

# Tasan on Righteousness and Profit

## : in Comparison to Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming

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### Abstract

Differentiation between righteousness (義) and profit (利) is one of the favorite issues in moral philosophy, especially in the Confucian tradition. Tasan Chŏng Yag-yong (茶山 丁若鏞, 1762~1836, Tasan hereafter) who weaved various strands of thoughts including Neo-Confucianism, western learning, evidential studies, and Yangming School into his philosophical framework, nonetheless maintained a critical outlook at all the prevailing thoughts of his time, which in turn brought him the singular, unified, and original perspective. In the same vein, his arguments on righteousness and profit also mark him distinct from Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130~1200) and Wang Shu-ren (陽明 王守仁, 1472~1529, Yangming hereafter), revealing the gist of his moral philosophy. In this article, the philosophical issues on differentiating righteousness from profit will be reviewed first. It is not a single issue, but related to various moral issues such as differentiating moral gentlemen (君子) from small men (小人), great constitution (大體) from small constitution (小體), Tao mind (道心) from human mind (人心), and so on. Then Zhu Xi's perspective on this issue will be reviewed, which is followed by Yangming's description on the same issue. Finally, Tasan's unique stance on righteousness and profit will be discussed and its significance will be analyzed in detail.

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## **Philosophical Issues on Differentiating Righteousness from Profit**

In Confucianism, the basic characteristics, or the ‘moral value’ of righteousness (義) is self-evident. No one questions whether righteousness is morally valuable, or worth pursuing. It is, with benevolence (仁), the acme of moral principle, a guiding rule to a just act, a primordial goal of all Confucian gentlemen, who all seem to have an agreed, unified image of ‘what is righteous.’ Righteousness is discussed in relation to moral gentlemen (君子), great constitution (大體), and Tao mind (道心): it is always public (公) and pursuing Tao and Tao only(求道).

Profit (利), on the other hand, plays exactly the opposite (in the sense of being a matching pair, that does not always contradict each other) role in Confucianism. It is coveted by small/petty men (小人),<sup>1</sup> and the ultimate end of small constitution (小人) and human mind (人心). It is always private (私); it pursues, secretly or openly, one's bodily comfort, as well as the public reputation and status. (求名).<sup>2</sup>

The problem with the notion of profit is that, just because it is weighed against the absolute moral value ‘righteousness,’ it cannot automatically be entitled as wrongful or evil. Even if it is the seed of all evils, it cannot be eliminated. To illustrate, although moral gentlemen labor their minds (勞心者) to govern the state, without small men who provide the actual laboring power (勞力者) the state cannot sustain.<sup>3</sup> Although the mind as a great constitution (大體) leads one to choose higher values and maintain a moral life, no one, even a sage, cannot be free from the basic requests of one's physical body (or the small constitution, 小體). Although Tao-mind is valuable beyond doubt, one cannot ignore human mind that repels hunger, cold, pain and itch (飢寒痛痒) and loves drinking, eating, man and woman (飲食男女). If one attempts to eliminate the natural inclination of physical body, one will eventually be like

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1 “君子喻於義，小人喻於利”；“君子懷德，小人懷土” (*Analects*).

2 *Book of Mencius* (11:15).

3 *Book of Mencius* (5:4)

wood or stone, with no sentiment and willpower. Likewise, if one tries to defy all the profits whatsoever, that is, if all the private profits are banned in order to maximize the public justice, then not only individual comforts but also the practical management of the state will be at stake.

Seen from the other perspective, if the profit, even if it is favored by small men, is pursued in the 'correct' way, e.g., if my profit is eventually extended to the public profit, just as my happiness is shared with the all friends and family, then pursuing individual profit would become something that even a Confucian gentleman should endorse. In sum, the (moral) value of 'profit' or pursuit of individual comfort is, as an irremovable element of human life, something that a philosopher must have a solid opinion about. Zhu Xi, Yangming, and Tansen all have their original definition of and judgment on 'profit' and related notions such as 'small men,' 'small constitution,' 'human mind,' 'private,' and 'pursuing reputation.'<sup>4</sup> And by examining their assessment on profit, one can have a good grasp at how the big thinkers have pictured the moral predicament of humans.

### **Zhu Xi on Differentiating Righteousness from Profit**

Although Zhu Xi repeatedly addresses that to differentiate righteousness from profit is the utmost task of a Confucian scholar,<sup>5</sup> he never describes profit as fundamentally evil.

Benevolence and righteousness are rooted in what human mind is originally constituted of; profit-seeking mind, on the other hand, is

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4 Concepts in East Asian philosophy relating to profit (利) includes, next to those already discussed, '[studying] for the self' (爲己), 'allured by outer things' (徇外), 'putting effort on the superficial' (務末) and so on. Also note Zhu Xi's summary on this: "第十二章凡五說, 今從謝氏之說。伊川尹氏以爲爲人爲己, 范氏以爲舉內徇外, 治本務末, 楊氏以義利爲君子小人之別, 其說皆通"(Zhuzi Yulei, 32:9).

5 "學者做切己工夫, 要得不差, 先須辨義利所在" (Zhuzi Yulei, 32:9); also, "義利之辨, 正學者所當深知" (Zhuzi Yulei, 120:67).

generated by the form of body that distinguishes oneself from others.<sup>6</sup>

Profit is the most difficult notion to speak about. Even though profit is not something harmful, as soon as a sage speaks of it, all people would run out to seek the profit. Not speaking of it does not mean to urge people to face the harm deliberately. Thus it is only that he speaks scarcely about it.<sup>7</sup>

As seen from the above passage, for Zhu Xi, 'profit' does neither stand for 'evil' that runs contrary to 'righteousness,' nor something 'good' that enables us to avoid any 'harm.' It is neither to be shunned, nor to be pursued yearningly. In other words, profit is some necessary element of human life that should be pursued 'passively.' To pursue something passively means that, if one pursue some higher value that is worthy of active engagement, 'righteousness' in this case, then lower value – profit – will automatically ensue as its consequence. Zhu Xi sharply criticizes other thinkers such as Su Shi (蘇東坡) in order to make his point clear.<sup>8</sup>

Profit lies only in the harmony of righteousness. Righteousness originally refers to some action of dividing, splitting, slicing and cutting out. Only after dispensing out the portion is carried out justly can it bring harmony. This is the reason why it turns into profit. Everyone before me misspoke on this sentence. For example, Su Shi stated that 'profit is the reason why righteousness becomes harmonious'; since he regarded righteousness as something that kills mercilessly, he figured that some profit will harmonize such a process. *Li* the profit is one virtue of hexagram gan (乾卦). How can he speak of *yi* the righteousness from this sentence! <sup>9</sup>

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6 “仁義根於人心之固有，利心生於物我之相形” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 13:43).

7 “問‘子罕言利’。曰：‘利最難言。利不是不好。但聖人方要言，恐人一向去趨利；方不言，不應是教人去就害，故但罕言之耳’” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 36:4).

8 “蓋‘利者義之和’，義之和處便利。老蘇嘗以爲義剛而不和，惟有利在其中，故和。此不成議論，蓋義之和卽是利，卻不是因義之不和，而遂用些小利以和之。後來東坡解易亦用此說，更不成議論也” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 36:4).

9 “利只在義之和。義本是箇制裁制之物，惟施得宜，則和，此所以爲利。從前人說這一句都錯。如東坡說

Su Shi saw that righteousness as the seed of disharmony, since it is related to strong, firm, determined character ; thus he held that only through gaining some profit during the process of division, can righteousness be supplied and harmonized. For Zhu Xi, this is to put a cart before the horse. *Li* the profit is, no matter even if it serves only as a mean, not worthy of independent pursuit. He therefore stresses that one must first differentiate the value of righteousness from profit, and then to pursue after righteousness and righteousness only. It is the only way that eventually yields the great profit.

Regarding righteousness and profit, he said, “the words of a sage means to distinguish clearly. Directly follow only the road to righteousness, and never even think of the second road. To speak of righteousness is same as bringing a profit. It is true that within righteousness, there is a great profit.<sup>10</sup>

Although Zhu Xi urges one to follow the way of righteousness and never think of profit, it does not mean that one must willingly take the loss or overcome the harmful. What he is arguing is that only through concentrating on righteousness can one save both the righteousness and profit. Humans are able to choose one and concentrate on it. If one chooses a higher value or an inborn virtue [根於人心之固有] – righteousness in this case – then outer conditions – profit in this case – will be automatically met; on the contrary, if one chooses a lower value or a comparative condition [生於物我之相形], then one becomes keen only on the profit, indulging one’s mind on momentary comforts.<sup>11</sup>

Zhu Xi describes the above theory that speaks “by following only the righteousness in dealing with every affair, profit naturally lies within”<sup>12</sup> as the

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道: ‘利所以爲義之和.’ 他把義做箇慘殺之物看了, 卻道得利方和. 利是乾卦一德, 如何這一句卻去說義!’ (Zhuzi Yulei, 22:59).

10 說義利處, 曰: “聖賢之言, 所以要辨別教分明. 但只要向義邊一直去, 更不通思量第二著. 才說義, 乃所以爲利. 固是義有大利存焉” (Zhuzi Yulei, 51:4).

11 “喻義喻利, 不是氣稟如此. 君子存得此心, 自然喻義. 小人陷溺此心, 故所知者只是利” (Zhuzi Yulei, 27:117).

relationship between leader and follower (主從), or head and tails (首尾).

Righteousness (義) and profit (利) are like only the head (頭) and tail (尾). In dealing with affairs, a Confucian gentleman stands on the proper side as he sees it, yet profits naturally flow from it. He only understands what is right, and never understands the profit that underlies it.<sup>13</sup>

Righteousness (義) and profit (利) are like head and tail. Righteousness stands for propriety (宜). If a Confucian gentleman sees one thing as should be done this way, and the other as should be done that way, then he carries on in a proper, clear-cut way; how can there be a loss (不利)!<sup>14</sup>

It is quite remarkable that Zhu Xi's perspective on the relationship between righteousness and profit, that is, the head-tail (首尾) or leader-follower (主從) relationship echoes throughout his theory of *li-qi* (理氣論), as well as his philosophy of mind and nature (心性論).<sup>15</sup> According to Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian framework, *li* the principle and *qi* the material force cannot be separated and always in a need of each other (相須); however, only when principle leads and the material force follows does every being in the universe gain its proper place. Likewise, only when Tao-mind (道心) leads and human mind (人心) listens to its order (聽命) can humans maintain their original moral nature without giving up the comfort of life. Zhu Xi illustrates Tao mind as the head of an army (將帥) and human mind as its soldiers (卒兵)<sup>16</sup>; in some other places, Zhu Xi exemplifies human mind as a boat, and

12 “罕言利者，蓋凡做事只循這道理做去，利自在其中矣。 (...) 但雖不言利，而所言者無非利” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 36:1).

13 文振問此章。曰：“義利，只是箇頭尾。君子之於事，見得是合如此處，處得其宜，則自無不利矣，但只是理會箇義，卻不曾理會下面一截利” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 27:114).

14 “義利猶頭尾然。義者，宜也。君子見得這事合當如此，卻那事合當如彼，但裁處其宜而爲之，則何不利之有” (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 27:115).

15 This relationship is firmly established during the late period of Zhu Xi's philosophy. Before the debate on Zhong hua (中和), Zhu Xi's ideas on Tao mind and human mind, as well as that on righteousness and profit were not always in the form described above.

Tao mind as its key.<sup>17</sup> Through these examples he clarifies the leader-follower relationship between Tao and human mind. Such a relationship is apparent at the end of his "Preface to the Doctrine of Mean":

When the two (Tao mind and human mind) are mingled within one's mind without any guidance, then what is at stake becomes more and more risky, while what is subtle becomes more and more hidden. Then the justice of Heavenly principle can never win the private of selfish desires. To make something fine (精) means to distinguish between the two, never allow them to intermingle; to keep something single (一) means to maintain the rightness of one's original mind, never losing it. When engaging in such a practice, one must not halt even a moment. One must render Tao mind to become the master of one's body, and also render the human mind to listen to that order. Only then is the risky human mind brought to peace, and is the hidden Tao mind revealed; then, all actions become free from excess or shortage.<sup>18</sup>

As seen above, Zhu Xi explains that Tao mind must be differentiated from human mind so that one can follow only the Tao mind; when one unfalteringly follows the Tao mind, then the desires of human mind will naturally be resolved.

Such a leader-follower relationship that argues for concentrating only on a higher/moral value, which begets a result of achieving a lower/practical value is seen not only on the issue of righteousness and profit, but also is found in the distinction between Confucian gentleman (君子) and small man (小人), and between great constitution (大體) and small constitution (小體).<sup>19</sup> Only when a

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16 "人心如卒徒, 道心如將" (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 78:206).

17 "人心如船, 道心如舵. 任船之所在, 無所向, 若執定舵, 則去住在我" (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 78:190); "形氣猶船也, 道心猶舵也. 船無舵, 縱之行, 有時入於波濤, 有時入於安流, 不可一定. 惟有一舵以運之, 則雖入波濤無害" (*Zhuzi Yulei*, 62:39).

18 "二者雜於方寸之間, 而不知所以治之, 則危者愈危, 微者愈微, 而天理之公, 卒無以勝夫人欲之私矣. 精則察夫二者之間而不雜也, 一則守其本心之正而不離也, 從事於斯, 無少間斷, 必使道心常為一身之主, 而人心每聽命焉, 則危者安, 微者著, 而動靜云為, 自無過不及之差矣" ("Preface to the first line of Doctrine of Mean" in *Zhuxiji*).



Confucian gentleman, as a leader of a country, actively adopts a moral outlook and engages in a virtuous action, do its citizens, who can only react to the outer conditions, carry out their work properly. Similarly, only when the mind as the great constitution of one's body concentrates on values like benevolence and righteousness, can the request of the small constitution, that is, the desire of a physical body, be met within a proper boundary. They are all in the same line with what we have discussed so far on the issue of righteousness and profit: when one seeks only what is righteous, profits will be justly distributed and society becomes harmonious.

To sum, Zhu Xi's differentiation between righteousness and profit has the following characters. 1) Humans, especially Confucian scholars, must first clearly distinguish righteousness from profit, so that they can firmly hold on to the righteousness: 2) Profit is neither good nor evil. It is a necessity of life that should be pursued passively, and be always under the guidance of a higher moral value. 3) The relationship between righteousness and profit is like head-tail, or leader-follower. Only when one follows righteousness, does profit ensue. These characteristics are quite unique to Zhu Xi's philosophical framework, distinct from any other Confucian philosophy such as Yangming Learning or Tasan Studies.

### **Yangming on Differentiating Righteousness from Profit**

It is same in Yangming's philosophical writings that righteousness is to be sharply distinguished from profits. He is even stricter than Zhu Xi in that righteousness and profit are sometimes directly equated with truth and falsity, or good and evil.

When this one thing is right, hundreds of them are right; when this one thing is wrong, then hundreds of them are wrong. This is the breaking point between the way of King (王道) and the way of

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19 Some discussions relating on this topic, see Cho (2006) and Chang (2008).

tyrant(霸道), righteousness (義) and profit (利), truth (誠) and falsity(偽), and good (善) and bad (惡).<sup>20</sup>

In Yangming's philosophical framework, *li* the profit generally means 'self centered and self-profiting' (自私自利) mind, or the mind pursuing profit and reward (功利之心). Self-centered and self-profiting mind is obsessed only with one's private comfort and gain. It stands on the contrary to *yi* the righteousness, which Yangming describes as clear and empty state of mind, devoid of selfish desires (私慾). It is like an ineffectual, harmful addendum waiting to be eliminated.

Now the attempt not to think of good and evil, and to control the Innate Good Knowing (良知) to be clean and calm is no other than self-centered, self-profiting mind. (...) To seek calmness and or to pursue non-thinking is also the illness of self-centered, self-profiting mind. Because of it, one cannot escape the train of thoughts, and is far from peace and tranquility.<sup>21</sup>

As above, Yangming holds the self-centered, self-profiting mind to be a kind of mental illness. Every human being is born with a natural conscious capacity to discern what is moral, and it is by itself clean and tranquil, yet alive and flourishing. Any attempt to make it better, or more tranquil, or more energetic would be futile – it is nothing more than a root of disease (病根) causing illusion and worry. It is not a natural, inborn desire, but brought forth by some kind of obsession. As soon as one is aware of the fact that one is being obsessed, caught up with illusion, then what has obscured one's original mind will be eliminated and the clear and tranquil mind will be recovered.<sup>22</sup>

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20 “一是百是，一錯百錯。正是王霸·義利·誠偽·善惡界頭” (*Chuanxi lu*, 290).

21 “今欲善惡不思，而心之良知清靜自在，此便有自私自利，將迎意必之心。 (...) 欲求寧靜·欲念無生，此正是自私自利，將迎意必之病，是以念愈生而愈不寧靜” (*Chuanxi lu*, 290); 今曰“養生以清心·寡欲為要，”只“養生”二字，便是自私·自利，將迎·意必之根。有此病根潛伏於中，宜其有滅於東而生於西，引犬上堂而逐之之患也。” (*Chuanxi lu*, 161).

22 “但不可有所著。七情有著，俱謂之欲，俱為良知之蔽。然纔有著時，良知亦自會覺，覺即蔽去，復其體

The mind that pursues profit and reward (功利之心) is same as the self-centered, self-profitting mind in the sense that it is a blind, futile obsession.<sup>23</sup> It does not bring any good to oneself, not even to one's physical body (軀殼的己).

You do not care for yourself, even for your physical self. Tell me about what you call 'physical self': doesn't it refer to ears, eyes, mouth, nose and the four limbs? (...) if you care for ears, eyes, mouth, nose and the four limbs, then you must figure out how ears listen, how eyes see, how mouth speaks, and how the four limbs move. If it is not for a proper ritual, the [true] ears, eyes, mouth, nose, and the four limbs cannot listen, see, speak or move. This is how one really cares of one's ears, eyes, mouth, nose, and the four limbs. What you are seeking outside all day long is for fame and profit. They are for things and events (物事) outside your physical body.<sup>24</sup>

Pursuit of fame and profit, which does not bring any good even to one's physical self, is portrayed as 'poison' (毒) that brings about chaos to both one's mental life and the social rule set up by the wise kings of the past.<sup>25</sup> Such a poisonous desire contaminates mind, and turns it into self-profitting, fame-desiring mind. In short, for Yangming righteousness refers to the original

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矣! 此處能勘得破, 方是簡易透徹功夫 ” (*Chuanxi lu*, 290).

- 23 “世儒只講得一箇伯者的學問, 所以要知得許多陰謀詭計. 純是一片功利的心, 與聖人作經的意思正相反, 如何思量得通?” (*Chuanxi lu*, 11); “只要此心純乎天理處同, 便同謂之聖. 若是力量氣魄, 如何盡同得? 後儒只在分兩上較量, 所以流入功利” (*Chuanxi lu*, 107); “聖人之學日遠日晦, 而功利之習愈趨愈下. 其間雖嘗瞽惑於佛老, 而佛老之說卒亦未能有以勝其功利之心. 雖又嘗折衷於羣儒, 而羣儒之論終亦未能有以破其功利之見. 蓋至於今, 功利之毒淪浹於人之心髓, 而習以成性也, 幾千年矣” (*Chuanxi lu*, 143).
- 24 “恐汝連那軀殼的己也不曾爲. 且道汝所謂軀殼的己. 豈不是耳目口鼻四肢? (...) 若爲着耳目口鼻四肢時, 便須思量耳如何聽, 目如何視, 口如何言, 四肢如何動. 必須非禮勿視聽言動, 方才成得箇耳目口鼻四肢. 這箇才是爲着耳目口鼻四肢. 汝今終日向外馳求, 爲名爲利. 這都是爲着軀殼外面的物事 ” (*Chuanxi lu*, 122).
- 25 “聖人之學日遠日晦, 而功利之習愈趨愈下. 其間雖嘗瞽惑於佛老, 而佛老之說卒亦未能有以勝其功利之心. 雖又嘗折衷於羣儒, 而羣儒之論終亦未能有以破其功利之見. 蓋至於今, 功利之毒淪浹於人之心髓, 而習以成性也, 幾千年矣 ” (*Chuanxi lu*, 143).

clean mind, and profit (seeking profits, to be exact) refers to the diseased state of mind. He continually argues that the mind is one and only one, albeit in many conditions. The original body of mind is simply righteous, but it can be polluted by profit-seeking selfish desires. Righteousness and profit are two aspects of one human mind.

The same pattern repeats itself in Yangming's theory of human mind and Tao mind. As Xu Ai(徐愛), the disciple of Yangming, asks about Zhu Xi's theory of 'human mind listening to the order of Tao mind' (人心聽命於道心) and the following theory of making it fine and single (精一),<sup>26</sup> Yangming answers as follows:

The master answered: Yes, the mind is one. The mind that is not yet mingled with artificiality is called 'Tao mind,' while the mind mingled with artificiality is called 'human mind.' The human mind, when recovered its rightness (正), is the Tao mind; the Tao mind, when it loses its rightness, is human mind. They have never been two in the first place. The master Cheng (程子) spoke that "human mind is just human desire(人欲), and Tao mind is just the Heavenly principle (天理). Although he seemed to divide the mind into two, the meaning is very accurate. Now, if one argues for "Tao mind being the leader, human mind must listen to its order," then one is dividing the mind into two. Heavenly principle does not exist next to human desire: how can the Heavenly principle be a leader, with the human desire listening to its order?<sup>27</sup>

The above passage also reveals that for Yangming, Tao mind and human mind are two aspects of one mind. Human mind is no longer a value-neutral, necessary element of human life. Neither is it something that must listen to the order of Tao-mind, representing the higher moral value. To Yangming, human mind is just the mind mingled with artificiality, obsessed with futile

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26 愛問: "道心常爲一身之主, 而人心每聽命," 以先生精一之訓推之, 此語似有弊" (*Chuanxi lu*, 10).

27 先生曰: "然。心一也。未雜於人謂之道心, 雜以人僞謂之人心。人心之得其正者即道心, 道心之失其正者即人心, 初非有二心也。程子謂"人心即人欲, 道心即天理," 語若分析, 而意實得之。今曰"道心爲主而人心聽命," 是二心也。天理人欲不並立, 安有天理爲主, 人欲又從而聽命者?" (*Chuanxi lu*, 10).

illusions, devoid of rightness. It is the mind in state of illness. The way to recuperate is to return to its original state, i.e., Tao mind. The original body of all the moral pairs – righteousness and profit, Tao and human mind, truth and falsity, good and evil, etc., are just one and only.

[Hwang] asked: Master said earlier, “good and evil are only one thing (一物).” But the two sprouts of good and evil run contrary to each other, just like ice and fire. How can you speak of them as ‘one’? Master answered: what is ultimately good is the original state of mind. If it passes its proper, right path ever so slightly, it turns directly into evil. It is not the case that here is one good thing, and there is one evil thing that contradicts it. Therefore, good and evil are only one.<sup>28</sup>

Here, Yangming makes it transparent that the original state of mind is purely good and righteous, and it can suddenly turn into evil as it crosses over the proper boundary to be obsessed with outer things. There is no independent basis for evil. It is all within one human mind.

Then the question arises: If a human mind is full of righteousness, clean and tranquil, free from selfish desires, then does actual profit or possession follow upon such a pure mind-state, just as Zhu Xi claims? That is, if one keeps the original, righteous mind, then will it bring about the actual profit (not a profit-seeking mind)? Naturally, it is beyond Yangming’s concern whether one achieves profit from keeping the tranquil mind. He speaks, however, that if one’s state of mind is pure and illuminating without any vain obsession, then one is able to deal naturally and properly even if one sees riches and fame, woman and profits (聲色貨利). Even when one is in touch such worldly goods, one can realize the course of Heavenly principle.

Then, what does it mean to deal with possession according to Heavenly principle? On this issue, one Korean scholar of Yangming Learning in the late

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28 “問: 先生嘗謂‘善惡只是一物’。善惡兩端, 如冰炭相反, 如何謂只一物? 先生曰: 至善者, 心之本體。本體上才過當些子, 便是惡了。不是有一個善, 却又有一個惡來相對也。故善惡只是一物” (*Chuanxi lu*, 228).

Chosŏn dynasty, Baekun(白雲) Sim Dae-yun (沈大允, 1806~1872) leaves a commentary as follows:

To distributing benefits partially (偏) only to oneself is called // the profit; sharing such benefits with other people is called yi the righteousness. Small man knows only profit and not righteousness, while Confucian gentleman knows the profit and chooses righteousness. Yi the righteousness is no other than the great extension of // the profit. It is not that Confucian gentleman never pursue profits. Sometimes he dismisses wealth and stays poor; it is because that he knows wealth (富) brings about disaster (禍) more than poverty does. Sometimes he lets go of his life (生) in order to save righteousness(義); it is because the profit of being alive is less than salvaging righteousness. If one argues that a Confucian gentleman does not know the profit and loss (利害), then it would be a lie, far from truth; it would be possible only after Heavenly principle and human sentiment are completely gone. If one gives up profits in order to save one's name, then he is a charlatan (夸). A charlatan throws away one's body to covet a name, and a greedy man harms others in order to prosper. Name (名) and profit (利) are the one. They are same in that if one's vanity becomes extreme, it will cause evil and injure one's nature. A Confucian gentleman neither throws away one's body nor harms others; yet, he realizes both the name and profit. <To share one's profit is called righteousness; to realize both the name and profit is called righteousness.><sup>29</sup>

Sim, as described above, sees profit as something that can easily be turned

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29 “子曰：君子喻於義，小人喻於利：偏利己曰利，與人同利曰義。小人知利而不知義，君子知利而取義。義，利之大者也。君子非不爲利也。有時乎棄富而居貧，知富之爲禍，甚於貧也。舍生而取義，爲生之利不若於義也。若曰君子不知利害，是僞也。非誠也。無天理人情而後可也。若曰舍利而取名，是夸也。夸者亡身而殉名；貪者賊人而求利。名利一也，而夸爲甚，其爲不善而喪性一也。君子不亡身不賊人，故能名利兩遂也。<與人同利曰義，名利兩遂曰義>” (*Sim Dae-yun jŏnjip*, Vol.2).

into righteousness. Righteousness does not exist independently of profit. It is just the extending profits to others, which can be achieved simply through eliminating selfish desire of partial distribution. It is in the same vein with Yangming's argument that righteousness and profit are just two aspects of one same mind. A Confucian gentleman does not try hard to ignore profit; he is only cautious of selfish desire to accumulating profits only to himself. Sim's statement that "righteousness is no other than the great extension of profit" shows the same belief Yangming held, i.e., "the state in which self-profiting disease is eliminated is righteousness." In a nutshell, righteousness and profit are of 'the same body with different use (同體異用),' which is the general characteristic of Yangming Learning.

To sum Yangming's differentiation of righteousness from profit, the followings are observed. 1) *Li* the profit represents the profit-seeking mind, which is like illness or disease, waiting to be eliminated. 2) Righteousness and profit are not two independent things, but are like two sides of one coin. Profit means the blinded state of mind, while righteousness refers to the clear, tranquil, original state of the same mind. The same applies to the cases of Tao and human mind. 3) To eliminate profit means to overcome selfish desires. The actual profit itself is continuous to righteousness. Choson Yangming philosopher Sim interpreted that righteousness is no other than extending one's profit to others. By eliminating the selfish desire to keep profit only to oneself, one can share the profit with the others, which is just the righteous deed. In that Sim inherited Yangming's theory of one mind, which argues for 'the same body with different uses.

### **Tasan on Differentiating Righteousness from Profit**

Tasan is well-versed with the issue of righteousness and profit, as delineated by Zhu Xi and Yangming. Criticizing various insights accumulated before him, Tasan manages to maintain a unique stance on this matter. First point to mention is that for Tasan, profit simply means evil, which is rooted in a class

wholly different from righteousness. Profit-seeking mind and action is often described as something that is carried out by evil men (惡人) and thieves:

Learning from Confucius one becomes Yan Yuan (顏淵); learning from Hou Ye (后羿), one becomes Feng Meng (逢蒙). (...) Those following King Shun wake up early in the morning, diligently do virtuous deeds. Those following Dao Zhi (盜跖) also wake up early in the morning, diligently seek the profit. This explains why people's deeds are different.<sup>30</sup>

Profit is something for which small constitution (小體) or human mind (人心) strives. It is also liked by small men (小人). Tسان, however, identifies human mind with private, selfish desire, and small men with evil men (惡人).<sup>31</sup>

Confucian gentlemen are good men (善人), while small men are evil men (惡人). In the past, those in the high position must be good, so men of high status were called as Confucian gentlemen, and men of lower status were called as small men. Later years, it is not always the case. Hence, good (善) men are called Confucian gentlemen and evil (惡) men are called small men.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike Zhu Xi who interprets small men as those belonging to laboring class, and human mind as the desire of physical body which is essentially value-neutral, Tسان directly equates small men, human mind, or profit with 'evil.' According to Tسان, human can become anything, for one has the right of choice. (自主之權). Seeking one's profit does not call for any other reasons, such as that one's inborn temperament makes one greedy, or that one's Tao mind has lost its control due to extraordinary circumstances, or even that the original body of mind is contaminated by futile obsession. When one seeks

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30 “學於孔子則爲顏淵，學於后羿則爲逢蒙，此雨露之不齊也。舜之徒鷄鳴而起，孳孳爲善。跖之徒鷄鳴而起，孳孳爲利。此人事之不齊也。” (*A Summary Opinion on Mencius*).

31 More on this, see Chung (2011a).

32 “君子善人也。小人惡人也。古者在位者必善人，故貴曰君子，賤曰小人。後世未必然。故善曰君子，惡曰小人” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).



profit, one does so by deliberate choice. One is free to choose between two options – righteousness and profit, good and evil, Tao mind and human mind, Confucian/moral gentleman and small/petty man – and to take a specific action on it. One is endowed with the ability to judge and choose; hence, to seek profit and become a small man is the choice one willingly makes.

A Confucian gentleman is well-versed, full of knowledge, so he is sufficient to take a higher position to rule the people. A small man obliges to the desire to gain profit, so he willingly takes the lower position to be ruled.<sup>33</sup>

As Tasan frequently mentions, righteousness is what Tao mind aims for, while profit is loved by human mind. Nonetheless, the matter with Tao and human mind is that one cannot completely eliminate any one of them from one's mind. That is, just by assiduously following Tao mind one cannot escape from the desire of human mind. Tao mind and human mind always emerge simultaneously, fighting with each other (相爭). That is the human predicament, of which a sage is no exception.

Human mind and Tao mind cannot be chosen and stick to it. How can one makes one's mind fine (精) and single (一)? If one can eliminate human mind, leaving only the Tao mind, then what does it mean that 'even a sage cannot be without human mind'?<sup>34</sup>

Righteousness and profit, Tao mind and human mind, good and evil are indispensable elements of human mind. The contrary pair, however, is not two sides of a same coin, as Yangming argues. They are from two separate roots. Tasan, criticizing harshly a Yangming scholar Huang Zong Xi who argued that human has only one human mind,<sup>35</sup> states that we humans have two selves,

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33 “君子學識周通，足以爲民上者也。小人利欲是循，甘於爲人下者也” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).

34 “人心道心，不可以擇執其一，將何以惟精惟一乎? (...) 若云絕去人心，孤存道心，是之謂精一，則又何云上智不能無人心乎?” (*Deep Examination of the Classic of Mind*).

35 “黃南雷方斥荀卿性惡之論，而曰人只有人心。不失此本心，便是允執厥中” (*Review on the Book of*

two minds, and two natures:

It is clear that nature(性) comes in two sorts. (...) Two natures means two minds (心), and two minds are rooted in two selves (己). Confucius spoke of 'cultivate oneself' and 'a scholar of the past studied for oneself': this refers to the self (己) I have originally. Confucius also spoke of 'overcome oneself and return to ritual is to act on benevolence': this refers to the self that I have to win over. Apparently I am one, but I have to overcome myself. Since I already have two selves, how would there not be two minds? Since there are two natures, how would there not be two minds? The Tao of a Confucian gentleman lies only in apprehending this.<sup>36</sup>

As seen above, so far as the theory of human mind and Tao mind is concerned, Tasañ rejects both the leader-follower (主從) theory of Zhu Xi and the theory of 'same body with different use' (同體異用) of Yangming. He insists instead on the two contradicting mind within humans. Although humans cannot stamp out any one of them, they are endowed with the right that they are free to choose any one option between the two. It may sound similar to Zhu Xi's argument that one should follow only one path of righteousness. However, they are distinct in the sense that, while Zhu Xi is saying that when one follows righteousness the leader, then profit the tail will naturally ensue, Tasañ is bitterly confessing that one is free to follow righteousness 'even though' profits attract his human desires. For Tasañ, there is no winning of both. One is only given with a right to choose one and only one action. Hence, when one chooses profit, he is doing it deliberately; when one is a small man, he has chosen to be that way.

Confucian gentlemen and small men all start from 'middle men' (中人). Divergence is at first as fine as splitting a hair, and it shows in

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*Mae*).

36 "二性則二心, 二心由二己. [...]孔子曰'修己,' 曰'古之學者爲己,' 此我本有之己也. 孔子曰'克己復禮爲仁,' 此我戰勝之己也. 明有一己克此一己, 既有二己, 胡無二心? 既有二性, 胡無二心? 君子之道, 察乎此而已" (*Review on the Book of Mae*).

understanding righteousness (義) and profit (利). Confucian gentlemen develop their virtue one by one, eventually reaching the top level. Small men regress back one by one, until falling into the bottom level.<sup>37</sup>

According to Tasan, before one chooses righteousness to become a Confucian gentleman or profit to become a small man, there is an incident in which one is clearly aware of one's options; in other words, one always has a good reason to perform one's actions.

Here are two persons. Before recognizing righteousness and profit, they are bluntly the same kind of person. One day, one of them becomes clearly aware in his mind and says, "There is only righteousness in human life. This one bowl of rice is sufficient to destroy my righteousness." He rejects one bowl of rice today, and performs one good deed tomorrow; he becomes keener on righteousness and does kind deeds more and more. He becomes highly perceptive [in righteousness] as to realize the mandate of Heaven. From there he cannot move; this is how he becomes a Confucian gentleman. Another of them becomes clearly aware in his mind and says, "There is only profit in human life. This one bowl of rice is sufficient to add to my profit." He takes one bowl of rice today, and performs one evil deed tomorrow; he becomes keener on profit and does evil deeds more and more. He becomes highly perceptive [in profit] as to be blinded by human desires. From there he cannot move; this is how he becomes a small man.<sup>38</sup>

The reason why a small man's seeking profit becomes an 'evil deed' is

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37 “補曰：君子小人，其始皆中人也。毫釐之差，喻於義利。君子日進其德，一級二級，升而達乎最上之級。小人日退其步，一級二級，降而達乎最下之級” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).

38 “有二人於此。其義利之未喻也。天然同類人也。一日其一人犁然有契于心曰：人之生也，義而已。是一簞食，亦足以害吾義也。今日辭一簞，明日行一善，駸駸然喻於義，而孳孳然進乎善，彌進彌喻，洞見天命，確乎其不可動，於是乎君子也。其一人犁然有契于心曰：人之生也，利而已。是一簞食亦足以輔吾利也，今日取一簞，明日行一惡，駸駸然喻於利，而孳孳然進乎惡，彌進彌喻，墊溺人欲，確乎其不可動，於是乎小人也” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).

that, in his pursuit of profit, he is not unaware of what he is doing. Profit-seeking persons are as diligent as those who seek moral virtues; they not only wake up early to gain more profit, but also take various risks and hardships to maximize it.<sup>39</sup> Their goal is just the opposite of Confucian gentlemen's quest for virtue.

In Tasan's philosophy, righteousness and profit are neither in a leader-follower relationship as Zhu Xi argues, nor continuous in that one can easily be changed into another, as Yangming describes. The two are perennially within one's heart, contradicting each other. But just because of such, one's pursuit of righteousness and profit becomes merit (功) and sin (罪), good and evil. Put it differently, because one has chosen righteousness 'even though' human mind attracts him to pursue profits, the righteous action becomes his virtue and merit; because one has chosen profit 'even though' Tao mind warns him not to, the profit-seeking action becomes his vice and sin. Tasan writes the point as follows:

Giraffes are born to perform good deeds; that is why their good deeds are insufficient to become a merit. Wolves are born to perform evil actions; that is why their evil actions are not to become a sin. Capacity (才) of humans can be both good and bad. To be able (能) to do so depends upon one's effort, and the right (權) of choice to depends on one's control. Therefore, one is praised by one's good deed, <because one is always attracted by evil>, and admonished by one's evil deed <because one has the capacity to perform good>.<sup>40</sup>

To recap Tasan's notion of righteousness and profit: 1) Righteousness and profit have two different roots, which cannot be eliminated from one's mind.

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39 “孔曰先勞苦而後得功，此所以爲仁。駁曰非也。仁者嚮人之愛也，勞苦得功，皆屬自己。則仍是雞鳴而起，孳孳爲利者，何以謂之仁也？耕者盡力於耨耰，賈人冒險於風濤，亦莫不先其所難而後其所得，將皆謂之仁者乎？恕而後成仁，此仲尼氏之恒言也” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).

40 “天之賦靈知也，有才焉有勢焉有性焉。才者其能其權也。麒麟定於善，故善不爲功。豺狼定於惡，故惡不爲罪。人則其才可善可惡，能在乎自力，權在乎自主。故善則讚之，<以其有可惡之機，故讚之>，惡則訾之 <以其有能善之才，故訾之>” (*Review on the Book of Mae*).

2) Profit is neither a value-neutral element, nor a diseased state of mind; it is just evil and sin, for pursuing profit means deliberately choosing to ignore righteousness. The same applies to Tasan's interpretation of small man as evil man (惡人), and human mind as selfish desire(私慾). 3) Righteousness and profit perennially contradict each other, and just because of such they are justly called as good and evil. Pursuing righteousness is good because it means one has struggled to overcome one's selfish desire; pursuing profit is evil because it means one has ignored the small, clear warning from Heaven.

### **The Significance of Tasan's Argument on Righteousness and Profit**

Three points are to be mentioned in discussing the significance of Tasan's argument on righteousness and profit.

First, if one follows Zhu Xi's line of argument, then one would find that there is nobody fully responsible for one's wrongdoing, such as 'excessive' profit-seeking behavior. Small men's seeking profit is not a bad idea in the first place; even if it goes a way over the limit, to a certain extent it is the Confucian gentlemen, the ruling class, to blame. Even if one is completely obsessed by human mind, it is Tao mind that lost its control. This way, one, especially the layman, becomes irresponsible for one's own action, losing self-control and respect.

On the other hand, if one sees pursuit of profit as freely chosen action as Tasan argues, then the actor is completely responsible for the outcome – moral failings, self-indulgence, etc. Tasan has once described a person who is adamant in seeking only the profit as the following:

I have once seen a person who is very perceptive in gaining profits. His weighing profit and loss is as precise as splitting a hair; slight meaning and subtle intention within it are just beyond description. He has something firm in his mind, which cannot be

shaken a bit. Even if Lord of Zhou came out to teach him, he would yawn; even if Yi Yan spoke to him, he would fall asleep. He would not pay a penny even if he listened to the greatest virtue and ultimate goodness. If he saw an old, poor man who liked to speak of benevolence and righteousness, he would laugh secretly, thinking how foolish. How can he be feared by the difference between King Shun and the thieves, between human and animals! Such is the person perceptive in seeking profit.<sup>41</sup>

The greedy man described above might be the one with a high status, certainly with some level of intelligence. Tasan mentions that in the past, the person in the high position was usually moral, but it is not the case in his time. As he sees those with high position, intelligence, and good chance of encountering words of sages caught up weighing profit and loss, Tasan would want to declare that evil acts are done by one's free choice – and it is the one who is responsible for all the sinful outcomes.

Secondly, as Zhu Xi assures us, if a natural consequence of doing righteous action was a great profit, then no profit or poverty would signify 'not enough righteous action'; even worse, poverty can be seen as excessive pursuit of profits. In other words, according to Zhu Xi's theory of leader and follower, present poverty symbolizes moral failure. On the contrary, great Confucian scholars of Tasan's time were often in poor condition, especially the Southerners to which Tasan belonged, whereas covetous officials enjoyed riches and fame. It is thus a prevailing thought among Kyonggi Southerners that Confucian gentlemen would overlook one's profit to perform righteousness. Būnam Ch'ae Che-gong 樊巖 蔡濟恭 (1720~1799), the leading official of Southerners in Tasan's time, portrays the situation as the following:

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41 “余嘗見喻於利者矣。財產利害，絲分縷析，細入秋毫，其中有精義妙旨，不可言傳。確有所守，不可搖撼。周孔誨之而欠伸，儀衍說之而熟睡。舉天下之盛德至善，而不足以易人吾之一錢。彼見長貧賤好語仁義者，方且竊竊然笑其愚。而何舜蹠人獸之足懼乎！是所謂喻於利者也。於是道心亡而人心爲之主，大體枯而小體爲之旺。此喻於利之效也。顧不當早辨之乎！” (*Old and New Commentaries of Analects*).

Recently, [Heaven] seem to hate what it preferred previously, and like what it hated before. The evil people are growing into thousands and millions; they are jealous of the wise and ready to betray the nation. Their sins are piled up as high as to reach the sky, but Heaven rather bequeaths them with fame and fortune, comfort and pleasure. The good people know only of justice and not of profits, know only that there is nation, and not that there are individual bodies 身. They spend all night practicing virtue and agonizing their mind over it, but Heaven rather showers them with sufferings and does not allow them to execute their good will, thereby makes them unable to save their bodies. Heaven is only one; is it not questionable that its nature has the old one and the recent one?<sup>42</sup>

Chae adds at the end that “even if such is the case, enjoying good and hating evil is the rightful (正) state of Heaven’s nature, while enjoying evil and hating good is the changed state of Heaven’s nature. A Confucian gentleman, if he wills to realize his originally given form, then he must believe in what is right; how can he stop doing good actions, thinking Heaven has changed its nature!”<sup>43</sup> He urges scholars to go for righteousness, regardless of its results. Tasan’s philosophy is developed upon such an attitude, declaring the rather ironical fact that exactly because there is hardship and difficulty, does a righteous action become precious and valuable.

Finally, Yangming’s interpretation of profit-seeking mind as a disease covering the original body of righteousness is, for Tasan, a dangerous claim. Yangming asserts that just by recognizing that one is attached to profit, one can be free from such obsession; what one needs to do is to acknowledge the original constitution of one’s mind, and to boldly extend its desire. Tasan thinks that it is applicable those with excellent, virtuous predisposition. If a common person did not think twice in carrying out what one is inclined to do,

42 “近世以來，厭其所嘗嗜，嗜其所嘗厭。惡者，千億化身，妬賢負國，其罪上通于天，而天乃以尊榮逸樂，享之。善者，知有義而不知有利，知有國而不知有身。蚤夜修行，良亦苦心，而天乃餉以橫逆，錮以轉軻，使不得容其身。天一也，其性之有古有今，不亦可疑之甚乎？” (*Ch’ae Che-gong jŏnjip*).

43 “雖然，嗜善而厭惡，天之性正也。好惡而惡善，天之性變也。君子如欲踐形，信其正而已。烏可因其變而有所前却於爲善也！” (*Ch’ae Che-gong jŏnjip*).

then he would inevitably bring about a disaster.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, if sharing profits with others is interpreted as righteousness, then indigent scholars of Tasan's time having nothing to share would find no starting point to righteousness. What is worse, the common people would become busy only in maximizing one's profit, claiming that they want to share 'more' with others; they would not even imagine there is a wholly different kind of goods and values. This is the pitfall of Yangming's line of argument, claiming righteousness and profit are not two.

Zhu Xi developed the leader-follower theory that if one unfalteringly walks on the path of righteousness, then the profit will naturally entail. Yangming held that righteousness and profit are just two aspects of one same mind: when profit-seeking mind is eliminated, the righteous, original mind will be revealed. Tasan identified righteousness as good, profit as bad: although the pair continually fights with each other within human mind, we humans are endowed with a right and freedom to choose between the two and act upon it. The reason why a Confucian gentleman chooses righteousness is because it is right. It has nothing to do with profit. The way to moral perfection is, therefore, inevitably difficult and painful. But exactly because it is difficult, does a virtuous action become precious, valuable, and praiseworthy. Such a theory seems to explain the life of Tasan himself, who, despite all the hardship and pain of exile, devoted all his energy in uncovering the hidden value of Confucian Classics.

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44 “陽明之性，樂善好勇。凡有善心萌於中，即銳意果行而莫之回顧曰此良知也。於是學此者，凡有發於心，不細察徐究而直行之曰此良知也。陽明資質本善，故以之爲善者多。他人資質不清，故以之爲惡者衆。此陽明之能自託於賢者，而其徒之爲羣盜也。故人於其自得而自樂也，正所以生大患也。吁可畏也” (*“ch'iyangjibyŏn” in Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ*).



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## 从义利之辨来看朱子学·阳明学·茶山学的本质

郑素伊

义利之辨是一场体现了韩国思想家特色的哲学性论争。茶山丁若镛的经学注释中批判性的接受了当时的各种思潮，如朱子的性理学，西学，考证学，阳明学等，与此同时他还将自己相当具有独创性的立场贯穿于其中。他的义利观也是独树一帜的，与朱子学及阳明学有着明显的区别。

朱熹主张行义利自随之的主从理论；阳明认为义和利是心的两种形式，只有消灭私利私欲，纯正的义才会出现；茶山将义和利放在对立的立场上，将义规定为善的，利规定为恶的，我们可以任选其一而行之，行义的本身就是义的，因此与利没有任何关系。茶山反复重申君子即使贫穷卑贱也应当行义，这个过程必然是艰苦卓绝的，但是就因为艰苦卓绝行义才会成为有价值的善行。这一理论，一方面是茶山对受到所处时代压迫的南人抛开一切只求仁义的理由的解释，另一方面也是自己战胜流放的苦痛，一心只求儒学本质的生活理想写照。

**关键词：**义利，茶山丁若镛，朱熹，阳明王守仁，南人，善恶，人心道心

