
The *Leitmotif* of the Confucian Concept of *Shu*: Interpretations of Chŏng Yagyong and Zhu Xi

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The Confucian concept of *shu* 恕 (reciprocity) is a *leitmotif* which is continuously interpreted and reinterpreted in response to changing circumstances. The purpose of this paper is to determine the features of *shu* in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), as interpreted by Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), widely regarded as one of the greatest and most original Korean thinkers, by comparing his interpretations with those of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), whose brand of Neo-Confucianism in Chosŏn constituted an almost unassailable orthodoxy. Both placed great emphasis on *shu*, but there are important differences in their interpretations. This paper thus contributes to an understanding of the dynamics of the Confucian concept of *shu* in East Asia.

Keywords: *shu* 恕, reciprocity, Confucian Golden Rule, Chŏng Yagyong, Zhu Xi

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Introduction

The Golden Rule is an ethical principle that mandates treating others as you would like to be treated through imagining the reversal of your roles. There are many forms of the golden rule. Some manifestations of it appear in the New Testament: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:39) and “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31).¹

Shu 恕 (reciprocity), a principle that is very similar to the Golden Rule, also plays a decisive role in Confucian texts. Criticisms of the Confucian golden rule, however, commenced with James Legge, who sought to demonstrate the superiority of the golden rule as promulgated by Jesus over its Confucian counterpart.² Prior to the 19th century, East Asian intellectuals also discussed the meaning of the Confucian golden rule, often through glosses on texts such as *Analects* 4.15³ and *Great Learning* 9.⁴ These two much-discussed passages are most frequently cited when modern scholars discuss the true meaning of *shu*.

The Confucian concept of *shu* is a *leitmotif* which requires continuous reinterpretation in response to changing circumstances. This means that the supposedly universal concept of *shu* is open to diverging interpretations. A comparison of *shu* as interpreted by Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), widely regarded as one of the greatest and most original Korean thinkers, with the approach of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), whose brand of Neo-Confucianism in Chosŏn constituted an almost unassailable orthodoxy, reveals a particularity hiding behind the seeming universality of the *shu* concept. Both emphasize *shu* but in significantly different ways that limn some of the salient features of universality and particularity in historical understandings of the Confucian golden rule in East Asia.

Shu As An Essential Principle For Conducting The Confucian Way

Choosing Shu over Zhong: Two Contrasting Views on *Analects* 4.15

Shu is a principle that plays a decisive role in a variety of Confucian texts, in particular the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), the *Doctrine of the Meaning* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子). Many traditional East Asian thinkers commented on these texts, particularly *Analects* 4.15:

¹ For the golden rule in different cultures, see Robert E. Allinson, “The Golden Rule as the Core Value in Confucianism and Christianity: Ethical Similarities and Differences,” *Asian Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1992): 173–85; and Robert E. Allinson, “Hillel and Confucius: The Prescriptive Formulation of the Golden Rule in the Jewish and Chinese Confucian Ethical Traditions,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2003): 29–41.

² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. 1 (London: Trübner, 1861), 31–43, 49, 110–13.

³ James Legge, trans. *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 169.

⁴ Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1 (1960), 370–72.

The Master said, “Shen, my Way has one thread passing through it.” The disciple Zeng replied, “Yes.” After the Master went out, the other disciples asked, “What did he mean?” Zeng replied, “Our Master’s Way is *zhong* and *shu*, nothing more.”

子曰：“參乎！吾道一以貫之。”曾子曰：“唯！”子出，門人問曰：“何謂也？”曾子曰：“夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。”

There are two interpretations of this passage: (1) the view that the two concepts of *zhong* 忠 (wholeheartedness) and *shu* 恕 together constitute one thread (*yi* 一)⁵ and (2) the view that *shu* by itself is the one thread.⁶ In particular, discussions on this issue centered on what “one thread” means in the phrase “one thread passing through it” (一以貫之). In this section, I will discuss how Chǒng Yagyong and Zhu Xi viewed this question.

In a comment on *Analects* 4.15, Chǒng Yagyong wrote:

“Way” here refers to the Way of the human being. Confucius referred to it as “my Way” because he himself undertook it as his mission. “One thread” refers to *shu* ... “my Way” is the human moral order, nothing more. Those things that helped reveal the human moral order—such as the five teachings, nine constant methods, three hundred essential rituals, and three thousand detailed rituals—are uniformly practiced through the one principle, *shu*. It resembles a string that links together hundreds or thousands of coins. This is what the phrase “one thread passing through it” means.

道，人道也。謂之吾道者，身任之也。一者，恕也 ... 吾道不外乎人倫。凡所以處人倫者，若五教·九經，以至經禮三百·曲禮三千，皆行之以一恕字，如以一縷貫千百之錢，此之謂一貫也。⁷

In this passage, Chǒng indicates that “one thread” refers to *shu*. In support of this claim, he presented a passage from *Analects* 15.23 in which only *shu* is mentioned, not *zhongshu*:

Zi Gong asked, “Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s

⁵ Paul W. Kroll, *A Student’s Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 423, 611.

⁶ For the first interpretation, see David S. Nivison, “Golden Rule Arguments in Chinese Moral Philosophy,” in *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 61–76; and Yu-lan Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy: A Systematic Account of Chinese Thought from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Macmillan, 1966). For the second interpretation, see Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Reweaving the ‘One Thread’ of the *Analects*,” *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 1 (1990): 17–33; D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 15–16; Herbert Fingarette, “Following the ‘One Thread’ of the *Analects*,” in “Studies in Chinese Classical Thought,” thematic Issue, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47, no. 3 (1979): 373–405; and Junghwan Lee, “Confucius’ Golden Rule and Its Reformulations by Mencius and Xunzi: *Shu* 恕, the Commonality-Premise, and Human Nature in Pre-Qin Confucianism,” *Journal of Confucian Philosophy and Culture* 30 (2018): 1–27.

⁷ Chǒng Yagyong, *Nonŏ kogŭmju*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chōnsŏ: Kyogam p’yojŏm*, vol. 8, ed. Song Chaeso (Sŏul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 190a. Translation with modifications from Hongkyung Kim, trans., *The Analects of Dasan: A Korean Syncretic Reading*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 35.

life?” The Master said, “Is not *shu* such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.”

子貢問曰：“有一言而可以終身行之者乎？”子曰：“其恕乎！己所不欲，勿施於人。”

In his interpretation of this passage, Chǒng wrote:

As I understand, given that it says “[*shu*] may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life,” all occasions in which people form relationships—including those of serving one’s parents, serving one’s lord, dealing with brothers, mingling with friends, nurturing the people, and mobilizing the masses—are morally managed by means of this one word “*shu*,” without exception. How else can this situation be described than with “[My Way is] penetrated by one thread?” The meaning of “being penetrated by one thread” is self-evident in Zengzi’s own commentary, there is no other meaning.

終身行之，則凡事親事君處兄弟與朋友牧民使衆，一應人與人之相接者，一以是一恕字行之也，此非一貫而何？一貫之義，曾子自注甚明，無他義也。⁸

This shows that Chǒng emphasized *shu* rather than *zibong*. In contrast, in his gloss on *Analects* 4.15, Zhu Xi linked “one thread” with an “inherent pattern” or “principle” (*li* 理). He stated:

That the one principle of our Master is everywhere and yet is broadly responsive and minutely sensitive, is analogous to heaven and earth being perfectly true and unceasing even as each of the myriad things attains its own place. There really is no rule beyond this—nor is there any need to look further ... It seems that “to be perfectly true and unceasing” is the substance of the Way and the reason for the one foundation among the myriad differences. “Each of the myriad things attaining its own place” is the function of the Way and the reason for the myriad differences in the one foundation. From this point of view, the truth of “one thread passing through it” is evident.

夫子之一理渾然而泛應曲當，譬則天地之至誠無息而萬物各得其所也。自此之外，固無餘法，而亦無待於推矣 ... 蓋至誠無息者，道之體也，萬殊之所以一本也，萬物各得其所者，道之用也，一本之所以萬殊也。以此觀之，一以貫之之實，可見矣。⁹

This interpretation is related to Zhu’s metaphysical belief that every person shares a complete endowment of *li* 理 with all other people, creatures, and things, which establishes a kind of

⁸ Chǒng, *Nonŏ kogŏmju*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ*, vol. 2, 190b. Translation by the author.

⁹ Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, vol. 23 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 72. Translation with modification from Daniel Gardner, trans. *Zhu Xi’s Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary and the Classical Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 158.

identity or solidarity between the individual and the world.¹⁰ In the above passage, he quotes Chengzi to argue that “one” in the phrase “one thread passing through it” refers to *zhongshu* 忠恕.¹¹ It is thus clear that Chǒng Yagyong interpreted “one thread” as *shu*, while Zhu Xi interpreted it as *zhongshu* by relating it to the principle of *li*.

Chǒng was particularly critical of Zhu Xi’s theory of the oneness of the self and all things (*wanwu yiti* 萬物一體). This interpretation of *zhongshu* derived from his theory of oneness, his belief that the two concepts could eventually be united. For Chǒng, on the other hand, the principle of *zhong* and the principle of *shu* were separate, meaning that the one thread of the teachings of the Master was literally a single word, *shu*.

These contrasting views of the one thread raise the question as to what role *zhong* plays in carrying out the Way. Zhu Xi emphasized the role of *zhong* in implementing the Way. Chǒng, on the other hand, felt that *zhong* played a much less important role. However, he did not devalue the importance of *zhong*; rather, he regarded it as a method of practicing *shu*.

In the Confucian Five Classics, *zhong* is interpreted not only as loyalty (*zhongcheng* 忠誠), but also as meaning “the center of the heart” or “to do all that is within one’s heart with sincerity.”¹² However, Chǒng did not interpret *zhong* as loyalty. In support of this, he cited two sources, *Zhou Li* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou), from the Warring States period, and *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 (Correct meaning of the *Analects*), from the Northern Song dynasty.¹³ The first, a comment on *Zhou Li*, reads “*zhong* means the center of the heart” (中心爲忠). In the second, in *Lunyu zhengyi*, Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010) comments that “*zhong* means to do all that is within the center of one’s heart” (忠謂盡中心也). Chǒng’s interpretation of *zhong* was a combination of these two ideas.

Zhu Xi, for his part, interpreted *zhong* as “doing one’s best,” meaning that the two philosophers agreed on the basic meaning of *zhong*. However, they differed in the role they assigned to it in practicing moral behavior. Chǒng saw *zhong* as a condition for practicing *shu* but emphasized *shu* rather than *zhong*:

It is said [in Zhu Xi’s comment] that doing one’s best [*jinji* 盡己] is *zhong*, and that putting oneself in someone else’s place [*tuiji* 推己] is *shu*. However, *zhong* and *shu* are not parallel concepts because the latter is foundational whereas the former is something that helps practicing *shu*. *Zhong* properly exists only after one has served others. One cannot

¹⁰ Zhu Xi emphasized a more robust sense of the connection between self and world. He believed in a oneness between the self and others. This idea was developed by the Northern Song neo-Confucians under the influence of the metaphysical beliefs of Buddhism, and it began to constitute the core ideology of Song-Ming neo-Confucians. It provided the foundation for their other ideas, including a very extensive and demanding imperative to care for the world as one does for oneself. For Zhu Xi’s idea of oneness, see Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Oneness: East Asian Conceptions of Virtue, Happiness, and How We are All Connected* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed., *Zhu Xi: Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 5-6.

¹¹ Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangu jizhu*, vol. 23, 72–73.

¹² Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1403.

¹³ Chǒng, *Nonŏ kogŏmju*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ*, vol. 2, 191a.

accomplish *zhong* alone and on one's own. Even if one wishes to first do one's best, one will have no place to start. Today, in their pursuit of the Way, people tend to think that one should practice *zhong* first and then proceed toward *shu*—they have been greatly led astray. Whenever one practices *zhong*, one already has practiced *shu* for a long time.

盡己之謂忠，推己之謂恕也。然忠恕非對待之物，恕爲之本，而所以行之者忠也。以人事人而後有忠之名，獨我無忠，雖欲先自盡己，無以著手。今人皆認吾道爲先忠而後恕，失之遠矣。方其忠時，恕已久矣。¹⁴

Here Chǒng claims that it is impossible to attach equal value to *shu* and *zhong* and that *shu* is the virtue which should be prioritized. In his view, *zhong* can only be called *zhong* after one realizes it in action in lieu of simply maintaining the mental state, defined by Zhu Xi as “doing your best.” Chǒng also claimed that “What is called *zhongshu* is nothing more than carrying out *shu* with a sincere and earnest heart-mind” (所謂忠恕者，不過曰：‘實心以行恕耳’)¹⁵ and that “One carries out *shu* with *zhong*; and so, Confucius just talks about *shu*, and Zengzi subsequently connects *zhong* with *shu*” (行恕以忠，故孔子單言恕，而曾子連言忠恕也)¹⁶. What Chǒng means here is that *zhong* is not really part of *shu*, which is the principle of putting oneself in another's shoes. Although it is a very important part of carrying out the Way, it is not part of the sympathetic understanding of others.

In contrast, Zhu Xi saw *zhong* as a prerequisite for carrying out the Way. In his view, perfect *shu* could only be achieved through *zhong*: “The word ‘*shu*’ must be discussed in conjunction with the word ‘*zhong*.’ This is the word for expending all [efforts]. *Zhong* is doing one's best, and doing one's best before conducting *shu*” (恕字，須兼忠字說。此說方是盡。忠是盡己也，盡己而後爲恕)¹⁷. Zhu argued that *zhong* is the fundamental condition for implementing the Way and an essential step for *shu*,¹⁸ whereas Chǒng saw *shu* as foundational for carrying out the Way.¹⁹ Both considered *zhong* to play a role in implementing *shu*, but differed in terms of what this role was. Zhu deemed *zhong* to be a prerequisite for conveying the Way, while Chǒng felt it was a method or principle for applying it. For Chǒng, *shu* was of more importance in carrying out the Way.

To sum up, Chǒng Yagyong contended that the one thread refers to *shu*, and *shu* is the only means of conducting the Way, while for Zhu Xi, the two concepts of *zhong* and *shu* represented the one thread of the teachings of the Master. In this reading of Chǒng, the

¹⁴ Chǒng, *Nonŏ Kogŭmju*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yŏyudang Chŏnsŏ*, vol. 2, 191b. Translation from Hongkyung Kim, *The Analects of Dasan*, vol. 2, 37.

¹⁵ Chǒng Yagyong, *Simgyŏng mirbŏm*, in *Chǒngbon Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ: Kyogam·p'yojŏm*, vol. 2 (Sŏul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 42a.

¹⁶ Chǒng, *Nonŏ kogŭmju*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ*, vol. 2, 191a.

¹⁷ Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi yulei*, vol. 41, ed. Li Jingde (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), 1071. Translation by the author.

¹⁸ Zhu Xi, *Sishu huowen* (Shanghai: Anhui Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001), vol. 39, 935.

¹⁹ Zhu took *zhong* to mean “doing one's best in *carrying out one's proper obligations*” (emphasis by the author), with the latter described primarily in terms of the rites. An individual then applies *shu* to fine-tune the practice of the rites.

one thread that penetrates all is *shu*, and *zhong* is not passive or auxiliary but the proper way to carry it out.

Shu as All-Encompassing

For Chǒng Yagyong, *shu* not only encompassed *zhong* but was also central to the moral virtues of humankind. By framing it in this way, Chǒng argued that *zhong* does not constitute being benevolent (*ren* 仁) and that *shu* is only a means of practicing *ren*. He quoted a passage from *Mencius* 7A4:

Mencius said, “If one acts with enthusiasm in applying *shu*, when seeking to implement benevolence, nothing can be closer than his approximation to it.”²⁰ *Shu* is the way of conducting benevolence.

乃聖人之言曰強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。恕者仁之道也。²¹

The ultimate goal of Chǒng’s philosophy was to practice moral virtues in human relations. Contrary to Zhu Xi’s metaphysical interpretation, “*ren* is the virtue of the heart-mind and the principle of love” (仁者，心之德，愛之理)，²² Chǒng interpreted *ren* as a relationship between two people, defining it as a virtue to be practiced within human relations.²³ He also discussed its implementation more deeply than Zhu, saying that *ren* can be defined as *ren* only after putting it into practice.²⁴ Chǒng’s interpretive approach to *shu* focused more on action than on thinking or meditation.

Shu is significant in Chǒng’s ethical philosophy since he identified it as the primary principle of practicing *ren*.²⁵ He constantly emphasized that the cardinal virtue *ren* can exist

²⁰ Translation with modifications from Legge. *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 451.

²¹ Chǒng Yagyong, *Taebak kongüi*, vol. 1, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chönsö: Kyogam p’yojöm*, vol. 2 (Söul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 22b. Translation by the author.

²² Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, vol. 26 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 839. Translation by the author.

²³ Chǒng, *Nonö kogümju*, vol. 1, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chönsö*, vol. 2, 159a.

²⁴ Chǒng Yagyong, *Maengja yoüi*, vol. 1, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chönsö: Kyogam p’yojöm*, vol. 2 (Söul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 107a. For details of the different views of Chǒng and Zhu on the nature of benevolence, see Han Hyöngjo, *Chu Hüi esö Chǒng Yagyong üro: Chosön yubak üi ch’örbakchöke p’aerödaim yön’gu* (Söul: Segyesa, 1996), 243–65.

²⁵ The way Chǒng used the words of Confucius to make his own arguments is known as *igyöng jünggyöng* (以經證經), a philological hermeneutic approach which interprets the original text by means of providing a passage of the original text as proof. This method of interpreting the classics is often found in the philological school (*kaozheng xuepai* 考證學派) of Qing China, the Sirhak school (*sirhak p’a* 實學派) of Korea, and the Kobunji school (*kobunji ha* 古文辭派) of Edo Japan. Although Chǒng derived his interpretation of the relationship between *shu* and *ren* by means of *igyöng jünggyöng*, it differed markedly from the philological intellectuals of the time in these three countries. For example, Jiao Xun 焦膺 (1763–1820) of Qing used *Analects* 12.2 (己所不欲，勿施於人) as grounds for his interpretation of the original text, placing the two concepts of *ren* and *shu* on an equal

only after moving to action using *shu*. As such, the ultimate meaning of *ren* is achieved by putting *shu* into practice. Zhu Xi, on the other hand, insisted that *shu* is not *ren* because in acting according to *shu*, one must still make a conscious effort to be *ren*. For Zhu, *shu* was not *ren*, but only the way to cultivate *ren*.

If one accepts the premise that the way to achieving *ren* has several paths, then *shu* is certainly one of them. It is generally accepted in Confucian tradition that *shu* is the way of practicing *ren*. In Chǒng's ethical philosophy, however, *shu* had unique connotations compared with other Confucian thinkers. He stated:

To serve one's parents with *shu* is filial piety, to serve one's ruler with *shu* is loyalty, and to shepherd one's people with *shu* is kindness. This is the way of acting benevolence.

以恕事父則孝, 以恕事君則忠, 以 恕牧民則慈, 所謂仁之方也.²⁶

By claiming that *shu* is the only essential way to practice *ren*, Chǒng clearly distinguished *shu* from other ethical concepts. Whereas filial piety applies only to the relationship between father and child, and brotherhood applies only to the relationship between elder brother and younger brother, *shu* permeates the universal relationship between people. *Shu* differs from filial piety or brotherhood in that it is a principle that can be applied regardless of who the other person in the relationship is. Because of this, Chǒng claimed that *shu* was the only essential principle for achieving *ren*.

In a similar vein, Chǒng took the practice of *shu* to constitute *ren*, meaning that if one acts according to *shu*, this is what it is to be *ren*. He employed the analogy of a bamboo shoot and bamboo tree to express the relationship between *shu* and *ren*:

Ren is the supreme virtue of the human moral order, and *shu* is the means to achieve *ren*. The assertions that *ren* refers to a full-blown virtue and that when it is not fully developed, it turns out to be *shu* might be wrong. The relationship between *ren* and *shu* is analogous to that between a bamboo shoot and a bamboo tree or that between a lotus bud and a lotus plant. The saying "Do not do to others as you would not wish done to yourself" perfectly matches what this passage indicates. It is unnecessary to distinguish *ren* from *shu* and assign them to two different dimensions.

仁者, 人倫之成德. 恕者, 所以成仁之方法. 不是已熟爲仁, 未熟爲恕. 如筍之爲竹, 菡萏之爲芙蕖也. 施諸己而不願, 亦勿施於人. 與此經所言, 毫髮不差, 分作兩層, 恐未必然.²⁷

footing as *renshu* 仁恕. Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728) of Edo used *Analects* 12.22 (仁, 愛人也) as evidence for his concept *renai* 仁愛. Chǒng's concept of *shu* as an essential principle for implementing *ren* is therefore not simply the result of a philological hermeneutic approach, but rather offers a unique insight into his thoughts and ethical philosophy.

²⁶ Chǒng, *Simgyōng mirhōm*, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chōnsō*, vol. 2, 46a. Translation by the author.

²⁷ Chǒng, *Nonō kogūmchu*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chōnsō*, vol. 2, 196a. Translation with modifications from Hongkyung Kim, *The Analects of Dasan*, vol. 2, 76.

Chǒng went even further in depicting *shu* as a principle that permeates not only *ren* but also all things and affairs:

Whoever wants to practice the way of the Mean [*zhongyong* 中庸] is incapable of doing so without *shu*. The single word “*shu*” can be applied to all things and affairs. ... If I demand my son serve me, the way to serve my father would depend on me. If I demand my retainer serve me, the way to serve my king would depend on me. If I ask my brother to serve me, the way to serve my brother would depend on me.

欲行中庸之道者，非恕不能。一恕字，可以貫萬事萬物。... 有求乎子，則事父之道在我也。有求乎臣，則事君之道在我也。有求乎弟，則事兄之道在我也。²⁸

The examples here show how *shu* applies to all human relations such as older and younger brothers, parents and children, and rulers and ruled. Chǒng further noted:

From this point of view, it follows that the ancient sages’ study of serving Heaven does not deviate from human relations. By means of one word, “*shu*,” we can serve humankind or Heaven. Why would we take *shu* for granted?

由是言之，古聖人事天之學，不外乎人倫，即此一“恕”字，可以事人，可以事天。何故而小之也？²⁹

Chǒng believed that all the texts of the Confucian Classics can be integrated into “*shu*”³⁰ and went so far as to declare *shu* the way of oneness between the self and others. He claimed, “This is what Confucius called one thread, which means that even if all things are intertwined, I can penetrate them with the single word *shu*” (此孔子所謂一貫，謂萬物紛錯，我以一恕字貫之也)。³¹ This idea contrasts sharply with Zhu Xi’s view that *shu* limits oneness between the self and others.³²

²⁸ Chǒng Yagyong, *Chungyong chajam*, vol. 1, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam p’yoyǒm*, vol. 2 (Sǒul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 53b. Translation by the author.

²⁹ Chǒng Yagyong, *Nonǒ kogǔmchu*, vol. 7, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam p’yoyǒm*, vol. 2 (Sǒul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 312a. Translation by the author.

³⁰ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogǔmchu*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 191b.

³¹ Chǒng, *Maengja yǒi*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 147b. Translation by the author.

³² Tiwald argues, “In the *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu*, Zhu Xi makes it clear that he thinks only *ren* and other-focused empathy are compatible with the experience of unity or ‘oneness of body’ with others. Much of the discussion focuses on his reading of an intriguing passage in the *Mencius*, which Zhu takes to suggest a clear incompatibility between experiencing oneself as unified with the world and self-focused empathy or *shu*.” Justin Tiwald, “Zhu Xi on Self-Focused vs. Other-Focused Empathy,” in *Dao Companion to Zhu Xi’s Philosophy*, eds. Kai-chiu Ng and Yong Huang (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 974–75.

Ch'usŏ 推恕 And Yongsŏ 容恕: Ideal Or Not

Coping with the Downside of Reciprocity: Chŏng Yagyong's Ideal Concept of Shu, Ch'usŏ 推恕

Shu is an ethical concept that represents the Confucian golden rule. In Confucian tradition, *shu* is often defined as “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes” (易地思之) or “What you do not want to be done to yourself, do not do to others,” (己所不欲, 勿施於人) or “inferring from oneself and extending to others” (推己及人). The *shu* concept also entails some flaws such as problematic paternalistic empathy which “causes empathizers to want for others things which others may not want for themselves.”³³ People may not realize the distinction between their mind and that of others since the minds of any two people may not match each other. There may also be cases where the consequence of putting *shu* into practice is immoral, for instance, forgiving the evils of others because of a desire to avoid punishment.

Both Chŏng and Zhu Xi agreed that for the successful implementation of *shu*, the individual enacting reciprocity should hold on to his or her morality. However, while Zhu suggested performing *shu* with *zhong* and proposed *ren* as the ideal reciprocity, Chŏng had a stronger belief in the concept of *shu*. He considered it to be the ideal reciprocity and negated its subtle but far-reaching drawbacks.

In their readings of the term *xieju zhi dao* 絜矩之道 (Principle of measuring with a ruler and holding the scales even) in the *Great Learning*, Chŏng and Zhu Xi addressed the moral failures of Confucian reciprocity. Chapter 9 of *Great Learning* states:

On this account, the ruler must himself be possessed of good qualities, and then he may require them in the people. He must not have bad qualities in himself, and then he may require that they shall not be in the people. Never has there been a man, who, not having reference to his character and wishes in dealing with others, was able effectually to instruct them. Thus, we see how the government of the state depends on the regulation of the family.

是故君子有諸己而后求諸人, 無諸己而后非諸人, 所藏乎身不恕而能喻諸人者, 未之有也。故治國在齊其家。³⁴

Chŏng commented on this passage in response to Zhu Xi’s earlier interpretation:

There are two kinds of *shu*. One is *ch'usŏ* 推恕 [inferring what others feel by looking at

³³ Tiwald, “Zhu Xi on Self-Focused vs. Other-Focused Empathy,” 977. For other discussions of problematic paternalism, see Fingarette, “Following the ‘One Thread’ of the *Analects*,” 373–405; Yong Huang, “Empathy with Devils,” in *Moral and Intellectual Virtues in Western and Chinese Philosophy: The Turn toward Virtue*, ed. Chienkuo Mi, Michael Slote, and Ernest Sosa (New York: Routledge, 2016), 214–34; Michael Slote, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (London: Routledge, 2007); and Philip J. Ivanhoe, “The ‘Golden Rule’ in the *Analects*,” in *Confucius Now: Contemporary Encounters with the “Analecets*,” ed. David Jones (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), 81–108.

³⁴ Translation with modifications from Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1 (1960), 371.

what I myself feel from others], and another is *yongsǒ* 容恕 [accepting the behavior of others in light of how one looks at oneself]. In the texts of the Confucian Classics, there is only *ch'usǒ* but no *yongsǒ*, and what Zhu Xi mentions is usually *yongsǒ*. The *Doctrine of the Meaning* says, “What you do not like when done to you, do not do to others,”³⁵ and this is *ch'usǒ*. Zi Gong says, “What I do not wish others to do to me, I also wish not to do to others,” and this is *ch'usǒ*. The *Great Learning* says, “What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors,” and this is *ch'usǒ*. Confucius says, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others,” and this is *ch'usǒ*. *Ch'usǒ* encourages you to cultivate yourself. For this, Mencius says, “If a man acts with all his best through the law of *shu*, when he seeks to implement benevolence, nothing can be closer than his approximation to it,”³⁶ which means that the only key for people to interconnect with others is *ch'usǒ*. Whenever the ancient sage refers to *shu*, he means *ch'usǒ*. The so-called *yongsǒ* is, the *Songs of Chu* say, “Consider others with a heart that forgives oneself;” the *House of Zhao* of the *Historical Records* says, “an old servant forgives himself”; and the *Liu Kuan* of the *Book of Later Han* says, “Warm and kind, more forgiving.” All these are *yongsǒ*. Though *ch'usǒ* and *yongsǒ* seem identical, the distance between them is a thousand miles.

恕有二種. 一是推恕, 一是容恕. 其在古經, 止有推恕, 本無容恕, 朱子所言者, 蓋容恕也. 《中庸》曰: “施諸己而不願, 亦勿施於人.” 此推恕也. 子貢曰: “我不欲人之加諸我也, 吾亦欲無加諸人.” 此推恕也. 此經曰: “所惡於上, 毋以使下, 所惡於下, 毋以事上.” 此推恕也. 孔子曰: “己所不欲, 勿施於人.” 此推恕也. 推恕者, 所以自修也. 故孟子曰: “強恕而行, 求仁莫近焉.” 謂人與人之交際惟推恕為要法也. 先聖言恕, 皆是此義. 若所謂容恕者, 《楚辭》曰‘恕己以量人’, 《趙世家》曰‘老臣自恕’, 《後漢書: 劉寬傳》曰‘溫仁多恕’, 此容恕也. 推恕: 容恕, 雖若相近, 其差千里.³⁷

In his *Interlinear Analysis and Collected Commentaries on the Great Learning (Daxue zhangju jizhu* 大學章句集註), Zhu Xi had defined *shu*:

I can demand goodness from others only after I myself am good; I can rectify the evilness of others only after I myself am not bad. All are inferring the self and expanding to the others, so it is so-called *shu*.

有善於己, 然後可以責人之善. 無惡於己, 然後可以正人之惡. 皆推己以及人, 所謂恕也.³⁸

³⁵ Translation with modifications from Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1 (1960), 394.

³⁶ Translation with modifications from Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2 (1960), 2, 451.

³⁷ Chǒng Yagyong, *Taebak kongǔi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam-p'yojǒm*, vol. 2 (Sǒul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 20a. Translation by the author.

³⁸ Translation by the author.

In criticizing this interpretation, Chǒng suggests that there are two forms of *shu*—*ch'usǒ* 推恕 (inferring what others feel by looking at what I myself feel from others) and *yongsǒ* 容恕 (accepting the behavior of others in light of how I look at myself).³⁹ Chǒng devalues Zhu's interpretation of *shu* as *yongsǒ*, claiming that *shu* in the original texts is not mere tolerance or misuse of reciprocity. He gives the examples of *ch'usǒ* and *yongsǒ* from the Confucian texts, arguing that there is only a representation of *ch'usǒ* in the original texts, not of *yongsǒ*.

Chǒng maintained that there was a difference between these two forms of *shu*:

Ch'usǒ focuses on self-cultivation and is the means by which one carries out the good; *yongsǒ* focuses on managing others and is the means by which one accommodates their bad behavior. How could these be regarded as the same?

推恕者，主於自修，所以行己之善也，容恕者，主於治人，所以寬人之惡也。斯豈一樣之物乎？⁴⁰

Two important ideas come from this: (1) the purpose of the true *shu*, *ch'usǒ*, is not ruling others but cultivating the self, so as to develop the self's moral potential to the utmost degree and (2) the demand of the true *shu* is not for tolerance but for fulfilling moral goodness.

Chǒng's main criticism of Zhu was that his understanding of *shu* was a "self-focused" or "imagine-self" reciprocity based on imagining how someone would feel were he or she in another's shoes.⁴¹ The downside of this self-focused *shu* formulation is (1) it does not prompt one to cultivate virtue in oneself and (2) it encourages one to forgive the unethical feelings and thoughts of others. The former implies that the individual should not demand good behavior and self-improvement from him or herself; the latter seems to say that the individual should overlook the misbehavior of others and not encourage them to be better than they are.

Chǒng used an analogy to point out the shortcomings of this view: "You cannot reprimand someone who bathes with you for being naked, and you can't reprimand someone who steals with you for punching a hole in a wall" (同浴者不可譏裸，同盜者不可譏穿).⁴² His point is that the individual can't criticize someone for doing something wrong if one is doing

³⁹ Ivanhoe translates *ch'usǒ* as "inferential sympathetic consideration" and *yongsǒ* as "accommodating sympathetic consideration." Philip J. Ivanhoe, "New Old Foundations for Confucian Ethical Philosophy: Itō Jinsai, Dai Zhen, and Jeong Yakyong," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 31. I translate *ch'usǒ* as "inferring what others feel by looking at what I myself feel from others" and *yongsǒ* as "accepting the behavior of others in light of how one looks at oneself."

⁴⁰ Chǒng, *Taebak kongūi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 20a. Translation by the author.

⁴¹ Tiwald outlines the morally salient differences between self- and other-focused empathy considering their implications for the virtue of *shu*: "Roughly, the first type of empathy is what is sometimes called 'other-focused' or 'imagine-other' empathy, in which one reconstructs the thoughts and feelings that someone else has or would have. The second conception, 'self-focused' or 'imagine-self' empathy, is the sort of emotional attitude someone adopts when she imagines how she would think or feel were she in the other person's place." Justin Tiwald, "Two Notions of Empathy and Oneness," in *The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of Self*, ed. Philip Ivanhoe et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 371.

⁴² Chǒng, *Taebak kongūi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 20a. Translation by the author.

the same thing at the same time.

Chǒng's concept of true *shu*, so-called “*ch'usǒ*,” indicates more perfect empathy than that of Zhu Xi. He depicted the features of *ch'usǒ* as follows:

If this passage means that [only after I have morality] can I demand [morality from] others and blame them for immorality, then it is not *ch'usǒ* but the opposite of *ch'usǒ*. What the ancient sages say *shu* indicates is that I can only reprove others if I am first good myself and I can only correct others once I have eliminated what is bad within myself.⁴³ If, however, the *shu* of this passage is interpreted [like Zhu Xi's reading] as “only after having [morality in] myself and then being able to require [morality from] others, and not having [morality in] myself and then not being able to blame others,” doesn't this put what is outside on the inside and exchange the branch tip for the root? Zhu Xi's reading nevertheless warns against *ch'usǒ*, not *yongsǒ*. ... What this passage says is that if I am willing to educate people, I should first cultivate myself; if I am willing to cultivate myself, I should first practice *changsǒ* 藏恕 [literally, internal reversibility]. *Shu* is the way of *jieju* 絜矩 [a principle with which, as with a measuring square, one may regulate his conduct]. If I measure what I want from others and regulate my immorality, I can have filial piety and brotherhood and then demand it from them. If I measure what I want from others and regulate my immorality, I can't lack filial piety and brotherhood, so I can blame people's neglect of filial piety and brotherhood. Though [Zhu Xi's reading] seems to make the same point, the words must be in order.

乃若此經之言求諸人：非諸人，即推恕之倒言者，非直推恕也。先聖之所謂恕者，求諸人而后有諸己，非諸人而后無諸己。此經之所謂恕者，有諸己而后求諸人，無諸己而后非諸人，表裏本末不換倒乎？然其所戒，在於推恕，而不在於容恕。... 經所言者，謂將欲化民，必先自修，將欲自修，必先藏恕。恕者，絜矩之道也。絜矩，則我有孝弟，乃可以求諸民。絜矩，則我無不孝，乃可以非諸民。理雖相通，言必有序。⁴⁴

Chǒng here interprets *ch'usǒ*, the ideal *shu*, as an “other-focused” or “imagine-other” reciprocity. The cognitive mechanism of *ch'usǒ* is “inferring what others feel by looking at what I myself want from them and then expanding it to others.” In another work, Chǒng stated his *shu* formulation clearly as “serving others in accordance with one's mind [*zhongxin* 中心] is called *zhong*; being considerate of another's mind as though it were my mind [*ruxin* 如心] is called *shu*” (蓋中心事人，謂之忠，忖他心如我心，謂之恕也).⁴⁵ This concept of *ch'usǒ* is similar to Zhu's concept of *ren* in terms of both being other-focused.⁴⁶

According to Zhu Xi's reading of *shu* in the *Great Learning*, it is logical that if someone is

⁴³ Chǒng, *Taebak kongüi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 19b–20a.

⁴⁴ Chǒng, *Taebak kongüi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 20a.

⁴⁵ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogümbu*, vol. 2, in *Chǒngbon Yöyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 191b.

⁴⁶ According to Tiwald, Zhu Xi interpreted *ren* as other-focused empathy. Tiwald, “Zhu Xi on Self-Focused vs. Other-Focused Empathy,” 963–80.

immoral, he or she can tolerate the deviousness of others and not demand virtuous behavior. Chǒng, on the other hand, felt that even if someone is immoral, he or she can ask for righteousness from others by means of inferring the feelings or thoughts that he or she requires from others and then redirecting these back to the self. Chǒng specifically labeled this other-focused perspective *changsǒ* 藏恕 (literally, internal reversibility).

The merit of this formulation of *shu* is that it promotes fully developing one's own potential morality rather than trying to control others.⁴⁷ If I measure my feelings and thoughts from the perspective of what I want others to do to me, I can have a proper ideal and grasp what moral mindset/behavior I should have toward others. In doing so, I can rectify my morally wrong mind and doings by means of modeling the thoughts and actions that I want others to have toward me.⁴⁸ For Chǒng, “the principle of measuring with a ruler and holding the scale even” (*xiejū zhi dao* 繫矩之道) was basically another name for the Confucian concept of *shu*.⁴⁹

Gateway of the True Shu and Keji 克己

For Chǒng, *ch'usǒ* was the perfect way to make proper whereas *yongsǒ* was not. He disagreed with the Cheng-Zhu School's reading of *shu* as corresponding to *yongsǒ*, and insisted that *ch'usǒ* was the primary method of Confucian self-cultivation and socializing with others. He contended that only the former appeared in the classics.

Chǒng felt that *yongsǒ* failed to connect with the primary method of self-cultivation advocated by classical Confucians. Moreover, his reading of *ch'usǒ* entailed both understanding how to treat others by consulting one's feelings and actually behaving toward them in this way. It also required one to adjust one's treatment in light of a more complete understanding of how one's feelings accord with the feelings of others. Chǒng put great emphasis on *ch'usǒ* as a guide to action. He highlighted the need to treat others as it suggests and that this helps to extend one's moral feelings and develop virtue. He rejected *yongsǒ* on the grounds that it did not encourage behavior that developed virtue. Moreover, it urged leniency towards others and eventually the self.

This other-oriented formulation of *ch'usǒ* reflects Chǒng's belief in practicing virtuous behavior in human relationships. *Shu* cannot be implemented if others do not exist, so Chǒng formulated *shu* in terms of human relations.⁵⁰ In this way, he both criticized and transcended Zhu's concept of *shu*. Both Chǒng and Zhu agreed on the importance of the morality of the subject in conducting *shu*. For them, *shu* was not mere tolerance or reversibility, with

⁴⁷ Chǒng, *Taebak kongŭi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 20a.

⁴⁸ Chǒng, *Taebak kongŭi*, vol. 3, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 2, 20a-20b.

⁴⁹ Chǒng Yagyong, *Simgyōng mirbǒm*, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam·p'yojŏm*, vol. 6 (Sŏul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 42b.

⁵⁰ Chǒng Yagyong, *Nonŏ kogŭmchu*, vol. 8, in *Chǒngbon Yōyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam·p'yojŏm*, vol. 9 (Sŏul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 15b.

both highlighting its morally appropriate consequences. They differed, however, in the implementation of *shu*, Zhu emphasizing inner cultivation, *zhong*, while Chǒng focused on interactions with others.

For Zhu, the morality of the subject was to be achieved independently: the concept *zhong* of *zhongshu* performs a role in moral discernment so that only after *shu* meets *zhong* does it work as an ideal form of reciprocity in the way that Zhu's concept *ren* does. Chǒng's concept of true *shu*, on the other hand, was another type of empathy consulting feelings or thoughts which I ask others to have toward me and then requiring them from others. In his sense, the virtue of the subject develops and practices virtue by means of interaction with others, prompting the cognitive and moral capacity to place the other at the center of humanness and consideration. Chǒng provided many cases of practicing *shu* in human relationships, such as between father and son or ruler and ruled.⁵¹

True *shu* seeks to practice moral good. The moral agent needs to judge his or her instinctual understanding of a moral issue on every occasion, and implementing *ch'usǒ* requires a process of *kwǒnhyǒng* 權衡 (sliding weight and weighing rod) and *yǒngji* 靈智 (spiritual wisdom).⁵² To know what others want without asking them, one must restrain self-interest and infer what behavior is desirable from others. In this regard, Chǒng linked the concepts of *shu* and *keji* 克己.

In *Analects* 12.1, Yan Yuan 顏淵 asks about benevolence. Confucius replies:

To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is benevolence. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe benevolence to him. Is the practice of benevolence from a man himself, or is it from others?

克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。為仁由己，而由人乎哉？

In interpreting *keji* in *Analects* 12.1, Chǒng stated:⁵³

⁵¹ *Simgyǒng mirhǒm*, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 6, 42b. Chǒng advocated a return to the original intent of the sages of early Confucianism, which was based on more humanistic values. The main feature of early Confucianism, in comparison with other East Asian philosophies (Daoism and Buddhism) of that period, was a focus on humankind rather than on other creatures or metaphysical realities. For this reason, Chǒng did not extend the application of *shu* beyond human beings.

⁵² Chǒng contended that the biggest merit of humankind, and which distinguishes humans from animals, is our ability to make moral judgments, in his words, *yǒngji* 靈智 (spiritual wisdom). He also considered one of the functions of the heart-mind to be the ability to judge good and evil on an ethical level—so-called *kwǒnhyǒng* 權衡 (sliding weight and weighing rod), a cognitive and determinative action that plays a pivotal role in examining and evaluating our instinctual sentiments and intuitive understanding of a moral issue. Baek states, "In my view, *kwǒnhyǒng* as a deliberative faculty holds a meaning similar to that of *kwǒnhyǒng* as a cogitative and determinative agency." Min Jeong Baek, "Moral Success and Failure in the Ethical Theory of 'Tasan Chǒng Yagyong,'" *Acta Koreana* 19, no. 1 (2016): 244. For an alternative reading of *kwǒnhyǒng*, see Mark Setton, *Chong Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 83; Chǒng Yagyong, *Chungyong kangūibo*, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam·p'yojǒm*, vol. 6 (Sǒul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 86a.

⁵³ For Chǒng's interpretation of *Analects* 12.1, see Kǔm Chang'ae, *In kwa ye: Tasan ūi "Nonǒ" haesǒk* (Sǒul: Sǒul

Desire is what the human mind wants to do, and not to [follow desire] is what the moral mind wants to do. These two minds fight against each other by doing this and not doing that. When the not-doing wins, it is called *keji* [克己, Kor. *kŏkki*, overcoming oneself].

欲也者, 人心欲之也. 勿也者, 道心勿之也. 彼欲此勿, 兩相交戰, 勿者克之, 則謂之克己.⁵⁴

Chǒng interpreted the word *ji* 己 as oneself (*wo* 我), while Zhu Xi read it as self-desire, *siyu* 私欲. Zhu interpreted *keji* as “subduing one’s desires,” while Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) from the Han dynasty and Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) from the Qing dynasty read *keji* as *yueshen* 約身 (disciplining oneself). Chǒng agreed with Zhu to some extent. However, he insisted that humankind has two heart-minds—the human mind (*renxin* 人心) and the moral mind (*daoxin* 道心)—and that the moral mind was superior to the human mind.⁵⁵ In light of this theory of the human mind and the moral mind (*renxin daoxin lun* 人心道心論),⁵⁶ Chǒng claimed that “when the moral mind wins, it is called *keji*.” This implies that one is able to treat others in the most virtuous way by following the moral mind.⁵⁷

Just as he divided the heart-mind into the moral mind and the human mind, Chǒng divided *shu* into two types—*ch’usǒ* and *yongsǒ*—and suggested that *ch’usǒ* stems from the moral mind, while *yongsǒ* arises from the human mind. His idea that one can naturally move to *ch’usǒ* is also directly related to Zhu Xi’s idea of the moral mind, and, in this view of Chǒng, enacting *shu* inevitably results in moral consequences.⁵⁸ According to Chǒng, *keji* is a prerequisite for *ch’usǒ*, since acting in accordance with the moral mind produces the true *shu*.

Chǒng understood *keji* as a method of practicing *shu*. His gloss on *Analects* 12.2 expresses this more clearly: “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others” (己所不欲, 勿施於人). Zhu Xi, on the other hand, separated *ren* and *shu*; in his view, *keji* was a method of acting *ren*.⁵⁹ Chǒng, however, argued that all of Confucius’s references to *shu* indicate *keji*, though 12.2 does not contain the word *shu*.⁶⁰ He further suggested that “one who wishes to

Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 2006), 102–08.

⁵⁴ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogŭmchu*, vol. 6, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 9, 2b.

⁵⁵ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogŭmchu*, vol. 6, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 9, 1b.

⁵⁶ This theory deviates from a statement in the *Counsels of Yu the Great* (*Da Yu mo* 大禹謨) in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書): “The human mind is restless, prone [to err]; its affinity, the moral mind, is small. Be discriminating, be uniform [in the pursuit of what is right], that you may sincerely hold fast to the Mean” 人心惟危, 道心惟微. 惟精惟一, 允執厥中. Translation with modifications from James Legge, trans. *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. 4 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 61–62.

⁵⁷ For Chǒng’s view on the theory of the human mind and moral mind, see *Mae-ssi sǒp’yǒng*, vol. 4, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ: Kyogam-p’yŏjom*, vol. 2 (Sōul: Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan, 2012), 270b–276b.

⁵⁸ For Chǒng’s view on the relationship between the theory of the human mind and moral mind and the concept *shu*, see Paek Minjǒng, *Chǒng Yagyong ūi ch’ǒrbak: Chubŭi wa Mat’eo Rich’i rŭl nǒmǒ saeroun segye ro* (Sōul: Ihaksa, 2007), 252–60; 356–63.

⁵⁹ Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, vol. 23, 132. “須是克盡己私, 皆歸於禮, 方始是仁. … 克己復禮, 則事事皆仁.”

⁶⁰ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogŭmchu*, vol. 6, in *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 9, 5a.

conduct *shu*, must practice *keji* first” (求仁者必強恕, 強恕者必克己).⁶¹

According to Chǒng, people have outstanding moral judgment skills that allow them to differentiate between a moral good and a tempting alternative and guide them toward a moral decision in practicing *shu*. People have the ability to infer (*ch’u* 推) their true desires through exceptional moral perception and by using others as moral exemplars. As such, people can control their feelings/thoughts in a virtuous way while conducting *shu* so that even without *zhong*, *shu* itself can be the principle that unifies everything and enables the practice of the cardinal Confucian virtue *ren*. In terms of the relationship between *shu* and *keji*, *keji* is the means to the true *shu* - *ch’usǒ*.

Conclusion

Chǒng Yagyong’s philosophy arose from a dialectical or negatively rational view of the ideas of Zhu Xi, his main criticism being the lack of practicality in the latter’s ethical theories. Zhu’s conception of reciprocity consisted of the two concepts of *zhong* and *shu*. This, for Chǒng, required an emphasis on meditation but was limited in its application. To overcome this issue, Chǒng negated the metaphysical aspect of the Confucian concept of reciprocity and reformulated *shu* to make it more applicable to everyday life. He sought to make *shu* independent of *zhong*, dividing it into *yongsǒ* and *ch’usǒ*, and presenting *ch’usǒ* as the ideal form of reciprocity. This entailed “consulting feelings or thoughts which I ask others to have toward me and then requiring them from others.”

Though Chǒng rejected Zhu Xi’s interpretation of *shu* as forgiveness, Zhu also had a moral consequentialist view of the principle of reciprocity. For him, only after overcoming our desires are we able to infer others’ feelings or thoughts. Chǒng’s *ch’usǒ* and Zhu’s *zhong* entail searching for the true feelings or thoughts of others. Not coincidentally, both highlighted *keji* as way of acting *shu* or *ren*. Despite their apparent differences, both felt that the reversal of roles had to focus on moral results.

Zhu Xi interpreted *shu* from the perspective of his own philosophical framework. Based on the idea that *shu* is the expression and application (*yong* 用) of *zhong* as the ontic (*ti* 體), Zhu formulated a clear conception of *zhong* that balanced the incompleteness of *shu* in his ethical philosophy. Both he and Chǒng aimed for other-focused empathy, a more perfect form of reversibility. Zhu’s reading of *ren* and Chǒng’s reading of *shu* were both other-focused empathy. However, they differed with regard to the concepts they chose to highlight in their ethical theories.

Chǒng’s interpretation of *shu* stemmed from his ethical philosophy. While he emphasized the practicality of Confucianism, he sought to develop the ideas of the Cheng-Zhu school of thought by adding sophisticated cognitive meanings to the key concepts in the Confucian Classics. For example, while Zhu Xi insisted on a strict distinction between the moral mind

⁶¹ Chǒng, *Nonǒ kogǔmchu*, vol. 8, in *Chǒngbon Yǒjudang chǒnsǒ*, vol. 9, 21a.

and the human mind, Chǒng used the theory of the moral mind and the human mind to divide *shu* into *yongsǒ* and *ch'usǒ*.

The aim of this article was not to determine the validity of the philosophical arguments expressed in the writings of Chǒng Yagyong and Zhu Xi, but rather to view them as representative of a specific branch of Confucian thinking. Both Chǒng and Zhu provided important interpretations of *shu*. It would be illuminating if future studies expanded their focus from Chinese and Korean thinkers to Japanese or Vietnamese interpretations of the Confucian concept of *shu*. This would help shed light on the endless fascination of the Confucian tradition in Asia.

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