The concepts of morality and health of humans are discussed from the viewpoint of Sasang medicine, as described by Je-Ma Lee in his books Donguisusebowon and Gyeokchigo. Sasang medicine suggests that human beings exist with qualities of “heavenly loom,” “humanly affair,” and “nature and conduct in following parts.” In addition, Sasang medicine classifies people into the following four Sasang types: Tae-Yang, So-Yang, Tae-Eum, and So-Eum. This classification is based on the following traits: benevolence–righteousness–propriety–wisdom, manifestations of sorrow–anger–joy–pleasure (Seong and Jeong), and largeness and smallness of lung–spleen–liver–kidney. Human diseases are always caused by the excessive mind action of sorrow–anger–joy–pleasure. Mind action affects the body unilaterally and makes it ill. According to Sasang medicine, both good health and illness in human beings originate from morality. Therefore, realizing and acting in accordance with the right moral behavior are essential to lead a healthy life.

1. Introduction

Health and longevity have been an old and fundamental concern in human history. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The primary questions of this review begin with this definition. How are physical, mental, and social well-being related and also how are the mental and social health related to morality and longevity of human beings?
We herein review the morality and health of human beings based on the viewpoint of Sasang medicine by analyzing the Confucian relation of the moral law, human health, and life span demonstrated in the books Gyeokchigo and Donguisusebowon.

2. Discussion

2.1. Definition of human being in Theories on Nature and Conduct

Dongmu thought all human beings have the nature of four virtues, namely, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom (Confucianism). He mentioned that these four virtues are the core theme of human beings, and classified human beings into one of the following two categories: noble and humble.

2.1.1. Structure of the existence in human being

In the “Theories on Nature and Conduct” chapter of the book Donguisusebowon, Dongmu reinterpreted the structure human beings live with. He described that human beings stand externally and internally with heavenly loom, humanly affair, and nature and conduct in following parts. The former two components can be translated into a series of environmental relations, that is, time–space and various relationships with the others, respectively (Figure 1).

Each part of the human body works subjectively to communicate with the objective elements. The sensory organs receive the heavenly loom and use the mind to value good, whereas the internal organs work with the mind to scorn evil. People try to realize nature with their anterior regions, while they act (or conduct themselves) with their posterior regions. According to the Good Nature Principle, human beings are actually born with nature and conduct in following parts, which are supposed to be good. Therefore, people are meant to act based on their morality by realizing and acting in accordance with nature and conduct in following parts, or the four virtues. However, an inattentive and indolent mind keeps them from realizing and acting in moral ways, respectively.

Thus, it can be said that human beings can realize morality and act properly only if they control their inattentive and indolent mind by fostering good nature, that is, by preserving the mind and following the good conduct. Anybody can be a saint but not everybody can be a saint. It depends on how one controls the interrupting minds.

The aforementioned structure of human being described is illustrated in Figure 2 and summarized in Table 1.

![Figure 1 – Structure of human existence in Sasang medicine.](image-url)
2.1.2. Human being completes morality through the constant realization and acting
People are born with good nature and conduct, or the gift with which each of them can become a saint. However, only constant efforts can make them reach the level of saints by comprehending the nature and practicing the good conduct. These are how Dongmu thought people can live morally.  

2.2. Definition of Sasangin and etiology in Sasang Medicine

2.2.1. Definition of Sasangin
Sasangin, or Sasang constitution, is classified into four types according to the differences of mind action and inherent body. Dongmu proposed the basic premise of Sasangin

| Table 1 – Existence of human being can be structured with the organs and their function, purpose, and the inborn mind |
|---|
| **Organ** | **Function** | **Purpose** | **Inborn mind of the organs** |
| Sensory organs (ear/eye/nose/mouth) | Receiving heavenly loom | Accept time–space | The mind to value good |
| Anterior regions (jaw/chest/navel/abdomen) | Nature | Realization | The inattentive mind |
| Posterior regions (head/shoulder/waist/hip) | Conduct | Acting | The indolent mind |
| Internal organs (lung/spleen/liver/kidney) | Acing humanly affair | Act to people | The mind to scorn evil |
classification as follows: human beings are born with the internal organs, which vary between four types, and they also chase their strong desires, which vary between the four types.3

Human mind differs from realization–acting, both of which originate from the inherent nature. People behave with the essence of the four virtues, that is, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Human mind develops by realization–acting with the following four indications: the mind to distinguish the wrong, the mind to refuse the inappropriate, the mind to be ashamed of the unfair, and the mind to be pitiful of the wretched. These minds work in human body in the forms of physical energy, which is called manifestations of Seong or Jeong. Seong and Jeong are expressed as sorrow, anger, joy, and pleasure, respectively. The manifestation of Seong is the mind action that the nature is revealed through realization, whereas that of Jeong is the mind action that the conduct is revealed through acting.

Dongmu classified Sasangin into four types, based on the hyperactivity and hypoactivity of metabolic functions in the four organ systems (i.e., the lung, spleen, liver, and kidney systems). The spleen and kidney play primary roles in nutrient metabolism. The hot energy of spleen draws in water and food, whereas the cold energy of kidney sends them out. The spleen and kidney control heat and coldness above and below the human body. Meanwhile, the lung and liver play central roles in energy metabolism. The lung exhales energy and fluid, whereas the liver inhales them. The lung and liver distribute and circulate energy and fluid inside and outside the human body.3 This physical structure and function are illustrated in Figure 3.

Taeyangin, or the Tae-Yang type, takes the moral good and evil as the foundation to realize and act with a large lung system and a small liver system. One then realizes and acts with manifestations of sorrow Seong and anger Jeong, based on the mind to distinguish the wrong. The large lung makes Taeyangin exhale energy and fluid excessively, whereas the small liver lets one to inhale them insufficiently.

Soyangin, or the So-Yang type, takes the social peace and order as the foundation to realize and act with a large spleen system and a small kidney system. One then realizes and acts with manifestations of anger Seong and sorrow Jeong, based on the mind to refuse the inappropriate. The large spleen makes Soyangin draw in water and food excessively, whereas the small kidney lets one to send out them insufficiently.

Taeemin, or the Tae-Eum type, takes the humane solicitude and duty as the foundation to realize and act with a large liver system and a small lung system. One then realizes and acts with manifestations of joy Seong and pleasure Jeong, based on the mind to be ashamed of the unfair. The large liver makes Taeemin inhale energy and fluid excessively, whereas the small liver lets one to exhale them insufficiently.

Soeumin, or the So-Eum type, takes the unstinting love and generosity as the foundation to realize and act with a large kidney system and a small spleen system. One then realizes and acts with manifestations of pleasure Seong and joy Jeong, based on the mind to be pitiful of the wretched. The large kidney makes Soeumin send out water and food excessively, whereas the small spleen lets one to draw in water and food insufficiently.

The definitions with characteristics of the mind and the body in each Sasangin are presented in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 4.

![Figure 3 – Assignment of the 4 internal organs of Sasang medicine in nutrient and energy metabolism.](image)
Table 2 – Sasangin is classified into four types according to the characteristics of the mind and body in Sasang Medicine

| Sasangin | Four-Virtue | Four Indication | Manifestation of Seong | Manifestation of Jeong | Organs | Function |
|----------|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------|----------|
| Taeyangin| Wisdom      | Mind to distinguish the wrong | Sorrow               | Anger                   | Large lung system and small liver system | Exhaling energy and fluid excessively |
|          |             |                  |                       |                        |        | Inhaling energy and fluid sufficiently |
| Soyangin | Propriety   | Mind to refuse the inappropriate | Anger | Sorrow | Large spleen system and small kidney system | Drawing in water and food excessively |
|          |             |                  |                       |                        |        | Sending out water and food insufficiently |
| Taeeumin | Righteousness | Mind to be ashamed of the unfair | Joy | Pleasure | Large liver system and small lung system | Inhaling energy and fluid excessively |
|          |             |                  |                       |                        |        | Exhaling energy and fluid sufficiently |
| Soeumin  | Benevolence | Mind to be pitiful of the wretched | Pleasure | Joy | Large kidney system and small spleen system | Sending out water and food excessively |
|          |             |                  |                       |                        |        | Drawing in water and food insufficiently |

2.2.2. Mind action affects the body unilaterally

The four virtues are the Sasang medical terms to show how the human mind acts.

Human mind works with uniform directions individually. Sorrow and anger physically ascend and may pathologically impair the lower parts, or the liver and kidney systems, because the ascent easily goes excessive. By contrast, joy and pleasure physically descend and may pathologically impair the upper parts, or the lung and spleen systems, because the descent easily goes excessive.³

---

Figure 4 – Relationship between the mind and body of human being in Sasang medicine.
The diseases of Taeyangin occur when the manifestations of sorrow Seong and anger Jeong have an immoderate effect on one’s body through increase in the gap between the large lung system and the small liver system. The diseases of Soyangin occur when the manifestations of anger Seong and sorrow Jeong have an immoderate effect on one’s body through increase in the gap between the large spleen system and the small kidney system. The diseases of Soeumin occur when the manifestations of pleasure Seong and joy Jeong have an immoderate effect on one’s body through increase in the gap between the large kidney system and the small spleen system. The diseases of Taeemin occur when the manifestations of joy Seong and pleasure Jeong have an immoderate effect on one’s body through increase in the gap between the large liver system and the small lung system.

Dongmu demonstrated that mind damages the body unilaterally, exacerbates the imbalance of largeness and smallness in the four organ systems, and eventually causes illnesses. This happens when the mind action works excessively. Therefore, health and life span of human being are decided by the mind action.

This physical and pathological theory implies that it is very important to control the mind action to preserve the inherent body status and keep the body in shape. The mind can be controlled by realizing and acting morally. Therefore, it is necessary for one to reach equilibrium and moderation of sorrow, anger, joy, and pleasure. This is how the human mind plays the key role in the process toward maintaining a healthy life.

3. Relationship between morality and health in the viewpoint of Sasang Medicine

Health and longevity of human being hinge on morality in Sasang medicine. Therefore, it is more important how human mind operates within the path and virtue and the manifestations of Seong and Jeong.

Dongmu emphasized on the technique to make one’s mind beautiful, and also underlined how to control selfishness, from which every disease originates. In other words, excessive selfishness impairs the mind. Therefore, controlling the mind action is the key factor to lead a healthy life and improve longevity.

In the “Proposition on Common Welfare" chapter of the book Donguisusebowon, the core concept of morality and health in Sasang medicine is stated as follows: Being jealous of others’ goodness is the primary cause of illnesses, and being fond of others’ goodness is the best medicine for the illnesses. As mentioned so far, human beings can lead a healthy life and improve longevity only when they live with good morality in the viewpoint of Sasang medicine. This gives us a proposition that the moral are the healthy.

4. Conclusion

We have reviewed the relationship between human morality and health from the viewpoint of Sasang medicine. Human being exists by communicating with external time–space and other people with nature and conduct. Sasangin differs from the four virtue, the mind action, and metabolic functions of the internal organs. The diseases of each Sasangin are always caused by immoral mind action. Therefore, mind action affects the body unilaterally and makes it ill. Therefore, both health and illness in human beings originate from morality in Sasang medicine, making it inevitable to realize and practice the morality to live a healthy life.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

References

1. World Health Organization. WHO definition of health. WHO Website. http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html. Published 2003. Accessed October 13, 2014.
2. Lee JM. Gyeokchigo. In: Dept. of Sasang Constitutional Medicine, College of Korean Medicine in Kyung Hee University, editor. The manual book of Sasang constitutional medicine. 2nd ed. Seoul, Korea: Hanmi Medical Publishing Co; 2012.
3. Lee JM. Donguisusebowon. In: Dept. of Sasang Constitutional Medicine, College of Korean Medicine in Kyung Hee University, editor. The manual book of Sasang constitutional medicine. 2nd ed. Seoul, Korea: Hanmi Medical Publishing Co; 2012.
4. Lee JM. Jejungsinpyeon. In: Dept. of Sasang Constitutional Medicine, College of Korean Medicine in Kyung Hee University, editor. The manual book of Sasang constitutional medicine. 2nd ed. Seoul, Korea: Hanmi Medical Publishing Co; 2012.
5. Lee JM. Dongmuyoogo. In: Dept. of Sasang Constitutional Medicine, College of Korean Medicine in Kyung Hee University, editor. The manual book of Sasang constitutional medicine. 2nd ed. Seoul, Korea: Hanmi Medical Publishing Co; 2012.