

The Appropriateness and Publicness of Emotion in Korean Neo-Confucianism

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in Korean



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Abstract

In this talk, I shed new light on the “Four-Seven” debate in Korean Neo-Confucianism from the standpoint of emotion theory. While previous studies have focused mainly on the structure of li-gi (cn: lǐ-qì 理氣) metaphysics, I will pay special attention to the appropriateness and publicness of emotions. First, I examine the notion of ‘joongjeol(cn: zhōngjié 中節)’, commonly understood as the appropriateness of emotions. The questions here are whether the “Seven Emotions”(七情) can be regarded as good as the “Four Sprouts” (sadan/siduan 四端), when they are expressed properly in a specific moral situation and whether they are understood to be bad if expressed improperly in the given situation. Since this issue was first raised in the debate between Toegye(退溪) Yi Hwang(李滉, 1501-1570) and Gobong(高峯) Gi Daeseung(奇大升, 1527-1572) it has been continuously discussed among Korean Neo-Confucianism, developing into debates on various and complex topics, culminating in of the debate on emotions’ publicness and privateness during the late Joseon period. I conclude that the Four-Seven debate raised a series of important philosophical discussions, at the center of which lay in the ethical and socio-political meaning and significance of emotions. I argue that this debate is worthy philosophical reinvestigation from the standpoint of emotion theory.

About the Speaker

Seongmin Hong is professor in the Department of Philosophy at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies(HUFS) in Korea, where he teaches Chinese philosophy and Confucian ethics. He received his Ph.D in the department of Philosophy from Korea University. He is the author of 감정과 도덕: 성리학의 도덕 감정론[The Emotion and Morality: The Moral Emotion Theory in Neo-Confucianism], and co-authored of 주제 속 주희, 현대적 주희[Zhu Xi’s Thought in Themes and in Contemporary World] etc. His current research interests include justice theory, virtue ethics and self-cultivation in East Asian tradition.