

Moral Metaphysics and Moral Psychology of Korean Neo-Confucianism: Explanation of the Moral Mind and Emotion in the Four-Seven Debate

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Abstract

The paper discusses the philosophical conflict of the Four-Seven Debate (사단칠정논쟁, 四端七情論爭) in the Chosŏn (朝鮮) dynasty Korea. The Debate reveals the philosophical difficulty of the Cheng-Zhu (程朱) Neo-Confucianism on the matters of the moral mind and moral emotions. Specifically, the *li-qi* (理氣) metaphysics of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism could not provide adequate explanation of why and how certain emotions (the Four Emotions 四端) are intrinsically good while others (the Seven Feelings 七情) are only contingently good. The root cause of this philosophical difficulty (i.e., developing a viable form of Neo-Confucian moral psychology that can explain both the goodness and the evilness of the mind and the difference between the Four and the Seven) lies in the comprehensive or integrative orientation of Neo-Confucian moral metaphysics. Specifically, the teleological, integrative, and generative explanation of *li-qi* metaphysics makes it very difficult to explain the contrastive and discrete distinctions (good/evil and the Four Emotions/the Seven Feelings) in moral philosophy and moral psychology. This paper interprets the Four-Seven Debate from the perspective of the philosophical effort made by the Korean philosophers to develop an adequate explanation of the moral emotions in the Four-Seven Debate and to overcome the inherent philosophical difficulty of the *li-qi* metaphysics.

Keywords: The Four-Seven Debate, Korean Neo-Confucianism, *Li-Qi* Metaphysics, Moral Metaphysics, Moral Psychology

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Introduction

Classical Confucian texts such as the *Mencius* (孟子 2A6, 6A6), the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸, first chapter), and the *Book of Rites* (禮記, chapter of Yiyun 禮運), categorize affective states of the mind with different sets of emotions.¹ Among these, the two sets of emotions are frequently discussed by Confucian philosophers in the following centuries. The first set of emotions are called the Four Emotions (四端, *siduan/sadan*, the four intrinsically moral emotions, such as the emotions of pity/compassion (惻隱), shame/dislike (羞惡), deference/reverence (辭讓) and moral approval/disapproval (是非) discussed by Mencius) that are intrinsically good. The second set of emotions are called the Seven Feelings (seven emotions (七情) listed in the *Book of Rites* (禮記) such as joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire (喜怒愛懼哀惡欲)) that are morally contingent. The Seven Feelings can be good or evil depending on their circumstances. Since they have different moral psychological characteristics, the distinction between the two was generally acknowledged and explained by Chinese Neo-Confucian philosophers such as Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107) and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130 – 1200). Korean Neo-Confucians, however, raised deeper philosophical questions about the moral psychological natures of the two sets of emotions. They discussed if the distinction can be *fully* and *systematically* explained and justified by the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics (i.e., explanation of the reality of the universe through the interaction between the two cosmic elements, *li* (理, the governing order and pattern of the universe) and *qi* (氣, the dynamic force and energy in the process of change and transformation in the universe)) developed by Chinese philosophers in the Song dynasty. They debated whether the diverse functions of the *li* and *qi* can systematically and consistently explain the intrinsic moral emotions (the Four Emotions 四端) and the morally contingent emotions (the Seven Feelings, 七情).²

In this paper, I will discuss how the Korean Neo-Confucians such as T'oegye, Ugye, Kobong, and Yulgok discussed whether the morally specific or morally dedicated emotions (the Four Emotions) are different from the morally neutral or morally contingent emotions (the Seven Feelings).³ As I will explain in the following sections, Neo-Confucianism has a

¹ They are pity/compassion, shame/disgust, deference/reverence, approval/disapproval (*Mencius*), joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure (the *Doctrine of the Mean*) and joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, desire (the *Book of Rites*). In addition, Xunzi (*Xunzi*, Zhengming Chapter) lists six emotions (like, dislike, joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure).

² See Huh Nam Jin, *Li and Qi philosophy in the Early Joseon Period*, (Seoul Korea: Seoul National University, Institute of Philosophy, 2004) and Kim Young Woo, *Philosophy of Nature and Mind in Early Joseon Period*, (Seoul Korea: Seoul National University, Institute of Philosophy, 2004) for general explanation of Korean Neo-Confucianism in the early Chosŏn period.

³ It is beyond the scope of the current paper to analyze the different notions of moral goodness. I defer the full and complete analysis of Confucian notions of good and evil to recently published papers, for example, by Cheung Ching-Yuen, "The Problem of Evil in Confucianism", in *Probing the Depths of Evil and Good: Multireligious Views and Case Studies*, edited by Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom, (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 87-99, and Sandra Wawrytko, "The Problem of the Problem of Evil: A Taoist Response", in *Problem of Evil, an Intellectual Exploration*, edited by Sandra Wawrytko, (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 21-39 and by many Korean scholars such as Guak Shin Hwan, "Confucian Understanding of Evil", in *What is Evil?*, ed. the Institute of Mind and Culture (精神文化研究院), (Seoul, Korea: Chang Publication, 1992), 159-188, Hong Seong-min, "The Dissolution of the Four-Seven Debate and Unification of Goodness", *Journal of Eastern Philosophy* (東洋哲學研究), 96 (2018), 7-37, Kim Kee-Hyeon, "Goodness by the Original Mind and Goodness by the Harmonization of Feelings - The Root Causes of Philosophical Perspectives in the "Four-Seven" Debate", *Yulgok Studies* (栗谷學研究), 37 (2018), 37-65, Lee Chi-uck, "A Study on Pure Good of Four Beginning in Toegye's Four-Seven Debate", *Study of Confucian Thought and Culture* (儒教思想文化研究), 45 (2011), 93-115, Lee Dong Hee, "On the Good and Evil of Neo-Confucianism: y-Y Mode of Thought", *Journal*

peculiar philosophical orientation: It explains the distinctive and contrastive moral properties of good and evil in the mind and its emotions through its *generative* (i.e., understanding change as the process of constructive realization of an underlying foundation), *integrative* (i.e., the tendency to combine conflicting processes into the holistic unity), and *teleological* (i.e., the presence of the goal directedness in the universe set out by an original foundation) viewpoint.⁴ If everything in the universe derives from and comes down to the same ultimate foundation of the goodness of the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), explaining good and evil as the two independent and contrastive moral properties is very difficult. It is also difficult to distinguish the ideal moral nature and the contingent psychological nature of emotions, which the Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers struggled to explain in the Four-Seven Debate.

In the following sections, I will discuss the Korean Neo-Confucians' effort to provide a philosophical explanation of the moral goodness of the heart-mind (心), the nature (性), and the emotions (四端七情). I will start by explaining the philosophical orientation of the Cheng-Zhu school's Neo-Confucian metaphysics. Then, I will analyze how Korean Neo-Confucians explain morally intrinsic (i.e., morally distinct, or morally specialized) and morally unspecific emotions within the philosophical framework of the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics. Specifically, I will explain the tension between Neo-Confucian metaphysics and the moral psychology of the Four Emotions (the Four hereafter) and the Seven Feelings (the Seven hereafter) through the lens of the philosophical integration of the ideal morality and the psychological reality of the moral emotions.⁵ I will argue that the philosophical conflict developed and articulated in the Four-Seven Debate, although the debate failed to develop any satisfying consensus, reveals both the philosophical limitation of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism on the matters of moral goodness in the mind and the Korean Neo-Confucians' philosophical attempt to explain the fundamental conditions of good and evil in the Confucian heart-mind (心). The reason the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism is limited in its explanation of the mind and its moral nature is not because it is imperfect or incoherent but because it provides an overly integrative and comprehensive explanation of moral goodness of the mind that combines the three distinct sets of properties: metaphysical properties (properties about what things truly are), moral properties (properties about what

of Eastern Philosophy (東洋哲學研究), 50 (2007), 287-324, Yang Myeong-Soo, "Toegye's View of Seven Feelings and Problem of Evil", *Journal of Toegye Studies* (退溪學報), 122 (2007), 1-58, and Youn Sa Soon, "A Reflection on the Ethical Characteristics of Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings", *Journal of Toegye Studies* (退溪學報), 133 (2013), 5-37. Instead, I will discuss how the goodness and evilness of the mind and its emotions are understood and distinguished in Korean Neo-Confucianism in the context of the Four-Seven Debate. For the philosophical notions of good and evil in Western philosophy, see Todd Calder, "The Concept of Evil", In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/concept-evil/>>. (accessed in 4/25/2019), Dan Heybron, "Moral Monsters and Saints", *The Monist*, 85-2 (2002), 260-284, Roy W. Perrett, "Evil and Human Nature", *Monist: An International Quarterly Journal of General Philosophical Inquiry*, 85-2 (2002), 304-319, and Marcus Singer, "The Concept of Evil", *Philosophy*, 79 (2004), 185-214.

⁴ The philosophical limitation here means using indiscrete (holistic or inclusive) notions such as *li* and *qi* to explain discrete and exclusive distinctions such as the distinction between the Four and the Seven. Lee Chan, "A Rethinking of the Four-Seven Debate: Critical Approach to the Fact-Value Framework and Moral Naturalism", *Journal of Toegye Studies* (退溪學報), 125 (2009), 47-92 and Lee Dong Hee, "Philosophical *Aporia* of Zhu Xi's Thought in the Joseon Dynasty", *Eastern Philosophy* (東洋哲學), 32 (2009), 125-148 point out the similar limitations or peculiarities of Neo-Confucianism, i.e., moral naturalism or naturalistic moralism through the intricate distinction and integration of good and evil in the *li-qi* metaphysics. The philosophical limitation here means using indiscrete (holistic or integrative) notions such as *li* and *qi* to explain discrete distinctions such as the distinction between the Four and the Seven.

⁵ In a similar vein, Hong, "The Dissolution of the Four-Seven Debate" interprets the Four-Seven Debate as the process of the unification or integration of the foundation of goodness.

things should be or become) and psychological properties (properties of the affective state of the mind).

Neo-Confucian Metaphysics and Moral Psychology

Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107) and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130 – 1200) the two major Chinese Neo-Confucian philosophers in the Song dynasty, explain the nature of the mind, morality, and the generative processes of the universe through the activity of *li*, *qi* and their intricate interplay.⁶ The *li-qi* metaphysics refers to this general metaphysical framework where the universe and its myriad objects and properties are explained by the intricate interactivity between *li* and *qi*.⁷ The *li-qi* metaphysics has the following philosophical characteristics. First, *li* is one but it can be related or applied to many different things (理一分殊). According to a famous Neo-Confucian analogy, *li* is compared to the moon: the moon is one but it is reflected in many different rivers and lakes (*yue ying wan chuan* 月映萬川).⁸ Like the singularity of the moon reflecting on many rivers, the universal penetration of the cosmic order (*li*) in the universe is the first metaphysical foundation of Neo-Confucianism. It is important to note, however, that *li* is not an abstract and transcendental entity such as a Platonic form, but an inherent and generative pattern or resonance residing in individual objects, their properties, and their environments. That is, the governing order of Neo-Confucian universe is universal but not transcendental.

Second, *li* does not have tangible forms (無形), i.e., not bound by particular forms, shapes, or physical conditions of a local environment. Nor is it bound by physical and spatial activities or functions. It is called *wuwei/muwi* (無爲), i.e., lacking particular physical actions and processes.⁹ It is the holistic coherence and universal (but immanent) pattern of the

⁶ See Huang Yong, *Why Be Moral? Learning from the Neo-Confucian Cheng Brothers*, (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2014) and Julia Ching, *The Religious Thought of Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi]*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) for detailed discussion of Cheng Yi's and Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism.

⁷ For a philosophical survey of Neo-Confucianism in general, see Stephen Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Stephen Angle and Justin Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2017), and John Makeham, *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (New York: Springer, 2010). For a broad comparative context of the Song Neo-Confucianism and the Four-Seven Debate see Philip J. Ivanhoe, "The Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance of the Four-Seven Debate", *Philosophy East & West*, 65-2 (2015), 401–429.

⁸ See *Zhuzi Yulei* (6, 2409). According to Huang Yong, "Cheng Yi's Moral Philosophy", In *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucianism*, ed. John Makeham, (New York: Springer, 2010), 80, however, "Cheng [Yi] does not use the metaphor of one moon reflected in ten thousand rivers... as it was used in Buddhism before him and by Zhu Xi after him."

⁹ Yulgok, for example, distinguishes *li* and *qi* on the basis of *wuwei/muwi* (無爲) and *muhyōng* (無形) (理無形也...氣有形也理無爲也氣有爲也), Yi Yulgok, *Yulgok Chōnsō* (栗谷全書), (Seoul: Sōnggyun'gwan University Taedongmunhwa Yōn'guwōn Press, 1960), Tapsōnghowōn 栗谷全書 I,卷 10, 答成浩原. Please note that *wuwei/muwi* (無爲) does not mean that *li* is completely inert and inactive. Nor does it refer to the Daoist notion of spontaneous action. In this Neo-Confucian context, *wuwei/muwi* means not being involved with causal processes or not being limited by the local and physical conditions of the world. Since *li* is global coherence and penetrating pattern, it is not bound by the functions or processes of particular contexts or environments. See Ahn Jaeho, "The Significance of Toegye's Theory on 'Manifestation of Principle'", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 41 (2015), 114–129, Kim Sung Won, "A Reconsideration of the Mutual Issuance Theory in Yi Toegye's Neo-Confucianism", *Philosophy East & West*, 65-2 (2015), 582–603, Lee Seung-Hwan, "Toegye's Conception of *Lifa* (理發) Explained from the Theory of Supervenience". *Eastern Philosophy* (東洋哲學) 34 (2010): 191-237, and Mun Seok-yun, "On the Meanings of Manifestation of *Li*, *Li* in Motion, and Initiation by *Li* for Toegye: The Issue of Activity of *Li*", *Journal of Toegye Studies* (退溪學報), 110 (2001), 161-201 for different interpretations of the inactivity (*wuwei*) of *li*.

universe. Therefore, *li* is often characterized as something above the form (形而上), i.e., being above or beyond the physicality and locality of individual objects and their properties.

Third, since *li* is the governing order of the universe, it represents the true and original nature of things, i.e., what things truly are and what they should ideally become. That is, *li* refers to the essential nature of things and their purity and goodness. *Qi*, on the other hand, refers to the concrete, local, dynamic, and physical side of the universe. It is the material force or energy behind the uneven and diverging tendencies and activities of physical objects and their local properties.¹⁰ It takes material forms/shapes, serves their physical functions, and stimulates the diversifying forces of the universe.¹¹ For this reason, *li*, as the governing order of the universe, represents the defining nature of moral goodness but *qi* represents variable and contingent reality that can be good or evil depending on its contexts or environment.¹²

Fourth, the Neo-Confucian universe is generative and teleological. It is changing, growing, and expanding to realize its inherent nature. It exists in a continuously growing and generative process that consists of the complex interaction among myriad things. Everything derives from the unifying foundation of the universe and exists in the continuous process of interactive self-realization. According to Zhou Dunyi's (周敦頤, 1017–1073) metaphysical scheme illustrated in his *Taijituishuo* (太極圖說, *The Illustrative Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*), the Neo-Confucian universe comes to exist by such foundational elements or forces as *taiji* (太極), *li* (理), *qi* (氣), *yin* (陰), *yang* (陽), and *wuxing* (五行). These different layers of existence derive from and reflect the built-in goodness of the ultimate foundation of *taiji* (太極). That is, the Neo-Confucian universe has the holistic identity in its generative and teleological nature. The whole universe is a living organism growing from the seed of *taiji* (太極) and guided by the pervasive goodness deriving from *taiji* (太極). Therefore, the Neo-Confucian universe is inclusive and integrative. Conflicting details of individual events and objects are contextualized

Fifth, in this generative and teleological universe, the interactivity of *li* and *qi* is critically important. Although *li* and *qi* are the two different or contrastive foundations of the universe, they always interact with each other in myriad things and their generative processes in the universe. According to the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, *li* and *qi* are distinct but not separable (不相雜不相離): their natures and identities are different but they work together in every object and property in the world. Through the interaction between *li* and *qi*, therefore, Neo-Confucian philosophers explain all the properties of the universe including those of the mind and morality, good and evil, the Four (四端) and the Seven (七情). However, the cosmic interactivity of *li* and *qi* often glosses over the discrete and intricate differences or distinctions such as the one between the Four and the Seven.

It is unclear whether the interactivity of *li* and *qi* can explain consistently and unambiguously the two distinct properties, i.e., the moral and the psychological properties

¹⁰ Ivanhoe, “Historical Significance”, 418 provides a concise description of *li* and *qi*. *Li* is “the normative principle interrelating all the phenomena of the world,” but *qi* is “the basis for the physical things of the world, the material that forms but also separates one thing from another and inclines each conscious thing to mistakenly see itself as cut off from and morally unconnected to the rest of the world.”

¹¹ See Joseph A. Adler, “Zhou Dunyi: The Metaphysics and Practice of Sagehood”, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 669-678, and Robin Wang, “Zhou Dunyi’s Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained: A Construction of the Confucian Metaphysics”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66-3 (2005), 307-323 for further details.

¹² See Wong Wai-Ying, “Morally Bad in the Philosophy of the Cheng Brothers”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 36-1 (2009), 149. He states that “...according to the Cheng Brothers [Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi] the sources of moral badness lie in the native endowment of *qi*, the body, and the inherent desires of human beings.”

of the mind and emotions. For example, if *li* and *qi* are everywhere, involved with everything in the universe, why is *li* exclusively or closely related to goodness but *qi* is closely related to evilness? Specifically, in the context of the Four-Seven Debate, this question presents a puzzling philosophical conundrum. Why are some emotions good but others are evil if all emotions come from the same foundation (*li*, *qi*, and ultimately *taiji* 太極) of the universe? In fact, there is a more pressing question. A moral emotion such as *ceyinzhixin/ch'ükünjishim* (惻隱之心), the Confucian heart-mind of pity and compassion, discussed in the book of *Mencius* (2A6, 6A6) is moral (i.e., a *li*-governed state) but, at the same time, an aroused (i.e., a *qi*-activated) state of the mind. Is it purely good (exclusively governed by *li*) or only contingently good as an aroused (a *qi*-activated) state of the mind? If the moral categories (good/evil) and metaphysical categories (*li*/*qi*) are correlated and integrated in the inclusive metaphysical framework of Neo-Confucianism, it is very difficult to focus on and explain the moral goodness of *ceyinzhixin/ch'ükünjishim* under the governing order of *li* independently of the *qi*-activated psychological arousal. The goodness of *ceyinzhixin/ch'ükünjishim* seems to be incompatible with its contingent psychological arousal (potentially evil) yet they *coexist* in the mind as a moral emotion because of the interactivity of *li* and *qi*. How is that possible? How can one explain this intricate combination of the pure goodness of *li* and the possibility of evil by *qi*, in the same moral emotion of *ceyinzhixin/ch'ükünjishim*? The Four-Seven Debate reveals the philosophical difficulty of explaining the moral goodness of the mind under the *li-qi* metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism.

The Four-Seven Debate

The Four-Seven Debate (사단칠정논쟁, 四端七情論爭(1559–1572), a philosophical debate about the moral psychological nature of the four intrinsically moral emotions and the seven morally contingent emotions listed in the classical Confucian texts) is one of the major philosophical debates in Korean Neo-Confucianism in the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910). Many papers have been published and its line of argumentation have been analyzed along the concepts of *li*, *qi*, the original nature (本然之性, the nature that a thing is born and defined with), the *qi*-affected nature (氣質之性, individually and locally conditioned nature), the balance and harmony (中節, the well-organized original states of the mind and their dynamic integration).¹³ However, a relatively small number of papers have been published to discuss the metaphysical background (the *li-qi* metaphysics of the Song Neo-Confucianism) and its broad philosophical implications (moral philosophy, moral psychology, moral realism and constructivism, self-cultivation, virtue ethics etc.).¹⁴ In the following sections, I will conduct such an analysis, an analysis of the foundational or philosophical issues of the Four-Seven Debate, through the notions of good, evil, the mind, and emotion. If the foundation of the Four-Seven Debate is the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, the debate inherits the general metaphysical foundation and the conceptual framework from the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. If the Four-Seven Debate runs into a deep philosophical trouble in explaining the distinct moral psychological natures of the Four (the four intrinsically moral emotions) and the Seven (the seven morally contingent emotions)

¹³ A statistical study of Korean philosophy shows that T'oegye and Yulgok, the two major philosophers in the Four-Seven Debate, are the most studied philosophers in Korea along with Wonhyo and Chŏng Yakhyŏng. See Huh Nam Jin, "Trend and Future of the Eastern Philosophy at the Reception Period of the Western Philosophy - Statistical Analysis", *Philosophical Thought* (哲學思想), 5 (1995), 175-190.

¹⁴ See, for example, Hong, "Dissolution of the Four-Seven Debate", Lee Chan, "A Rethinking of the Four-Seven Debate", Lee Dong Hee, "Philosophical *Aporia* of Zhu Xi's Thought", and Lee Seung-Hwan, "Semiological Analysis of Zhu Xi's Moral Psychology", *Eastern Philosophy* (東洋哲學), 37 (2012), 175-205.

it is worthwhile to investigate the root cause of the philosophical trouble at the foundation. i.e., the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism (specifically in its *li-qi* metaphysics). The root cause of the philosophical difficulty, as I discuss in this paper, is the overly inclusive approach of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism to the nature of moral goodness of the affective state of the mind. Simply the *li-qi* metaphysics of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism is too inclusive and integrative to analyze and explain the discrete moral nature of the mind and its emotion that is distinctively different from other non-moral properties (such as nature, harmony, balance, etc. along with the more fundamental processes driven by the Supreme Ultimate, *yin-yang*, *li-qi*, *wuxing*) discussed in the Neo-Confucian philosophy. That is, good/evil and the Four/Seven have clear boundaries and distinctions (or at least this is intended by the Korean Neo-Confucians) but *li* and *qi*, often, have a more interactive, integrative, and vague boundary. For instance, good is different/separate from evil and the Four is different/separate from the Seven but *li* is different from but not necessarily separate from *qi*. (According to the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian metaphysics, *li* and *qi* are distinct (不相雜) but inseparable (不相離).) Because of the inclusiveness and the integration of *li* and *qi* in the Neo-Confucian universe, developing and explaining sharp and discrete moral distinctions such as good/evil and right/wrong are deeply challenging tasks in Neo-Confucianism. To make the matters worse, if one adds another layer (i.e., the layer of the mind) to this, one can see a formidable philosophical challenge. Explaining the moral goodness of the mind and moral emotions, specifically with the *li-qi* metaphysics is even more challenging as one can see in the Four-Seven Debate.

Perhaps, the best way to understand the philosophical success and failure of the Four-Seven Debate and its philosophical foundation, i.e., the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, is to understand the complexity and the integration of the multi-layered or multi-dimensional structure of the *li-qi* metaphysics featured in the explanation of good/evil and the Four/Seven in the Four-Seven Debate. In this section, I will briefly summarize the Four-Seven Debate and, in the following section, I will analyze the three different threads or dimensions of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism and identify the underlying cause of the difficulty in explaining the moral nature of the mind and emotion.

The Four-Seven Debate is a moral psychological debate on the nature of the two sets of emotions listed in the Confucian classics specifically in the *Mencius* and the *Book of Rites*. The major point of conflict in the Four-Seven Debate is whether and how the Four are intrinsically different from the Seven. If the Four are morally specific emotions but the Seven are morally contingent, then the uniqueness of the Four in comparison to the Seven would be the intrinsic moral goodness of the Four.¹⁵ If the distinct nature of the Four, in contrast to the Seven, lies in the former's intrinsic moral goodness, the investigation of the former would

¹⁵ To be specific, the Four refers to Mencius's four beginnings (四端 the four moral sprouts) and the Seven refers to the seven emotions (七情) in the *Book of Rites*. For full explanation and analysis of the Four-Seven Debate see Ahn Young-sang, "A Study on the Joseon Neo-Confucian's Four-Seven Debate, Comparing it with the Yangming School's Debate about Equilibrium in the Meditation and Harmony in the Practice", *Studies of Folk Culture* (民族文化研究) 51 (2009a), 615-653, Ahn Young-sang, "An Exploration on Zhu Xi's the Theory of Mind's Consolidating Nature and the Emotions for Understanding Four-Seven Debate", *Study of Philosophy and Culture* (精神文化研究) 32-4 (2009b), 281-308, Edward Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Toegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation*, (New York: State of New York Press, 1996), and Kim Hyoung-chan, "The *li-ki* structure of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions and the intention of the Four-Seven debate: A critical reflection on the methods of explaining the theories of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions in Korean Neo-Confucianism", *Acta Koreana* 18-2 (2015), 561-581. For full English translation of the letters and other documents of the Four-Seven Debate see Michael Kalton, *The Four-Seven Debate, An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought*, (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1994).

constitute the investigation of the intrinsic and pure goodness of the mind. Can the moral nature of the mind be explained by the Four's distinctive moral psychological character in contrast to the Seven? Specifically, can the difference between the Four and the Seven and the intrinsic goodness of the mind be explained consistently by the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics?

T'oegye (退溪, YiHwang, 李滉 1501 - 1570), who started the debate, argues that the Four and the Seven are fundamentally different emotions. T'oegye believes that the Four is different from the Seven because the former is *intrinsically* moral and deeply rooted in the governing order of *li*. While, the Seven can become good, they become only accidentally or contingently good. The Seven's goodness cannot be their intrinsic nature because they can become evil. *Li* is also involved in the Seven, it does not exclusively or intrinsically contribute to the generation of the Seven. T'oegye states that:

...although the neither of the two (the Four and the Seven) is separable from principle (*li*) and material force (*qi*), on the basis of their point of origin, each points to a predominant factor and emphasis, so there is no reason why we cannot say that the one (the Four) is a matter of principle (*li*) and the other a matter (the Seven) of material force (*qi*).¹⁶

Against T'oegye's *li*-centered interpretation of the *moral* emotions, Kobong (高峯, Ki Taesŭng 奇大升, 1527 - 1572) focuses on the *qi*'s activity in the moral *emotions*. He argues that the Four and the Seven are not essentially different because they are all emotions: they are all aroused states of the mind caused by *qi*. According to him, it is wrong to believe that the Four are the only moral emotions because the Seven can become good through self-cultivation and balanced regulation of emotional arousal.¹⁷ It is also wrong to argue that the Four are caused (*fa/bal* 發) by *li*: *li* does not have causal efficacy. He points out that T'oegye's *ibal* (理發 being activated or caused by *li*) is not compatible with Zhu Xi's distinction between *li* and *qi*: *li* does not have any material form nor does it assume any physical efficacy. *Li* is beyond the form (形而上) and devoid of physical action (無爲) that is completely bound by physical functions and their local operations because *li* serves the global coherence and the governing pattern of diversely different things. Kobong states that:

The two (*li* and *qi*) are certainly distinct, but when it comes to their presence in actual things, they are certainly mixed together and cannot be separated. It's just that principle (*li*) is weak while material force (*qi*) is strong; principle (*li*) has no concrete sign, but material force (*qi*) is physically in evidence.¹⁸

¹⁶ Kalton, *The Four-Seven Debate*, 11.

¹⁷ The first view is called Kobong's *kongbal* theory (共發, common arousal by *qi*) and the second view is called his *chungchöl* (中節) and *puchungchöl* (不中節) theory.

¹⁸ Kalton, *The Four-Seven Debate*, 6. Also see Yulgok's reply to Ugye's sixth letter in Kalton, *The Four-Seven Debate*, 175.

According to Kobong, even though *li* works with *qi* to provide orderly existence and dynamic changes in the world, *li* does not have any causal efficacy.¹⁹ If all emotions are aroused states of the mind, they are all *qi*-activated or *qi*-affected states. Then, the Four and the Seven are not *really* different. The conflicting views of T'oegye and Kobong reveal the inherent vagueness of the *li-qi* metaphysics in its application to the Four and the Seven, which I will discuss in the following sections.

Three Layers of the Neo-Confucian Heart-Mind

To understand the philosophical significance of the Four-Seven Debate, it is important to see how the three different philosophical dimensions of Neo-Confucianism are utilized in the explanation of the moral nature of the Confucian heart-mind. First, the debate discusses the moral psychological distinction between the Four and the Seven: how and why are the Four different from the Seven? T'oegye and Ugye (牛溪 1535 – 1598, Seong Hon, 成渾) believe that the Four and the Seven are different sets of emotions. The former is intrinsically moral, but the latter is not. However, Kobong and Yulgok (栗谷 1536-1584 YiI 李珥) believe, from the perspective of *qi*'s activity in the arousal of emotion, that the Four and the Seven are basically the same: they are all affectively aroused states of the mind.²⁰

Second, to explain the distinction between the Four and the Seven, the debate explores whether the Four and the Seven are aligned with the moral distinction between good and evil: Is the Four the foundation of good but the Seven the source of evil? T'oegye and Ugye believe that the Four are morally good but the Seven can be evil. The Four represents the pure goodness of the mind but the Seven represents the possibility of evil. The former is intrinsically good, but the latter is only contingently or accidentally good. Kobong and Yulgok, however, believe that both the Four and the Seven are emotions aroused by *qi*'s activity. According to them, the Four and the Seven have different moral characteristics but they are not fundamentally different.

Third, ultimately, the moral goodness of the mind, its aroused states (emotions), and the distinction between the Four and the Seven are all related to the activity of *li* and *qi* in the Neo-Confucian universe. If everything in this universe, according to Neo-Confucian cosmology, comes out of the differential (不相雜, mutual distinction) but integrative combination (不相離, mutual non-separation) of *li* and *qi*, the moral psychological nature of the mind should be explained by the same process, i.e., the generative interactivity of *li* and *qi*. However, T'oegye-Ugye and Kobong-Yulgok developed different interpretations of how *li* and *qi* give rise to the Four-Seven and good-evil, in their theories of *fa/bal* (發, causation, generation, manifestation, or issuance).²¹ T'oegye developed *hobal* (互發, the alternate

¹⁹ From a less metaphysical but more morally relevant viewpoint, see Ivanhoe, "Historical Significance", 420. Ivanhoe describes the debate in the following way. "If the Four Sprouts [the Four Emotions] were not in some way special and distinctive emotions, this would make it more difficult to interpret certain canonical texts such as the *Mengzi*, which seem to present them as special emotions, at the core of an ethical life. If, however, the Four Sprouts were associated too strongly with heavenly principle and contrasted too sharply with our everyday emotions and the realm of *qi*, then neo-Confucians seem to encourage the same kind of withdrawal and asceticism they so vehemently criticized in Daoism and Buddhism."

²⁰ T'oegye and Ugye developed similar ideas of the Four and the Seven. Their view is often characterized as the *li* school of Korean Neo-Confucianism that empathizes the *li*-guided moral nature of the Four. Kobong and Yulgok, on the other hand, developed a different viewpoint often characterized as the *qi*-school of Korean Neo-Confucianism that empathizes the common psychological nature of the Four and the Seven. Therefore, the Four-Seven Debate is, often simplistically, described as the philosophical conflict between the *li* school (T'oegye/Ugye) and the *qi* school (Kobong/Yulgok).

²¹ Yoo Weon-ki, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Concept "Bal/Fa 發" in the Four-Seven Debate between Toegye and Gobong", *Korea Journal*, 52-2 (2012), 92 – 115 explains different meanings of *fa/bal*(發).

causation of the Four and the Seven by *li* and *qi*) theory and Kobong developed *kongbal* (共發, the common causation of the Four and the Seven by (both)*li* and *qi*) theory to explain how *li* and *qi* contribute to the goodness and evilness of the Four and the Seven. The *Hobal* theory argues for the alternating (i.e., differential) involvement, whereas the *kongbal* theory focuses on the uniform involvement of *li* and *qi* in the moral and psychological properties of the Four and the Seven.

The key philosophical point of the Four-Seven Debate, therefore, is whether these three dimensions can correlate with one another so that the different moral psychological natures of the Four and the Seven can be explained within the consistent framework of the Neo-Confucian metaphysics.²² Can the moral psychological distinction (the Four vs the Seven) be explained by the moral distinction (good vs evil), and the metaphysical distinction (*li* vs *qi*)? That is, can the three dimensions be correlated, and can their integration explain the moral psychological distinction between the Four and the Seven? If the answer is positive, the moral goodness of the mind and its emotions can be integrated into and explained by the Neo-Confucian metaphysics and its correlative alignment between the Four/good/*li* and the Seven/evil/*qi*.²³

If one realizes, however, the incompatibility or misalignment among the three dimensions (as the Korean Neo-Confucians did in the Four-Seven Debate) and still attempts to explain the Four and the Seven, one has basically two options: (1) rejecting the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics and explaining the Four and the Seven purely from the moral psychological viewpoint without bringing any metaphysical theories or (2) accepting the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics and explaining the Four and the Seven with the available combinations of *li*, *qi*, nature (性), and the mind (心). The Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers in the Four-Seven Debate (as followers of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism) chose the latter option and explained the difference between the Four and the Seven with the diverse metaphysical distinctions available in Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics. For example, they used the *li*-derived original nature (本然之性, *benranzhixing/bonyŏnchisŏng*, the intrinsic and innate nature of human being and the human mind) and the *qi*-affected nature (氣質之性, *qizhizhixing/kichilchisŏng*, the nature of the human being understood by *qi*'s activity in a given environment) to explain the difference between the Four and the Seven. That is, the Four are the emotions derived from the original nature of the human being but the Seven are the emotions derived from the *qi*-affected nature. Things derive from the original nature are inherently good, but things derive from the *qi*-affected nature can be contingently good or evil.

Korean Neo-Confucians in the Chosŏn dynasty continued to discuss the two forms of nature (*xing/sŏng* 性) in their philosophical discussions, but the two do not seem to capture the distinction between the Four and the Seven. Since both the original nature and the *qi*-affected nature derive from the same foundational nature (性), the distinction between the two shows only minor or perspectival difference. If the goal of the Four-Seven Debate is to explain the substantial difference between the Four and the Seven, the two forms of nature,

²² See Seok Bongrae, "The Four-Seven Debate of Korean Neo-Confucianism and the Moral Psychological and Theistic Turn in Korean Philosophy", *Religions*, 9-374 (2018), 1-15. Seok explains the correlation and the conflict between *li*/good/Four and *qi*/evil/Seven in the Four-Seven Debate. The current paper, however, focuses on the broad conflict among metaphysics (*li-qi*), moral philosophy (good, evil) and moral psychology (the Four and the Seven) in the Song Neo-Confucianism that resulted in the philosophical difficulty of the Four-Seven Debate.

²³ See Seok, "The Four-Seven Debate of Korean Neo-Confucianism" for the full discussion of the incompatibility among the moral, the moral psychological and the metaphysical dimensions of Neo-Confucianism.

(because they are not substantially different) do not explain the substantial moral difference between the Four and the Seven.²⁴

Although the second option is the only way to maintain their Neo-Confucian identity (the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism), the Korean Neo-Confucians quickly realized that they had to deal with the philosophical difficulty of explaining the *discrete* and *contrastive* moral psychological distinction between the Four and the Seven with the *inclusive* and *integrative* Neo-Confucian terms. That is, they needed to develop Neo-Confucian explanation of the moral goodness of the mind with the inclusive and often indiscrete interactions of *li* and *qi*. The difficulty, however, is that the clear and sharp moral (good/evil) and moral psychological (the Four and the Seven) distinctions are not *fully* and *consistently* correlated with the broad and interactive nature of *li* and *qi*.²⁵ Simply speaking, if the Four comes out of *li* and *qi*, and the Seven comes out of *li* and *qi*, then what is the difference between the Four and the Seven?

The ultimate cause of this philosophical difficulty (i.e., developing a viable form of Neo-Confucian moral psychology that can explain the intrinsic goodness of the mind and the difference between the Four and the Seven) lies in the conflict between the teleological, integrative, generative orientation of the Neo-Confucianism metaphysics and the contrastive and discrete distinctions (good/evil and the Four/the Seven) in moral philosophy and moral psychology. In the following section, I will explain the deep philosophical nature of this conflict the Korean Neo-Confucians faced in the Four-Seven Debate.

***Li-Qi* Metaphysics, Moral Philosophy, and Moral Psychology**

To understand the incompatibility between the *li-qi* metaphysics and the Four-Seven moral psychology, one needs to start with the two important characteristics of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. The first is the intricate relation between *li* and *qi*. As I explained in the second section, *li* and *qi* are distinct elements/processes/forces of the universe, but they are constantly interrelated with each other. Simply they are different (不相雜) but not fully separated from each other (不相離). Because of the differential but integrative and interactive activities of *li* and *qi*, the mutually exclusive and discrete distinction between the Four and the Seven is difficult to explain. As one can see in T'oegye's and Kobong's theories, the Four is not exclusively explained by *li* and the Seven is not exclusively explained by *qi*: Both *li* and *qi* are involved in the generation of the Four and the Seven. If the goal of the Four-Seven Debate is to explain the clear and contrastive distinction between the Four and the Seven via *li* and *qi*, the goal is not going to be achieved easily or fully. Because both *li* and *qi* are involved in the generation of the Four and the Seven, one cannot explain the Four without explaining some properties of the Seven and vice versa. Broadly speaking, the distinction between the Four and the Seven, which the Four-Seven Debate aims to explain and justify, is a discrete moral distinction but the available Neo-Confucian explanation couched in terms of *li*, *qi*, and *xing* is metaphysical and inclusive. Although T'oegye and Kobong developed their *hobal* and *kongbal* theories by proposing the different roles and the combinations of *li* and *qi* in the generation of the Four and the Seven, the substantial and

²⁴ Regarding the distinction between the original and *qi*-affected nature, a Korean Neo-Confucian Yi Ik (李穡 1681–1763, pen name Sōng Ho 星湖) argues that the two types of nature are two different modes of the same foundational nature deriving from the governing order of the universe (i.e., *li*). He states that that “the original nature and the *qi*-affected nature are not two natures [...] The nature is one” [本然之性與氣稟之性非二性也. . . 性一也]. See Jeong So-yi, “A Study of the Continuity and Discontinuity of Toegye I Hwang's, Sōngho Yi Ik's and Dasan Jōng Yakyong's Theories of Mind”, *Human, Environment, and Future*, 10 (2013), 46 n16.

²⁵ This incompatibility or misalignment among the three distinctions is discussed in Seok, “The Four-Seven Debate”, 7-8. In this paper, the foundational cause of the incompatibility, i.e., the generative, inclusive, and integrative orientations of the Neo-Confucian metaphysics is analyzed.

exclusive difference between the Four and the Seven (in comparison with more interactive and inclusive distinction between *li* and *qi*) is not fully explained. Although they play different roles, both *li* and *qi* are involved with *hobal* and *kongbal*. Therefore, from the perspective of *li*, *qi*, and their intricate interaction in emotional states, the Four and the Seven look only slightly, not substantially, different.

The second point of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism one needs to understand in the context of the Four-Seven Debate is the integration of moral ideality and psychological reality of the mind (*xin/sim* 心). The mind (the Confucian heart-mind of *xin/sim*) can be intrinsically moral and can reflect the true nature of human being but it can be affected by uncontrolled or spontaneous psychological processes.²⁶ The mind can cultivate its intrinsic nature and morality but it exists as a real and contingent psychological entity. The integration of the moral ideality and the psychological reality of the mind is important in Neo-Confucianism because, within the teleological cosmology and the integrative moral metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism, the normative ideality and the psychological reality of the mind are not completely separate: They should be *closely* integrated in the teleological and cosmic process of the universe. Neo-Confucianism, as one can see in Zhou Dunyi's scheme of the cosmic evolution, explains both what is happening and what should ideally happen in the integrated vision of the ultimate goodness of *taiji* (太極). However, this integration of ideality and reality (or value and fact) in Neo-Confucianism may defeat the philosophical effort to explain moral distinctions such as moral goodness and evilness or moral psychological distinctions such as the Four and the Seven because these distinctions can be meaningful if one can differentiate the moral ideality and the psychological reality of the mind. To understand successfully and consistently the intrinsic moral nature of the Four and to distinguish the Four from the Seven, the moral ideality the Four should be discussed independently of its psychological reality (i.e., emotional arousal). Even though the Four are aroused states, their moral identity, in contrast to that of the Seven, should be explained at the level of normative ideality. Under the integrative Neo-Confucian metaphysics, however, one cannot successfully explain the former (the ideal norm and intrinsic moral quality of the mind) without explaining the latter (the factual, contingent, and locally conditioned mind).

According to Neo-Confucian metaphysics, everything is part of the continuous and generative process of development initiated by the Supreme Ultimate. From the viewpoint of this inclusive and integrative process, one can understand that *li* is not an abstract entity or a formal principle but the continuously growing and interacting order of the universe. That is, the ultimate reality of the universe is not only real but also dynamically generative and ideally normative. Kim Hyoung-Chan states that "The concept of *li* in Neo-Confucianism means both physical law and moral norm. According to this view, *li* is not only an ontological principle, which forms and operates nature and society, but also an axiological rule, which describes how nature and society should exist and be operated. The potential of the physical law and moral norm can be realized with the help of *ki* (*qi*), which represents matter or energy."²⁷ That is, reality (existence) and ideality (normativity) are intertwined in the teleological and generative Neo-Confucian universe, which is often understood as a constructive entity under a cosmic realization process that emanates from the Supreme Ultimate down to the myriad things. In this regard, Zhu Xi (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 6.2371) states that "The Great Ultimate (Supreme Ultimate) is not a separate entity. It is present in *yin* and *yang* as *yin* and *yang*, in the Five Phases (Five Elements) as the Five Phases (Five Elements), in the ten thousand things as the ten thousand things. It is (nonetheless) only one principle. Because of its ultimate reach, it is named the Great Ultimate." He also adds that "The Great

²⁶ Perhaps this distinction is comparable with that between *daoxin/dosim* (道心) and *renxin/insim* (人心).

²⁷ Kim Hyoung-chan, "The *li-ki* structure of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions", 563.

Ultimate (Supreme Ultimate) is simply the supremely excellent and perfect normative principle...What Master Zhou called the Great Ultimate (Supreme Ultimate) is the exemplary virtue of all that is good and most excellent in Heaven and Earth, in people and things.”²⁸ That is, reality (what it is) and normativity (what it should be) are coherently and fundamentally integrated in Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism.²⁹

Since everything in the Neo-Confucian universe is in the interactive and generative process of realizing the original nature and the foundational coherence of the universe, it is often difficult to explain the psychological nature of the mind *independently* of its moral nature and vice versa. If everything is changing and growing in the continuous process of the onto-generative derivation from the cosmic foundation (*taiji* 太極) and the governing order of the universe (*li* 理), how can one explain the intrinsic moral goodness (the normativity and ideality) of the Four, independently of its psychological background driven by *qi*’s activity? More important, if value (what should ideally happen) and fact (what is happening) are integrated in the ultimate foundation of goodness in the Neo-Confucian universe, how can one explain the moral mind *independently* of the generative process of the cosmic coherence (the underlying reality of the Neo-Confucian universe)? If the normative standard and the axiological foundation of moral goodness are explained by the metaphysical unity (i.e., the teleological cohesiveness or the inclusive oneness) of the universe, explaining good and evil or the Four and the Seven separately as the two contrastive and conflicting moral properties will be a formidable philosophical challenge in Neo-Confucianism.³⁰

The comprehensive philosophical integration of Neo-Confucianism, however, does not imply that there is no distinction between good and evil. Neo-Confucianism is neither moral skepticism nor moral nihilism although it allows the relative or relational conditions or contexts of good and evil.³¹ However, the kind of moral distinction that is necessary to differentiate the Four and the Seven (i.e., a clear and sharp distinction between the Four and the Seven on the basis of the former being *intrinsically* good but the latter only *contingently* good) cannot be found in the integrative, generative, and teleological world of Neo-Confucianism. The distinction between the Four and the Seven is a discrete, exclusive distinction but the philosophical orientation of Neo-Confucianism is holistic, generative, and inclusive. That is, the Neo-Confucian tool is too inclusive and integrative to separate and distinguish the Four and the Seven.

²⁸ Lee Hyo-Dong, “Empty and Tranquil, and without any Sign and yet all Things are Already Luxuriantly Present – A Comparative Theological Reflection on the Manifold Spirit”, in *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*, edited by Catherine Keller and Laurel Schneider, (New York: Routledge, 2011) 145, n. 23, 24.

²⁹ This does not mean that there is no distinction between reality and ideality (or normativity) in Neo-Confucianism. They are distinguished in different dimensions of the universe with their relative and variable differences but, ultimately, they are integrated in the cosmic process of the Supreme Ultimate.

³⁰ For this reason, Lee Dong Hee in his “Philosophical *Aporia* of Zhu Xi’s Thought” believes that the Four-Seven Debate as an intellectual puzzle (*aporia*) of Neo-Confucian philosophy. He argues that Neo-Confucianism, like natural law theory, did not clearly distinguish fact and value. Lee Chan, in his “A Rethinking of the Four-Seven Debate”, also analyses the Four-Seven Debate from the similar viewpoint, i.e., integrating the fact and value distinction.

³¹ One would argue that Confucian notions of good and evil are relational and situational and therefore only ambiguously or vaguely understood. However, the relational and situational nature of Confucian goodness and evilness do not imply that Confucian moral philosophy is weak and sometimes it does not even distinguish good and evil. For example, See A. Walden, “Zhu Xi, the Four-Seven Debate, and Wittgenstein’s Dilemma”, *Philosophy East and West*, 65-2 (2015), 579. He argues that although the standard of moral goodness is not clearly specified or formulated in Neo-Confucianism, it is still meaningful to discuss the normative standard. He states that “The fact that that standard cannot be explicitly stated is not a weakness but a strength of the theory...It [the standard of moral goodness] is not manifest in the sense of being explicitly present to consciousness, but it is present to consciousness in the sense that veridical moral judgment is the phenomenal product of the *li*, as manifest in and through the *qi* of the heart-mind.”

Considering the two Neo-Confucian characteristics discussed in this section, one can argue easily that explaining the contrastive and qualitative difference between the Four and the Seven that the Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers sought after in the Four-Seven Debate is not an easy task. If one adopts the integrative and interactive stance of the all-inclusive Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics, where *li* and *qi* are closely related and everything derives from the same *fundamental foundation* with the same *ultimately goodness*, the clear and exclusive moral distinction between good and evil in the Four and the Seven will be very hard (if not impossible) to make.

The unresolved debate between T'oegye-Ugye and Kobong-Yulgok clearly demonstrates the philosophical difficulty and the challenge of Neo-Confucianism. T'oegye and Ugye attempt to explain the unique moral nature of the Four by *li*'s special or exclusive contribution to the moral identity of the heart-mind. Kobong and Yulgok, however, do not believe that the goodness of the Four is a distinct moral property explained exclusively by *li* but a common property shared by the Seven explained by both *li* and *qi*. That is, to explain both the unique moral psychological character of the Four and the morally contingent nature of the Seven, one needs to change or revise part of the Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics, i.e., emphasizing *li*'s (not *qi*'s) special or exclusive contribution to the Four (à la T'oegye and Ugye) or giving up the special moral status of the Four by smoothening the sharp distinction between the Four and the Seven (à la Kobong and Yulgok). The Four-Seven Debate, however, is neither a complete failure nor a clueless philosophical puzzle. It is a reflection and revelation of the philosophical *aporia* of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism and an attempt to resolve the philosophical ambiguity (reality/ideality, mind 心/ nature 性, etc.) that looms large in the *li-qi* metaphysics. Perhaps, with the philosophical inspiration of the Four-Seven Debate, one can develop, beyond the Neo-Confucian conventions of good-evil and *li-qi*, a new brand of moral psychology and moral philosophy as the various schools of Korean philosophy in the later centuries of the Chosŏn dynasty did.³²

Conclusion: Moral Psychology, Moral Metaphysics, and Korean Neo-Confucianism

In this paper, I discussed how the Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers in the Four-Seven Debate explain the moral emotions and the moral mind within the metaphysical framework of Neo-Confucianism. The unresolved debate between T'oegye-Ugye and Kobong-Yulgok reveals the philosophical difficulty of Neo-Confucianism in integrating moral psychology and moral metaphysics of the Confucian heart-mind. Because of the teleological, generative, and integrative metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism that combines reality (existence, being and becoming) and ideality (moral norms and values) of the universe in its explanation of nature (性), *li* (理), the Confucian heart-mind (心), and emotions (四端七情), the discrete

³² Regarding the deviation from or the overcoming of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism and the unique orientation towards the affective moral psychology in Korean Neo-Confucianism, see Choe Young Jin, "A Study of the Mentalizing (*xinxue*, 心學) Tendencies of Korean Neo-Confucianism in the 18th to 19th Century", *Korean Folk Culture* (韓國民族文化), 33 (2009), 339-368 and Jeong Weon-jae, "Does the Neo-Confucianism of the Chosŏn Dynasty belong to the Cheng-Zhu School? Rethinking the Intellectual History of Chosŏn through the Philosophical Tradition of Yi I (1538-1584)", *Journal of Korean Religions*, 7-1 (2016), 67-92. According to Ivanhoe, "The Historical Significance" 426-427, 429, some of the philosophical effort to criticize or overcome the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism can be found in Luo Qinshun's (羅欽順 1465-1547), Dai Zhen's (戴震 1724 - 1777), Ito Jinsai's (伊藤仁齋 1627-1705), and Chŏng Yakyong's (丁若鏞 1762 - 1836) views. The Korean Neo-Confucians in the Four-Seven Debate, however, used the philosophical language of the Cheng Zhu Neo-Confucianism but the content of their philosophical discussion comes close to the study of the mind (*xinxue* 心學) than the study of nature and *li* (*xinglixue* 性理學). See Jeong "Neo-Confucianism of the Chosŏn Dynasty" for further details of this interpretation. This does not, however, mean that Korean Neo-Confucianism follows the path of the Yangming school (陽明學) of Neo-Confucianism.

and contrastive distinctions, such as moral psychological distinction (the Four and the Seven) and the moral distinction (good and evil) are not fully developed and explained.

The Four-Seven Debate exemplifies this philosophical difficulty (i.e., difficulty of clearly distinguishing the Four and the Seven by the philosophical means available in the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism) and Korean Neo-Confucians' effort to overcome it.³³ For this reason, it is inappropriate to characterize Korean Neo-Confucianism *simply* as a *linear* philosophical extension or a *direct* philosophical heir of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. Korean Neo-Confucians understood the ambiguities of the *li-qi* metaphysics in its application to the moral mind and attempted to overcome the overly inclusive and integrative orientations of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism.³⁴ They did their best to bridge the gap between moral metaphysics and moral psychology through their rigorous philosophical analyses and argumentations. Despite the inherent philosophical vagueness derived from the integrative and teleological tendencies of Neo-Confucianism, Korean Neo-Confucians in the Chosŏn dynasty developed their own moral psychological approach to the challenging questions of Neo-Confucianism, i.e., the moral mind and emotions. Korean Neo-Confucianism, therefore, is a unique school of moral psychology and moral philosophy and the Four-Seven Debate clearly demonstrates both the challenge and opportunity of Korean Neo-Confucianism on the issues of the moral goodness of the Confucian heart-mind and its emotions. Although they did not find satisfying solutions to the challenging philosophical questions raised in the Four-Seven Debate, the Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers clearly recognized the philosophical difficulty and attempted to find the peculiar moral psychological nature of the mind, i.e., the mind of moral emotion, of self-cultivation, and of virtue.³⁵

³³ For example, the *hobal* and the *kongbal* theories of T'oegye and Kobong can be understood as the overcoming effort. In these theories, *li* and *qi* do not simply interact: they develop intricate interplay to generate the Four and the Seven. *Li*'s and *qi*'s *discrete*, *differential*, and *detailed* contribution to the Four and the Seven demonstrates that the Korean Neo-Confucians, in their *fa/bal* theories, think of the discrete roles of *li* and *qi* beyond the typical characteristics of *li* and *qi* such as universal/particular, form, function, interaction (理一分殊, 形, 爲, 不相雜, 不相離) etc..

³⁴ For example, if *li* and *qi* are everywhere in this world (i.e., if their interdependent or interactive activities are pervasive in the world), why are the Four *heavily* or *exclusively* invested in *li* (with only minor involvement of *qi*)?

³⁵ Considering their theories of *fa/bal* (such as the *hobal* or the *kongbal* theory), what the Korean Neo-Confucians discovered, one can estimate, is the unique combination of the moral and psychological processes of the mind where both *li* and *qi* play differential but interactive roles, which the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism did not fully explore and develop. As I discussed in this paper, however, even this innovative renovation of Neo-Confucianism could not answer all the questions about the nature of the mind and emotions. The Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers could not come to full agreement in the details of their theories and tried to find different ways of explaining moral emotions because they realized that the Neo-Confucian terms (*li*, *qi*, nature etc.) cannot fully, consistently, and unambiguously explain the moral mind and emotions.

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