

### Chapter Three

#### Reason and Emotion in Buddhism

In the last two chapters, we have considered the thought of two philosophers concerning emotion and reason. The first one is the idea of David Hume and the second one is the idea of Immanuel Kant. In the view of Hume, human life has been mainly directed by emotion, and reason just acts as the thing to support emotion. Kant accepts that people are naturally created to be under the influence of emotion, as claimed by Hume, and Kant also accepts that people in general use reason just for supporting emotion. But the point that Kant needs to suggest is that being created to be like that does not mean that what human beings are is the good thing. In the view of Kant, using emotion is not the good thing. On the contrary, using reason is the good thing. Kant believes that human beings have been created to act against natural inclination which is being subject to emotion. Goodness in the human life in the view of Kant would happen when people do not follow emotion, but act from the command of reason.

In the teaching of the Buddha, we would not see the division of human nature into reason and emotion, like Western philosophy. The Buddha has his own system in looking at human nature. As we know, a man according to the philosophy of the Buddha is the living thing which is composed of five parts which are the body, the feeling, the perception, the good and evil inclination, and the consciousness. Everything which composes the human life as said has been explained by the Buddha to be the thing that we can observe with sense perception of human beings. Like other Indian religions, Buddhism talks about a thing which is called the mind. But the mind in Buddhist philosophy

is not the mysterious entity which is beyond human sense perception like the soul in Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. On the contrary, the Buddha says that when seeing things in the world, know that what we are seeing is nothing but the mind. In the same way, when hearing, know that what we are hearing is nothing but the mind. The mind in Buddhist philosophy is consciousness that happens in the form of eye consciousness, ear consciousness, and so on.

There is the fourth part that composes the human life which is called by the Buddha natural inclination of the human life to think and act either in the good way or the bad way. This teaching of the Buddha might be the thing that we can study comparatively with the ideas of Hume and Kant concerning reason and emotion. It seems that in the view of Hume and Kant, emotion is the bad thing while reason is the good thing. Even though Hume has accepted that man acts from emotion, this does not mean that in the view of Hume acting from emotion is the good thing. Hume just says that human beings have been created to be like this, and this thing is the root of suffering of people in the world. This is the thing that Hume fully accepts.

In the philosophy of the Buddha, human nature has been divided into two parts. The first part is the good, and the second part is the evil. But the Buddha does not say that the good part in the human life is concerned with reason, while the bad part has the connection to emotion. It seems that in the view of the Buddha, reason can be used to serve either good or evil. In the same way, emotion can be used to serve either good or evil, not differently.

Looking from this perspective of the Buddha, the problem in the human life does not lie in emotion, as understood by Kant. Even reason can be the bad thing if it has been used

for the bad purpose. The thing that we have to be interested in Buddhist philosophy is that (1) Buddhism differs from the philosophy and science in that Buddhism is a religion, and as religion, Buddhism has the mission not same as the mission of philosophy and science. (2) The division of emotion and reason has been made by thinkers in philosophy and science, and in terms of epistemology we understand that the thing that the philosophers and scientists in the world need to find is knowledge. In the view of some philosophers in the world such as A. J. Ayer, there are two kinds of knowledge in the world. The first one  $\phi$  is scientific knowledge. And the second one is mathematical knowledge. It should be noted that in the view of some philosophers in the world, besides these two ~~two~~ kinds of knowledge, there is no other possible knowledge. Religion in the view of these philosophers is not knowledge but faith or belief.

I think we do not need to question whether or not Buddhism can be counted knowledge in the view of these philosophers. But the thing that we should be interested in is that there are some teachings of the Buddha which are given to people in the form of practical knowledge. The thing given by the Buddha to people in the world in the form of practical knowledge can be considered to be partly based on reason and partly based on emotion. Or we can say that the thing that the Buddha stresses is morality and not just pure knowledge as found in philosophy and science. It could be possible to call the morality given by the Buddha for dealing with problems in the human life a kind of knowledge. But the point is that knowledge in Buddhism is different from knowledge in science and philosophy in that knowledge in Buddhism needs both reason and emotion. Good life is the one in which emotion and reason of the person has been equally developed. In the view of the Buddha, man is not a machine, and the thing which makes

man differ from the machine is not reason (because the machine such as the computer can have reason) but emotion.

The following are the questions for further thinking.

1. What is the thing which is called emotion in Buddhist philosophy.

2. Can we think that morality is a kind of feeling and the feeling is part of emotion. We cannot teach the computer to be the moral computer because the computer cannot have feeling. Man is higher than the machine because man has emotion.

3. There is a thing which is called in Buddhist texts as wisdom. What is wisdom. It should be considered as reason or emotion, or both of them?