Emotions and creativity, East and West

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This article is concerned with emotion, creativity, and the intersection of the two – creativity in the domain of emotion. We first present a framework for the analysis of emotion, a framework that recognizes the importance of biological influences but that also takes into account cultural and individual variations. We then describe the criteria – effectiveness, novelty, and authenticity – for judging a response as creative; the relative emphasis placed on these criteria, especially novelty and authenticity, helps account for East-West differences in aesthetic preferences (e.g., in the production and evaluation of works of art). Next, we explore the ability of individuals to be emotionally creative, that is, to acquire emotions that meet the criteria for creativity. Finally, we examine the “Four-Seven Debate,” a classic in Korcan Neo-Confucian thought, in light of our discussion of emotions and creativity.

In popular conception – not to mention psychological theory – emotions are often viewed as biologically primitive responses that interfere with deliberate, rational thought; creativity, on the other hand, is typically ranked among the highest of the “higher” (uniquely human) thought processes. Yet, the line between emotions and creativity is easily breached. The Western stereotype of the creative genius, especially in the arts, is a person who is uncommonly emotional (Sternberg, 1985). This may be more stereotype than reality; however, it is the case that, as antecedents, emotions can facilitate or hinder creative endeavors and, conversely, creative endeavors can have profound emotional consequences (Russ, 1998).

In this paper, we argue that emotions and creativity not only interact (e.g., as antecedents and consequences), but that emotions themselves can be products of creative change (Averill, 1999a; Averill & Nunley, 1992; Averill & Thomas-Knowles, 1991). The potential for creativity in the domain of emotion is most evident when viewed cross-culturally. We therefore draw on Eastern and Western perspectives to illustrate the ways in which emotions may be subject to creative change.

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In speaking of Eastern and Western perspectives, we are speaking in broad generalities. Within the West, there are many cultural differences between, say, the United States, France, and Germany, and within each of these, there are important subcultural differences. But there are also similarities, due to a common Judeo-Christian heritage, and to two millennia of economic and political alliances and conflicts. The same is true of the East. By "East," we refer to China, Japan, and Korea. Although in many ways distinct, these societies also bear notable similarities. Most importantly for our purposes, each has been strongly influenced by the "Three Teachings": Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Of these three, we focus primarily on Confucianism. As a historical figure, Confucius (551–479 BC) is perhaps more legend than reality (Brooks & Brooks, 1998). However, his teachings are real enough, especially as transmitted by Mencius (372–298 BC) and further emended by the Neo-Confucians of the twelfth century, such as Chu Hsi (1130–1200).

We divide the article into four sections. First, we present a framework for the analysis of emotion and explore East–West differences in light of that framework; second, we examine the criteria for judging a response as creative and describe East–West differences in the application of those criteria; third, we explain how emotions are subject to creative change and present supporting data; fourth, we relate emotional creativity to the Neo-Confucian debate concerning the "Four Beginnings" of human nature, the associated "Seven Emotions," and jen, the ideal self in Neo-Confucianism.

A framework for the analysis of emotion

Any analysis of emotion, particularly one that involves cross-cultural comparisons, must begin with a clear understanding of what is meant by the term. This is not an easy task for two reasons. First, "emotion" is often used to refer to logically distinct types of variables, each type alluding to a different aspect of a more complex whole. Second, to avoid ethnocentrism, these variables or aspects of emotion should be described in culturally neutral terms, to the extent that is ever possible. Figure 1 presents a framework for the analysis of emotion that, we believe, meets these two criteria. In discussing this figure, we begin at the top and work down.

Biological and social systems of behavior

The origins of behavior lie in a person’s biological and social heritage. The sum of a person’s biological endowment is his or her genotype. The aspects of the genotype most relevant to emotions are those responsible for instinctive behavior, or what is now commonly referred to as biological systems of behavior. Even though the notion of instinct has gone out of vogue, the idea that emotions — particularly "basic" emotions — are remnants of our biological heritage is a common assumption among contemporary psychologists, both East and West (cf. Hahn & Chon, 1990; Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980).

In a manner analogous to the biological, we may speak of social systems of behavior — institutionalized patterns of response that help assure the survival of a society. In the well-socialized individual, such "social instincts" may be experienced as passionately as any biological propensity. But whereas biological systems are encoded in the gene pool of the species, social systems are encoded in the symbols, artifacts, and customs of society — what Lumsden and Wilson (1983) have called "culturgreens." The sum of a person’s culturgreens, acquired during socialization, is his or her sociotype.

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Figure 1  Aspects of emotion. The shaded areas represent external (biological and social) influences; the clear areas represent personal (intrapsychic and behavioral) variables.
Emotional traits

A person’s genotype and sociotype, together with experiences unique to the individual, combine to form his or her emotional traits. These are long-enduring predispositions to respond in an emotional way; for example, with fear, anger, or sadness.

Emotional traits are sometimes confused with emotional states, which we will discuss in detail below. Confusion is especially likely when the same name is applied to each kind of variable, as in the case of state and trait anxiety. Cross-culturally, too, the state–trait distinction can be a source of confusion. For example, in the United States hope is generally conceived of as an emotional state, whereas in Korea its nearest equivalent, huimang, is typically regarded as an enduring trait (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990). Thus, when comparing hope with huimang, one must take into account not only cultural differences in the emotional state, but also logical differences between state and trait variables.

Emotional syndromes

Emotional syndromes form the crux of the model presented in Figure 1. These are folk-theoretical constructs, recognized in ordinary language by such abstract nouns as “grief” in English, hwa (“anger”) in Korean, anae (“dependency”) in Japanese, and k’ung (“emptiness/solitude”) in Chinese. To clarify the nature of emotional syndromes, it is helpful to compare them to constructs found in formal scientific theories. Consider a disease syndrome, such as measles or mumps. Measles is a theoretical construct that helps explain the symptoms people exhibit when ill with the disease. Emotional syndromes play a role in our everyday theories of behavior analogous to the role disease syndromes play in medical theory. Put differently, the meaning of emotion quia syndrome depends on a matrix of cultural beliefs (explicit theories) about the nature of emotion, just as the meaning of disease syndromes depends on scientific beliefs about microbes, immunity, homeostasis, and the like.

Two categories of beliefs are relevant to emotional syndromes: existential beliefs and social rules. These are illustrated in Figure 2. Existential beliefs concern what is, what exists. Some existential beliefs about emotions may be true in the sense that they are accurate reflections of how people respond when emotional. For example, it is true that, when angry, people typically wish to correct a perceived wrong. Other existential beliefs are mythical, for example, that a person will explode if anger goes unexpressed. Needless to say, myths can lend meaning and significance to life, sometimes even more than true beliefs. The important point is that emotional syndromes are constituted, in part, by the existential beliefs we hold about them.

Unlike scientific theories, our folk theories of emotion are evaluative; that is, they not only describe what is, whether in fact or myth, they also prescribe what should be. Emotions, it might be said, literally embody the values of society. Stated more formally, emotional syndromes are constituted by social rules as well as by existential beliefs.

All theorists recognize that emotions are regulated by social rules that determine, for example, the proper occasions for, and display of, anger. Less recognized is the fact that many rules also have an enabling function. In this respect, rules of emotion might be compared to the grammar of a language. Grammatical rules not only regulate how we speak on any given occasion, they help constitute the language. Without an English grammar, there would be no English language, and without a Chinese grammar, there would be no Chinese language. The same is true with respect to the rules of emotion. Without the rules of anger, say, there would be no anger, only inarticulate expressions of rage and frustration.

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Implicit theories of emotion

Existential beliefs (descriptive)
- Factual beliefs

Social rules (prescriptive)
- Constitutive rules
- Regulative rules

Emotional syndromes
(Folk-theoretical constructs)

Figure 2 The relation of emotional syndromes (e.g., anger, love) to implicit theories of emotion

**Emotional schemas**

Before an emotional syndrome can be manifested in the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals, the relevant beliefs and rules must be internalized. Those internalized beliefs and rules constitute emotional schemas or scripts. Internalization is never complete, of course. Due to differences in personality, socialization practices, and position in society, only a subset of beliefs and rules that constitute an emotional syndrome may be internalized by an individual, and then with varying degrees of agreement. Because of this, no two individuals experience an emotional syndrome in exactly the same way.

**Emotional states**

We are now in a position to describe more fully the nature of emotional states, as opposed to emotional traits. As discussed above, emotional traits are relatively enduring predispositions to respond in emotional ways. An emotional state is also a dispositional variable, but temporary rather than enduring. Stated formally, an emotional state is an episodic disposition to respond in a manner consistent with an emotional syndrome, as that syndrome is understood by the individual.

Emotional states involve the activation of relevant emotional schemas. This does not mean that emotional schemas exist fully formed in the mind (or brain) of the individual, just waiting to be activated by appropriate initiating conditions. Like other mental structures, some emotional schemas may be stored and recalled as such. When the situation is unusual and the episode complex, however, emotional schemas may be constructed "on line," as an
episode develops. In constructing a schema on line, the person has recourse to a large database of experience previously stored in memory, as well as general beliefs about the emotion and its consequences. Depending on the situation and the person's motives and goals, only a subset of this stored information may be accessed in any given episode.

**Emotional responses**

Emotional responses are what a person actually does when in an emotional state. These would include, among others things, instrumental acts (hitting, running, etc.), physiological changes (e.g., increased heart rate), expressive reactions (smiling, frowning, etc.), and their afferent and efferent reverberations in consciousness (feelings). No one type of response, not even feelings, is a necessary or sufficient condition for the attribution of an emotional state. Indeed, a person may be in an emotional state and not respond in an emotional way at all (e.g., because he is distracted or engaged in other activities).

A reflexive or bidirectional relation exists among emotional syndromes, schemas, states, and responses, as illustrated by the curved arrows to the right on Figure 1. Looking down the hierarchy depicted in Figure 1, emotional syndromes literally inform (help organize and direct) the kinds of responses that are exhibited during an emotional state. Conversely, looking up the hierarchy, emotional responses lend substance to otherwise "empty" schemas. Even responses that are relatively automatic are experienced as emotional only to the extent that they are interpreted within the framework of an emotional syndrome: for example, it is this reflexivity that transforms mere arousal (from climbing the stairs, say) into emotional arousal (e.g., an angry episode).

**Emotions East and West**

As illustrated in Figure 1, culture can influence the emotional life of individuals in two main ways: first, through social systems of behavior (contributing to a person's sociotype) and their influence on emotional traits; and, second, through the implicit theories (beliefs and rules) that help constitute emotional syndromes and regulate their expression.

Social systems may differ along a number of dimensions; we will consider only one for illustrative purposes, namely, collectivism versus individualism (e.g., Hahn & Chon, 1994; Triandis, 1995). Eastern societies tend to emphasize group harmony over individual interests, or, more properly speaking, the welfare of the group is seen as inseparable from that of the individual. By contrast, Western societies—at least over the past several centuries—emphasize the rights of the individual, even at the expense of the group. These differences in orientation influence the emotional traits of individuals socialized within the respective cultures.

Cross-cultural comparisons of emotional traits are fraught with methodological difficulties. Nevertheless, there is converging evidence (based largely on Chinese samples) that East Asians tend to be somewhat more reserved—introverted—than Westerners (Hahn, Lee, & Ashton, 1999; McCrae, Costa, & Yik, 1996). Undoubtedly, this is due largely to socialization practices (i.e., the subordination of individual interests to those of the collective), although genetic influences may also play a role (Rushton, 1999). If Easterners are indeed temperamentally more reserved than Westerners, for whatever reason, this might help account for the frequent observation that emotional expression is more subdued in the East than in the West (Bond, 1993; Chon, Kim, & Ryoo, 2000; Matsumoto, 2001).
Kasri, & Kooken, 1999). Emotional traits, however, set only broad limits on the kind of emotional syndromes that a person is predisposed to experience; the exact nature of the syndrome is determined by the beliefs and rules of society.

This is not the place to review extensive literature on cultural differences in emotional syndromes, about which we will have more to say below. One example will suffice to illustrate the point. Doi (1973) has described a syndrome, amae, that is common among the Japanese, but not seen in similar form among Westerners. Amae is related to attachment, a biological system of behavior (Bowlby, 1982; Hinton, 1999), and in that sense a predisposition to amae and related syndromes is universal. However, amae is not simply attachment. It is a specific emotion the form and meaning of which can be understood only within the context of Japanese society. Thus, the reach of amae extends far beyond its biological roots to encompass, among other things, the reciprocal relationship between employee and employer, and even between citizen and emperor.

Potter (1988) describes how, in Chinese village life, emotions may be treated as trivial concomitants of experience, of little interest to anyone except the person who feels them. Thus, if a Chinese villager is asked how he feels about a certain arrangement, the response might be, “It doesn’t matter how I feel.” This contrasts with the typical Western attitude that emotions help legitimize social actions. For example, anger helps legitimize aggressive responses; love helps legitimize sexual relations; grief helps legitimize social withdrawal; and so forth.

There is reason to believe that Potter has understated the relevance of emotion to social relations in Chinese culture (Russell & Yik, 1996; see also the above example of amae among the Japanese). At best, such perceived irrelevance would be true of only certain emotions, such as sexual infatuation, in which biological impulses threaten to undermine established social practices. Rather than denying the emotions, Eastern cultures place great emphasis on emotional refinement, as illustrated, for example, in Chinese art and poetry (Sundararajan, 1997, 1998).

A central theme of this article is that emotions are subject not only to refinement, as the above references to Sundararajan suggest, but, more fundamentally, to transformation; and when the transformation is for the better, we speak of emotional creativity. Before expanding on that theme, however, we must say more precisely what we mean by creativity.

Creativity East and West

Creativity is known by its products. The product can be a tangible object, like a painting, or it can be form of behavior, like an improvisational dance. Emotional creativity would fall into the latter category. Of course, all products require behavior for their production. In a generic sense, therefore, we can refer to the creative response, regardless of the type of product involved. In this section, we first describe the criteria by which a response may be judged creative; we then explore East–West differences in the application of those criteria.

Criteria for judging a response as creative

If a response has no value, either to the individual or to the group, it can hardly be considered creative. The nature of the value depends on the domain of creativity. For example, a painting is judged by its aesthetic value; a scientific discovery, by its theoretical value; a business venture, by its commercial value; and so forth. To cover values of all
kinds, we speak simply of \textit{effectiveness} as a criterion for creativity. To be effective, in this sense, is to be of value.

Although easy to state, the application of effectiveness as a criterion for creativity is far from simple. For one thing, values often conflict (as when commercial values compete with aesthetic values). For another thing, a response that is deemed effective at the outset may eventually prove harmful; and, conversely, a response that is ineffective at the outset may eventually prove beneficial. Thus, judgments of creativity are often based more on hindsight than on foresight. To complicate matters even further, a response that is effective for the individual may be ineffective— even harmful— for the group, and vice versa (Hobfoll, 1998).

Such complications aside, let us assume that a response is effective. This, by itself, is not sufficient for a judgment of creativity. A response that is habitual for the individual or standard for the group may be effective because it is, colloquially speaking, “tried and true.” To be considered creative, the response should also be novel— different from the ordinary. As in the case of effectiveness, the criterion of \textit{novelty} is easier to state in theory than to apply in practice. A response may be novel in comparison to an individual’s own past behavior, or it may be novel in comparison to some reference group. The latter (group) comparison is the most common in judging creativity. It should be kept in mind, however, that all learning involves the acquisition of novel behavior from the individual’s perspective, and hence entails some degree of creativity. On the personal level, then, creativity is integral to growth of the self— a point to which we will return later in our discussion of \textit{jen}.

In addition to being effective and novel, a creative response should be \textit{authentic}; that is, a reflection of an individual’s own values and beliefs. To illustrate the relevance of this criterion to creativity in general, consider a computer-generated design— a fractal image, for example. The design may be effective (have aesthetic value), and it may be novel (differ in style and content from other designs). But would we judge it creative? Probably not. The question is: Why not?

In the words of Arneheim (1966), creativity involves “the pregnant sight of reality” (p. 299). Computers are lifeless: they have no inner vision, pregnant or otherwise. In a word, they lack authenticity. Contrasting the emphasis of theoreticians on novelty as opposed to authenticity as a criterion for creativity, Arneheim further notes that “the desire to be different for the sake of difference is harmful, and derives from a pathological state of affairs inherent either in the situation . . . or the person, as in the ‘escape mechanism’ of neurotics, attributed to artists by Freudians” (p. 299). A computer, we might add, is no more capable of being neurotic than it is capable of being creative.

\textit{East–West differences}

The difference between Eastern and Western judgments of creativity can be analyzed in terms of the three criteria for creativity discussed above— effectiveness, novelty, and authenticity. Let us begin with effectiveness. To be considered effective, a response must meet relevant standards of excellence. It hardly needs saying that those standards may differ depending on the culture and context. However, a difference in the standards by which effectiveness is judged does not imply a difference in the importance placed on effectiveness \textit{per se} as a criterion for creativity. Apropos our present discussion, there is no reason to assume that Eastern cultures place more— or less— importance on effectiveness than do Western cultures. Novelty and authenticity are more interesting in this regard.

In discussing cultural differences in artistic creativity, Li (1997) distinguished between two traditions, one horizontal (more characteristic of Western cultures) and the other vertical
(more characteristic of Eastern cultures). In a horizontal tradition, the aims, methods, and symbols used in the production of art are subject to modification and even radical change. Picasso’s cubism or Pollock’s drip paintings are good examples. In a vertical tradition, by contrast, both the content and the techniques of the work are highly constrained. Chinese brush painting provides a good example of a vertical tradition in art. What is important within a vertical tradition is that the artist captures the ”spirit” of the object portrayed.

The distinction between horizontal and vertical traditions corresponds roughly to the relative emphasis placed on novelty and authenticity as criteria for creativity. In Western (horizontal) conceptions of creativity, major emphasis is placed on the novelty of a response. The criterion of novelty has been stated in perhaps its most extreme form by Kaufmann (1993), who argues that a truly creative response should not only be different or unique, it should also involve a ”modification or rejection of previously accepted ideas” (p. 146, emphasis added). By contrast, the criterion of authenticity is seldom mentioned by Western commentators on artistic (or scientific) creativity. Arneheim (1966), quoted above, is a notable exception, as are some humanistically oriented theorists (e.g., Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1961).

When we turn to Eastern conceptions of creativity, the relative emphasis placed on novelty and authenticity is reversed. For example, contrast the above observation by Kaufmann (on ”the modification and rejection” of accepted ideas) with the following passage from the Analects of Confucius (Bk. 2, #11): ”The Master said, Warming up the old so as to understand the new: such a one can be a teacher” (Brooks & Brooks, 1998, p. 111). Something similar could be said of the artist. In Confucian aesthetics, the goal is not to modify fundamentally – and certainly not to reject – previous ideas, but to breath new life into them, in order to make them better fit the circumstances. The new is, in a sense, already in the old; it only needs to be ”warmed up.”

In short, a Confucian conception of creativity tends to de-emphasize novelty as a criterion for creativity. But is there a compensating emphasis on authenticity? Within Confucian aesthetics, according to Tu (1985a, Ch. 6) self-cultivation is considered basic to creativity. Self-cultivation implies authenticity, as we are using the term.

Whenever a dichotomy is drawn, such as that between novelty and authenticity, some nuances are bound to be lost. No two individuals are exactly alike; thus, self-cultivation would seem to imply novelty as well as authenticity. Louise Kuen-Wei Sundararajan (personal communication) has expressed this point as follows:

When creative energy goes to the authenticity dimension, we can expect to see novelty and innovation there as well. In fact, when it comes to the expression of authenticity, Chinese artists are radical in their innovations. For instance, each brush stroke is brand new, so new that it does not tolerate correction by a second stroke. In Chinese art, the best expression of novelty is found in the ephemeral – the transient moods and fleeting moments, in sharp contrast to the Western attempts to create novel forms that last.

The self that is cultivated in Eastern societies is more inclusive than the self that is cultivated in Western societies, and that fact may help account for the differences noted by Sundararajan. Inclusiveness affixes the self to others, past and present; this anchoring effect makes lasting change difficult but may allow for ”transient moods and fleeting moments” mentioned by Sundararajan. Be that as it may, we agree with Tu (1985a) that an act of creation is also an act of self-cultivation – and not just within the Confucian tradition. Moreover, when novelty accompanies authenticity – especially the kind of novelty that
involves enduring change – creativity becomes self-transformative. In the next section, we extend this line of reasoning to the emotions: Authentic emotions ("true feelings") are expressions of a person's core beliefs and values; hence, any transformation of the self involves a transformation of the emotions, and vice versa (Morgan & Averill, 1992).

Creativity in the domain of emotion

In what ways can an emotion be an object of creativity? The answer to this question depends on the aspect of emotion under consideration (e.g., emotional syndromes, schemas, or responses) and on the relative value placed on the criteria of effectiveness, novelty, and authenticity. For our present purposes, such detail is not necessary (Averill, 1999a; Averill & Nunley, 1992). An analogy may suffice to illustrate the issue. Responding emotionally might be compared to a dance. The musical score for the dance corresponds to the emotional syndrome; the cognitive structures by which the dancer interprets the score correspond to the emotional schemas or scripts; and the movements of the dancer correspond to the expression of the emotion. Dancers can be more or less creative in the way they interpret and express a piece of music without altering the basic score; the situation is similar in the case of emotion. But let us say the dance is improvisational, so that no score exists except in broad guidelines. In terms of our analogy, that would correspond to a change in the emotional syndrome itself, which is the main concern of this article. But whether the focus is on the expression of an already existing syndrome or a change in the syndrome itself, the result can be considered creative if it meets some combination of the three criteria of effectiveness, novelty, and authenticity.

As Figure 1 suggests, multiple opportunities exist for the refinement and transformation of emotional syndromes. Change can start from the top, with an alteration of the beliefs and rules that help constitute an emotional syndrome, or it can start from the bottom, with the responses exhibited during an emotional episode. A top-down approach is common during psychotherapy, where attempts are often made to alter the beliefs and rules that constitute ineffective ("neurotic") syndromes (e.g., Beck, 1976; Ellis, 1962). Bottom-up approaches are more common in everyday affairs. That is, a change in response is made in order to better meet the circumstances. Alterations in beliefs and rules may then follow, first as a kind of rationalization or post hoc legitimization, and later as a basis for future action.

Supporting evidence

Is there evidence for emotional creativity in fact as well as in theory? Three types of data are particularly relevant. First, according to the model presented in Figure 1, differences in social systems and implicit theories of emotion may give rise to historical and cross-cultural differences in emotional syndromes. Marked cultural differences in emotion clearly exist (see, e.g., Harré, 1986; Harré & Parrott, 1996; Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Lutz, 1989; Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997). Those differences, we maintain, are not superficial overlays on more "basic" emotions; rather, they reflect real differences in emotional syndromes (Averill, 1980, 1984, 1990). This could not be true if not for creativity on the individual level – which brings us to a second kind of evidence.

Not all members of a society are equally creative – emotionally any more than intellectually or artistically. Thus, there should be identifiable differences in the personality of individuals who are more or less emotionally creative (cf., the trait variables depicted in

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Figure 1). To test this possibility, an Emotional Creativity Inventory (ECI) has been constructed, the structure and correlates of which have been presented elsewhere (Averill, 1999b; Gutbezahl & Averill, 1996). To summarize briefly, the ECI consists of three factors: Preparedness (the tendency to think about and learn from past emotional experiences); novelty (the tendency to experience new or unusual emotions), and effectiveness/authenticity (the tendency to express emotions persuasively and honestly). People who score high on the ECI are better able to express their emotions symbolically in both writing and drawings; they report having had more emotionally traumatic experiences (such as early bereavement or divorce of their parents); and they are more open to new experiences and less authoritarian in attitude than are low scorers. Scores on the ECI are unrelated to extraversion and neuroticism – two personality traits related to positive and negative emotionality, respectively. This last finding might at first seem inconsistent; however, emotional creativity is not the same as emotional reactivity, which often is neither effective, novel, nor authentic.

A third source of supporting evidence comes from the analysis of individual emotional episodes. As discussed above, emotional schemas may be constructed on line, during the course of an encounter. Parkinson (1995) has compared this on line constructive process to a conversation. A good conversation does not proceed like a prerecorded message; rather, it is a highly variable and often creative interaction between two or more individuals. Similar considerations apply to emotional episodes. Kitayama and Masuda (1995) have made a similar point from a cross-cultural perspective. They view emotions as “socially shared, collective scripts” that help organize component reactions (e.g., physiological changes, emotion-relevant knowledge, conventionalized responses) during an episode. These reactions, they note, are “in a constant flux, always generating contradictions and tensions between them, thereby resulting in continuous changes” (p. 221).

The improvisational nature of many emotional episodes has until recently received little attention from emotion researchers. This is changing. In addition to the work of Parkinson and Kitayama mentioned above, note should be made of Oatley’s (1992, 1999) use of fiction as a way of simulating emotional interactions. Rhetoric – the “art of persuasion” – also provides a useful model for the analysis of emotional episodes (Averill, in press; Sarbin, 1995). Drawing on a botanical metaphor, Scheff (1997) has described a “part-whole” analysis that takes into account the vicissitudes of emotional responses over time. Finally, the work of Jia (2001) deserves special mention. He has applied the “Co-ordinated Management of Meaning” – a theory and technique for the analysis of communication episodes (Cronen, 1994) – to an examination and potential transformation of “face practices” in China.

The Four-Seven Debate

In addition to the three types of evidence discussed above (cross-cultural differences in emotional syndromes, individual differences in the ability to be emotionally innovative, and the improvisational nature of emotional episodes), a fourth type of analysis can help clarify the creative aspects of emotion. Specifically, the model underlying emotional creativity can be compared with a model of emotion that starts from very different assumptions. We refer to the model that underlies the Four-Seven debate, which, according to Tu (1985b), “is unquestionably one of the most important intellectual events in Korean Confucian thought” (p. 261). The original protagonists in the debate, T’oegye (1501–1570) and Yulgok (1536–
1584), did not confront one another directly; rather, both addressed a common set of issues through correspondence with others (T’oegeye with Kobong and Yulgok with Ugye). The points at issue concerned the meaning of, and relation between, the Four Beginnings of human nature (compassion, shame/disgust, modesty, and discernment) and the Seven Emotions (joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, dislike, and desire). The Four-Seven debate continued among Korean scholars for over 300 years and remains influential today (Hahn, 1997; Hahn & Chon, 1990; Hahn & Chon, 1994).

In traditional Confucian philosophy, both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions were conceptualized as feelings in the broadest sense. The difference lay in the fact that the Four Beginnings, as the name implies, belong to human nature in its original state; and the Seven Emotions, to emotions that are aroused during the course of everyday living. In Confucianism, especially Korean Neo-Confucianism, the goal is to expand the influence of the Four Beginnings and to regulate expression of the Seven Emotions, thereby achieving both personal and social well-being.

Ontologically, the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions are manifestations of li and ch’i, respectively. These two concepts are multifaceted and require a brief digression for their explication. At the most fundamental level, li refers to the ultimate principles at the creation of the universe; every object – animate and inanimate – has its own li (set of principles) that determines its nature. The li of human beings includes the Four Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. To aid people in the realization of their nature as human beings, Confucius and his followers formulated a body of ritual practices. Such practices, although they have changed over the centuries, are also counted as aspects of li.

Ch’i (ki in Korean orthography) is a kind of force that encompasses both matter and energy. Without ch’i there would be no movement in the universe. In some respects the distinction between li and ch’i is similar to that between form and matter in Aristotelian philosophy. However, the properties attributed to li and ch’i are different than those attributed to form and matter, the former being more closely related to questions of ethics and the latter to questions of knowledge (epistemology). Another difference is that li and ch’i are inextricable aspects of everything that exists; their distinction does not carry dualistic implications. Aristotelian philosophy is also fundamentally monistic. For logical reasons, however, Aristotle believed that form could exist independently of matter in the case of “active reason,” that is, reason that mediates knowledge of universals. This exception allowed an inroad for subsequent dualistic interpretations.

This is not the place to discuss the nuances of the debate between T’oegeye and Yulgok. For our purposes, it suffices to note the following four assumptions that are shared by these two individuals – indeed, by most Neo-Confucian philosophers (Ching, 1985; Hahn, 1994; Tu, 1985a; Yun, 1990).

1. Each of the Four Beginnings is related to one of the Four Virtues: Specifically, compassion is related to benevolence; shame/disgust, to righteousness; modesty, to propriety; and discernment, to wisdom. These relations imply that human nature is necessarily good; at least, that was the assumption of T’oegeye and Yulgok, and most (but not all) Confucian philosophers before and after them.

2. The Seven Emotions are good to the extent that they are informed by, or conform to, the moral standards implicit in the Four Beginnings. Specifically, when expressed in conformance with moral standards, each of the Seven Emotions is closely related to one or more of the Four Beginnings. For example, joy is associated with compassion and discernment; anger, with shame/disgust and discernment; and fear, with modesty.
3. The Four Virtues (which, as noted above, are associated with the Four Beginnings) are building blocks for the achievement of personal and social ideals. For example, righteousness pertains predominantly to the relationship between a ruler and his subjects; and benevolence, to the relationship between a father and son.

4. The Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions are inborn; however, the propensity to experience the Four Beginnings is weaker than the propensity to experience the Seven Emotions. This means that the Seven Emotions, once aroused, may overwhelm the Four Beginnings. The Four Beginnings must therefore be nurtured while a person is in a non-aroused state; or, if already aroused, a person should engage in reflection and self-observation in order to bring the emotions into line with the Four Beginnings.

**Relevance to emotional creativity**

How might the above propositions relate to emotional creativity as discussed earlier? Perhaps the first thing to note is that the propositions are a combination of existential beliefs and social rules; that is, they assert what is (the nature of things) and what should be (proper human conduct); and among the beliefs, some are based on fact and some on myth. For example, the idea that human nature in its original state is necessarily good (Proposition I) is largely a myth – an ideal fostered by society, sometimes in the face of recalcitrant human nature.

As if to illustrate this last point, not all Confucian philosophers agreed that, in its original state, human nature is basically good. Hsün Tzu (fl. 362 BC/1963), for one, did not. He argued that people are by nature evil; they strive after goodness for much the same reason that hungry people strive after food—they are suffering from a deficit. Such disagreements aside, there is consensus within Confucianism on the importance of conformity to social standards in the evaluation of emotional responses. This emphasis on conformity might seem antithetical to emotional creativity. Such a conclusion assumes that novelty is a more important criterion for creativity than is authenticity—an assumption that, as discussed earlier, reflects a Western bias. But the conclusion is also misleading even with respect to novelty.

*Emotional innovation and change.* A central tenet of Confucianism (as well as Taoism and Buddhism) is a world in flux. This is perhaps best exemplified by the *I Ching* – literally, the *Book of Changes* (Wilhelm, 1950). Originally a guide to divination, the *I Ching* comprises 64 hexagrams. Each hexagram consists of six parallel lines, some continuous, some broken. Each hexagram is accompanied by a descriptive label and a series of brief, enigmatic guides to interpretation. Signifying the underlying theme of the work, the first hexagram is labeled “The Creative” (*Ch’ien*).

The *I Ching* antedates Confucius by many centuries; however, early Confucian philosophers wrote commentaries (the “Ten Wings”) on the hexagrams, and hence the book is often counted among the classics of Confucianism. Before becoming involved in the Four-Seven Debate, T’oegye also compiled extensive notes on the *I Ching* (Kalton, 1988). We mention these facts, not simply for historical reasons, but to avoid a potential misunderstanding. Within the Confucian tradition, conformity does not imply mindless consistency; rather, it implies a *dynamic* equilibrium or coherence – not only between oneself and others, but also within oneself (assuming that the social standards have been appropriately internalized and made one’s own). This dynamic equilibrium is symbolized by the interdependence of *li* and *ch’i*. *Ch’i*, it will be recalled, is the hypothetical material force.
that helps account for the Seven Emotions. Depending on the aspect of li applicable in the situation, ch'i – and hence an emotional response – can undergo transformation, much as one cloud formation might change into another during an approaching storm. For example, joy might change into shame if a person realizes that he received a gift or award that was undeserved. Similarly, a person might become angry at not receiving a desired object, but the anger could turn to joy if the person subsequently realizes that the object she desired was inappropriate.

But it is not only ch'i that is capable of transformation. More relevant to emotional creativity is the fact that the moral principles represented by li can also change, depending on the circumstances. Or, perhaps more accurately, the principles themselves do not change, but their instantiation in practice does. Ritual, a body of formulated practices, helps mediate this process. And, as Hall and Ames (1998, pp. 32–33) observe:

Ritual practices are not simply standards of appropriateness sedimented within a cultural tradition that serve to shape and regulate its participants; they have a significant creative dimension since what distinguishes ritual from rule or principle as a source of order is that ritual practices not only inform the participants of what is proper, they are also performed by them. . . .

New cultural models are continually emerging as qualitatively achieved persons who personalize formal ritual practices, write commentary on some canonical text, or create some particular variation on a conventional example of calligraphy or a painting prized by the tradition.

What is true of canonical texts, calligraphy, and painting is also true of the emotions. New cultural models (emotional syndromes) are continually emerging as abstract principles (represented by li) are interpreted and reinterpreted to fit the circumstances; and as the cultural models change, so, too, do the corresponding emotional responses (represented by ch'i). Feedback from the responses may, in turn, be used to further refine the model, especially when enacted by “qualitatively achieved persons.” This reciprocal process of change in li and ch'i (syndrome and response) corresponds roughly to top-down and bottom-up approaches to emotional innovation and change discussed above.

In short, emotional innovation and change, although not emphasized within Confucianism, is by no means antithetical to that tradition. The compatibility of Confucianism with emotional creativity is even more evident when we consider the criterion of authenticity.

**Becoming jen.** The Four-Seven debate was not intended simply as an analysis of emotion; rather it was to illuminate the path to jen. Jen is a difficult concept to transport across cultures. It has been variously translated as “Goodness,” “Humanity,” “Humane-heartedness,” “Love,” “Benevolent Love,” and “Virtue” (all listed by Tu, 1985a, p. 87). None of these translations is entirely adequate. Confucius explicitly contrasted jen with sickness, which would imply that jen is a form of health (Fingarette, 1972). We suggest that jen is also related to authenticity.

Perhaps the closest concept to jen in contemporary Western psychology is self-actualization. Of particular relevance to our present concerns, both jen and self-actualization imply the ability to be creative in the emotional as well as in the intellectual domain. For example, Tu (1985a) refers to “the meaning of Confucian selfhood as creative transformation” (p. 7). In a similar vein, Maslow (1971) described the self-actualized person as possessing “primary” creativity. By this he meant the ability to be inspired, to
become totally immersed in the matter at hand, and to experience those "peak" moments that are "a diluted, more secular, more frequent version of the mystical experience" (p. 62). Primary creativity, as conceived of by Maslow, implies novelty, but even more centrally, it implies authenticity, and in that respect it is closer to the Eastern than Western concept of creativity. ("Secondary" creativity, incidentally, is the kind found in routine scientific research and artistic production; in Maslow's view, it depends more on technical competence and persistence than on original thought.)

There are also important differences between the concepts of jen and self-actualization. A person of jen is steeped in ritual and is well versed in social norms. By contrast, the self-actualized person presumably follows an internal compass that supersedes social norms and custom. In one sense, this difference between jen and self-actualization might be viewed as a difference between the ideals of collectivist and individualistic societies, respectively. But that oversimplifies the issue. The person of jen transcends the norms of the group when those norms are perceived to be unjust or contrary to humanity; conversely, the self-actualized person is socially responsible and attuned to the highest ideals of his or her culture. A more fundamental difference between the two is, then, that a person of jen must conform his or her behavior to well-defined standards of conduct (li), whereas the standards toward which self-actualization tends are more implicit and varied, but no less socially determined. This difference should not, however, mask the fact that the jen person and the self-actualized person are both authentic within their respective cultural contexts.

The notion of self-actualization is open to criticism for being too vague and too selective in the values it represents. Jen is subject to similar criticisms. However, our purpose is not to critique these concepts, but merely to illustrate how both presume an ability to be creative in the emotional as well as in other domains. The reverse presumption, it is important to note, is not necessarily true: creativity does not imply self-actualization or jen.

In Western cultures, creativity has long been associated with mental disorders. Echoing Aristotle, the Roman philosopher, Seneca, claimed that "no great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness" (1932, p. 285). The claim is a gross overstatement, but it is not entirely without basis. A predisposition toward affective disorders, such as depression, is more common among creative writers and artists than among the general population (Andreason, 1987; Jamison, 1993; Richards, 1990). In evaluating these findings, a distinction needs to be made both among domains of creativity and the cultural context. With regard to domain, creative scientists are no more susceptible to affective disorders than is the population in general (Ludwig, 1997). With regard to culture, Kuo (1996) claims that "in China, creativity goes hand in hand with Taoistic sanity not insanity ... as found among many of the Western geniuses..." (p. 208). This claim may also be a gross overstatement, but it is consistent with the Eastern emphasis on authenticity over novelty as a criterion for creativity.

**Concluding observations**

The emotions have often been taken as a stand-in for the biological in human nature, even by theorists of a radical social persuasion (e.g., Hochschild, 1983, p. 219). Such a position substitutes a dualism between society and biology for the hoary dualism between mind and body. Human beings are a biological species, and our emotions — like the rest of our behavior — reflect our evolutionary past; but so, too, do they reflect our social history. Emotional syndromes, we have argued, are constructed according to the beliefs and rules of

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society. The constructive process does not end with socialization, however. Individuals are capable of change in the emotional as in the intellectual domain, and when that change is effective (adaptive to the situation) and authentic (reflective of the self), we speak of emotional creativity.

When evaluating the creativity of a response, Western cultures tend to emphasize novelty, whereas Eastern cultures tend to emphasize authenticity (assuming that the response is effective). This difference in emphasis may be related, in turn, to the individualistic orientation of the West and the collectivist orientation of the East. Hahn and Chon (1994) have argued that the Neo-Confucian philosophy of T’oegye provides a balance between individualism and collectivism, within the context of a collectivist society. It is not surprising that T’oegye should take the emotions as central to his philosophy, for the emotions are fundamental to a person’s sense of self (individualism) and to the cohesiveness of a society (collectivism). A society may, as a matter of principle, emphasize the individual over the collective, or vice versa, but if the extremes of anarchy and conformity are to be avoided, some balance must be achieved between the pursuit of personal satisfaction and social harmony. Balance, however, does not imply a lack of conflict.

Because emotions embody the values of a culture, societies tend to be intolerant of emotional responses that deviate too greatly from accepted norms. That is true whether the society tends toward individualism, and the new emotions favor communal living (as was the case in the United States during the 1960s), or whether the society tends toward collectivism, and the new emotions favor personal fulfillment (Cha & Cheong, 1993). In either case, emotional creativity can be a source of stress for the individual as well as the society. But rather than viewing stress as something to be avoided (e.g., because of its negative impact on a person’s health – Chon, 1997, 2000; Chon & Kim, 2000), perhaps we should view it as part of the price we must pay for a creative, fulfilling life. Persons “survive in adversity and perish in ease and comfort” (Mencius, quoted by Tu, 1985a, p. 104).

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