

Humean Elements in the Teachings of Itō Jinsai: A Study of Moral Motivation in Confucian Ethics

Marko OGRIZEK*

Abstract

The present article juxtaposes selected elements of the Humean position on moral motivation with the ethical teachings of the Edo period Japanese Confucian scholar Itō Jinsai—especially the latter’s critical reading of the notion of structural coherence *li*, his defence of human feelings as the fundamental ground of moral motivation and his views on the origins of moral sentiment. In doing so, the article aims to show that there is an interesting line going through Jinsai’s work that might be argued to bear, within the philosophical project of Confucian ethics, similarities to certain of Hume’s more famous positions, which it actually predates.

Keywords: Itō Jinsai, David Hume, structural coherence *li*, moral motivation, sentimentalism

Humovski elementi v naukih Itōja Jinsaija: Študija moralne motivacije v konfucijanski etiki

Izvleček

Pričujoči članek si jemlje za primerjavo izbrane elemente Humovega pogleda na moralno motivacijo na eni ter etične nauke japonskega konfucijanskega učenjaka obdobja Edo Itōja Jinsaija na drugi strani – posebej Jinsaijevo kritično branje pojma strukturne koherence *li*, njegov zagovor človeških čustev kot temeljne podlage moralne motivacije in njegovega pogleda na izvor moralnih stališč. Na ta način se v članku pokaže, da se skozi Jinsaijevo delo vije zanimiva rdeča nit, za katero bi se dalo trditi, da poseduje znotraj filozofskega projekta konfucijanske etike določene podobnosti z nekaterimi Humovimi bolj znanimi stališči – od katerih je Jinsaijevo delo sicer starejše.

Ključne besede: Itō Jinsai, David Hume, strukturna koherenca *li*, moralna motivacija, sentimentalizem

* Marko OGRIZEK, Independent researcher.
Email address: marka.ogrizek(at)gmail.com



Introduction

David Hume's (1711–1776) arguments on moral motivation are well known and have sparked numerous debates in the Western philosophical tradition. I do not propose in this paper to enter this vast and expansive field and to argue either for or against Hume's positions. I rather wish to try and show that certain distinctions, similar to Hume's, can also be found within the bounds of Confucian ethics¹—and that the selected example of this actually predates Hume's arguments themselves. Namely, I would like to use Hume as a lens to examine certain aspects of the work of the Edo period Japanese scholar Itô Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705).

Taking the Humean position as a specific lens to look through, I would like to analyse Itô Jinsai's critique of the philosophical teachings of the Cheng-Zhu School of Neo-Confucianism, also taking into account the fact that Jinsai's thought was developed within a completely different philosophical tradition to Hume's. I would especially like to take a closer look at Jinsai's critical examination of one of Cheng-Zhu School's key philosophical notions: that of structural coherence (*li/ri* 理), as well as his defence of the notions of human feelings and desires as the fundamental ground of moral motivation and the natural origins of moral sentiment. I will argue that Jinsai's project might actually contain elements similar to the Humean position, and that it might be precisely this question of moral motivation that gives Jinsai's critique its cohesive thread.

As I show elsewhere (see Ogrizek 2021) even though the philosophical work of Jinsai might for him perhaps be seen as neither the starting point, nor the actual goal, it can also be said to be the central activity that holds his project together (ibid., 206). Jinsai's main contention is that the Cheng-Zhu School was in its readings of Confucian notions too deeply influenced by the Buddhist and Daoist teachings—which for Jinsai symbolized a sort of antithesis to Confucian ethics². Here then, in contrast to Hume, Jinsai's work stands also in service to the Confucian project as a whole—a project that is turned not only towards philosophy, but primarily towards practical self-cultivation and the proper practice of virtue.

1 There is some research into similarities between Hume's work and works of Confucian philosophy, especially of Mencius. In their article "Mencius, Hume and the virtue of humanity: sources of benevolent moral development" Carey and Vitz, for example, argue that we can see a similarity between what they themselves call the Humean and Mencian moral philosophy, especially on the psychological and social sources of benevolent moral development (Carey and Vitz 2019, 2). In the present article I focus instead on the similarities of critical examination of notions carried out by Jinsai and Hume.

2 As with Hume's position, in the present paper I do not try to adjudicate such disputes on the whole. Instead I wish to emphasize certain points of similarity (as well as those of difference) with the Humean position.

I do not propose to present an exhaustive list of similarities and differences, but instead draw upon those elements of Hume’s critique which I find to be the most readily useful to try and juxtapose with Jinsai’s own works. In this sense, I place the real focus on Jinsai’s teachings, while I take Hume to represent a certain influential lens, through which aspects of Jinsai’s work can be more readily contrasted and identified. It would therefore be wrong to claim that these ideas are *Humean* first, although they are here identified as such, since that is the name under which they were perhaps most famously represented in the Western philosophical canon. But I also realize that Jinsai’s work actually predates Hume’s. I thus take Hume’s work as a lens simply due to its influential status.

Taking cues from Hume’s critique—which has inspired an enduring position on the subject of moral motivation—I examine Jinsai’s critical discussions and try to show that while the notions and formulation of his critical arguments are very different, there might be some similar elements in both of these positions. I believe that some of these elements can also be seen at the centre of Jinsai’s own critique of the ethical teachings of his predecessors—but at the same time I point out the ways in which Jinsai always operates within the Confucian ethical project of self-cultivation, as well as relational ethics.

The Inactivity of Reason and Structural Coherence *li* 理 as a Dead Term

I would first like to draw parallels between Hume’s critical examination of *reason* as a possible source of moral motivation and Jinsai’s own examination of the term structural coherence *li/ri* 理—a term that played a central role in the teachings of Song Neo Confucians and which in the Chinese philosophical tradition might be most closely associated with reason and rationality.

Jinsai’s examination starts with a critical look at Zhu Xi’s famous duality of *li* and *qi/ki* 氣. In this regard, much has been written about Jinsai denying the substance “dualism” of Zhu Xi Learning (see for example Yamashita 1983), but such a reading is surely too simple. For one, John Makeham argues that Zhu Xi himself was never a substance dualist (Makeham 2018, 317), and shows that in Zhu Xi’s system *li* is never considered a creative force (*ibid.*)—a charge that Jinsai would surely agree with. Jinsai does not even seem to dissolve the duality (much less a non-existing dualism) of *li* and *qi* in a direct way—but he does emphasize that *li* cannot be understood as existing *a priori* in any way, even conceptually. He argues: “If we further seek the origins of *yin* and *yang*, we cannot but return

to the notion of *li*” (Transl. Tucker 1998, 74, ed.³) (しこうして再びかの陰陽たるゆえんの本を求むるときは、すなわち必ずこれを理に帰せざることをあらず。) (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 16, 116⁴). But he then goes on to criticize Neo-Confucian statements such as structural coherence *li* might have existed before generative force *qi*, and that even prior to the existence of Heaven and Earth there was *li*⁵, which he, in the Neo-Confucian tradition, criticizes as “subjective opinions” (*okutaku* 臆度) (Tucker 1998, 74–75), concluding: “Like legs added to a picture of a snake or a head growing atop another head, they will never really be confirmed via experience (ibid., 75) (蛇を描いて足を添え、頭上に頭を安んず、実に見得る者にあらず。) (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 16, 116).

He furthermore describes the notion of *li* as a dead term, saying:

Structural coherence is a dead term (*siji* 死字). Dictionaries classify it under the jade radical (*tama* 玉), while pronunciation derives from the word “mile” (*ri* 里)⁶. Structural coherence originally denoted the veins in a piece of jade (*gyokuseki no bunri* 玉石之文理). By extension, it came to refer to the order of things (*jibutsu no jōri* 事物之条理). Thus, structural coherence can neither convey nor capture the mysteries that Heaven and Earth spawn through productive and transformative life (*tenchi seisei kaka no myō* 天地生々化々之妙). (Trans. Tucker 1998, 101, ed.)

道の字はもと活字、その生生化化の妙を形容するゆえんなり。理の字のごときはもと死字、玉に従い里の声、玉石の文理を謂う。もって事物の条理を形容すべくして、もって天地生生化化の妙を形容するに足らず。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 31, 124)

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- 3 I lean heavily on Tucker’s translations throughout the text and mark this accordingly, but I will also edit those translations appropriately to accord with my own translations of Jinsai’s philosophical notions.
 - 4 Jinsai’s original text is written in well-annotated *kanbun*, but as most Japanese sources quote the *kakikudashi* version of the text, I do the same here. However, in the book by Yoshikawa and Shimizu (1971) there is also the original *kanbun* version of the text—I therefore also quote the page numbers for that version of the text.
 - 5 In *Zhuzi yulei*, for example, Zhu Xi says: “Before Heaven and Earth existed there was only *li*. Because *li* exists, so do Heaven and Earth. Without *li* there would be neither Heaven and Earth, neither man nor animals, neither containing nor sustaining (of things by Heaven and Earth). Because there is *li*, *qi* flourishes everywhere, nourishing and developing everything (transl. Tucker 1998, 74–75, ed.) (未有天地之先，畢竟也只是理。有此理，便有此天地；若無此理，便亦無天地，無人無物，都無該載了！有理，便有氣流行，發育萬物。)” (*Zhuzi yulei*, 1)
 - 6 This is apparently from the *Showwen* (ibid.).

Jinsai's intentions here seem to be both to place the notion of *li* strictly within the notion of *qi*, and also to try and shift emphasis from *li* to *qi* when it comes to the notions that define value within the creative process of the common movement. While John Makeham again shows that Zhu Xi's own concerns with the diagram of Taiji are in fact far from cosmogonic, but rather ontological⁷, Jinsai's concern from the very start seems to be in setting the stage for his ethics of everyday human relations: starting with the universe in which the creative movement of a unitary generative force (*ichigenki* 一元氣) is the only origin of things and affairs—and especially value. Thus Jinsai's first criticism of *li* can also be seen as part of his rebellion against the notion of *li* as conceptually *a priori* and as the main notion value giving. There can be no value before value arises within the unitary generative force,⁸ and we cannot really speak of the truth of things outside all human experience.

However, Jinsai's reading could also be seen here as somewhat too narrow to encompass the different philosophical aspects and semantic nuances of the notion *li*. As Brook Ziporyn points out, the term *li/ri* 理 has played a rather interesting and controversial part in the history of Chinese philosophy, and it is also notoriously hard to pin down a translation of it. Several translations of *li* into English have been attempted, like “principle”, “order”, “reason”, “Logos”, “pattern” and “coherence.” However each of these has presented problems of its own, and there seems to be no ready-made fit for the concept in the existing philosophical lexicon⁹ (Ziporyn 2008, 403).

Ziporyn goes into detail of where all these different aspects of *li* stand in relation to the historical and philosophical uses of the term. And while following his thorough search for a proper translation would go beyond the confines of this paper, I would

7 See Makeham (2018). Makeham sees Zhu Xi as providing “a new solution to the problem of how badness is possible, which avoided the radical proposals entailed in the Buddhist attempts to deal with the issue for over half a millennium. Zhu's solution was to develop a monistic ontology in which the conditions that make badness possible are not associated with pattern [*li*] but rather are associated with *qi*, but with the crucial stipulation that there can be no pattern [*li*] without *qi*.” (Makeham 2018, 334) Whether Zhu Xi actually developed what can rightly be called a “monistic ontology”, while going far beyond the bounds of the present article in scope, might also be a question worth exploring further in the future.

8 Thus here, the notions of the Way and virtue already supplant the notion of *li* as value-giving and standard-setting.

9 Recently, several other translations or interpretations of the term *li* have come *in vogue*. In the context of Zhu Xi's philosophy, Margus Ott (2020, 281), for instance, uses the term veins. I myself use the translation “structural coherence”. *Li* as “structure” is not mentioned by Ziporyn, but it is used consistently by Jana Rošker (see for example, Rošker 2012). Rošker also offers an important discussion of *li* as a structural compatibility between the human mind and the external world (see Rošker 2018).

like to highlight those elements of *li* which seem to stand in starkest contrast with some of Jinsai's allegations. Explaining the earlier uses of the term, as also pointed out by Tang Junyi (in Tang 1986), Ziporyn emphasizes that *li* always demonstrates an important component of human action and cohering with desire.

The earliest Chinese dictionary, the *Shuowenjiezi*, defines the term simply as 'to treat jade' (治玉也). The implication is that Li here means 'to cut and divide in a way which is consistent with a particular human value'. One cuts away pieces from a raw piece of jade in order to make it serve as a ritual implement or to attract a human buyer. Thus the raw jade material must be reorganized to form a whole that also necessarily coheres with some human desires or purposes. Tang thus stresses that in its earliest uses, the subjective and active/temporal sense of Li as primary, with its objective and static/spatial aspects as derivative: Li as a verb rather than as a noun. He also notes, importantly, the role of human will, a human project, in all these early usages of Li; that is, the essential connection with value and valuation. (Ziporyn 2008, 404)

Ziporyn himself, after examining all the different possible treatments of the term, offers the definition of *li* as "a harmonious coherence, which, when a human being becomes harmoniously coherent with it, leads to further harmonious coherence" (ibid., 415), and points out that the "coherence, in Li, must cover at least these four senses: sticking together of parts, sticking together with the environment, intelligibility, and value (ibid., 412). Ziporyn also, here and elsewhere, stresses a very relevant point about *li*, namely the normative/descriptive fusion within it, noting that: "The Li of a thing is both 'what makes it so' and also 'how it should be', and ethics are derived directly from this fusion of 'is' and 'ought'" (Ziporyn 2008, note 4).

Ziporyn finally points out that:

[I]t is still far too easy to imagine Li simply as some sort of pattern to be apprehended, without considering the subjective position of the apprehender. Li is not just any togetherness: it is a valued togetherness. Value, however, is here also a type of togetherness: it is a relation between a desire and its object. The valuer is already implied in this notion of value. The intelligibly coherent thing must cohere with certain human inclinations, which must themselves cohere with other inclinations in a valued way—i.e., "harmoniously". (Ziporyn 2008, 413)

All these elements speak towards the fact that Jinsai's reading of the term is in fact quite narrow and many of his concerns are actually addressed by giving it a

more well-rounded interpretation. In many ways, the reading itself seems to be pre-empted by the reading of the notion of *li*, as presented above by Ziporyn (2008). *Li* in its relation with *qi* also already presupposes the kind of movement-and-negotiation-based value-arising that one could consider Jinsai trying to describe—and one would be hard-pressed to argue Jinsai here does more than stress once more what Zhu Xi had himself already argued (see for instance Thompson 2017, 11). However, it is still important to follow Jinsai’s own train of thought and to see whether these problems might in fact not carry deeper implications.

Jinsai sets against *li* the Way and virtue as the proper value-giving notions and does not allow for these notions to coincide in any way. Value is first defined by the Way and virtue of Heaven and Earth, and the notion most closely associated with it in Jinsai’s own system is that of life.

The Book of Changes states, “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth (*tenchi no daitoku* 天地之大徳) is life-giving productivity (*sei* 生).” Thus, ceaseless reproduction (*seisei shite yamazaru* 生生而已) is the Way of Heaven and Earth (*tenchi no michi* 天地之道). (Transl. Tucker 1998, 75)

易に曰く、「天地の大徳を生と言う」。言うところは生生して已まざるは、即ち天地の道なり。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 16, 116)

Jinsai seems to afford life, as he sees it, a sort of special place in his limited ontological considerations. He says that “the Way of Heaven and Earth consists of life (*sei* 生) not death (*si* 死) (天地の道は、生有って死無し。)” (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 16, 116) and “life and death are utterly opposed to one another¹⁰ (生と死と対するが故なり。)” (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 17, 116). He argues that while we can say things die and the integrated disintegrates, life itself never ends (*ibid.*, 17), as it is an ongoing and interconnected process. To Jinsai life and death are so utterly opposed to one another that they fall outside of any kind of complementary pairing of opposites—life and death are completely incommensurable.

In a sense, life and death, the animate and inanimate, seems to be one of the deepest ontological divides Jinsai allows in his teachings. It is therefore an interesting question as to what Jinsai might actually consider the animate and inanimate universes, but it also seems that this question does not lead to a simple answer. While for him animate things are “vivacious” (*huo/katsu* 活), inanimate things are dead

10 Translated by Tucker 1998, 76

(*si/shi* 死) and only exist (*cun/son* 存); living things possess *Dao* 道 and virtues *de* 德, while dead things only possess *li* 理; living things also possess a living suchness (*xing/sei* 性) and the heart-mind (*xin/kokoro, shin* 心), but dead things do not seem to. The living universe possesses productivity and transformative potential, and it also possesses an inherent moral dimension that the dead universe does not. The animate universe is a moving, changing universe—and it is also motivated.

Jinsai thus also differentiates between what can be either morally good (*shan/zen* 善) or bad (*e/aku* 惡) and between what is simply ordered. Order is neither good nor bad, death is neither good nor bad, because it does not pertain to the living universe and so does not pertain to the Way and virtue. The Way and virtue are both notions of the living universe—but of course this distinction cannot be made along any modern scientific lines, nor would it be fair to expect this. As a Confucian Jinsai sees life as a grand process of production and transformation that makes the animate universe a coherent whole—as different but not separate from the inanimate universe: life itself is the great process of production, reproduction and perseverance, it is also the great web of productive and meaningful relations.

And it is at this point that I propose we first examine Hume's thoughts upon the subject of *reason*. Hume famously begins his third book *A Treatise of Human Nature* with a section titled "Moral Distinctions not Deriv'd from Reason", in which he asks the question: "Whether 'tis' by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praise-worthy?" (Hume 2000, 294; T 3.1.1.3) and he comes to the conclusion that:

Actions may be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable: laudable or blameable, therefore, are not the same with reasonable or unreasonable. The merit and demerit of actions frequently contradict, and sometimes controul our natural propensities. But reason has no such influence. Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring of reason. Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals. (Hume 2000, 295; T 3.1.1.10)

Even at first glance it would be hard to propose that such objections be projected upon Confucian thought in a simple manner—even those readings of it which at their centre employ the notion of structural coherence *li*. And yet the last part of the above paragraph—namely, that reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals—bears a striking resemblance to Jinsai's own view on the notion of *li*. Jinsai criticizes *li* as a *dead*

notion and tries to show that as such it can never properly describe or (re)produce the movement of the living universe—an aspect of which is also a sense of morals.

Hume produces one of his most famous observations in connection with the above view:

In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it ... [I] am persuaded, that a small attention [to this point] wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason. (Hume 2000, 302; T 3.1.2.27)

This might help us illuminate one of Jinsai's less apparent criticisms. Jinsai also identifies a kind of inactivity in *li*, a sort of stillness, which for him is inherent in the notion itself and antithetical to life. And this stillness is perhaps precisely what both connects (but also separates) within the notion itself the *what is* from the *what ought to be*. *Li* possesses an element of value and takes into account the valuer—but in the works of Zhu-Cheng Neo Confucians penetrating it always comes with a certain appeal to purity, a purity that is further linked to stillness. The divide is a demand for stillness, since agitations can cover what is pure; but at the same time, it also remains a Confucian demand for an active moral growth. Jinsai does not seem to believe that the divide formulated in this way can be surmounted—that entering the stillness of inanimate existence could also give special insight into the moral workings of the living universe. He sees stillness and inactivity as inherent in *li* and thus also as a necessary burden upon the proper Confucian project.

Jinsai criticizes the teachings of the Cheng-Zhu School in both their project of self-cultivation as well as language, since they both make an appeal towards stillness and purity. Jinsai, for example, criticizes the metaphor of “bright mirror,

still water (*mingjing zhibhui/meikyo shisui* 明鏡止水), as describing the heart-mind¹¹—and argues that such language is not originally Confucian, and thus brings the wrong kind of direction into Confucian thought and practice. Jinsai here points out the fact that the *stillness* and *purity* that penetrating *li* seems to demand, are in fact inherent in the notion itself—at least in the way that it was used by the followers of the Cheng-Zhu teachings.

Jorgensen indeed traces such metaphors to the Buddhist lineages (Jorgensen 2018, 78–81)¹² and argues that they probably did in fact influence Zhu Xi in his teachings.

Without this *tathagatagarbha* framework, with its many implications, Daoxue would lack much of its core structure, even vocabulary, and perhaps its *raison d'être*. In the end, Daoxue, especially that of Zhu Xi, formulated a kind of Confucian “Northern Chan” because it claimed there was an empty, radiant mind obscured by habituation and *qi*, which could be realized by gradual practice—all doctrines of the Northern Chan of the early Tang period. While Zhu would have strenuously denied this contention, he was also interacting with people such as Liu Pingshan¹³ and Zhang Jiucheng¹⁴ who were openly attempting to reconcile Buddhism and Confucianism or create a new synthesis. Zhu was trying to do the opposite, but like many who attempt to oppose something strenuously, he ended up mirroring many of his opponents’ doctrines as he responded to agendas already well-established in Buddhist circles, central to which were interpretations of the *tathagatagarbha* doctrine. (ibid., 121)

Jorgensen here bases his conclusions on a similar argument to that which Jinsai bases his own on: that Zhu Xi had used similar root metaphors¹⁵ that the Buddhists used, and thus came to see philosophical problems in a similar light (though his project was meant to argue the exact opposite in many cases).¹⁶ Jinsai may have

11 Though he claims that it comes from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, which is not true. While the metaphor of the mirror does appear in the text (for example: Ch. 5), there is no mention of the mirror being covered, like in Zhu Xi’s use of the metaphor.

12 He also notes that there is no covering of the mirror in similar pre-Buddhist metaphors, and Daoist traditions cannot be seen as a key influence on this matter (see Jorgensen 2018, 49).

13 Liu Zihui 劉子翬 (Pingshan 屏山; 1101–1147).

14 Zhang Jiucheng 張九成 (1092–1159).

15 See MacCormac (1976, xiii).

16 In the same book, Stephen C. Angle argues that Jorgensen overstates what his evidence shows (see Angle 2018, 164–65). The point is not argued here further, only that Jinsai’s own criticism certainly does stem from a point of view closer to Jorgensen’s.

conflated these metaphors, but he is in effect arguing that in case they represent the language of stillness—language that facilitates the practices of Quietism and thus integrally belongs to the Buddhist and Daoist traditions.

And at the centre of it all stands Jinsai's idea that the notion of structural coherence *li*, when basing any kind of proper Confucian practice upon it, carries with it an appeal to purity and stillness—and this, for Jinsai, is actually damaging to the natural basic moral motivation of humanity.

Human Feelings as the Ground of Moral Motivation

On the question of moral knowledge and moral sense, Hume asserts:

Since morals [...] have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prove'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. (Hume 2000, 294; T 3.1.1.6)

In this Hume asserts the impotence of reason to (alone) dictate the rules of morality and directly links those rules to passions. Jinsai himself seems to believe that within the Confucian discussion the notion of *li* is burdened with similar inactivity, and tries to therefore turn away from any assertions on an *a priori*, unchanging moral structure, towards a morality based on human feelings (*qing/jō* 情) and an ethical life based on the everyday experience of the people. Jinsai's concerns here are therefore also quite different from and more radical than Hume's. While Hume asserts the impotence of reason in this regard, Jinsai actually sees a danger in basing the Confucian project of self-cultivation on the notion of *li*.

Jinsai believes that the notion of *li* is also at the root of the Neo-Confucian ideas of curtailing human desires, which were in the Cheng-Zhu discussions seen as part of the habituation covering the pure *li*. The language is one of purity and stillness—it calls for purity and stillness and therefore puts a negative value connotation on the notion of movement and of human desires. Jinsai defends human feelings—themselves belonging to human desires—as the basic activators of humanness (*xing/sei* 性), seeing them as the ground of moral motivation, which *li* in his view does not possess. And in this sense Jinsai also attempts to offer a reading of the notion of the Mencian four sprouts of the heart-mind (*shiduan zhi xin/shitan no kokoro* 四端之心) that is not based on any *a priori* morality.

Jinsai begins his argument by establishing the meaning of the word “sprout” (*duan/tan* 端). Consulting a dictionary¹⁷, he says that this word can mean both a “start” (*shi/shi* 始) and also a “tip” (*zhu/sho* 緒). He does however disagree with Zhu Xi’s view that the four sprouts can be seen as “thread-tips” (*duanzhu/tansho* 端緒). He argues: “His reasoning was that while a thread is hidden within (*naka ni aru* 在于中), its tip appears externally (*sho soto ni arawaruru* 緒見於外也).¹⁸ (謂えらく、「なお物 中に在って、緒 外に見わるるがごとし.)” (Itô in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 54, 137)

As Koyasu Nobukuni points out, this actually represents a fundamental difference between how Zhu Xi viewed the notions of the heart-mind and humanness and of the Way and virtue, and how Jinsai did (for his discussion, see Koyasu 2015, 165–66)¹⁹. While Zhu Xi’s description points to a tip of something inner emerging as something outer—the original state of humanness being realized as the four virtues—Jinsai’s heart-mind is the heart-mind of living people, working and moving towards other things and other people. Such a “being turned towards others” is an inclination that all people are born with and what helps define humanness as good. All people possess a fundamental kind of sympathy²⁰ that moves them towards the effort of ethical practice, but they do not possess virtue itself as part of their humanness:

Mencius’ idea was that people have the four sprouts just as they have four limbs.²¹ Everyone has them. We do not search for them externally. If we know how to develop (*kakujū* 拡充) them, they emerge forcefully like a fire blazing or a flood rising. Ultimately the four sprouts are realized as the virtues (*toku* 徳) of humanness, appropriateness, propriety and wisdom. Thus the heart-mind’s four sprouts are the very sprouts (*tanpon* 端本) of the four virtues. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 143–44, ed.)

17 According to Tucker “Jinsai’s reference is to Mei Yingzuo’s 梅膺祚 *Zihui* 字彙, compiled in 1615. This dictionary was published in Japan in 1660. Jinsai apparently consulted and quoted it frequently. His copy is in the Tenri University 天理大学 Central Library’s Kogidō bunko 古義堂文庫” (Tucker 1998, 143).

18 Translated by Tucker 1998, 143.

19 While Huang Chun-chieh argues Jinsai’s account here is closer to the Han commentary of Zhao Qi 趙岐 (?–201) and believes both Zhao Qi and Jinsai have failed to “grasp the fundamental insight of Mencius’ idea of the heart-mind with its transcendental dimension” (Huang 2015, 194).

20 For a good comparison between the Mencian and Humean notions of sympathy and a look at their parallels, see Carey and Vitz 2019)

21 *Mengzi*, 6A/6.

孟子の意、以為えらく「人の四端有るや、なおその身の四体有るがごとし」と。人人具足、外に求むることを仮らず。いやしくもこれを拡充することを知るときは、すなわちなお火燃え泉達するがごとく、ついに仁義礼智の徳を成す。故に四端の心をもって仁義礼智の端本とす。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 54, 137)

Jinsai criticizes the idea of the four sprouts “emerging” as a precondition to developing proper moral sensibilities—as he believes that if moral sensibilities emerged only in answer to proper stimuli, this would cause the Confucian project of self-cultivation to become confusing and difficult. People would be in a constant state of worry as to whether they are engaging in the right kind of situations through which their inner goodness would be allowed to emerge—they would be lost in a constant, daily search for the proper stimuli to help them release their inner moral sensibilities (Tucker 1998, 144–45; Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 54–55, 137). Instead, Jinsai believes such sensibilities are in everyone, they are always present, just as people possess four limbs, and they are (to a degree) exercised daily.

But on the other hand, by exercising them more and more, we also strengthen and cultivate them—and this is also a fundamental characteristic that defines humanness as good: because the four sprouts are in everyone and because they can be enlarged, they allow all people to enter into universal virtue and thus become truly human. But this project takes effort—such a movement away from the limitations of humanness and the individual person, both in the direction of encompassing more and more situations, pertaining to different relations, extending to more and more people—can only be achieved through the daily striving for consummate practice. Thus, while the four sprouts are not universal virtues in themselves, they are what allows people to enter into universal virtue.

In discussing “things that people cannot endure” (*shinobazaru tokoro* 所不忍) and “things they will refuse to do” (*sezaru tokoro* 所不爲)²², Mencius was referring to the sensibilities of compassion and shame (*sokuin shū no kokoro* 惻隱羞惡之心). “To extend” (*tassuru* 達) means to “develop” (*kakujū* 擴充). Mencius’ idea is that one should develop sensibilities of compassion and shame so that they extend everywhere and penetrate everything. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 145–46)

孟子の曰く、「みな忍びざるところ有り。これをその忍ぶところに達するは、仁なり。人みなせざるところ有り。これをその

するところに達するは、義なり」。いわゆる「忍びざるところ」「せざるところ」の者は、即ち惻隱・羞惡の心なり。達と云う者は、即ち拡充の謂い。けだし謂えらく惻隱・羞惡の心をして、至らざるところ無く、通ぜざるところ無からしむ。(Itô in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 56, 138)

Jinsai argues that we can practice virtue in one form or another from our very births, since virtue is universally established in ongoing human relations—our heart-minds make this possible, but this does not mean that such relations are set up as *a priori*. Only that life does not begin and end with the birth and death of a single person, and so its ethical dimensions don't begin and end with such an event either. Going from people's moral sensibilities—the possibilities of which are inborn, but which are first developed through practice of basic relations within familial environments—simultaneously moving in unison with the universal values of humanity: this is the proper Confucian project. Since heart-minds come to recognize that they share universal values, they also come to recognize such values require the effort of adhering to consummate practice.

The personal moral sensibilities and the universal ethical values are not connected through the notion of *li* that needs to be properly understood by a radiant, uncovered mind. Rather, for Jinsai, the basic moral motivation comes from feelings:

Feelings (*jō* 情) are the desires of our humanness (*sei no yoku* 性之欲). They refer to what activates (*ugoku* 動) people. Thus, humanness and human feelings are often discussed together. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 147, ed.)

情とは、性の欲なり。動くところ有るをもって言う。故に性・情をもって並び称す。(Itô in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 56, 138)

Jinsai goes on to quote the “Yue ji” 樂記 [Record of Music] in the *Book of Rites*, which says: “Through contact with things (*mono ni kanjite* 感於物), we become active (*ugoku* 動); this activity results in the desires of humanness (*sei no yoku* 性之欲). (Transl. Tucker 1998, 147., ed.²³) (感於物而動，性之欲也。)” (*Liji*, 19) It is clear that Jinsai speaks of feelings as what moves people, and this movement is the result of coming into contact with things (it is certainly not *a priori*)—but what reacts to such contact is also a basic aspect of the desires of humanness. This seems to also take into account the fact that *qing/jō* 情 possesses the added meaning of a “situation” or “external conditions”—therefore it moves humanness in accord with

23 James Legge translates this passage as: “His activity shows itself as he is acted on by external things, and develops the desires incident to his nature.”

the common movement of *qi*; it is what drives the movement within the movement, the process that is itself the whole of humanness.

Jinsai thus believes feelings must be understood as belonging to human desires—that is, they accord with external situations, but also possess their own moral dimension. This again argues against the kind of teachings that would try to dichotomize the notions of human feelings and human desires and subject these notions to differing value judgements. Feelings are what drive humanness as a movement within a movement—they are thus the fundamental activators of humanity, answering to the external conditions of life; but they also belong to the desires of humanness and thus possess their own fundamental quality.

It is humanness for the eyes to respond to forms; the ears, to sounds; the palate, to tastes; and the four limbs, to rest.²⁴ However, feelings are in the eyes' desire (*hosshi* 欲) for beauty; the ears' desire for fine music; the palate's, for exquisite cuisine; and the four limbs' for peaceful rest. Familial love between father and son (*fushi no shin* 父子之親) is humanness (*sei nari* 性也). But a father's desire (*hosshi* 欲) that his son be morally good (*zen* 善) and a son's desire that his father live long (*ju* 壽) are feelings (*jō* 情). (Transl. Tucker 1998, 147, ed.)

目の色における、耳の声における、口の味における、四支の安逸における、是れ性。目の美色を視んことを欲し、耳の好音を聴かんことを欲し、口の美味を食らわんことを欲し、四支の安逸を得んことを欲す、是れ情。父子の親は、性なり。父は必ずその子の善を欲し、子は必ずその父の寿考を欲するは、情なり。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 56–57, 138)

Jinsai affirms feelings as the fundamental moral motivation. In accord with Mencius,²⁵ he argues that “everyone loves success, but hates shame. No one wants to be viewed as a wild animal (Transl. Tucker 1998, 148) (人のために榮とせらるるは、天下の同じく好むところ、人のために辱しめらるるは、天下の同じく悪むところなり。ひとわれを指してもって禽獸とせば、人の欲するところにあらず)” (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 57, 138). All people possess feelings that answer to external conditions, but they answer in a way in which the Mencian “goodness of humanness” can be asserted, and this in a way that is turned towards the moral.

24 See *Mengzi*, 7B/24.

25 See, for example, *Mengzi*, 6A/8.

However, here Jinsai once again goes on to reject some of the more prominent Neo-Confucian discussions of feelings. He criticizes Zhu Xi's formulation that "the heart-mind unifies humanness and the feelings", and argues that while the "four sprouts" are integral to the heart-mind they themselves are not in fact human feelings, and therefore are not in fact the basis of moral motivation:

Zhu Xi further claimed, "the heart-mind unifies humanness and human feelings" (*kokoro wa seijō o subu* 心統性情).²⁶ In this context he saw humanness as the heart-mind's corporeality (*kokoro no tai* 心之體), and the feelings as its functioning (*kokoro no yō* 心之用). Zhu formulated these ideas because he never realized that the heart-mind is the heart-mind, and humanness is humanness. For each, there are distinct methods of cultivation. Feelings are the activators of humanness (*sei no dō* 性之動); they belong to desires (*yoku ni zoku suru mono* 屬欲者). As feelings congeal into intentions they become parts of the heart-mind (*shiryo ni wataru toki wa sunawachi kore o kokoro to iu* 涉乎思慮則謂之心). The four sprouts, as well as anger, fear, affection, anxieties, are intentions of the heart-mind (*kokoro no shiryo tokoro* 心之所思慮); they should not be called feelings (*jō to iubekarazaru nari* 不可謂之情也). (Transl. Tucker 1998, 149, ed.)

晦庵以為えらく、心は性情を統ぶと。しこうして性をもって心の体とし、情を心の用とす。故にこの説有り。殊えて知らず。心は是れ心、性は是れ性、おのおの功夫を用うる処有り。情はただ是れ性の動いて欲に属する者、わずかに思慮に涉るときは、すなわちこれを心と謂う。四端および忿懣等の四つの者のごとき、みな心の思慮するところの者、これを情と謂うべからざるなり。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 57–58, 138)

Here Jinsai first argues from the point of view of cultivation techniques and goes on to touch upon the famous Korean Neo-Confucian "four-seven" debate.²⁷ The discussion pertains to the difference between the "four sprouts of the heart-mind" and the "seven feelings", both established separately in the canonical literature. The problem at the heart of the debate lay in trying to determine how both of these canonically established notions stand in relation to Zhu Xi's fundamental duality of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣²⁸ and the corresponding notions of the "original humanness" (*benran*

26 It was Zhang Zai who first made this remark.

27 For a recent discussion on the four-seven debate, see Lee (2017).

28 Interestingly, Lee Ming-huei points out that in effect we could see a parallel in how the notion of

zhi xing/honzen no sei 本然之性) and the “humanness of embodied *qi*” (*qizhi zhi xing/kishitsu no sei* 氣質之性), of corporeality *ti/tai* 體 and function *yong/yō* 用. But by rejecting the *a priori* ontological status of the notion of *li* Jinsai does not really take any side in this debate. Instead, he sets up a differentiation of his own.

The ancients (*kojin* 古人) viewed pleasure (*ki* 喜), anger (*do* 怒), sorrow (*ai* 哀), joy (*raku* 樂), love (*ai* 愛), hate (*o* 惡) and desires (*yoku* 欲) as “the seven feelings” (*shichijō* 七情).²⁹ In doing so they were simply categorizing reactions to external situations (*jō no hin* 情之品). Yet it is wrong to identify pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desires as feelings. Feelings involve no thought, but they do activate people (*shiryo suru tokoro nakushite ugoku* 無所思慮而動). As intentions occur, feelings become aspects of the heart-mind. If pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, hate, and desires involve no intention, but do activate people, they are feelings. Once they become intentions, however, they should no longer be referred to as feelings. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 150, ed.)

古人 喜・怒・哀・樂・愛・惡・欲をもって七情とす。けだし言う 情の品この七者有りと。喜・怒・哀・樂・愛・惡・欲を謂いて即ち情とするときは、すなわち不可なり。およそ思慮するところ無くして動く、これを情と謂う。わずかに思慮に涉ときは、すなわちこれを心と謂う。喜・怒・哀・樂・愛・惡・欲の七つの者のごとき、もし思慮するところ無くして動くときは、すなわち固にこれを情と謂うべし。わずかに思慮に涉ときは、すなわちこれを情と謂うべからず。 (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 58, 139)

For Jinsai feelings belong to desires, but are as yet unfacilitated by thought. They represent spontaneous reactions to external situations, but are also driven towards the moral—and thus they themselves represent a fundamental motivating force. Once feelings are facilitated by thought, they are no longer simply feelings but become intentions of the heart-mind. While the fundamental drive towards virtue—as what preserves the Way—seems to come first, the more complex movement of the four sprouts comes later and is already facilitated by thought. This would mean that while the moral tendencies of humanness can actually be seen as basic human drives, such drives represent “the four sprouts and the seven feelings”

“the four sprouts” relates to the notion of “seven human feelings” and how Kant’s notion of “moral feelings” relates to his notion of “physical feelings” (see Lee 2017, 55).

29 See *Liji*, 9.

only when facilitated by thought: but even unfacilitated, they are motivated towards moral goodness as moral goodness, as this is aesthetically pleasing.

In Jinsai's formulation the feelings are there before they are facilitated by thought and can be seen as basic human drives—which goes against elements of Zhu Xi's formulation, where the original nature can be seen as pure *li*, described by the language of stillness, and feelings as a mixture of *li* and *qi*, described by the language of movement, but also as already potentially obscuring the original good humanness. Jinsai's notion of human feelings describes a kind of tendency of humanness, to react to external situations as humanness: a basic human motivation towards virtue, unfacilitated by thought, completely unreflected upon—akin to a kind of moral instinct.

Hume famously asserted:

Reason is, and ought to only to be a slave of passions, and can never pretend to any office than to serve and obey them. (Hume 2000, 266; T 2.3.3.4)

And while this very contention is impossible to translate into the language of Confucian notions of structural coherence *li* and of human feelings *qing*, nevertheless Jinsai most certainly sets the feelings as the most basic of human activators—and it is this very notion that is at the centre of Jinsai's own positions on moral motivation. It is in the feelings that Jinsai first tried to resolve the duality between *li* and *qi* (see: Yamashita 1983). It is in the feelings that he sees “what activates people”—and, interestingly, it is for the feelings, he argues, that there are no special techniques of cultivation. As he writes:

There are requisite methods for cultivating the heart-mind (*kokoro* 心), humanness (*sei* 性), and the purpose (*shi* 志). But there are none for human feelings (*jō* 情) or human abilities (*sai* 才). Methods of cultivation for the heart-mind are referred to as “heart-mind preservation” (*son* 存) and “exhaustive realization of the heart-mind” (*jin* 盡). For humanness, they include “cultivating humanness” (*yō* 養)³⁰ and “toughening humanness” (*nin* 忍)³¹. Techniques for cultivating one's purpose include “grasping one's purpose” (*ji* 持)³² and “setting one's purpose high” (*shō* 尚志)³³. These are all necessary. Feelings and human abilities, however, have no such requisite methods of cultivation. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 150)

30 *Mengzi*, 7A/1.

31 *Ibid.*, 6B/15.

32 *Ibid.*, 2A/2.

33 *Ibid.*, 7A/33.

およそ心・性・情・才・志・意等の字、必ず功夫を用うる字有り、必ずしも功夫を用いざる字有り。心においては、すなわち存と曰い尽と曰い、性においては、すなわち養と曰い忍と曰い、志はすなわち持と曰い尚と曰う、みな是れ功夫を用ゆるの字、情の字・才の字のごときは、みな必ずしも功夫を用いず。
(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 58, 139)

Jinsai argues that within the Confucian project of self-cultivation feelings and abilities cannot be directly cultivated, writing: “By cultivating our humanness, the feelings are naturally corrected (*sono sei o yashinau toki wa sunawachi jō onozukara tadashiku* 養其性則情自性). By preserving the heart-mind, one’s abilities naturally mature (*sono kokoro o sonsuru toki wa sunawachi sai onozukara chōzuru o motte nari* 存其心則才自長也).³⁴(その性を養うときはすなわち情おのずから正しく、その心を存するときはすなわち才おのずから長ずるをもってなり。)” (Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 58, 139)

Feelings and abilities cannot be directly cultivated, because they pertain to how we relate to others and only through consummately relating to others, coming into contact with people and things, can they be well exercised and set right: trying to cultivate feelings and abilities in absence or stillness is futile, and will ultimately do damage. In this sense Jinsai feels that techniques that cultivate feelings—or even demand that they be curtailed so that the underlying pureness of the structural coherence *li* can be cohered with—work against the inherent human moral motivation.

The Way as the Origin of Moral Sense

Jinsai writes that the Way, as a vivacious concept (*katsuji* 活字), signifies organisms alive with activity (*kō* 行), while structural coherence, an inanimate, dead term (*shiji* 死字), denotes things that exist (*son* 存), but are not alive (Transl. Tucker 1998, 103, ed.). The living universe denotes activity and action, while the inanimate universe deals with what exists but is not alive: and in the case of moral action, is unmotivated.

Jinsai defines the Way like so:

The Way is the path that people should follow in daily ethical conduct (*jinrin nichiyō masa ni yukubeki no michi* 人倫日用當行之路). It does not

34 Translated by Tucker 1998, 150, ed.

exist simply because it was taught. Nor does it exist simply because it corrects human tendencies. Rather it naturally exists (*mina shizen ni shite shikari* 皆自然而然). Throughout the four directions and eight corners of the world everyone understands the moral relationships naturally existing between rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, elder and younger brothers, and friends. Everyone also understands the ways of parental love, duty, distinctions, order, and fidelity. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 93)

道とは、人倫日用当に行くべきの路、教えを待つて後有るにあらず、又矯揉して能く然るにあらず。みな自然にして然り。四方八隅、遐陬の陋、蛮貊の蠢たるに至まで、おのずから君臣・父子・夫婦・昆弟・朋友の倫有らずということなく、亦親・義・別・叙・信の道有らずということなし。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 27–28, 122)

Koyasu Nobukuni contrasts Jinsai’s formulation of “the path that people should follow in daily ethical conduct”³⁵ with Zhu Xi’s similar statement of “the structural coherence people should embody in daily ethical conduct”³⁶ (Koyasu 2015, 99–100) and points out that in abandoning the notion of the Heavenly *li* (*tianli/tenri* 天理) as something absolute that connects both Heaven and humanity—which acts as humanness itself when pertaining to people—Jinsai minimalizes the normative character and stresses the Way as the natural state of humanity (*ibid.*). His rejection of an unchangeable structure (as his own reading of the term *li*), through which we could understand and describe the ever-present ethical norms of humanity, is here replaced by what arises daily from the common living experience of all people, who by their very humanness, their common suchness, produce certain ways of co-existing and relating to one another and in which “what is good” and “what is wrong” can then be discerned on some level as universal.

The Way of Humanity is “humaneness (*ren/jin* 仁) practiced along with appropriateness (*yi/gi* 義)”. If Heaven and Earth are the crucible for the production and reproduction of the movements of *yin* and *yang*, then the daily living experiences of humanity, in their many varieties, represent the crucible, the “box”, within which humaneness and appropriateness are practiced. The Way is not a normative teaching that is designed to fix human tendencies—it is the natural way of people relating to one another. Jinsai argues that the Confucian Way is the Way all

35 人倫日用當行之路

36 人倫日用當然之理 (see Zhuzi yulei, 24).

people follow naturally, and no one can depart from, even when they might not understand it fully—it is in effect the Way of a healthy and productive human life, and its inherent moral and ethical dimensions: the parameters by which we can be considered fully human.

A similar sentiment can again be gleaned in Hume’s own thought:

[N]ature may also be oppos’d to rare and unusual; and in this sense of the word, which is the common one, there may often arise disputes concerning what is natural or unnatural; and one may in general affirm, that we are not possess’d of any precise standard, by which these disputes can be decided. Frequent and rare depend upon the number of examples we have observ’d; and as this number may gradually encrease or diminish, ‘twill be impossible to fix any exact boundaries betwixt them. We may only affirm on this head, that if ever there was any thing, which cou’d be call’d natural in this sense, the sentiments of morality certainly may; since there never was any nation of the world, nor any single person of any nation, who is utterly depriv’d of them, and who never, in any instance, show’d the least approbation or dislike of manners. The sentiments are so rooted in our constitution and temper, that without entirely confounding the human mind by disease or madness, ‘tis impossible to extirpate and destroy them. (Hume 2000, 304–05; T 3.1.2.8)

But Jinsai’s own thought always exists within the Confucian project of self-cultivation and his relational ethical understanding. As can be seen from his words, the Way to Jinsai represents basic human relations in their most ethically fulfilled sense—but one which is connected to the inherent good of humanness (*xing/sei* 性), and he sees humanness itself always as a movement within the common movement of *qi*. In this sense, he also denies that virtues are something that is already inherent in humanness—instead, he seems to imply that it is the motivation towards universal virtue and the kind of instinctual basic distinction of the quality of moral and immoral that the limited humanness possesses.

Humaneness, appropriateness, propriety, and wisdom are all concepts pertaining to the Way and virtue (*dōtoku no mei* 道德之名). They do not denote humanness (*sei no mei ni arazu* 非性之名)! We speak of “the Way” and “virtue” in universal terms (*amaneku tenka ni tasuru o motte iu* 以遍達於天下而言), not as something specific to one individual (*hitori no yūsuru tokoro ni arazu* 非一人之所有)! Humanness, however, refers only to the particular self (*moppara onore ni yūsuru o motte shite iu* 以專有於己而言), not everyone in the world (*tenka no kanuru tokoro ni arazu* 非天下

之所該!) Such is the distinction between humanness and the Way and virtue. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 117, ed.)

仁義礼智の四者は、みな道德の名にして、性の名にあらず。道德とは、遍く天下に達するをもって言う。一人の有するところにあらず。性とは、もっぱらおのれに有するをもってして言う。天下の該ぬるところにあらず。これ性と道德との辨なり。
(Itô in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 39–40, 129)

The Way and virtue are the ground and nutrition by which humanity grows—but in contrast with the notion of *li*, they are a part of the living universe and thus they also possess the power to motivate. People are motivated by the circumstances of their daily lives, and their daily lives are their interpersonal relations in movement. The difference then between the Way and virtue and between *li* is exactly that it is not hard to see in what ways daily life—among one’s friends, family and peers—motivates people towards growing and preserving what is already in accord with human desires. But in trying to penetrate an all-pervading harmonious coherence, one will in most cases find oneself in search of purity and stillness.

To Jinsai then, the notion of *li* attracted Buddhist (and supposedly Daoist) discourse precisely because it is a notion that in itself lacks that most important quality of life (*katsu* 活), and is one which inevitably arrives at emptiness and vacuity (*xu/kyo* 虚, *kong/kū* 空)—a state opposed to the given feelings of humanity. As he writes:

The way of the sage Confucius makes daily morality its foundation (*irin o motte hon to nashite* 以彝倫爲本), and compassion and appropriateness its binding strength (*ongi o motte musubi to su* 以恩義爲結). The thousand discourses and myriad conversations of Confucians have all centered around these moral teachings. Buddhists and Daoists make purity (*shōjo* 清淨) their foundation, and the absence of human desire (*myoku* 無欲) their way. By perfecting those qualities, the heart-mind supposedly becomes vacuous (*munashiki* 空) like a bright mirror and deep (*tataeru* 湛) like still water. When contamination no longer exists, the heart-mind’s soil is pure and clean (*shinchi ketsujō* 心地潔淨). But the same process of mental purification also severs the heart-mind from its sense of compassion and appropriateness (*ongi mazu taete* 恩義先絶) utterly destroying humanity’s ethical ground (*irin kotogotoku horobu* 彝倫盡滅). Though our heart-minds may be pure, they will come to see the relations between ruler and minister, parent and child, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, and friend and friend as useless, childish relics. Buddhist and Daoist views of

the heart-mind thus contradict the Way of the Confucian sages just as water extinguishes fire. (Transl. Tucker 1998, 131–32, ed.)

それ聖人の道は、彝倫をもって本となして、恩義をもって結びとす。千言万語、みなこれをもって教えをせざることなし。今かの仏老の教えたるや、清浄をもって本とし、無欲を道とす。功夫すでに熟するに暨んでは、すなわちその心 明鏡の空しきがごとく、止水の湛えたるがごとく、一疵せず、心地潔浄、ここにおいて恩義まず絶えて彝倫ことごとく滅ぶ。君臣・父子・夫婦・兄弟・朋友の交わりを視ること、なお弁髦綴旒のごとくしかり。聖人の道と相反すること、なお水火の相入るべからざるがごとし。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 47–48, 133)

Jinsai argues that the search for purity and stillness actually brings about the destruction of the ethical dimensions of the living universe: going beyond good and bad, beyond meaningful human relations, we enter into something which is simply empty and dead. This search then can never represent the same notions of consummate ethical life that the Confucian language is supposed to represent. In this, Jinsai surely does not simply represent a similar position to Hume's ideas, but rather exists as an original thinker within the Confucian project of self-cultivation and relational ethics.

Conclusion

The article aims to examine Jinsai's critical project through the lens of the Humean discussions on moral motivation. It also aims to show that while it is impossible to simply project the Humean notions upon Confucian ethics, certain sensibilities and familiar emphases can be found in Jinsai's critical project, predating those of Hume himself.

While the notion of the structural coherence *li* could be read in a more open-minded manner, Jinsai's criticism that it is a dead notion comes from observing the kind of practice of cultivation associated with it—usually accompanied by appeals to purity and stillness. Jinsai believes that human feelings are the basic moral activators, belonging to the desires of humanness. He thus in his project gives priority to human feelings before structural coherence *li* and any kind of *a priori* morality—human feelings are the most basic reactions to the external world. Jinsai juxtaposes the notion of the structural coherence *li* with the notion of the Way, which for him is the living process of ethically fulfilled human relations. He

claims that the two cannot be seen as equal—as the Way and virtue represent the living, motivated universe, while *li* represents the dead, ordered and inactive one.

It can be argued that Jinsai’s criticism, while in its details very different from Hume’s own—being developed within the Confucian project of self-cultivation and relational ethics – does in certain ways bear striking similarities to Hume’s own concerns. It contains elements similar to Hume’s critique of reason as inactive, of moral knowledge as not enough to activate moral action, as well as his contention that feelings (or passions) are the basic motivators of human behaviour and can never come second to any *a priori* state of moral purity.

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