

# A Philosophical Analysis of the Concept “Bal/Fa 發” in the Four-Seven Debate between Toegye and Gobong

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## Abstract

*The Four-Seven Debate was an attempt to explain human feelings in terms of their ontological basis. In this article, I intend to offer a better understanding of the debate by analyzing some of the conceptions that play a significant role in it. I choose this method for three reasons: this line of approach to the debate has been very rare though not completely new; the conclusion derived by such an approach has been inaccurate and indecisive; and the philosophical connotation of the word “bal 發” (fa in Chinese pronunciation) has not been well recognized. In what follows, I begin with analyzing and examining the three candidates for the meaning of the word “bal” in the context of the six Propositions introduced in the Four-Seven Debate concerning the relationship between the Four-Seven and i-gi (li-qi in Chinese pronunciation). In consequence, I arrive at the conclusion that there is no universal translation of bal that fits all the Propositions and also that Gobong’s final Proposition concerning the aforesaid relationship returns the Four-Seven Debate to the starting point.*

**Keywords:** Korean Neo-Confucianism, Four-Seven dichotomy, *i-gi/li-qi* dichotomy, Toegye, Gobong, conceptual analysis, *bal/fa* 發

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## Introduction

The basic element of the philosophical discussion is to exchange ideas in an understandable manner so that one might eventually persuade the other on a particular point of view. Yi Hwang (penname: Toegye; 1501-1570) and Ki Dae-seung (penname: Gobong; 1527-1572) in Korea’s Joseon dynasty were no exception. They began a debate, later known as the Four-Seven Debate, in the form of correspondence, in an attempt to persuade each other on the relationship between human feelings and their ontological basis. Toegye argues that the Four Beginnings (*sadan* 四端; commiseration, shame-dislike, deference-compliance, and right-wrong) are to be explained in terms of *i* 理, and the Seven Feelings (*chiljeong* 七情; joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, and desire) in terms of *gi* 氣, whereas Gobong objects to this claim for the reason that Toegye severs too starkly the relationship between *i* and *gi* and also between the Four and the Seven.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a general consent that Gobong neither gave up his earlier position nor accepted Toegye’s point of view. In this article, I also arrive at the conclusion that Gobong did not quite agree with Toegye. However, in making this point, I take a somewhat different step from previous ones. I shall first analyze the three possible translations of the word “*bal* 氣” (*fa* in Chinese pronunciation) and then examine the adequacy and implication of each translation in the context of the Propositions concerning the relationship between the Four-Seven dichotomy and the *i-gi* (*li-qi* in Chinese pronunciation)

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1. Although their correspondence numbered only six missives in total for eight years (1559-1566), the Four-Seven Debate produced a butterfly effect in that an initially private and seemingly trivial debate between two people eventually brought about a huge effect all over the Confucian world. It triggered a number of debates on the relation of the human mind (*insim* 人心) to the moral mind (*dosim* 道心), on the relation of the human nature to the nature of myriad things, and on the relation of the noble mind to the ordinary mind. For the last 40 years, more than some hundreds of papers on the Four-Seven Debate have been published in Korean. And just over ten papers and books on it have been published in English, most of whose titles are listed in the references.

dichotomy.<sup>2</sup> This method is not completely new: Fu once exercised this method in his article,<sup>3</sup> in which he considered two meanings, “issuance” and “manifestation,” as a translation of *bal* in five Propositions mentioned in the Four-Seven Debate, and suggested “manifestation” as a universal translation of *bal* in them. However, in contrast to Fu, I shall argue that there are six Propositions introduced in the debate, consider three meanings of *bal* in each of the Propositions, and claim that there is no universal translation applicable to all of them. In particular, from the analysis of the sixth Proposition, i.e. Gobong’s final Proposition, which Fu did not consider, I shall conclude that Gobong refused to agree with Toegyue and that they were hardly reconcilable with each other.

### Some Presuppositions of the Four-Seven Debate

It is clear that if we are to understand and participate in a scholarly debate, we need to be familiar with its basic concepts and ideas. This is more strongly required, given that the Four-Seven Debate adopts a number of the terms and concepts that are unfamiliar to the contemporary people. The debate concerns the relationship between, and the origin of, the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings, which originate in the *Mengzi* 孟子 (Book of Mencius) and the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), respectively. In the *Mengzi*, the clues or signs of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom constitute the Four Beginnings; they are interchangeably used and collectively compose human nature (Chan 1963, 54, 65-66).<sup>4</sup> Men are born with the capacity for such feelings

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2. Throughout this paper, I deliberately capitalize this proposition concerning the relationship between the Four-Seven and the *i-gi*, as in “Proposition.”

3. See Fu (1985, 16-24, especially, 19-22).

4. “Humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are not drilled into us from without. We originally have them with us” (*Mengzi* 6A:6); “Men have these Four Beginnings just as they have their four limbs. . . . If anyone with these Four Beginnings in him knows how to give them the fullest extension and development . . .” (*Mengzi* 2A:6).

and know how to express them without learning. According to the *Mengzi*, since human nature is originally good, human feelings are also good, for the value of human feelings is derived from the value of human nature. Apart from the Four Beginnings in the *Mengzi*, the *Liji* introduces the so-called Seven Feelings as the “basic human feelings” that “are not acquired through learning from the outside” (Legge 1970, 379).<sup>5</sup> The *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) also introduces another set of “four feelings” as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, it is called equilibrium (*jung*/centrality/mean). When these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony. Equilibrium is the greatest foundation of the world, and harmony its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish (*Zhongyong*; Chan 1963, 98).

The three feelings except for pleasure mentioned in the above passage are included in the Seven Feelings. However, the number of feelings is not important:<sup>7</sup> indeed, both the Seven Feelings in the *Liji* and the four feelings in the *Zhongyong* do not refer to particular emotions, but rather all the emotions human beings have. The above passage makes a distinction between “before the arousal [of feelings]” and “after the arousal [of feelings].”<sup>8</sup> It says that one is always in the state of equilibrium “before the arousal,” whereas one is either in the state of har-

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5. The translations of the original texts in this article are my own, unless otherwise stated.

6. This may be written as “Four Feelings,” using capital letters, but I am not doing so in this article in order to distinguish it from the term “Four Beginnings” in the *Mengzi*, which also refers to four kinds of feelings.

7. Kim (1992, 54-55) explicitly distinguishes them, but he is not clear about what their differences are. Nonetheless, this distinction is a worthwhile point to consider since it may give us a clue as to why Toegye and Gobong argued against each other.

8. Zhu Xi in the *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句 (Commentaries on the *Doctrine of the Mean*) says that while pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are feelings, [their] *mibal* is nature (The word in the square bracket is mine).

mony or disharmony “after the arousal of feelings.” It is not clear what it is that is in the state of equilibrium, harmony, or disharmony.<sup>9</sup> The above passage states that the four feelings are good when they are in the unaroused or not-yet-aroused state called *mibal* 未發 (*weifa* in Chinese pronunciation) and that they are evil when they are not in such a state. That is, their goodness can be acquired only when they are in the state of equilibrium or harmony without being affected by anything internal or external. Since the four feelings are identified with the Seven Feelings, what is ascribed to the former can be also applied to the latter. The Seven Feelings can be either good or evil. That is, they are good when they are aroused appropriately and harmoniously, whereas they are evil when they are either excessive or defective.

In Neo-Confucianism, the characteristics of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings are closely related to those of *i* and *gi*. The characteristics Zhu Xi ascribes to *i* and *gi* can be classified into two types, which we may call “ontological characteristics” and “moral characteristics.”

101. ***I has never been separated from gi.***<sup>10</sup> However, *i* “exists before physical form (and is therefore with it)” whereas *gi* “exists after physical form (and is therefore with it).” Hence when spoken of as being before or after physical form, is there not the difference of priority and posteriority? *I* has no physical form, but *gi* is coarse and contains impurities.

102. Fundamentally *i* and *gi* cannot be spoken of as prior or posterior. But if we must trace their origin, we are obliged to say that *i* is prior. However, *i* is not a separate entity. It exists right in *gi*. Without *gi*, *i* would have nothing to adhere to.

(*Zhuzi jizhu* 49:1a-49:2b; Chan 1963, 634)<sup>11</sup>

9. In relation to this, there arise questions about the underlying subject of the “*mibal/weifa* 未發” (not-yet-aroused) state and the “*ibal/yifa* 已發” (already-aroused) state and also about the exact nature of both states. On this, see Yoo (2009b, 258-263).

10. All bold emphases in this article are mine.

11. I have replaced Chan’s “principle” and “material force” with *i* and *gi*, respectively.

In general, the non-physical *i* is understood as the principle, the law, or the essence, whereas the physical *gi* is understood as the material that consists of all the myriad things in the physical world. Their relationship is characterized by the phrase “unmixable and inseparable.” Since there cannot be any physical thing without the principle or any principle without the physical thing, *i* and *gi* can neither be separated from nor exist without each other. They are thus inseparable. But since they are not one and the same thing, they are also unmixable. Although this much is accepted by most Neo-Confucian scholars as Zhu Xi’s standard position on *i* and *gi*, it is extremely difficult to grasp exactly what they refer to and what their relationship is.<sup>12</sup> Apart from the ontological characterization of *i* and *gi*, Zhu Xi also offers the moral characterization of them in terms of goodness and evilness. He often ascribes goodness to *i* and evilness to *gi* and maintains that all the things in the physical world are the same in respect to *i*, but different only in their purity or impurity of *gi* (*Zhuzi jizhu* 49:7a). When the state of *gi* is in accordance with *i*, then the subject composed of *i* and *gi* is good. Since the goodness of human nature is thus ascribed to *i*, Zhu Xi claims that Mencius who talked only of human goodness must have considered the aspect of *i* only.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, it is not the case that *gi* itself is evil, for if it were evil, all the things that are composed of *i* and *gi* would always be evil to a certain extent, too. Nonetheless, in Zhu Xi’s system, *gi* stands for evilness.

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12. Although Zhu Xi clearly states the inseparability of *i* and *gi* at 101, he seems to make the opposite claim of their separability, for example, at 105 wherein he says, “Before heaven and earth existed, **there was first of all *Li*** [*sic*]” (Chan 1963, 635). Thus, Choi (2005, 52-53) points out that Zhu Xi violates the law of excluded middle by accepting two contradictory Propositions at the same time. Indeed, Zhu Xi’s inconsistent remarks have caused a lot of controversy among his disciples. On the other hand, Tu (1982, 48) appears to agree with Joseph Needham’s assertion that “*I* was not in any strict sense metaphysical, as were Platonic ideas and Aristotelian forms, but rather the invisible organizing fields or forces existing at all levels with the natural world.”

13. Zhu Xi often states the following in the *Zhuzi yulei* (Classified Conversations of Master Zhu): “As for nature, Mencius speaks of *i*, and Gaozi speaks of *gi*” (4:40) and “Mencius speaks of nature in terms of *i*” (59:9).

To sum up, we initially have three classifications of the different types of feelings, that is, the Four Beginnings in the *Mengzi*, the Seven Feelings in the *Liji*, and the four feelings in the *Zhongyong*. We can dismiss the four feelings since they are identified with the Seven Feelings. This leaves us with the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings. The Four Beginnings are said to be good because they have their origin in human nature, which is good in itself because of *i*, whereas the Seven Feelings are also related to human nature and so too are good. Thus, at first glance, the Four Beginnings appear to be identifiable with the Seven Feelings. But this is not true since the Four Beginnings are always good,<sup>14</sup> whereas the Seven Feelings are either good or evil according to the degree or perfection of the arousal of feelings. Consequently, they are not identifiable, and defining their exact relationship is left for further discussion. This question of whether the Four Beginnings belong to the Seven Feelings or whether the former have nothing to do with the latter becomes one of the subject-matters dealt with in the Four-Seven Debate. At this stage, we should note that at the foundation of the debate, the Neo-Confucian doctrines such as “human nature is good” or “the Four [Beginnings] are good” or “*i* is good and pure” (*Zhuzi jizhu* 4:40),<sup>15</sup> “*gi* is subject to evilness” (*Zhuzi jizhu* 4:67), and “nature is *i*” (*Zhuzi jizhu* 4:39, 4:43, 4:49, 4:50 *passim*) are presupposed without any question.

### The Conceptual Analysis of *Bal/Fa*

Now let us turn to the word “*bal* 發” (*fa* in Chinese pronunciation), which occupies a significant position not only in the *Zhongyong* but also in the Four-Seven Debate. In the *Zhongyong* passage cited above,

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14. We need to confine this view to Mencius, but not to Zhu Xi, for the latter states in the *Zhuzi yulei* (53:36) that the Four Feelings can be in the state not only of equilibrium but also of non-equilibrium, which clearly appears to imply that the Four can be either good or evil.

15. See, by way of comparison: “*I* is only good” (*Zhuzi jizhu* 4:40); and “there is no *i* which is not good” (*Zhuzi jizhu* 4:49).

Chan translates the word as “being aroused,” but this is not the only possible translation. It also has been translated as a verb or a noun with varying meanings. In the Four-Seven Debate, the word takes the form of “A *bal*(s) in/from B,” or “A is B’s *bal*,” or “A’s *bal* is B.” Scholars differ in their opinions concerning the meaning of *bal*: for example, Fu (1958, 16-24) translates it mostly as “manifest” (*bal-hyeon* 發顯) but as “issue” (*bal-won* 發源) in one case; Jeong (2003, 207-223) not only understands it as “manifest” (*bal-hyeon* 發顯), but also as “activate” (*bal-dong* 發動); Nam (2007, 8-15) conceives all the three meanings as possible candidates; and Yoon (1985b, 37-38) initially acknowledges the three meanings as Nam did, but soon reduces them to two meanings as Jeong does.<sup>16</sup>

Among the three candidates for the meaning of *bal*, the semantic difference between “issue” and “manifest” seems immediately clear since the former involves the implication of origin, whereas the latter that of presentation. Now let us consider the three candidates in turn. Firstly, when we say that “A *issues from* B,” we mean that A comes *out of* B. In this sense, B is understood as the origin or source. Thus, I here suggest understanding it as “originate” rather than “issue” since the former explicitly relates to the meaning of “origin.” Secondly, when we say that “A *manifests itself in* B,” we mean that B presents A. Now B signifies a vehicle that contains A within it. Although the imposition of the meaning of containment to the expression is not wrong, *bal* here means to disclose something rather than contain it.<sup>17</sup> Thirdly, Nam suggests that the word be translated as “activate” in some cases. His initial translation of *bal* is “activate,” but he later on seems to impose the meaning of “arouse” to it. In particular, when he emphasizes the inseparability of *i* and *gi* in Gobong’s theory, he seems

16. Commentators differ in their translation of *bal*: for example, Jin (1987, 351) translates it as “emanate,” Chung (1995, 70) as “manifest,” and Kalton (1994), Tu (1978, 33), and Tan (2006, 160-161 *passim*) as “issue.”

17. See Fu (1985, 19). He translates it as “A *manifests itself in terms of* B,” but I translate it as “A *manifests itself in* B.” Fu’s translation seems to imply that A discloses itself without presupposing any subject, but mine specifically shows the subject B in which A is disclosed.



to refer to the affection or perception caused by an external object.<sup>18</sup> I suggest that we use the translation of “arouse” rather than that of “activate” because the main contention of the Four-Seven Debate is about feelings, explained in terms of *i* and *gi*, and the verb “arouse” is a more appropriate term to describe the causal relationship of feelings with other psychological factors.

Now, when we state the Proposition “A *bal*(s) in/from B” in the Four-Seven Debate, the Four or the Seven comes in the place of A, and *i* or *gi* or both in the place of B. Since Toegye and Gobong are deeply concerned with the relationship between A and B, the translation of *bal* that specifies the relationship is highly significant. Since the Four Beginnings or the Seven Feelings described in terms of *i* or *gi*, it is expected that they will show four cases of relationship. Indeed, the number of the cases is four as expected, but the relationships of the individual cases turn out to be different from the expectation. The relationships that one expects would be: (R1) between the Four and *i*, (R2) between the Seven and *gi*, (R3) between the Four and *gi*, and (R4) between the Seven and *i*. However, in Neo-Confucianism, R3 and R4 are not considered relevant at all for the following reasons: first, the Four have nothing to do with *gi* because they are pure good, whereas *gi* is inclined to be evil and, second, the Seven have nothing to do with *i* because they can be evil, whereas *i* is always good. Consequently, instead of R3 and R4, the relationships (R5) between the Four and *i* presupposing *gi* and (R6) between the Seven and *gi* presupposing *i* are included in the list for consideration.

As mentioned earlier, Yoon conceives three meanings of *bal*, two of which are introduced in the following passage:

The understanding of especially the issuance of *i* and *gi* in this con-

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18. Nam (2007, 11) does not seem to make a distinction between (R1) A is activating B and (R2) A is being activated as B. The relationship between A and B in R1 follows the agent-patient relationship which requires a subject and an object, whereas, in R2, A and B can be ontologically identified with each other and refer to one and the same subject. I thank Professor Don Baker at the University of British Columbia for helping me clarify this distinction.

text is based on the premise that the fundamental structure of feeling is “the sum of *i* and *gi*.” With respect to concept, therefore, the issuance of *i* and the issuance of *gi* cannot necessarily be said to be identical (Yoon 1985a, 10).

In the case of *gi*, it (*bal*) may denote activation or issuance which practically involves action, but, in the case of *i*, it should be viewed as denoting a sort of presentation or manifestation which does not practically involve action (through *gi*) (Yoon 1985b, 37).

Yoon distinguishes (S1) a static sense of *bal* in the case of *i* and (S2) its dynamic sense in the case of *gi*, as Jeong (2003, 212, 217) does, and also mentions (S3) the third case in the combination of *i* and *gi*. In this account, he says that “the function of issuance is not the explanation of the actual event, but only the conceptual explanation.” He relates S1 to S2 by saying that “the issuance of *i* explained in terms of the function of issuance does not mean that *i* itself issues, but that it manifests through *gi*” (Yoon 1985b, 38). He then goes on to conclude that they are identified since the issuance of *i* is always understood as its manifestation in *gi*. S1 is now understood as the static *i* that always manifests itself in *gi*. In this way, Yoon has two senses of *bal* in mind, S2 and S3.

On the other hand, Yoon and Jeong suggest that the *bal* of *i* and the *bal* of *gi* be understood as having different functions, whereas Fu and Nam do not distinguish their functions. Accordingly, the former scholars assign different meanings to *bal* in different contexts, e.g. manifestation in the case of *i* and issuance in the case of *gi*, whereas the latter ones assign one and the same meaning to it in all cases, e.g. either manifestation or issuance.

In regard to the Four-Seven Debate, I oppose both their positions, for, as we shall see below, in some Propositions multiple translations are recommendable, but in other Propositions only one translation is appropriate. In the next section, we shall also see the suitability of each translation of *bal* in each of the Propositions.

## The Translation of *Bal* in the Six Propositions

It is well known that the seed of the Four-Seven Debate was sown by Jeong Ji-un (penname: Chuman; 1509-1561), who drew a diagram with brief descriptions concerning Confucian teachings of the inner structure of the universe in relation to human nature and the human mind. Having done so, he gauged its accuracy by consulting many scholars around him and eventually consulted with Toegye who suggested he replace P1 with P2.<sup>19</sup> Some years later, Gobong happened to see the diagram and expressed his criticisms of it. The formal initiation of the Four-Seven Debate was occasioned by Toegye's letter to Gobong in which he asked whether it would be all right if he corrected P2 as P3.<sup>20</sup> P2 and P5 are known as Toegye's First and Second Interpretation, respectively. Moreover, it is to be noted that P4 is mentioned by Toegye without any detailed explanation, whereas P6 appears in Gobong's final letter to Toegye.<sup>21</sup> The main thesis of the Four-Seven Debate is about the relationship between the Four-Seven dichotomy and the *i-gi* dichotomy. In the debate, we are to discover six Propositions that are worthy of consideration.<sup>22</sup>

(P1) Chuman's original Proposition (1537): "The Four Beginnings **originate from / manifest [themselves] in / are aroused by *i***, and the Seven Feelings **originate from / manifest [themselves] in / are aroused by *gi***" (四端發於理, 七情發於氣).

(SCNY 2008, 161-162, 234)<sup>23</sup>

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19. But in his first letter to Gobong, Toegye, perhaps mistakenly, mentioned P3, whereas Gobong in his reply mentioned a mixed Proposition of P1 and P3, viz. (P1-1) "The Four Beginnings **originate from / manifest [themselves] in / are aroused by *i*** and [they are] nothing but good, whereas the Seven feelings **originate from / manifest [themselves] in / are aroused by *gi*** and [they are] good or evil" (四端發於理而無不善, 七情發於氣而有善惡) (SCNY 2008, 146).
20. Fu (1985, 19) is wrong to treat P1 as Toegye's and also to think that Toegye replaced P1 with P3 after Gobong's criticism.
21. P4 and P6 are pointed out by Fu (1985, 19) and Lee (2009, 363), respectively.
22. The Propositions are my translations, though I owe a lot to Kalton's resourceful translation (1994).
23. See SCNY (2008, 100-102 nn25-26) for the year of this Proposition. Considering

(P2) Toegye’s first emendation (1553): “The Four Beginnings are the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of *i*, and the Seven Feelings are the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of *gi*” (四端理之發, 七情氣之發).

(SCNY 2008, 169)<sup>24</sup>

(P3) Toegye’s second emendation (1559): “The **origin/manifestation/arousal** of the Four Beginnings is *i* only and [they are] nothing but good, and the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of the Seven Feelings is [not only *i* but] combined with *gi* and [they are] good or evil” (四端之發純理 故無不善, 七情之發兼氣 故有善惡).

(SCNY 2008, 140)

(P4) Toegye’s third emendation (1559): “In the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of the Four Beginnings, . . . *i* predominates, and in the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of the Seven Feelings, . . . *gi* predominates” (四端之發 . . . 則主於理, 七情之發 . . . 則在乎氣).

(SCNY 2008, 196)

(P5) Toegye’s fourth emendation (1560): “The Four are the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of *i* and *gi* follows it, and the Seven are the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of *gi* and *i* rides on it” (四則理發而氣隨之, 七則氣發而理乘之).

(SCNY 2008, 257)

(P6) Gobong’s final Proposition (1561): “In the **origin/manifestation/arousal** of feelings, at times *i* moves and *gi* is together with it, or at times *gi* is stimulated and *i* rides on it” (情之發也, 或理動而氣俱, 或氣感而理乘).

(SCNY 2008, 303)

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Chuman’s remarks in the preface to the *Cheonmyeong dosol* (Diagram of the Heavenly Mandate) that he had expected his father’s teachers, Kim An-guk (1478-1543) and Kim Jong-guk (1485-1541), to give some comments on the diagram, but that his expectation was not fulfilled because of their deaths, there is every reason to believe that P1 was written as early as 1537 and so there was a considerable time gap between P1 and P2.

24. In fact, the exact wording of P2 cannot be found in their correspondence. Toegye makes a frequent reference to Zhu Xi’s statement, which has a slightly different wording, “四端是理之發, 七情是氣之發” (*Zhuzi yulei* 53:20a).

The bold letters indicate the three possible translations of *bal*, which have the following implications:<sup>25</sup> (i) for A to be originated from B, A requires B as a source or material out of which it comes;<sup>26</sup> (ii) for A to manifest itself in B, A requires B as a medium in which it manifests; and (iii) for A to be aroused by B, A requires B as an external agent, or rather, object.

Having these meanings in mind, let us first consider “originate/origin” as a translation of *bal*. When we examine the suitability of the translation on the left sides of P2 and P5, we can immediately observe that they are wrong because the Four are not the origin of *i* but rather the other way around. The remaining four Propositions make sense. Although P1 and P3 imply *i* as the sole origin of the Four, they are rejected by Toegye and Gobong, respectively. This is because they appear to sever too starkly the dichotomy of *i* and *gi*. As for Gobong’s rejection of P3, Toegye accepts his criticism and emends it to P4. This might suggest that Gobong and Toegye understand the translation of *bal* in P3 as “originate/origin.” Considering that P3 and P4 are rejected, they must imply the stark severance of the dichotomy. On the other hand, the expression “predominate” in both coordinate clauses of P4 implies that there is something other than *i* or *gi*, whereas P6 explicitly suggests that *i* and *gi* are together in the origin of feelings.

The premise that, in Zhu Xi’s principle of inseparability, there cannot be *i* without *gi* or *gi* without *i* appears implicit in P4 and explicit in P6. The second candidate for the translation of *bal* is “manifest/manifestation.” Fu (1985, 19-21) claims that all the *bal* in P1-P5 should be

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25. There are two important points to be noted. Firstly, my analysis concerns the translation of *bal* only in the case of the Four Beginnings and *i* and wholly ignores the case of the Seven and *gi*. Secondly, the analysis does not presuppose whether *i* is a non-physical entity that can exist without *gi*. The results of the present analysis can vary in accordance with the additional analysis of the latter case and also with the presumed ontological status of *i*.

26. The traditional choice of “issue” seems to have two usages: (a) for A to issue (itself), it does not require anything else other than itself and (b) for A to issue from B, it requires B as a source of material. The second usage has the same connotation as “originate/origin” that I mean to convey.

understood as “manifestations.”<sup>27</sup> He adopts the phrase “manifest themselves in terms of” in P1 and understands that the Four somehow reflects *i*. This makes perfect sense in Neo-Confucian terms since the goodness of *i* is realized as the goodness of the Four, but the word for “in terms of” cannot be found in the original Chinese sentence at hand. Moreover, it is not clear how he can reconcile P2 and P5 with P3 and P4. The former states that “the Four Beginnings are the manifestation of *i*,” whereas the latter states that “the manifestation of the Four Beginnings is *i*.” The question about the reconciliation arises because the two expressions have different connotations and, also, because it is not that “the Four Beginnings manifest [themselves] in *i*” as in P1, but rather that “*i* manifests [itself] in the Four Beginnings.”

In fact, Fu explicitly takes P1 to be identical with P2, and P3 with P4 (Fu 1985, 20), despite the fact, according to my analysis above, that the connotations of P1 and P2 are different. That is, P1 states the manifestation of the Four in *i*, whereas P2 states the manifestation of *i* in the Four. Moreover, in relation to P3 and P4, Fu appears to think that it is all right to say that “the manifestation of the Four Beginnings is *i*.” However, if my reading is right, P1, P3, and P4 belong to the same group. Indeed, Zhu Xi would say that the Four reflect or mirror *i* and that *i* is realized “as” the Four. Consequently, the translation of *bal* as manifest/manifestation in P1, P3, and P4 does not appear appropriate. On the contrary, P2, P5, and P6 make sense, although they leave the question of whether the Four or the Seven are the manifestation of *i* or *gi* separately or both. Zhu Xi’s principle of inseparability between *i* and *gi* can be a matter of dispute again in relation to P2, for it states the manifestation of *i* itself, implying its independent existence. This understanding can be a reason for Gobong’s rejection of P2, and it may be an understanding upheld by Toegye who emends it to P3.

Let us now consider the last candidate for translating *bal* as “arouse/arousal.” This candidate might look lopsided in the sense that from the outset it leads us to view Toegye as a dualist who ack-

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27. He also accepts the translation of *bal* as “issue” in P1.

nowledges two types of substances, the physical *gi* and the non-physical *i*. Nonetheless, insofar as the existence of the non-physical *i* is granted, the translation is applicable to all the instances of *bal*, though this is a matter of dispute like the above case. Such expressions as the Four being aroused by *i* in P1, the arousal of *i* as the Four in P2, *i* in the arousal of the Four in P4, the arousal of *i* with *gi* as the Four in P5, and the role of *i* or *gi* in the arousal of feelings in P6 make perfect sense, although all the Propositions once again raise the frequently asked question about the ontological status of *i* with regards to its arousal of feelings or the nature of its existence. On the contrary, P3 is not acceptable to Zhu Xi, as he believes that the arousal of *i* is the Four, not the other way around.

At this stage, we need to ask whether we should look for a single translation applicable to all the cases or various translations appropriate in individual cases. In fact, we have been unable to find any translation of *bal* that meets the former condition, unlike Fu who claims “manifest/manifestation” as the translation that is applicable to all the cases. Therefore, we have to look for the best possible translation in every individual case. The translation of “arouse/arousal” is suitable for all the cases except for P3, “originate/origin” for P1, P3, P4, and P6, and “manifest/manifestation” for P2, P5, and P6. In fact, all of the three meanings are possible translations for only P6, and it is hard to determine which one of them is the best translation for it.

On the other hand, let us briefly look at the suggestion made by Yoon and Jeong earlier wherein they talk of how Toegye distinguished (S1) the static sense of *bal* as manifest/manifestation in the case of *i* from (S2) its dynamic sense as arousal/arousal in the case of *gi*. This interpretation of ascribing a non-physical characteristic of immovability to the non-physical *i* and a physical characteristic of movability to the physical *gi* is an easy way out to dismiss all the controversies concerning the translation of *bal*. However, this hardly seems right for the simple reason that if Toegye had thought of a static sense of *bal* in the case of *i*, he would not have emended his own claim in reaction to Gobong’s criticism. It is thus hard to believe that he ascribes different meanings to the same word in different contexts. Nor is it true to say

that he ascribes one and the same meaning to the same word in all contexts: for, as seen above, it is inappropriate to try to find one universal translation applicable to all the Propositions.

### The Inseparability of *I* and *Gi*

In this section, I shall start by analyzing the relationship between the Four-Seven and the *i-gi* in P3, which initially brought about the debate, and then compare it with their relationship in P4, P5, and P6. Toegye asks in his first letter to Gobong whether the expressions he uses in P3 are appropriate, and Gobong answers in the negative. Since we need not be concerned with the translation of *bal* here for the reasons stated above, we shall leave it untranslated. Let us cite P3 again.

(P3) “The *bal* of the Four Beginnings is *i* only and [they are] nothing but good, and the *bal* of the Seven Feelings is [not only *i* but] combined with *gi* and [they are] good or evil.”

There are at least six more points to be considered in P3, in addition to the question about the translation of *bal*.

- (P3-a) The *bal* of the Four is *i* only.
- (P3-b) The *bal* of the Seven is the combination of *i* and *gi*.
- (P3-c) The Four are always good.
- (P3-d) The Seven are either good or evil.
- (P3-e) The Four have nothing to do with the Seven.
- (P3-f) The Four refer to the good feelings among the Seven.

Gobong initially raises a question about P3-c on the basis of Zhu Xi’s implication that they can be either good or evil. However, he later on agrees with Toegye on accepting P3-c and, also, P3-d as presuppositions.<sup>28</sup> They are also happy with P3-b, which mentions both *i* and *gi*

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28. See note 14 above for P3-c and also the chapter, “Some Presuppositions of the Four-Seven Debate” for some basic presuppositions.



in relation to the Seven. According to our conceptual analysis of *bal*, the *i* in P3-a refers to a source from which the Four are originated and which also clearly exists on its own without reference to *gi*. Since P3-a implies the independent existence of *i*, Gobong is not happy about it at all. At an earlier stage, he refused Toegye's Proposition, P2, because it starkly severed the Four-Seven dichotomy as well as the *i-gi* dichotomy. It encloses two implications: P2-a that "the Four have nothing to do with *gi*," and P2-b that "the Seven have nothing to do with *i*." In a sense, there has been an improvement with P3 since P3-b dismisses P2-b by referring not to *i* alone, but to the combination of *i* and *gi*. However, P3-a is again refused by Gobong because it has the same connotation as P2-a; that is, P3-a still implies the separability of *i* and *gi* and also the separability of the Four and the Seven, that is, P3-e. Toegye is in favor of P3-e, which is incompatible with P3-f which Gobong accepts.

It is to be noted that, although Toegye's Propositions have called for Gobong's continuous criticism, Toegye himself has never said that *i* and *gi* are separable entities.<sup>29</sup> Toegye merely states that *i* and *gi* are surely inseparable in reality, but they can be talked of as separate entities in dialogue. In the course of making this point, he mentions P4 which implies that there is something else other than *i* or *gi* in the Four Beginnings and the Seven Feelings. Presumably, that something designates *gi* and *i*, respectively, and so *i* and *gi* are present together in both cases. Again, Gobong expresses his dissatisfaction with this rationale. His contention here is against the case of the Seven Feelings. He says that the word "predominate" (*ju* 主) gives the impression that there is only *gi* in the case of the Seven (SCNY 2008, 164-165, 186-187, 196-197). It may seem too obstinate an attitude for Gobong to keep raising continuous objections, but this is understandable.

The debate was initially raised by Gobong's reading of P2 as severing the dichotomy of *i* and *gi*, and he does not want to leave any room for such an implication of severance at all. Nonetheless, I am inclined to agree with Toegye; for when we designate the human mind

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29. See, by way of comparison, Jin (1987, 351).

as being in a latent state before the arousal of feelings, we can take out *i* alone and still talk about it, as we do with numerical numbers (SCNY 2008, 252-256, 162-164, 237). Indeed, it is hard to find any reason not to talk of *i* and *gi* separately from each other. Of course, Gobong understands this, but he is afraid that if it became widely accepted to talk about them as a dichotomy, there might be some people who would think that they are separable in reality (SCNY 2008, 188-190). Thus, he endeavors to get rid of any such possibility.

Eventually, Toegye makes his final suggestion, P5, wherein he explicitly acknowledges the presence of *i* and *gi* together in the cases of the Four and the Seven. He utilizes a bit of a tricky method that weakens Gobong’s successive criticism of the separability of *i* and *gi* and, at the same time, maintains the privileged value of the Four. He does this by explaining the goodness of the Four in terms of *i*, on the one hand, and the evilness of the Seven to *gi*, on the other. However, Gobong is not happy with P5 because, although it allows Toegye to avoid the commitment to the separability of *i* from *gi*, it cannot do away with the impression that the Four are somehow distinguished from the Seven. In fact, it seems that, from some point on, it does not really matter to Gobong whether the ontological basis of the Four and the Seven is *i* or *gi*, or both. The only thing he is concerned with is whether both *i* and *gi* play the same role in the arousal of feelings. We can see that Toegye does try hard to conform to Gobong’s restrictions, but Gobong does not wish to accept his expression insofar as it leaves any room for the slightest possibility of separating *i* from *gi* or vice versa.

We see that up to this point Gobong has only listened to Toegye’s Propositions and expressed his opinions of them, but he has never added or suggested any Propositions of his own. Eventually, though, he does make a Proposition, P6, and explicitly presents it as an alternative to P5 for some reason that remains unclear. Despite the fact that his Proposition has a very significant implication, its importance has not been well noted. The most significant point here is that, unlike Toegye’s Propositions that treat the Four and the Seven separately, Gobong uses a collective term “*jeong* 情” (*qing* in Chinese pro-

nunciation) to express the two as one. One of his reasons for not separating *i* from *gi* is that once you accept a dichotomy of *i* from *gi*, you also have to admit to the separability of the Four from the Seven.

Now, since his newly introduced term embraces all the feelings and treats them as a whole, the characterization made for one feeling can be also applicable to other feelings. Perhaps, P6 might have been the one Gobong waited so long to hear from Toegye. Unfortunately and unexpectedly, their debate ends here. Toegye summarizes the relevant remarks of Gobong's Proposition in his unsent letter (SCNY 2008, 363-364), but does not add any personal comments to it. It is, however, readily conceivable that he will not agree with P6 because it does not state anything about the characteristic distinction between the Four and the Seven. All the same, Toegye's account will not satisfy Gobong at all unless he gives up the emphasis on the predominated role of *i* or *gi* and ascribes an equal role or function to them. Thus, Toegye and Gobong are in parallel with each other and their debate is destined to go on and on without arriving at any conclusion.

Gobong may have thought that his final Proposition could not be reconciled with any of Toegye's Propositions. But Toegye would not have agreed with Gobong's opinion; for, insofar as the inseparability of *i* and *gi* is concerned, Toegye was already in agreement with Gobong from the moment he presented the First Interpretation, P2. The fact that Toegye emended his own wording of the Proposition several times merely suggests that he was a bit careless in his expression, but this does not mean that he ever changed his original position that "*i* and *gi* are inseparable in reality, but separable in thought or dialogue."<sup>30</sup>

On the basis of Toegye's position seen so far, we should consider the characterization of him as a sort of dualist. Some commentators characterize his Four-Seven Debate as dualistic and call him a dualist

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30. See, by way of comparison, SCNY (2008, especially, 252-256). This might be one way of interpreting Zhu Xi's thesis that *i* and *gi* are "unmixable with each other" (不相雜) and "inseparable from each other" (不相離). Thus, Tu (1982, 46) says that "even though conceptually they are distinguishable, they are never separable in the phenomenal world."

(Chung 1995, 63-64; Tan 2006, 155-183).<sup>31</sup> However, if we confine ourselves strictly to his letters to Gobong, he was never a dualist, for, in the letters, he never claims the independent or separate existence of *i* apart from *gi* or vice versa, but instead admits to their inseparability. On the other hand, it is undeniable that Toegye occasionally appears to ascribe to the non-physical *i* some physical characteristics such as the activity or power of arousing feelings. Due to this double standard, one might say that he was an explicit monist and, at the same time, an implicit dualist. This may be the reason why Kalton describes Toegye’s position as “a monistic dualism or a dualistic monism” (Kalton 1994, xxxii, xxxv). However, one can only be either a monist or a dualist, but not in between the two. That is, one is a dualist, if one admits to two kinds of substances, i.e. a non-physical substance and a physical substance, whereas one is a monist if one accepts the existence of one type of substance only. Although Toegye’s explanation of the origin of the Four and the Seven does have a dualistic implication at times, this does not make him a dualist. Insofar as he denies that *i* and *gi* are two distinct substances that exist separately from each other and believes in their inseparability, he must be a monist or, to be exact, a substantial monist, in opposition to a Cartesian dualist who acknowledges the separate existence of the non-physical soul from the physical body or vice versa.

## Conclusion

In the course of this discussion, I have arrived at three major conclusions. Firstly, there is no universal translation of *bal* that can be

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31. For example, Chung (1995, 63) says that “Toegye was well aware of the Che’ng-Chu doctrine that *i* and *ki* [*sic*] are inseparable from each other in concrete things and phenomena; however, he chose to emphasize that one must not neglect another fundamental point that each of *i* and *ki* [*sic*] is ‘an entity in itself.’” It appears that if this is true, then Toegye must be a dualist. Importantly, however, the reference to the expression “an entity in itself” he uses is not from Toegye, but from Zhu Xi.

applied to all the six Propositions concerning the Four and the Seven in terms of *i* and *gi*. Secondly, Gobong's final Proposition P6, of adopting the collective term of *jeong*, suggests that he does not accept Toegye's last proposal P5. Thirdly, despite all the dualistic implications, Toegye should be regarded as a monist insofar as his position in the debate is concerned. Above all, the method of analyzing and examining the meanings of *bal* in the context of five Propositions of the Four-Seven Debate, suggested by Fu, is surely a worthwhile method to adopt in the debate. This method involves a careful analysis of various concepts adopted and used in the debate and then requires the result of the analysis to be applied in a wider context to see whether the implication(s) of each analysis is appropriate. So, if in this vein we are to see the debate in a wider context, we should also analyze the various interpretations of each Proposition in the debate and view the results in the light of the whole Neo-Confucian system.

One commentator claims that it is not important to "try to determine who is right and who is wrong" because "Zhu Xi's system of thought is no longer valid nowadays" (Jeon 1995, 150). He does not clearly state the reason for his claim. However, I, unlike him, believe that any sort of discussion is worthy of academic consideration, insofar as it is rational. In their debate, Toegye and Gobong make their claims with supporting evidence, and this clearly shows that they are neither arbitrary nor dogmatic, but rational. Yoon once suggests that we try not to remain inside the framework of Neo-Confucianism whilst examining the debate, but to examine the framework itself, not to speak of the minor questions based on it, in view of contemporary philosophies such as the philosophy of mind, analytic philosophy, etc. (Yoon 2001, 119-120, 141-144; Yoo 2009a, 45-68). I am not sure whether Zhu Xi's system is completely invalid as is suggested above, but it is clear that the Four-Seven Debate has not been examined in terms of contemporary philosophies. Once this line of examination is performed properly, it can be said whether the theories presented in the debate are worthy of further consideration or not. This is a job for us to do sooner than later.

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