 理)" (*Mengzi* 6A7).<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, assuming this innate moral pattern in the heart, we can propose an adequate meaning of the heart of alarm. If one's perception of an object stimulates an emotional response more rapidly and violently, we can think that it takes the fast track in our mental infrastructure to produce the due effect of a certain emotion more swiftly. Hence, the degree of the spontaneity of one's moral sentiment possibly indicates the degree of one's proximity to the heart's original pattern, all other things being equal.<sup>44</sup> In theory, the major role of the spontaneous arousal of moral sentiment is to demonstrate the presence of the pre-established moral patterns in the heart.<sup>45</sup> In

<sup>40</sup> Kim believes that those who feel compassion would be motivated to act from their desire to care for the intentional objects: "Just as one goes to the rescue of the baby because she cares about the welfare of the baby, so the one who initially dumped his parents' bodies in a ditch comes back to bury his deceased parents because he cares for his parents even after they have passed away" (Kim 2010: 420). Kim concludes: "Since this construal is based on one's caring for the welfare of the baby, one's feeling of unbearableness should be interpreted as one's finding it hard to let the baby drown in the well rather than one's vicarious feeling of pain and fear that the drowning baby is anticipating" (Kim 2010: 421).

<sup>41</sup> Placing the core of compassion in our desires is not a strange idea to Hume, as he regards compassion as "[Pity is] a desire of happiness to another" (Hume 2000: 2.1.9.3).

<sup>42</sup> This trace of construal in emotion, though unnoticeable, would evince the heart's instrumental function to examine and reflect on the overall percepts before producing the effect of emotion.

<sup>43</sup> From the empirical observation of uniform sentiments, it is assumable that there is a *base* in the human mind for their appropriate arousal. I believe that both Mengzi and Hume ultimately rely on this natural *base* for moral sentiments. While Mengzi assumes the identical moral pattern in the heart, Hume refers to "the original constitution of the mind" (Hume 1998b: 5.3; Hume 2000: 2.1.7.5). Both function as grounds for the uniform moral sentiment in their moral systems, but they occupy different positions in each philosopher's moral theory. Mengzi takes the mental cause of compassion as the primary ground for his teaching of moral cultivation, whereas Hume regards this mental constitution as the last resort to clear the charge of "excessive skepticism" and to endorse a "more *mitigated* skepticism," which are "both durable and useful" regarding moral issues (Hume 1998a: 12.3.1).

<sup>44</sup> The original pattern in one's heart is not approachable when it is covered with "brush and weeds" (*Mengzi* 7B21), which can be interpreted as acquired mental causes that obstruct the natural arousal of moral sentiment. Perhaps the degree of the spontaneity of one's emotional arousal can be an indicator of the moral health of one's heart or the density of such brush.

<sup>45</sup> Shun's notion of "ethical predisposition" buttresses this view of seeing the essence of *ceyin zhi xin* as the heart's natural pattern. Shun assigns two roles in the ethical predispositions, or the four sprouts. They show that human beings have the abilities to be ethical and to practice the Confucian ideal. Both are related to each other: "If the ethical ideal is a realization of a direction built into these predispositions, then the predispositions are also what make people able to live up to the ideals" (Shun 1997: 139).

practice, the spontaneous arousal of one's moral feelings not only provides us with a gauge to check our hearts' healthy condition but also directs us to a mirror image of the universal pattern in the heart, discoverable by the heart's function of reflection.<sup>46</sup>

*Ceyin zhi xin* can indicate both the mental cause and the effect of emotion, which are directly connected to the beginning and the end of the whole causal process of feeling compassion.<sup>47</sup> Given Mengzi's practical goal of moral cultivation, however, it is more convincing to consider *ceyin zhi xin* as designating the naturally inscribed pattern in the heart that causes uniform moral sentiment upon perceiving intentional objects. Moral sentiment, the only noticeable general effect of the mental pattern, can function as a reliable guide for one's introspection of such inherent moral patterns and as a standard of performing moral actions. Hence, this causation-based approach to Mengzi's *ceyin zhi xin*, inspired by Hume's sentiment-based scientific inquiry into virtue and moral evaluation, suggests our distinction of the effect, the emotion of compassion (*ceyin* 惻隱), from the cause, the inherent pattern of the heart (*xin* 心).<sup>48</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

In this essay, I examined the structural position of the heart of compassion in Mengzi's moral theory, with reference to Hume's causal account of moral sentiment. The process of feeling compassion involves a causal relation in the mind, in which an expressed emotion is regarded as the effect. I argued that KIM Myeong-seok's effect-based approach to *ceyin zhi xin* is insufficient to justify its state as a higher cognitive emotion, given his reliance on inductive reasoning. Though we can charitably approve his conclusion, its reliability is tarnished by the possibility of constructing a noncognitivist theory of *ceyin zhi xin* with the same method as his. Moreover, I showed that Kim's attempt to detach the significance of "the heart of alarm" from *ceyin zhi xin* by applying environment-specific affect programs runs the risk of disregarding the practical significance of Mengzi's four sprouts. Instead, they would rather indicate the natural programs in the human heart, though the frequent and strong influences of situational factors would hinder their apt manifestation into moral sentiments. In consequence, Kim's view of *ceyin zhi xin* as a concern-based construal hardly represents its essential role for Mengzi's teaching of moral self-cultivation.

<sup>46</sup> Mengzi says that "the function of heart is to reflect," and we reflect to "get it" (*Mengzi* 6A15).

<sup>47</sup> For this reason, I take D. C. Lau's direct translation of "the heart of compassion" for *ceyin zhi xin* because literally the heart can be separated from compassion. Van Norden sees it as "the feeling of compassion," and Legge as "the feeling of commiseration."

<sup>48</sup> This cause-focused view suggests a good reason why Mengzi ultimately articulates that "the heart of compassion is benevolence" (*Mengzi* 6A6), but does not fully approve ZHU Xi's account of human nature as the *ontological* pattern or principle (*li* 理). Mengzi's four sprouts presuppose the presence of moral patterns in the heart, but this does not mean that they are necessarily characterized *ontologically*. We have yet no agreement about the characteristics of such patterns except for their manifestation through moral sentiments. This further means that there are two available approaches to these patterns: seeing them either as the *epistemic* causes of sentiments or more fundamental *ontological* causes. I believe that ZHU Xi's account of human nature as principle is concerned with the patterns' ontological dimension, whereas Korean philosopher JEONG Yak-yong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), arguing that the ancient philosophers identified human nature as moral taste (*gih* 嗜好), considers the patterns as the heart's epistemic causes for sentiments.



To our quest for the essence of Mengzi's *ceyin zhi xin*, Hume's causation-based approach raises a fundamental question about whether it is the cause or the effect in the causal process of feeling compassion. Given that Mengzi's practical goal of moral cultivation begins with recognizing this heart of compassion, I argued that his focus is not placed upon the expressed emotion, but upon the universal presence of its natural cause in the heart. For moral agents, this natural cause, recognized through their deliberation on their subjective but definite emotion of compassion, would function as both the epistemic foundation for moral development and the evaluative standard for self-examination. This cause-focused view of *ceyin zhi xin* not only accounts for the cause of our concern about others but also regards the spontaneity of compassion as a good indicator of our heart's moral health. In his teaching of *ceyin zhi xin*, Mengzi would stress our innate moral potential, which directs us to care for others before the heart's reflective function to construe the situational conditions.

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