



T'oegey's Arguments on the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

This article aims to phenomenologically examine T'oegey's arguments on the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, attempting a theoretical reconstruction through “founding” and “alterity”, so as to reveal the relations and differences between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings. On the one hand, the Four Beginnings constitute a founding substratum, on the top of which the Seven Feelings may be founded. Moreover, whereas the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings share the same assumption of alterity or intersubjectivity, they differ in their emphasis on whether *li* (理 principle) or *qi* (氣 material force) shall be prioritised. The priority of principle over material force is inherent in the notion of the Four Beginnings, while for the Seven Feelings, it is the other way around. When confronted by an “other”, one will invariably face a choice to make, in “deontological consideration of the other's interest” or “private preference”. There is an emphasis that “deontological consideration shall prevail” in the Four Beginnings, for which it is “purely good”. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings may be affected more often than not by “private desire or preference”, for which reason it will manifest the Janus faces of being both good and evil.

Keywords The Four-Seven Debate · Alterity · Founding relations · Otherness · Intersubjectivity

In the history of the Chosun Dynasty, the development of Confucianism experienced a golden time of development, in which the debate on the “Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings” (*sadan chilchǒng* 四端七情) between Yi Hwang (pen-name

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T'oegye, 1500–1570) and Ki Taesûng (pen-name Kobong, 1527–1572) had an important impact on the related discussions hereafter. This could be regarded as a groundbreaking moment Korean Confucian scholars made a leading contribution to developing the arguments made by Confucius, Mencius, and Zhu Xi. With this debate, certain moral-affective elements were introduced into Confucianism (cf. Kalton 2015; Kim 2015; Seok 2018). As one of the most famous debates in Korean Confucian thought, this Four-Seven Debate has received much attention from the scholarly community.¹ By way of comparison, this article shall more focus on examining what unique contribution to Confucianism T'oegye had made in this debate, when he was offering an exegetical reading of the original text by Mencius and Zhu Xi. T'oegye was creative in interpreting the arguments by Mencius and Zhu Xi—an interpretation which, if being judged upon from the phenomenological perspective may open up new angles for us to examine the theoretical significance of Mencius' arguments. For this very reason, this article shall examine T'oegye's arguments on the "Four Beginnings" (*sadan* 四端) and "Seven Feelings" (*chilchǒng* 七情) from two phenomenological angles, namely the "foundation relationship" and the "otherness".

1 The Difference in Terms of "Foundation Relationship"

As for the relationship between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, their first appearance in classical text was traced back to Mencius. As T'oegye argued, "in speaking of benevolence, Confucius did not itemise in full the four virtues (i.e. benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom). It was not until Mencius who began to speak of all these four in their entirety. Zisi spoke of four feelings (i.e. joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure) and not all of the seven feelings, which were not mentioned until the *Book of Rites*. The reason that they were not mentioned in entirety was not because of intellectual parsimony, but because the meanings and rationale of the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings are so intertwined that they are not distinguished from each other with absolute clarity" (Jia 1992, vol. 1, 479–480). It is, indeed, in *Mencius* when the Four Beginnings were mentioned for the first time. As Mencius argued, "The sense of compassion is the beginning of benevolence; the sense of shame the beginning of righteousness; the sense of modesty the beginning of decorum; and the sense of right and wrong the beginning of wisdom. Man possesses these four beginnings just as he possesses four limbs" (Mencius 3.6, in Mencius 1999: 73). By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings made its appearance for the first time in *The Book of Rites*. As is recorded, "What are the feelings of men? They are joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, and liking. These seven feelings

¹ Cf. Tan (2006) on the dualism of principle and material force, a topic touched upon by Kim (2007), Yoo (2012a, b, 2016, 2017), on such concepts as *mibal* and *yibal* in the debate; Ahn (2014), on the issuance of principle; Ivanhoe (2015), Walden (2015), and Glomb (2017), on the historiography and contemporary relevance of this debate.

belong to men without their learning them.” (7.19, translated by James Legge, Chen 2004, 159).

As for the difference between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, T'oegye offered an explanation:

...the distinction of the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings in the case of the feelings is similar to the difference between the original nature and the physical nature in the case of the nature. If that is so, since it is considered permissible to distinguish between principle and material force in speaking of the nature, why should it suddenly become impermissible to distinguish between principle and material force when it comes to speaking of the feelings? ... From whence do the feelings of commiseration, shame and dislike [for evil], yielding and deference, and right and wrong issue? They issue from the nature that is composed of [benevolence], righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. And from whence do feelings of joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, and desire issue? They are occasioned by circumstantial conditions when external things contact one's form and cause a movement internally. As for the issuance of the Four Beginnings, since Mencius has already referred to them in terms of the mind-and-heart, and since the mind-and-heart is the combination of principle and material force, then why do we say that what is referred to in speaking of them has principle as its predominant factor (*so chu*)? That is because the nature composed of [benevolence], righteousness, propriety, and wisdom exists in its pure condition within us, and these four are the comments [of its active manifestation]. As for the issuance of the Seven Feelings, Master Chu says they originally have a standard of what they ought to be, so it's not that they are without principle (Kalton 1994, 10–11)

Here, for T'oegye, benevolence, righteousness, rites, and wisdom—all these four virtues are, as a matter of fact, our original nature. They exist as “pure and perfect goodness” (*chuswae chi sŏn* 純粹至善) in the depository of our heart. These four aspects of our original nature, as the foundation of our humanity, have generated the four manifestations of “sympathy, shame, magnanimity, and right/wrong” in our mind-and-heart. For this very reason, T'oegye believed that the four virtues (i.e. benevolence, righteousness, rites, and wisdom) are seeds, from there sprout the four beginnings of our mind-and-heart. For this very reason, these four beginnings are the results and sprouts from the four aspects of our original nature. Here, in interpreting “dan” as in *sadan*, T'oegye regarded it as “sprouts, beginnings” or “commencements” (*danseo* 端緒), which apparently was influenced by Zhu Xi, who interpreted “dan” along this line.²

By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings are the results of our contact with external stimuli, where our body, in its involvement with the outside world, comes into contact with the things external. Such externality stirs within the body reactions sensible through our various bodily organs, to the accompaniment of a series

² Cf. Zhao (2009, 142–143), Chen (2018, 125–126) and Kalton (1994, 10).

of emotional responses based on these sensations thereof. Therefore, in this process, there are a few steps to be followed from one to another, in an orderly fashion, from contact to sensation and finally to (emotional) stirrings. Here, there is an issue of intentionality, to the extent that our entry into the world is mediated through the things, though external to our body, which nevertheless make themselves an object of our intention, or the data to be objectified by our intention. Our will, when being stirred or aroused, shall make itself felt through emotions of various kinds, the totality of which shall be encompassed by this inclusive term of the Seven Feelings. For this very reason, from the perspective of phenomenology, the origin of the Four Beginnings differs from that of the Seven Feelings, in that the former sprout from our inner nature while the latter are aroused through our coming into contact with the outside world. For this, T'oegye regarded it as a variation between the original nature (*ponyŏn chi sim* 本然之心) and the temperamental nature (*kijil chi sim* 氣質之心). There was one occasion on which T'oegye was summoned to the royal court by the king, who asked the former about the three diagrams on the Mind-and-Heart, Nature, and Feelings. T'oegye responded to this inquiry by pointing out that two of the diagrams were revised by himself on the basis of the arguments by Mencius, the two Chengs, and Zhu Xi. T'oegye used these two diagrams to explain away the differences between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, as well as those between the original nature and its temperamental counterpart. For T'oegye,

What is referred to in speaking of the original nature has principle as the predominant factor; in speaking of the temperamental nature, what is referred to is the combination of principle and material force. The Four Beginnings are what is referred to in speaking of feelings and issues in accordance with principle. The Seven Feelings are what issues in accordance with both principle and material force. Therefore, the middle diagram is made with reference to the original nature, with the Four Beginnings as its predominance. The diagram below is made with reference to the temperamental nature, with the Seven Feelings as its predominance (Jia 1992, vol. 1, 178–179).

In this paragraph, T'oegye interpreted the Four Beginnings through the perspective of principle, where principle is unshakable precisely because it is rooted in our human nature as a natural endowment with which we are born. Such principle is universally shared and invariably valid, as the foundation of our quality as human being. This underlying substratum, in laying a foundation of human nature, is the undeniable part of humanity, for which reason as principle it is categorical and imperative. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings are matters of material force, which varies from one person to another. It is precise this *material force* that gives us individuality, individuates us from the crowd, and individualises us into separate beings. This *material force*, with this individualising quality, apparently aims at differentiation than unification, from which our personal temperament and features of differentiating significance will be derived. Therefore, the Four Beginnings, or *principle*, are the universal, whereas the Seven Feelings, or *material force*, are the particular and individual.

From this, it may be safe to suggest that the relationship between the following three pairs of concepts, namely the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, principle

and material force, and the original nature and the temperamental one, will somewhat follow a lexical order of superordination. One is precedent to, higher than, or on the basis of the other. From the phenomenological perspective, this relationship is that which speaks of “founding” or “foundation” (*fundierung* in German)—a concept that can be traced back to Husserl. When he first proposed this concept, he gave this word a meaning which may not coincide with that which is used in this article. For this very reason, there is a need to briefly review the use of term in Husserlian texts and its transformation in ours. For Husserl, our mental activities fall under two broad categories, one being engaged with cognitive actions and mainly responsible for constructing objects for our intention or mental activities, whereas the other is closely associated with one's personal will, emotions, or feelings. Such activity is incapable of constructing an object of their own, in which stead, they can only take as their subjects those which have already been constructed by the former kind of conscious–cognitive activities. For this very reason, as far as we examine the dimension of “whether an activity is capable or not of constructing its own objects”, the notion of “foundation” suggests that the second mental activity (which we may refer to as “Activity II”) will have to be founded on the first one (which we may equally call “Activity I”). In this relationship, our Activity I (i.e. the conscious–cognitive activities) has directly laid a foundation, on the top of which to build a second order of will-emotional activities (Activity II). This second-order activity is only possible when the objects have already produced a result of Activity I. From this, it can be seen that Husserl, in proposing this concept of *fundierung*, had in mind mainly the possibility of constructing, in an autonomous manner, some objects by a conscious activity, with which a lexical order was formulated, namely to predicate one on the top or basis of the other. In more concrete terms, this suggests that Activity I, at the experiential level, will precede Activity II, while the latter is no less than a superstructure that is built, as a second or higher order, on the basis of Activity I.³ In this sense, although Activity I is at the bottom of the hierarchy, it nevertheless plays the ground-setting role of “foundation”, which is of utmost importance to the extent that it will directly have an impact on the tallness or firmness of the superstructure constructed thereon. For this very reason, this relationship of “founding” and “non-founding” has a lexical order of differential importance within itself (cf. Rawls 1971, 42).

This term “foundation”, when being used in this article, in spite of its apparent reference to the original term proposed by Husserl, acquires nevertheless its own assumption and usage different from the former. When applied to the relationship between the twin concepts of the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, it can be found that the theoretical dimension of “whether a mental activity is capable of constructing its own object” ceases to be relevant. In the context of our discussions, the attention is no longer focused on the competence of object construction. As we can see, the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings are not so much concerned with object construction, which in German is termed *Objektivierung* (Husserl 2005, 235, n.5), as with which concept of the two is in closer proximity to our human nature. For instance, in discussing the essence and function of the mind-and-heart, T'oegye argued that human

³ Cf. Husserl (1968, 261–263), Diemer (1956, 113–115) and Ni (2012, 28–35).

nature is regarded as the essence, while feelings as the function (Jia 1992, vol. 1, 95–96). The Four Beginnings, as an embodiment of principle, clearly belong to the category of “essence of human mind-and-heart”. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings, as the function, are triggered when we come into contact with external stimuli (Kalton 1994, xxiii). For this very reason, when our attention has been drawn to the dimension of “which is in closer proximity to human nature”, it is argued that the Four Beginnings, being closer to our human nature, is more competent to serve as the substratum of our humanity. In comparison with the Seven Feelings, the Four Beginnings can play a role that is more fundamental, thus laying the ground on which other superstructure, including the Seven Feelings, may be built. It is on the foundation prepared and laid down by the Four Beginnings that the Seven Feelings are erected. As a matter of fact, to elucidate this point, we may borrow the relationship between the universal and the particular as our reference. For each and every one of us, an individual shares with others, without difference, those characteristics universal to the constitution of humanity. These characteristics are universally shared, serving as the common denominator commonly valid across all boundaries. On the top of this universality, each and every individual is also differentiated from each other, based on his/her unique features. We are thus individuated along the lines of height, ethnicity, skin colour, sexuality, intelligence, and physical endowments, to name just a few. It will be difficult to find two individuals who share exactly the same features without the slightest difference. For this very reason, the particular which serves to individuate is a second-order characteristic that is built upon the universal that has laid the foundation. It is precisely the first-order foundation provided by the universal that has made possible those individuating features. In this relationship, the first-order substratum provided by the universal has a regulatory function to play, to the extent that it directly has an impact on defining what is physically possible for us, in spite of all the variations that manifest themselves on the basis of such a defining range of physical possibilities. From this relationship between the universal and the particular, it may be safely inferred that the first-order, ground-preparing, founding, and primordial substratum defines, in a straightforward manner, what succeeds it in this lexical order. Such a defining relationship can be applied to that between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, where the former approximates our human nature, defines our existence, and serves the common denominator universally shared across the whole humanity. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings are only rendered possible and conceivable on the basis of such a foundation laid by the Four Beginnings. Only through a ground-preparing definition of what is possible or impossible in terms of human nature will the Seven Feelings emerge, to differentiate and individuate. In other words, such a regulatory function⁴ is somewhat rooted in the Four

⁴ Such a regulatory, defining function is borrowed from Kant. For him, he discusses different kinds of intuition, one sensible, while the other intellectual. The sensible intuition is *sui generis* to humanity, and the intellectual intuition serves as a point of comparison. The sensible intuition refers to the representation of thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-sich*) through our sensing bodily organs, while its intellectual counterpart is based on pure imagination. For instance, in Genesis of the Bible, when God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. For a being like God or other deity, the means of constructing an object is directly through intellectual imagination. The moment this object is conceived in the intellectual faculty of imagination, it will come into being. Such an intellectual intuition is apparently beyond our human capacity. By way of comparison, when an object is constructed in our mind, such an activity will of necessity

Beginnings that approximate our human nature, whereas the Seven Feelings, which constitute the diversity of humanity, are constructed on the basis of the Four Beginnings. It is in this sense that the Seven Feelings are *founded* on the Four Beginnings.

The reason for us to discuss the concept of “foundation” here is precisely due to T'oege's insistence on assuming a relationship of “founding”, in his attempt to explicate the relationship between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, especially with regard to the differences between these two concepts. For instance, in arguing that both the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings pertain to *chǒng* (情 feelings), T'oege focuses his attention on how their difference will spring from such a shared commonality. For T'oege, Mencius refers to the Four Beginnings as the manifestations of our mind-and-heart (*sim* 心), by which the Four Beginnings equal the four manifestations of our mind-and-heart. This mind-and-heart, as a combination of both principle and material force, can mean that each and every of the Four Beginnings contains both principle and material force. Where the Seven Feelings spring from our mind-and-heart, this will suggest that each and every of the Seven Feelings has within itself an element of both principle and material force. Now that both the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings have principle and material force, how on earth do they differ from each other? For the Four Beginnings, our mind-and-heart, as a combination of both *principle* and *material force* resides in a state of pure goodness and supremacy, *principle* plays the dominant role in regulating and defining such a pure, natural, and primordial state. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings, in spite of the fact that they contain principle and material force as well, it is *material force* that plays the main role. For one thing, the Seven Feelings refer to when our mind-and-heart is aroused in our contact with things external to us, as a state of arousal triggered by stimuli foreign to our inner world. Such a state of arousal, compared with principle or the Four Beginnings that reside in an unaroused state of purity and tranquillity, can no longer guarantee purity or goodness. On the contrary, such a state is prone to be either good or evil, susceptible to external influences and malleable into a force serving purposes no longer pure. It is a state of probability, in which material force plays the dominant or guiding role, whereas principle, after preparing the foundation, retreats into the background and exerts a rather marginal influence as far as the steering of the course of events is concerned. Similar to the Schrödinger's cat (Gribbin 2011), the Seven Feelings can incline towards both good and evil probabilities. This concept is in and of itself a set of probabilities dictated by circumstances and contingencies, for which reason it will be impossible to assert, in an arbitrary manner, that the Seven Feelings are

Footnote 4 (continued)

be channelled through such intermediaries as our bodily senses, tools, consciousness, or practices. It is precisely due to the intermediary feature of this sensible intuition that human beings are dwarfed by God or other forms of deity, whose being has exceeded the comprehensibility based on human experiences or sensibility. It is precisely this human-specific sensible intuition that defines what is conceivable to us, and the range of actions possible to human beings. It thus regulates how we are, what we think, and where to conceive objects. See Kant (1998, 51, 254–256).

in no uncertain terms either *purely* good or evil. Such a decisive assertion will fail to do the concept justice, as it will foreclose the possibility, diversity, uncertainty, and plurality that may spring from such an open end as entailed in the state of the Seven Feelings. For this very reason, in the arguments advanced by T'oegye, there is a relationship of “founding” between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, where the Four Beginnings, as the purely good and original, serve as the foundation, the substratum, or the basis, on the top of which can be built, constructed, or erected a rather open-ended structure of the Seven Feelings that can be either good or bad and contains rich possible endings. In terms of moral value, the Seven Feelings are secondary to the Four Beginnings, as the former is no match to the pure goodness contained within the latter. By the same token, the Four Beginnings, which precedes the Seven Feelings in the structuring of our moral edifice, also have a higher value in terms of their primordially and closer proximity to our human nature. Therefore, this founding relationship between the two speaks of their difference of utmost importance. Query

2 The Difference in the Otherness

The difference in terms of the “founding” relationship between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings may be further illustrated through the mutual rapport between *li* and *material force*, where as a matter of fact, T'oegye offers an explication in his book. In explaining the Diagram of the Mind-and-Heart, Nature, and Feelings (*sim t'ong sǒng chǒng t'u* 心統性情圖) in his *Ten Diagrams on Sage Learnings*, he once remarks,

As for the feelings that are the Four Beginnings, principle issues them and material force follows it. Of themselves they are purely good and without evil; it is only when the issuance of principle has not yet reached its termination and is disrupted by material force that they can devolve into what is not good. In the case if the feelings that are the Seven [Feelings], material force issues them and principle mounts it. In this case, likewise there is not evil, but if the issuance of material force is not perfectly moderated and obliterates principle, then it is uncontrolled and becomes evil.⁵

Here, the focus is placed on which one of principle and material force issues the course of events, in spite of which this explication of the relationship between principle and material force has stressed in particular how such a course of development may deviate from propriety and incline towards the evil or non-goodness. For T'oegye, such a deviation occurs, in the case of the Four Beginnings, when the role of issuance does not reside in the hands of principle, in which stead, it shifts to material force, which takes over and issues. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings are issued by material force and will deviate from the proper course of development

⁵ T'oegye (1992, vol. 2, 194), translation quoted from Kalton (1994, 109–110); for comments, see Li (2018, 21–26).

if this issuance does not accord with equilibrium (*puchung* 不中). Here, it is worthwhile of some more explanation. From the passage, one may be led to believe that material force is the primary factor in leading astray the course of development. Although T'oegye's arguments may create such an impression, it will be reasonable to suggest that this is unintended by him. For one thing, T'oegye does not make a strict dichotomy between principle and material force, suggesting one to be good and the other evil. Material force can be good as well, as long as it follows the proper course of development and in accordance with propriety. Principle may be susceptible to the evil, if it fails to play the dominant role and is rather being overwhelmed by material force in the course of events. Therefore, both principle and *material force* can be subjected to an evil course of development. Nevertheless, for the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, they still differ from each other in the mode of falling prey to non-goodness. After issuance, if material force can be regulated by principle and operates within the orbit dictated by the latter, then pure goodness can be ensured; on the contrary, if in the course of operation, material force does not follow the route regulated by principle, then it will render the whole process either "susceptible to non-goodness" or "abandoned to the evil". For this very reason, the Four Beginnings have principle as the dominant factor to steer the course of events and to regulate the operation of material force, for which it is pure goodness and absence from the evil (無惡 *muak*) from the outset. There is one circumstance under which the Four Beginnings may be led to a result of "non-goodness", namely where principle fails to issue and the vacuum in the presiding role thus created is taken over by material force. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings are issued by material force, and the matter thus ensued will be whether material force-dominated course of development can follow the regulation by principle. If this course of events follows principle, then it will be free from the evil; if not, then it will be abandoned to the evil (放於惡 *bang eo ak*). Henceforth, T'oegye believes that although the Four Beginnings are the founding category and the Seven Feelings the non-founding one, for the former, if there is a problem with the issuance, while for the latter, if upon issuance the course of events deviates from propriety, then both may lead to a result of non-goodness.

In reading this text, a reader may still be perplexed by the rapport between principle and material force. A question one may ask will be, "How will the Seven Feelings be susceptible to non-goodness upon issuance?" Apparently, this passage does not give any clue to the mechanism of how such a scenario of susceptibility may take place. For this very reason, we will have to find cues in other passages. As a matter of fact, T'oegye, in his "Reply to Jeong Jajung", argues:

For Mencius's joy, Shun's anger, and Confucius's sorrow and happiness, [in all these cases,] material force follows principle in its issuance, encountering no impediment in the slightest manner, for which reason the original entity of principle is preserved intact in its entirety (*ponch'e ponjeon* 本體渾全). For an ordinary person, s/he will feel joy when seeing members of the kith and kin, and sorrow in confronting bereavement, under which circumstance, material force also follows principle in its issuance. Nevertheless, material force therein cannot be manifested evenly (*pu neung ja* 不能齊), for which

the original entity of principle cannot be preserved in its purity or entirety (*sunjeon* 純全) (Jia 1992, vol. 1, 488).

When reading this text, we may feel confused, in that such sages as Mencius, Shun, and Confucius, how could their Seven Feelings (e.g. joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness) be different from those experienced by ordinary folks? It will be difficult to assume that the sages, in terms of their bodily constitution, were particularly stronger or better than others. Then, where does this difference stem from? T'oegye, in explaining such a difference in the Seven Feelings between the sages and ordinary citizens, suggests that for the former, material force follows principle in its issuance. By way of comparison, for ordinary citizens, although when they experience the Seven Feelings material force also follows principle in its issuance, material force is nevertheless not manifested evenly, for which reason, it is impossible for principle to remain intact in its entirety. According to this explanation, T'oegye believes that when the sages experience the Seven Feelings, two aspects can be observed. On the one hand, material force follows principle in its issuance, where principle presumably plays the presiding role in this course of events. On the other hand, material force thus issued can be manifested evenly, which helps to preserve the original entity of principle intact in its entirety. When these two conditions are met, the *mélange* between material force and principle reaches a state of equilibrium. By way of comparison, for ordinary folks, when they experience the Seven Feelings, if material force does not follow principle in its issuance, then the sensibility shall fail in the very beginning to operate in the orbit regulated by principle. Another circumstance may arise, just as T'oegye describes in this text, where even if material force follows principle in its issuance, this good start may still not be able to ensure an equally good result. For one thing, if such *material force*, when being issued, cannot be manifested evenly, then it will equally fail to achieve an equilibrium between material force and principle. It may, in all probability, lead to a partial development or blockage of principle (Xing and Lin 2017, 190).

Now, even if when we have reconstructed the logic of T'oegye, the discussion of the relationship between principle and material force still remains abstract and difficult to grasp. A modern reader, for instance, will feel perplexed by this concept of “being manifested evenly” (*neung ja* 能齊). How will it be possible to discuss “evenness” when one experiences the Seven Feelings? By which standard can we evaluate the degree of evenness in one’s sensibility, providing that the greatest number of readers is simply “ordinary” citizens? We will need, in understanding this discussion, to introduce some experience-based concept, which may help to illuminate the abstract discussions that take place at a metaphysical level. The dimension of “otherness” from a phenomenological perspective may be a legitimate candidate here, where this prism of “otherness” (*l'autre*) may open up the very difference in terms of intersubjectivity between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings. For one thing, the Seven Feelings we experience are the result of external stimuli, when our inner self comes into contact with the outside world. Apparently, the Seven Feelings as experienced through our sensible organs awaits some external triggers. Therefore, the dis/equilibrium between principle and material force in the Seven Feelings as

discussed by T'oegye may be illustrated when we turn our attention to this aspect of "otherness".

Indeed, all the Four Beginnings (i.e. sympathy, shame, magnanimity, and right/wrong) have been premised on the assumption of the scenario of interpersonal social interaction, in that these four manifestations of our mind-and-heart are not the results when one is in solitude, in which stead, there is always the presence of an "other" or a group of others. It is simply that such an otherness has been bracketed, made invisible, and regarded as a taken-for-granted element in the background, default setting. It is situated in this scenario as a voiceless assumption, for which our discussion here is simply to flesh out this invisible otherness. Let us illustrate this with the heart of sympathy (*cheug eun chi sim* 惻隱之心). As one of the major topics in which Mencius is interested, this heart of sympathy can be seen quite often in the corpus of Mencius. As can be seen from the text quoted in Part I, Mencius argues that if we have seen a young child falling into a well, namely in case of an emergency, there will arise naturally within our mind such feelings as fear, worry, and sympathy. For Mencius, the emergence of such a mental state is not preconditioned on any concern external to our moral faculty. It is not because we have some instrumental concern (e.g. benefit, profit, or gain) that such sensibility is generated in our mind. On the contrary, they occur in us rather naturally. The reason Mencius emphasises that this heart of sympathy occurs naturally lies in his opinion that it is a moral proclivity inherent in human nature—pure, uncontaminated, and innate from the moment we are born. As principle, it is engrained in the mould of human nature and when each and every individual is cast out of this mould, s/he shall carry this substratum universal and unchanged. It thus becomes a benchmark by which our humanity is defined, namely the *differentia principia* by which the mankind differs from animals. Furthermore, this naturalness is free from all intents that are oriented towards external goals, such as one's reputation, interest, or personal preference. Such a goal-oriented intent will contaminate the naturalness of our mind to the extent that our sensibility is guided by a pursuit of things not intrinsic to moral propensity. On the contrary, a goal-oriented, instrumental concern will base one's decision or moral reaction on the calculation of interests, costs and benefits, and personal preferences. It aims at a maximisation of one's interest, for which it is only a second-order consideration that is premised on rational calculations. By way of comparison, the heart of sympathy, when it occurs, is pure and simple to the extent that it follows nothing but an intuitive impulse, triggered the moment we see. Seeing is triggering—it may be thus described. It is an occurrence that is entirely devoid of all profit-seeking, benefit-maximising, or preference-evaluative calculations. As a moral sentiment, it is a first-order, intuitive, and impulsive sensibility we will experience the moment we are situated in the case of witnessing an emergency happening on other(s). Such a natural moral sentiment may be initiated by seeing or hearing the other(s) in encountering an emergency. For this very reason, it will be safe to suggest that this heart of sympathy is a moral sentiment that assumes an intersubjective encounter with the other(s).

By the same token, the Seven Feelings have equally been based on the assumption of intersubjectivity. In the text quoted above, it can be seen that the Seven Feelings are aroused or triggered by external stimuli. In his "Reply to Jeong Jajung",

T'oegye also mentions that we as ordinary folks will feel joy in seeing members of our kith and kin and mournful in encountering funeral events. Such a genetic account of our emotions (e.g. joy and sorrow) is to base our sensibility on the feelings one will acquire in a scenario of socialising with other members of society. As a matter of fact, there is an argument by Adam Smith, which may help to illustrate this point in a more concrete manner. For Smith, when we are situated in a social milieu, it is precisely due to the presence of "other(s)", which triggers our sensible organs and makes us perceive the appearance of this "otherness" that the emotional response from our inner self is activated. Smith gives a somehow detailed description of how this may take place:

The plaintive voice of misery, when heard at a distance, will not allow us to be indifferent about the person from whom it comes. As soon as it strikes our ear, it interests us in his fortune, and, if continued, forces us almost involuntarily to fly to his assistance. The sight of a smiling countenance, in the same manner, elevates even the pensive into that gay and airy mood, which disposes him to sympathise with, and share the joy which it expresses; and he feels his heart, which with thought and care was before that shrunk and depressed, instantly expanded and elated (Smith 2002, 44–45).

Here, Smith's descriptive account links one's emotional response (e.g. joy or sorrow) back to the other(s), whose presence triggers this very reaction in one's mind, either through hearing, seeing or sensing. Therefore, these emotions are not conceived when one is alone, as solitude does not trigger much emotional response. On the contrary, when the otherness intrudes upon this solipsistic state of the subject, compelling the latter's attention by engaging his/her hearing, seeing or other feeling sense, then it is at this very moment of intersubjective encounter that our emotional responses spring into action. The harmful circumstance confronting the other(s) compels not only our attention, but also the triggering of our sympathy and social action, when we feel the urge to rush to his/her assistance. In a similar vein, the sight of a merry occasion can also elicit from within us some elation of mood. Under these circumstances, emotional responses are premised on intersubjective encounters. Smith's passage can help us to understand better the arguments put forward by T'oegye.

Now that both the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings have an intersubjective dimension, where both of them will need to be premised on an intersubjective encounter, then this renders all the more prominent this very issue of how they differ from each other. To rephrase the arguments by T'oegye, when the Four Beginnings are issued by principle and material force follows in suit, and the Seven Feelings by material force and principle presides over it, then how can the difference between these two concepts be illuminated through the otherness as embodied in the intersubjective encounter?

Actually, both principle and material force here can be delimited with two adjectives, namely the "universal *principle*" and the "particular *material force*". For T'oegye, principle is a universal existent, some "original nature" shared by all alike and without exception, while material force, varying with individuals, is a "temperamental nature" that depends on concrete circumstances. For this very reason, in

encountering an “other”, for both the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, there is an issue of which shall preside over this course of events, either the “universal *principle*” or the “particular *material force*”. Such a preponderance of universality or particularity shall have a direct bearing on the result thus generated. If it is the “universal principle” that takes the lead, then the result shall in all probability accord with propriety, thus manifesting material force evenly. By way of comparison, if the “particular material force” gains the upper hand, then the course of development may be led astray from the orbit dictated by propriety.

To get a full appreciation of this, we may draw on the works by Levinas for theoretical illumination. For Levinas, the other has an ethical “primacy”, where in encountering the other, the subject should place this “otherness” in a position higher than his/her own self. Only through this approach will it be possible to discuss ethical responsibility in our intersubjective world—a world that is lifted out of our solipsistic, self-contained individuality. In the Levinasian framework, the intersubjectivity, or the corporeal encounter between the self and the other, is the precondition for ethics. It is not the other way around, where it is more often than not presumed that ethics precedes the intersubjectivity between individuals. The plurality of individuals is not a simple, numerical aggregation of different individuals *ensemble*, in which stead, the recognition of such plurality requires that we adopt a radical idea, both epistemically and ontologically. This idea is radical to the extent that we are committed to the priority of the other(s) to our self notwithstanding our lack of a priori knowledge of this otherness—a priority by which the self is defined and to which our self is oriented. For Levinas, it is not autonomy, but responsibility that is the first ethics, which is in essence heteronomy, an other-centred ethical consideration (Levinas 1987, 58). When we are making an ethical decision, our first consideration will be offered to the other than our self.

Levinas believes that it is through the other that our self can truly be realised and lived in a full, responsible manner, which clearly rejects the assumption of ego-centric individualism as we have seen in modernity. This other-centred perspective places the otherness on the “altar”, elevating to the status of first or primary ethics the being of the other and his/her world. From another angle of view, this is an undertaking that seeks to “decentre” (*à le décentrer*) the self (Llewelyn 2004, 124), namely to liberate our subjective consciousness from the natural centre of our ego and to enter into an other-centred horizon. Through this undertaking, the otherness is elevated to the status of “altarity”. Etymologically, the word “altar” is connected with the “alter”, the former to communicate the profane with the sacred through offerings, while the latter emphasises the interpersonal connection through some kind of “difference”. Both stress the need to jump out of one’s comfort zone and enter an area foreign or new. If these two words are connected, then a new sense may come into being, where the emphasis is placed on using the self as the offering, on the *altar*, to be sacrificed for a communication with the *alter* (otherness). Thus, the otherness will be elevated to a highness that is supreme and responsibility centred. This ethical view has, indeed, set as its starting point the consideration of the

otherness, and regard as the first ethics those responsibilities one shoulders for the other(s).⁶

Levinas attempts to combine this philosophy of responsibility as the first ethics with a Kantian liberty, where our existence is first and foremost not for liberty. On the contrary, liberty is no more than a means to some higher end. We live not for the sake of liberty per se, as if pure liberty could exhaust the total meaning of our existence. As an alternative, our being, in its pursuit of liberty and the higher end behind such liberty, can only be channelled through heteronomy, which demands that we construct an other-centred mode of moral existence (Levinas 1987, 58). From the phenomenological perspective, our individual being or existence has been exposed to the other(s) since the very beginning. Our being in this world has from the moment of our birth been intertwined with a coexistence with the other(s), of which the alterity constitutes the external or the extrovert of our being (Butler 2015). For this very reason, such a web of “intersubjectivity” becomes the starting point of our ethical life. For our existence, the leverage of utmost importance is not an egocentric self, but a heteronomy that decentres the self and orients oneself towards the otherness. It demands that we maintain an open mind and be prepared to embrace an other that is foreign, external to us. Only through this will it be possible to put into practice the requirement of responsibility as the first ethics. It is precisely in this sense that our existence rejects egocentrism in the social world or anthropocentrism in the natural world (cf. Jung 2016, 13–15).

The ethical responsibility one shoulders, as discussed by Levinas, is universally applicable to all circumstances when one encounters the other(s)—a universality that approximates T’oegye’s “universal *principle*”. For one thing, both are propositions with a universal statement and devoid of referring to any particular individual or occasion. Such a proposition is universal to the extent that it categorically binds each and every individual of the humanity without exception. By way of comparison, the “particular *material force*” conditions one’s response and responsibility on such contingencies as the circumstance, personal preferences, or the closeness/remoteness in terms of interpersonal relationship, to name just a few. Such a conditionality entails that one would treat the other(s) not in accordance with some universal principle, but to some particular purchase. Under certain circumstances, one’s treatment of the other(s) may not accord with the principle of responsibility as the first ethics. One may lean towards a differential treatment of the others based on one’s own choices, preferences, or values. This partiality may be justified by resort to the “particular *material force*”, albeit in a way that will certainly defeat the imperative of universal responsibility to the otherness.⁷

When such a “universal principle” competes with the “particular material force” for the role to preside over the course of development, there will certainly arise the issue of priority, selection, and personal choice. If one adheres to the “universal *principle*”, then the “particular *material force*” shall have to yield to the former

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the etymological connection between the altar and the alter, see Taylor (1987, xxvii–xxxii, 91–95).

⁷ For a justification of such partiality, see Keller (2013, ch. 1). See also Kim (2002) for a discussion of connecting Levinas with T’oegye.

should there arise a circumstance of competition, following principle as its benchmark and deviating not from the orbit dictated by principle. Any decision concerning a real scenario should in no way jeopardise the operation of the “universal principle”. Only through this will it be possible to achieve a result where “material force follows principle in its issuance, encountering no impediment in the slightest manner, thereby preserving the original entity of principle intact in its entirety” (cf. Wang and Liu 2014, 42–46). By way of comparison, if one uses the “particular *material force*” as the guideline, treating the other(s) according to one’s own personal preferences, then there will certainly arise a result where the others are treated, in a differential manner, according to the degree of affinity, the level of likableness, and the closeness within one’s circle of acquaintances, among other factors. Such a differential treatment, under certain circumstances, may lead to a scenario where one’s affective ties might step into interfere with the operation of the “universal principle”. As a result, principle may be sacrificed to satisfy the imperative of one’s partiality. Thus, the “particular *material force*” may lead to a satisfaction of personal preferences at the cost of the greater, higher, and universal *principle*.⁸ Therefore, through this dimension of the otherness, we can come to a better appreciation of why T'oegye, in explaining the differences between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings, will resort to the rather abstract relations between principle and material force. Through a phenomenological hermeneutic reconstruction, it can be seen that such a difference may be rooted in how the other is treated by one’s self in a social scenario.

3 Conclusion

T'oegye, in his debate with Kobong, analyses the relationship, as well as their difference, between the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings. Through a phenomenological perspective, it can be seen that in T'oegye’s frame, the Four Beginnings are regarded the founding substratum, while the Seven Feelings are the non-founding sensibility built on the Four Beginnings. Moreover, in spite of the fact that both the Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings set as their starting points the alterity or the intersubjectivity, there are essential differences between the two, in that the Four Beginnings emphasise the priority of principle and material force following principle, while the Seven Feelings suggest that when material force becomes emanant, principle will ride material force. When one’s self encounters the other(s), there will arise a choice dilemma, where one has to decide which shall preside over the course of events, either the “universal *principle*” or the “particular *material force*”. The Four Beginnings will prioritise principle over material force, emphasising the former as the categorical imperative, which corresponds to the Levinasian philosophy of other-oriented responsibility as the first ethics. By way of comparison, the Seven Feelings may render our decision more susceptible to the influence of private,

⁸ For a discussion of how such partiality may defeats universal principles, see Nagel (1991).

particular preferences.⁹ Such a difference is decisive to the extent that it can lead to a qualitative variation in the result. For the Four Beginnings, to follow the dictate of the “universal *principle*” can ensure the pure goodness of the result, while in case of the Seven Feelings, under the influence of the “particular *material force*”, the result may become a Schrödinger’s cat, capable of both good and evil in its final manifestation.

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⁹ For an analysis of how such feelings may intermingle with international relations, see e.g. Patalakh (2018). Furthermore, for a discussion of the relations between particularity and universality, see Lu (2016).

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