

# ZHU Xi's Cosmology

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David Hall and Roger Ames, writing as comparative philosophers interested in the dialogue between Chinese and Western philosophy, provide the following definition of a fairly standard Western understanding of philosophical cosmology:

In the Western tradition, cosmology has carried two principal connotations. First, *ontologia generalis*, general ontology, which is concerned with the question of the being of beings. The second sense is that associated with the term, *scientia universalis*, the science of principles. The first type of cosmology is well represented by the project of Martin Heidegger, who pursued the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?" The second type of speculation address the question: "What kinds of things are there?" Whitehead represents this sort of philosophic activity. (Hall and Ames 1987: 199)

Hall and Ames submit that Master Kong was proposing neither a Western-style theory of general ontology nor a science of coherent principles in terms of a cosmological worldview. Rather, Master Kong's "is an aesthetic understanding, an *ars contextualis*, in which the correlatively of 'part' and 'whole'—of focus and field—permits the mutual interdependence of all things to be assessed in terms of particular contexts defined by social roles and functions" (Hall and Ames 1987: 248). Writing later they note: "Our focus/field model must be understood in terms of the general vision of *ars contextualis*. It is the 'art of contextualization' that is most characteristic of Chinese intellectual endeavors. The variety of specific contexts defined by particular family relations or socio-political orders constitute the 'fields' focused by individuals who are in turn shaped by the field of influences they focus" (Hall and Ames 1995: 273).

ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) inherited and expanded this classical cosmological sensibility as a form of *ars contextualis*, although he is eager to account for the coherent principles that inform the contextualization of the focus/field of the

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myriad things and events (*wushi* 物事) constituting the cosmos.<sup>1</sup> ZHU Xi's *ars contextualis* is a particular kind of axiological cosmology, an *ars contextualis* that addresses the question of what kinds of things and events compose, are manifested in, and function together in the cosmos. Moreover, as we shall see below, Zhu's "learning of the way" (*daoxue* 道學) closely resembles Julia Ching's and Robert Neville's notion of an architectonic axiological cosmology, a fundamental concern for moral and aesthetic values and intersubjective ethical self-cultivation and conduct.

In her profound meditation on the religious dimensions of ZHU Xi's thought, Julia Ching (2000: viii) writes "I think that the best word to describe his system of thought is *architectonic*, since it contains many parts that are held together by certain main concepts."<sup>2</sup> Zhu provides us with an architectonic of how the myriad things find their focus within the field of ever changing *dao* 道. Along with his *daoxue* disciples such as CHEN Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223),<sup>3</sup> Zhu presented his cosmological *ars contextualis* via clusters of architectonic terms. It is the coherent presentation of *how* ZHU Xi orders and connects his key cluster concepts that has always made him relatively unique among Song and post-Song philosophers. Some later thinkers such as WANG Fuzhi and DAI Zhen,

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. Neville (1995: 27, 40) maintains that "a more specific study than either ontology or metaphysics is the examination of the system of categories distinguishing, integrating, and interpreting all the various kinds of determinations there are. . . . It is the kind of speculative philosophy Whitehead and Peirce did, and it can be called *cosmology*." He further notes that when we add a theory of values, an axiology, to the mix "axiological cosmology is therefore more 'realistic' than the philosophy of organism." If we accept for the moment that Zhu's fundamental world view is a form of axiological cosmology, then it is plausible to argue that his philosophy is both realistic and pluralistic.

The best introductions to Zhu's thought in English include Ching (2002), Munro (1988), Levey (1991), Kim (2000), Tillman (1992), Wittenborn (1991), and Bol (2008). Levey's dissertation provides very detailed discussions of the best Chinese scholarship up to the 1990s on Zhu's philosophy. It should also go without saying that the various translations and interpretive works of Wing-tsit Chan also add depth to our understanding of Zhu's achievements. Daniel Gardner's (1990) translations from the *Yulei* are also an excellent introduction to part of ZHU Xi's extensive educational project. Needless to say the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literature on Zhu is vast and growing (Wu 2005). Bol's work is not only an introduction to Zhu but to whole Neo-Confucian tradition. Makeham (2003) illustrates ZHU Xi's talents as a commentator, a key form of Neo-Confucian discourse.

<sup>2</sup> In her use of "architectonic" Ching is acknowledging the work of Walter Watson and David Dilworth (1989) on a theory of cross-cultural architectonic hermeneutics. I have also employed this kind of architectonic analysis (Berthrong 1998).

<sup>3</sup> I will make extensive use of the work of CHEN Chun as found in his philosophical lexicography of ZHU Xi. His philosophical dictionary has served as an introductory textbook for *daoxue* philosophy for hundreds of years in China, Korea, and Japan; see Tucker (1998) for a discussion of the Japanese history of this philosophical lexicography as a genre. Chen has the great skill of organizing and condensing many of the most salient architectonic concepts important to understanding Zhu's cosmology. See Chan (1986) and Zhang (2004), respectively, for an English translation of Chen's text and for a fine modern Chinese study of Chen's work. Zhang also includes an excellent critical edition of the Chinese text in an extended appendix to his study.

and, of course, Xunzi among the classical Ruist thinkers, are similarly orderly. Furthermore, because of the vast scope of Zhu's preserved corpus it is highly probable that there are a number of likely stories to be told about various plausible cosmological architectonics to be discovered in Zhu's *daoxue*.

It is, however, critical to remember that an architectonic system for system's sake is not what interests ZHU Xi. System is a heuristic device that allows for better thinking; and better thinking is a key to becoming a better person, a crucial aspect of the long process of self-cultivation of the person in service to the world that is the goal of the Confucian *dao*. So while Zhu is never shy about trying to be clear, this philosophical clarity is subject to the moral ambitions of a Confucian master. Like the finger pointing at the moon, if we become too fascinated by the system or forget its real function as one of the means for moral self-cultivation, then we have missed Zhu's vision of the ultimately moral role a human person performs in the wider cosmos. As the classical tradition taught, the human person has a role to play, along with heaven and earth, in the completion of the cosmos.

An examination of Zhu's architectonic of key cosmological themes, motifs, and concepts can be highly revealing of what Stephan Pepper called the root metaphor or metaphors any philosopher employs in framing a worldview. This can be understood as Zhu's philosophical lexicon. Thus the interwoven mosaic of his cosmological architectonic reveals the deep pattern of Zhu's complicated *daoxue* worldview. In some cases it deals with contested terms such as "coherent principle" (*li* 理).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, neither Zhu nor other members of the *daoxue* fellowship or its early critics argued very much about how to define the notion of *qi* 氣, a root metaphor for Song speculative philosophy. It appears that *qi*, even as a primordial constituent of Confucian cosmology was so omnipresent that no Song thinker, save for ZHANG Zai 張載 (1020–1077) of course, felt the need to talk about its precise philosophical definition—even though later Yuan, Ming, Qing, Korean, and Japanese Confucians realized that they had to grapple much more carefully with understanding the cosmological role of *qi*. This lack of discussion implies that *qi* functioned as a metaphysical commonplace in Song *daoxue* philosophical lexicography. As Whitehead once observed, any real metaphysical concept is deemed so obvious that on occasion it is neglected because it is considered simply self-evident to any thinking person. What follows is one, I hope, plausible interpretation of the structure of Zhu's rich cosmological architectonic.

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<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on "coherence" I owe to the ongoing and mostly still unpublished work of Brook Ziporyn. Ziporyn's analysis has convinced me to translate the concept of *li* as "coherent principle." I should also note that Willard Peterson has also suggested that *li* carries the meaning of coherence. I retain "principle" based on a conversation with Wm. Theodore de Bary who explained to me that he and Wing-tsit Chan selected "principle" because it suggests both the moral and normative nature of the cosmos in English. We are all aware that the term principle also carries a heavy Western philosophical heritage; but then, what philosophical term does not have a history? Adding coherence stresses the notion of pattern, order, and rationale that are also part of the *daoxue* semantic range.

## ZHU XI's Cosmological Architectonic

ZHU XI devoted a great deal of effort to explain how the various objects and events of the world emerge, flourish, decay, and ultimately fall apart as part of a relational and realistic cosmology. His favored term for this realistic pluralism is “events and objects” (*shiwu* 事物); in modern Chinese usage the compound means things, articles, or objects. It is an interesting combination of terms in the context of the development of *daoxue* discourse. *Wu* usually means some definite object, a concrete thing. For instance, when he was teaching, ZHU XI would often use his fan as an example of a concrete object in need of analysis and explanation as to how it came to be and what its use was (Zhu 2002: 14:239–240).<sup>5</sup> *Shi* often means something like an event, which ZHU XI takes to be just as real as his fan. According to Zhu, a refined ethical ritual act is just as real as the fan. For Zhu, ethical conduct is as concrete as any event or physical object. He also used the term *shi* 實 to indicate the reality of these objects and events, the “ten thousand things” (*wanwu* 萬物) that constitute the cosmos. *Shi* 實 means what is real and solid and Zhu understood it to indicate the difference between the pluralistic and realistic worldview of the Confucian tradition in contradistinction to Buddhist emptiness (*kong* 空) and Daoist void (*xu* 虛). The basic architectonic was organized around four major conceptual clusters which I call the condition or state of any thing or event (form, pattern, coherent principle) (*ti* 體), the functional process of the things and events (*yong* 用), unifying action (*he* 和), and moral goal (*de* 德) traits of cosmological actualization.<sup>6</sup> For human beings this actualization comes about via self-cultivation of human nature (*xing* 性) as the coherent principle (*li* 理), state, condition, or rationale within the field of generative vital energy (*qi* 氣) manifested in the body (身 *shen*) as the emotions (情 *qing*) inscribed within the heart/mind (*xin* 心) of each person as they pursue the goal of achieving (*cheng* 誠) sagehood (although Zhu would settle for becoming a good and worthy person as a realistic aspiration for most students of the way).

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<sup>5</sup> This comprehensive modern edition of Zhu's collected writings in twenty-seven volumes is to be distinguished from the well-known the eighteenth-century anthology of the same title (Li 1977).

<sup>6</sup> In earlier versions of the architectonic I identified *ti* 體, *yong* 用, *wen* 文, and *de* 德 as Zhu's correlates to what I was seeking to define with form, dynamics, unification, and goal in Berthrong 1998, 2008. I have changed the Chinese terms now to *ti* 體 state or conditional traits, *yong* 用 functional (dynamic) traits, *he* 和 unifying action traits, *de* 德 goals or moral traits of self-cultivation. I believe this is more descriptive of Zhu's philosophical aims. However, as with most questions of translation of loaded terms on both sides of the cultural divide, there is probably no way to fine perfect or even remotely elegant fit.

## The Architectonic of States/Conditions, Functions (Dynamics), Unification, and Moral Goal

### *The State or Condition (ti 體) of Coherent Principle (li 理)*

Formal states, conditions, or normative traits are those defining characteristics that serve to distinguish one object from another thing or event. For ZHU XI everything has its own contextual marker, its own special relational coherent principle.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the human person, *li* is called *xing* 性, which means the disposition or tendencies of the maturing person. It is, however, critical to remember that coherent principle is more than merely a logical description of the state, condition, pattern or order of the person, object, or event, although it is certainly that in a very strong sense. *Li* defines what a person ought to be, not just the natural character or disposition that derives from the natural allotment of generative vital energy (*qi*) provided by her parents at birth and shaped by the environment of the family, society, and culture.

For instance, when CHEN Chun asked ZHU Xi about the various meanings of principle, Zhu replied that it is the normative or ethical meaning of coherent principle as “what ought to be” (*dangran* 當然) which informs all the other shades of meaning of principle (Zhu 2002: 23:2736). Zhu and Chen used this sort of language because it brings out clearly the ethical and normative dimension of *li*. But *li* can be further defined as the *suoyiran* 所以然 or the *raison d'être* of any person, object, or event. Zhu pointed out that it was the natural state or condition of a piece of bamboo to be both round and straight (Qian 1971: 1:252). Part of the bamboo *li* as coherence is defined by the qualities of roundness and straightness. Of course, the nature (*xing*) implies more than a description of its external physical qualities, especially when speaking of the human person, the most perfect creature of the cosmos, according to Zhu.

All things have boundaries that help us to define what they are as individuals, and these boundaries can be physical, ethical, or even cultural, in scope. When Zhu was asked about the *li* of a writing brush, he stoutly defended the proposition that the brush does have its own coherent principle but refused to define the brush in terms of human ethical dispositions (Zhu 2002: 14:189). Thus we can see that the *li* of a sentient human person is quite different from that of a writing brush, for a human has the potentiality for self-actualization and ethical action that the brush lacks, being itself a human artifact. Although all things have the urge to live in a technical sense of being part of the ceaseless fecundity of the

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<sup>7</sup> Some contemporary Chinese and Western scholars feel uncomfortable with “principle” because it strikes them that the term is too static. *Li* is always a trait of life, of the active, generative nature of the cosmos. However, as Wm. Theodore de Bary once explained to me, “principle” in English actually carries two connotations having to do with being determined, ordered, and patterned as well as being resolute and moral. These two ways of reading *li* make “coherent principle” a plausible translation of the Chinese philosophical concept as a marker for the states or conditions of anything whatsoever.

way, it is only in human beings that *li* become a complete coherent principle of ethical fullness (Zhu 2002 14:325; 486). All things share this life principle even though it is obscured in what Zhu calls dry and withered things. It is, however, worth repeating that for Zhu these are heuristic distinctions. Once the coherent pattern is grasped, the vision is holistic and axiologically focused on human values and forms of civility.

CHEN Chun provides a summary of *li* based on ZHU Xi's cosmological architectonic:

The way (*dao*) and coherent principle (*li*) are generally one thing, but they are discriminated as two concepts because they ought to be so separated. When the way, in the sense of meeting no obstruction wherever one goes, is compared to principle, the way is comparatively general while the principle is comparatively "real" (*shi* 實). *Li* has the connotation of having solid, unchanging definition. Therefore what is eternally unimpeded is the way, and what is eternally unchanging is principle. *Li* is without shape, so how can it be seen? *Li* is the necessary norm of things and events. This necessary norm functions as a rule or standard. This norm connotes [things and events] being determined and unchanging [in terms of coherent principle]. It is the norm of things and events being harmoniously coordinated [*qiahao* 恰好] without any excess or deficiency. . . .

When *li* and the nature are compared, *li* is the coherent principle in things while the nature is *li* in my person. In things it is the common coherent principle of the way of heaven, earth, humanity, and the things. In my person it is the *li* that makes me what I am.

When *li* and justice/rectitude (*yi* 義) are compared, *li* is the [fundamental] condition (*ti*) and justice/rectitude is the function. *Li* is the necessary criterion while justice/rectitude is the way these principles are [set forth in the world]. Therefore Master CHENG Yi said: "Inherent in things as *li*, ordering things as justice/rectitude." (Zhang 2004: 288–289)<sup>8</sup>

What, then, do we make of CHEN Chun's claim that principle is "real"?<sup>9</sup> The attribution of broadness or generality to the way is not surprising because the way is also construed as a road or pathway (Chen 1986: 105–108; Zhang 2004: 284–288). The way can mean a highway or public thoroughfare. Here again Chen is playing on the Confucian conceit that the Confucian doctrine of *li* is active and concerned with the real world, whereas Daoist and Buddhist teachings are not.

Chen succinctly notes that "obviously *li* is not something dead, just lying there. As the *qi* of the One Origin spreads out, it produces man and things. There are thus lines and veins, as it were. They are the way followed by man and things. This is what it is when one traces the source of the creative process"

<sup>8</sup> I have provided my own rather literal translation of this passage in order to highlight certain features of the rhetoric and lexicon I deem important. For a more elegant translation of the material see Chen (1986: 112–113).

<sup>9</sup> For an explanation of how the Cheng brothers saw this issue, see Graham (1992: 41–42; 119–126). Recently HUANG Yong (2008) has started publishing a set of reflections on the philosophical vision of the Cheng brothers that will expand our understanding of this famous pair of thinkers.

(Chen 1986: 106; Zhang 2004: 284–285). The normative state, condition or mandated quality of *li* is not something purely abstract or static: it is manifested in human ethical conduct, just communities, and the ceaseless fecundity of the cosmos. *Li* provides proper states, conditions, forms, or patterns of moral intentionality and cognitive awareness when a person responds in a completely appropriate fashion as a moral agent in any situation that demands moral and intellectual clarity of thought and action. Mere random motions, or immoral actions, are not what define the person from the *daoxue* perspective. If a coherent principle is in the person, creature, object or events which act, then activity is, at least, a subaltern factor in the definition of *li*.

Coherent principle serves as a norm for action in two ways: coordination of the unification of the conditional or normative traits with the functional (dynamic) trait and appropriateness or rightness as justice/rectitude (*yi* 義), with both traits pointing to the act of coming together, of becoming what a person, event, or object ought to become. Many of the key definitions of *li* are assembled in the first section (*juan* 卷) of the *yulei* 語類 dialogues and stress the theme of the states or conditions of coordination and definiteness (boundaries) in realized entities. QIAN Mu has analyzed the precepts from this and the other major sources of Zhu's massive corpus.<sup>10</sup> "In the world there is never vital force without coherent principle and never coherent principle without vital force" (Qian 1971: 1:238). Moreover, *li* can never be separated from the entities of the world for a single instant and be said to exist in any fashion whatsoever (Qian 1971: 1:245). Although Zhu wants to use the language of vital force and coherent principle as separate philosophical categories, he never wearies in telling us that they cannot be separated in terms of actual entities or events.

Zhu constantly uses language illustrating the quality of individuation or distinctiveness: *li* is a boundary, a limit or section, as with a petal of a flower (*tiaoban* 條瓣), and also that this boundary that is clearly defined or outlined in context (*tiaoli* 條理) as ordered pattern or what is clearly reasonable (Qian 1971: 1:252). For example, there is functional fitness in the fact that boats can travel on water whereas carts can travel on land and not the other way around (Zhu 2002: 14:236). Here again we see the proclivity to mix description and stipulation that is so common in Zhu's exposition of *daoxue*.

One of clearest statements about principle comes in a pivotal passage in Zhu's "Further Comments on the *Daxue* 大學 [Great Learning]": "Coming to the things of the world, what is called *li* is that each one has reasons why it is what it is and the norm by which it ought to be" (Zhu 2002: 6:512). It is important to notice the context of the definition: it appears right after the point in the main text of the *Great Learning* where the eight steps to achieve the unity of the empire have been introduced. The crux of Zhu's teaching is that the extension of knowledge resides in the investigation of events and objects as

<sup>10</sup> In the modern period, QIAN Mu's five-volume work (Qian 1971) is the best collection and analysis of Zhu's writings drawn from all the traditional sources. In the Qing period the other major anthology is Li (1977).

*gewu* 格物: the exhaustion of the meaning of *li* in the total act of understanding the complex states, conditions, or patterns of any entity in its relation to its own internal constitution and in relationship to the rest of the cosmos.

Zhu discriminates between exhausting and knowing coherent principles. At one point, he defines *zhi* 知 as “to recognize” (Zhu 2002: 6:510). The notion of “to know” is not conjoined with the notion “to exhaust” (*qiong* 窮) at this point. To exhaust clearly implies something rather more expansive than a purely cognitive act of recognition, although it may include knowing as one of its traits. *Qiong* indicates an active appropriation of the real state or condition of the object of study such that a person will actualize the coherent principle. To know something is to realize its limits, the boundaries of what it is and to learn to cope with this knowledge in terms of appropriate action: “to comprehend it and reach its limit is what is going on when a person exhausts the coherent principles of a thing” (Zhu 2002: 6:512).

The key to Zhu’s epistemology is the following: “The myriad things each set forth one coherent principle and the myriad principles commonly emerge from one source. This is the reason we can extend from this and comprehend [everything]” (Zhu 2002: 6:525). Zhu contends that because all the myriad things have coherent principles they can be analogously comprehended in theory if not always in fact due to human finitude, ignorance, and error. This theoretical claim for cognitive analogy is tempered by practical concerns as well. Zhu concurs with CHENG Yi’s famous precept that the cultivation of the person consists in following reverence and extending knowledge. He says that the very foundation of the praxis of self-cultivation is the examination of things in order to extend the activity of empathetic knowing (Zhu 2002: 6:525). The state or condition, sound, shape, and texture of the myriad things are all given by heaven and earth, and are not the subjective creation of human beings alone, although humans do play a role in the creative process together with heaven and earth. Zhu often emphatically denies a subjectivist understanding of perception (Zhu 2002: 6:527). Each thing in the world has its necessary state, condition, or pattern as an independent entity, however slight this reality might seem from a distant or different perspective. Zhu is defending a kind of objective, albeit intersubjective and relational, view of reality that is pluralistic and does not reduce these entities to shadows in the heart/mind of the beholder even if we cannot empirically examine all the ten thousand things—such, as the Buddhists would say, as all the grains of sand on the banks of Ganges or the great Yangtze. He accepts the witness of the external phenomena as part of his verification of reality, although he does not hold that physical objects are all there is (Zhu 2002: 6:528).

### The Functional (*yong* 用) Configuration of Active *Qi* 氣

The second critical trait or domain of Zhu’s cosmological lexicon is the ubiquitous vital force or energy (*qi*). What is *qi*? It is everything that was, is, or can be. This kind of vague definition, although accurate, does not help us very much in figuring out how *qi* functions. One reason is that generative or vital energy does



not seem to have been a lexicographical term that perplexed the Song Confucians very much. Later in the Ming, Yuan, and Qing dynasties, as well as in Korea and Japan, many thinkers did become fascinated with the explanatory power and scope of *qi*. Yet vital energy, as ZHANG Dainian (2002) notes, has been a critical component of Chinese second-order reflection since very early in the formation of the classical tradition.<sup>11</sup>

For Zhu's *daoxue*, vital force is the configurational or functional energy of all that exists, or what he calls the things and events of the world "below form" (形而下). Vital energy is related to all phenomena because there is nothing to be experienced that is not a product of the modifications and manifestations of vital energy in one of its myriad phases. It is agential because *qi* shapes what changes and becomes. Nothing departs from it: there is no thing that is greater or more expansive than the vital energy that produced or shaped it. This primordial vital energy (*yuanqi* 元氣) is something like a cosmogonic force, without form but with the function of ceaseless manifestation and creation.

In Zhu's theory about the relationship of *li* and *qi*, the most perplexing component is the various statements about the priority of vital energy or coherent principle. Zhu is very clear that he does not think that the priority issue is a good way to put the question of the relationship of the *li-qi* dyad. In response to a question about whether there is first *li* and then vital energy, he flatly states that this is not an acceptable formulation (Zhu 2002: 14: 115). He says that in speaking of coherent principle and vital energy, there is no simple "before and after" dichotomy. "You cannot say that today there is coherent principle and tomorrow there is vital energy. Following this distinction of before and after, it is really like the myriad mountains and rivers of the world flowing down. Finally, coherent principle is in this [process]" (Zhu 2002: 14:116). For Zhu, the flow of mountains and water does not differ from one point in the stream to any other point in the stream, for there is a continuity of coherent principles informing vital energy that is fundamental to all entities.

How can this explanation be squared with the common belief that Zhu considered *li* to exist prior to vital energy? "Question: Is there first *li* or is there first vital energy? Answer: Coherent principle can never be separated from *qi*. However, *li* is that which is above form (形而上) while vital energy is what is within form. From the perspective of what is above and what is within form, how can you not have a before and after? *Li* is without concrete form, while vital energy is coarse, having sediment" (Zhu 2002: 14:115). The implication is obvious: vital energy, having a specific state, condition, or form, must logically come after what is formless in any material sense, or in the sense of the recognition of any entity.

Someone asked: Must there be *li* and afterwards must there exist vital energy? Answer: This is fundamentally something that cannot be described in terms of before and after.

<sup>11</sup> James Liu (1975) has an excellent discussion of the role of vital energy or force in Chinese culture; yet the term remains elusive. See the essay by Robin Wang and DING Weixiang in this volume for an historical overview.

However, if you wish to push on to their common origin, then it follows that first there is coherent principle. But *li* is never separated from being something, and always exists in the midst of vital energy. Without vital energy coherent principle would lack any place to be located. Vital energy is like metal, wood, water, and fire, whereas coherent principle is like humanity, rightness, ritual action, and knowledge. (Zhu 2002: 14:115)

*Li* is viewed as that component of a definite entity which makes it what it is: it is not all that an entity is, as we shall see, but it is a state or conditional form of definiteness, and thus in terms of cognitive pattern recognition, there is a sense in which it is prior to anything else—but only in terms of how we come to recognize the events and objects of the world by first noting their states or conditions of definiteness. For actual events or things, there is no before or after coherent principle and vital energy. Because *li* defines the constant interaction of *yin* and *yang*, coherent principle remains an unchanging norm, and this is what Zhu meant by claiming that *li* is constant (*chang* 常).

“*Li* is only a vast and empty realm, without form or traits, and cannot produce anything [on its own]. Vital energy can ferment, congeal, and produce things. But where there is vital energy then coherent principle is in its midst” (Zhu 2002: 14:116). Thus what preserves both vital energy and coherent principle from the unreality of emptiness is the fact that both architectonic traits are always involved with each other. As CHEN Chun says, “This dual vital energy [referring to *yin* and *yang*] that prevails eternally, which produces without ceasing, cannot be this empty vital energy. It must have something that directs it, which is called *li*. Coherent principle is in its midst like a pivot. Therefore it grandly prevails and produces without ever ceasing” (Zhang 2004, 237; Chen 1986, 38). *Yin* and *yang* and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行) constantly interact and give rise of the myriad things through the primordial cosmological relationship of the *li/qi* dyad.<sup>12</sup>

### The Unification (*he* 和) of *Xin* 心, *Ming* 命, and *Taiji* 太極

In *daoxue* moral anthropology and cosmology, the most primordial relational or unifying trait is represented by the heart/mind (*xin* 心) within the cultivated person. Zhu proposed that the heart/mind is the director of the nature and feelings, and the ruler of the person (Zhang 2004: 249; Chen 1986: 57). The *shen* 身 or body of the person refers to the entire psycho-physical person. The heart/mind is the agent controlling our thoughts and actions, appetites and perceptions. When our actions are not controlled by the heart/mind, we are in a master-less, directionless state of mind, and the master-less person is said to be empty or void, neither of which are terms of praise and indicate that a person is actually sick, that is, lacks a proper sense of balance so necessary in Chinese theories of health (Kohn 2005).

<sup>12</sup> My hypothesis about the “living” quality of coherent principle is probably the most contested aspect of my essay. Given the vast nature of Zhu’s dialogues, publications, and correspondence, one might draw alternative interpretations.

CHEN Chun summarizes Zhu's teaching about the unifying activities of *xin* as follows:

Heart/mind has [a fundamental] condition (*ti*) and function (*yong*). Setting forth all *li* is its condition; responding to the myriad affairs of the world is its function. Quiet and unmoving, this is its condition; stimulated and engaged, this is its function. Its condition is called nature (*xing*), and we refer to it in terms of quiescence. Its function is called feeling (*qing*), and we refer to it in terms of movement. (Zhang 2004: 250; Chen 1986: 57–58)

Chen deems that vital energy must have a director, and that this director functions in the midst of vital energy “as a pivot” (Zhang 2004, 237; Chen 1986, 38). Following ZHU Xi, Chen again employed the analogy of a pivot in discussing the Supreme Ultimate. Just like the decree (*ming* 命), *taiji* 太極 functions as a pivot in the midst of vital energy (Zhang 2004: 291–292; Chen 1986: 117). *Ming* and the Supreme Ultimate function in the cosmological architectonic as relational or unifying traits just as the heart/mind functions to fuse the nature and feelings in the moral anthropology of a person.

In terms of precepts about the heart/mind, Zhu thought that none surpassed ZHANG Zai's notion that the heart/mind controls the nature and feeling (心統性情). Zhu also quoted with approval HU Hong's definition which, in turn, provides a commentary on Zhang's theory of the heart/mind: “the heart/mind controls the virtue of the nature and feeling/emotion” (心妙性情之德) (Qian 1971: 2:35 for both precepts). Zhu glossed the word *miao* as “to control” (*zhuzai* 主宰), to use (*yunyong* 運用)—or to fuse the virtues inherent both in the nature and emotions. In one sense this tells us what the heart/mind does, but it does not explain what the heart/mind is in itself. To know what something does is not always the same as knowing what it is, although it can be. Zhu implies, for instance, that the heart/mind is not inert in the same sense that a pen or brush is a stable object. *Xin* always manifests as an active agent of the living, dynamic unification of the living moral person.

The heart/mind is more than just coherent principle: people receive an allotment of generative vital energy to form the heart/mind. As Chen says, “Generally speaking, a person obtains the coherent principle of heaven and earth as the nature and the vital energy of heaven and earth as the raw material, so that coherent principle and vital energy unite in such a way that they become this heart/mind” (Zhang 2004: 249; modified Chen 1986: 56). The special quality of heart/mind as vital energy is that it is conscious (*jue* 覺). “With the union of the nature and consciousness, we produce this heart/mind, and thus we have this name of the heart/mind” (Zhang 2004: 252; Chen 1986: 61).

The liveliness or responsiveness of the heart/mind comes from this functionally dynamic interaction of principle and vital energy. This is why Mengzi said that Kongzi held that the heart/mind could be held fast and also be lost (Zhang 2004: 250–251; Chen 1986: 58–59). The heart/mind's activity in the world is not the locus of error per se; it is only when the heart/mind becomes unbalanced that it becomes prone to error. In its essential state the heart/mind is a well-balanced scale. Of course, this balance is only achieved via interaction with the world, so the process is one of constant exchange. When the heart/mind is properly

balanced, and when there is contact with the world, the response of the balanced heart/mind is appropriate to or properly in balance with the situation, the focus of the field of the cosmos at that moment. The metaphor of a balance is interesting. As an aside, ZHU Xi did not have a completely ‘external’ view of the things in the world: things had, as it were, to be on the balanced scale to be responded to, that is, they had to be part of the focus of the field of the heart/mind. They had to be related to the heart/mind in order to be perceived, but they were not totally dependent on the heart/mind for their existence.<sup>13</sup> For Zhu, the capacity of the heart/mind to respond to stimuli occurs because the heart/mind is balanced via cultivation by responding to the functions (dynamics) of the world and its myriad events and things. Although Chen points out that the heart/mind is not greater than an inch in size (clearly a rhetorical account of the size of the heart/mind), its capacity is unbounded (Zhang 2004: 251; Chen 1986: 59). There is no coherent principle it cannot appropriate or manifest nor any event or thing beyond its theoretical control. It does, however, require the effort of study (*xue* 學) to bring the heart/mind to completion. When the heart/mind is truly cultivated, there should be nothing left unrealized, no unbalanced response to the world. At this point, ZHU Xi’s rationalism passes over into a kind of religious faith, a quest for self-actualization and self-transformation via self-cultivation.

There is no better definition of the heart/mind’s unifying program and the anticipated results than ZHU Xi’s famous short essay “Interpretation of Fully Fathoming the Heart/Mind” (“Jinxin shuo” 盡心說):

“One who fully fathoms his heart/mind knows his nature. Knowing his nature then he knows heaven” [*Mencius*]. This says that in being able to know the heart/mind, a person knows his nature; and to know the nature enables a person to know heaven. This is because heaven is coherent principle as it is in itself (*ziran* 自然) and the source from which human beings are born. The nature (*xing*) is coherent principle in its undiminished state and that which a person receives to become a person. The heart/mind is that by which a human takes control of their person and so possess this principle. “Heaven is great and boundless” [a quotation from ZHANG Zai (Wang 1974: 27)] and nature is fully endowed with it. Therefore the state of a person’s fundamental heart/mind is itself expansive and without limitation. Only when it is fettered by the selfishness of concrete things, hemmed in by seeing and hearing pettiness, does it become concealed and incomplete. A person can in each event and in each thing exhaustively examine their coherent principles until one day the person will penetratingly comprehend them all without anything being left out. Then a person can make whole the expansiveness of their fundamental heart/mind. That whereby I am my nature and heaven is heaven rests in nothing more than this; moreover they are interconnected as one. (Zhu 1711: 2:1239)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> TANG Junyi (1975: 266) in his study of the notion of education makes this point very clearly. The events and things which Zhu speaks about are external in one sense, but they are also in the heart/mind when the heart/mind reflects on its own content, and hence this is not a form of simplistic objectivism.

<sup>14</sup> MOU Zongsan provides an extended commentary on this short text (Mou 1968–1969: 3:439–447), contending that this essay shows how far ZHU Xi had departed from the teachings of CHENG Hao and HU Hong on the nature of the heart/mind. Levey is less sure that Zhu got it

In this short essay ZHU Xi provides a short explanation of the nature of the mind/heart as the unifying agent of the person, with the heart/mind functioning as the mediator that unifies the nature and heaven, manifesting the coherent principle of the person. Because the heart/mind can know or interpret the will of heaven, it can likewise know the coherent principles that are given to every person by *tian*; and here we need to remember that *tian* is an equivalent for the *dao* as the ultimate way of the cosmos. The state or condition of the person combines the feelings the person has when she “knows” or correctly interprets the things and events of the cosmos with an understanding by means of her own coherent principle, her true nature in accord with the comprehensive feeling of the right order of the her person in relation to the things of the world. Hence the person and *tian* come to manifest the same coherent principle, a true knowledge of heaven itself, the *dao*. However, Zhu points out that as fallible humans we are liable to be hemmed in by the pettiness of our disordered and excessive feelings; so although ultimately there is nothing wrong with the things and events of the world, they can mislead us into following the pettiness of inordinate self-concern to which all human beings are prone without sufficient self-cultivation and study of the *dao*.

Although it is partially true, as Angus Graham noted,<sup>15</sup> that the Neo-Confucians did not over-“qualify” some of their concepts (Graham 1992: 40–41), from time to time Zhu and Chen did try to clarify both *what* and *how* an agent acts. This short essay on the fully fathoming the mind/heart is an example of how Master Zhu provided his students with an epigrammatic explanation of the nature, role, and function of the mind/heart. Having noted that the mind/heart is the unifying (*he* 和) agent of the triad of nature (coherent principle) and feeling (vital energy as the things and event known by the mind/heart), I will show below how Zhu attempted to elucidate a precise definition of the role and nature of the mind/heart.

ZHU Xi buttresses his basic argument about the nature and role of the heart/mind using a number of special observations. In the first place, he denies that we have any special *a priori* access to the principles we find in the heart/mind independent of the connection of the heart/mind to the world. “The heart/mind is a person’s consciousness *zhijue* 知覺 which controls the person and which responds to external objects” (Qian 1971: 2:116). For Zhu, the heart/mind is pure consciousness and the repository of external impressions of other objects. It is important to note that the events and things the heart/mind attends to are in the heart/mind and not external to it when it comes to making ethical choices. Again the Hall-Ames metaphor of the focus-field model is helpful. The person is a specific focus, to be sure, but a focus within the larger field of the dynamic functional vital energy of the cosmos.

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all wrong (1991). HUANG Yong (2008) has also provided a careful re-examination of the work of the Cheng brothers and how later Confucian scholars received their philosophy.

<sup>15</sup> Graham brilliantly explains how this works in his study of the two Cheng brothers. Levey (1991) also provides an incisive and extended discussion of *xin*.

In the second place, ZHU Xi's well known aversion to the Buddhist concept of enlightenment (*wu* 悟) is related to this twofold definition. We judge on the basis of what is *in* the heart/mind, not by ridding the heart/mind of all its content. The heart/mind without its various impressions and activities would be like "a scale without markings" (Qian 1971: 2:179). The test of true profundity of the heart/mind is the depth and width of civilized experience and action. Zhu says that what we call the way is really common to everyday life, and not some sort of isolated spiritual awakening or recognition of some arcane moral principles (Qian 1971: 2:179). Putting the problem in terms of *wei fa* 未發 and *yi fa* 已發, Zhu states that they are really one effort aimed at the humanization of the person. " 'Before manifestation' (*wei fa*) certainly is self-cultivation and 'after manifestation' (*yi fa*) is careful study" (Qian 1971: 2:187).

## *Ming*

After our excursus on the relational and unifying role of the heart/mind, I now turn to *ming* 命 or decree. CHEN Chun begins his extended discussion of the role and nature of *ming* stating that "*ming* is a command, like an order from a superior official" (Zhang 2004: 236–237; Chen 1986: 37).<sup>16</sup> As vital energy becomes individuated, *ming* divides and gives all things their fundamental nature as the decree of heaven.

Chen explains that *ming* must be defined in terms of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣. He argues that we have one general meaning for decree as it manifests coherent principle and two additional explications in relation to vital energy. Since vital energy is basically undifferentiated, it must have some kind of director or *li* which functions like a pivot on a door. It was the directional decree that Kongzi in *Analec*s 2.4 referred to when he said he knew the decree of heaven when he was fifty. In this mode, the decree is clearly the nature (*xing*). This also illuminates how the decree can be a form of "enlightenment," for the true realization of the decree implies a complete comprehension and appropriation of heavenly principle. This realization is the perfected state in which sagely wisdom and action are unified in self-realization (Zhang 2004: 236–237; Chen 1986: 35–37).

Decree also carries two distinct meanings as it informs *qi*. The first is the common notion of fate. A person has an allotted lifespan which cannot be altered and this fate is the person's decree. The second kind of decree is the relative lucidity or turbidity of the person's psycho-physical endowment of vital energy. This is the reason some people are naturally intelligent whereas others are stupid; and why some things are coarse and others refined. But this second

<sup>16</sup> Although Chen does not explain why he began his philosophical glossary with an account of *ming*, but there is a good chance that he was following the advice of ZHU Xi to start with the concrete application or manifestation of the architectonic, hence with *ming* as a form of coherent, concrete action. Lupke (2005) provides a superb set of essays that deal with various aspects of the role of *ming* throughout Chinese philosophical, social, and literary history.

meaning of the decree does not imply a form of fatalism because it is only one of a number of implications of the term. The *daoxue* philosophers often recalled Mengzi's example of a man foolishly standing under a damaged wall waiting for it to fall down on him as Chen notes in his discussion. Since the man knew that the wall was defective, he really could not claim that it was fate that finally caused the wall to fall on him. His own decision was the real cause of his potential death.

Zhu is actually quite clear on the issue of the role of *qi*. One of his students asked him why *ming* has a critical meaning informing both coherent principle and vital energy. Zhu answered by stating that it was true that the meanings of *ming* in each were not completely compatible, at least on the surface. However, he continued, if heaven was not itself at least partially *qi*-related, it could not command the person, and if the person was not in part constituted by vital energy, then the person could not receive the command of heaven (Zhu 2002: 14:207). Zhu was aware that there is a tension between the two senses, but he concludes that this is a necessary and fruitful tension. It does not thwart the relationship of human beings and heaven. On the contrary, Zhu thinks that it facilitates their mutual interaction.

What the sage knows as decree are the moral roots within each one of us (Zhu 2002: 14:209). And there is nothing determined about whether we will choose to nourish and cultivate or neglect these seeds of virtue. "It is like all people commonly looking at a stream. The ordinary people see only the water flowing by, while the sage knows the source of the stream" (Zhu 2002: 14:210). Zhu implies that it is not enough to know the physical facts of the world—one must also know the real origin of these facts, which are to be found in their true source, the moral creativity of the universe.

Chen also provides another shade of meaning for *ming* by linking it to coherent principle. Since *qi* begins in an undifferentiated state, it must have a director or master as noted above. It must have some mode of informing coherent principle. This director is decree, which is like a pivot of a door (*shuniu* 樞紐) or the axis (*gendi* 根柢) of creation (Chen 1986: 117; Zhang 2004: 291). This is highly suggestive of the heart/mind as well. The decree is the same *ming* that Kongzi referenced when he said he knew the decree of heaven he was fifty. In this mode, decree is clearly identified with human nature, which is the normative state or condition for the person in Chen's *daoxue*. The function of *ming* can be thought of as a two-stage process: (1) in the first (axiological) stage it flows forth from heaven as a command, a coherent principle of what ought to be, a lure of the emergence of any thing or event, but (2) there is also an (epistemological/hermeneutical) element of conscious choice involved in the human reception of *ming* such that the person appropriates this command as the informing coherent principle of the allotment of vital energy in need of moral self-cultivation. *Ming* is the heavenly decree for each person as human nature, and the command trait is that each person must realize (*cheng* 誠) the heavenly command or decree to become a fully moral and responsible person. What

initiates the process as *tianming*, the command of heaven, becomes something personal when a person realizes (*cheng*) the command as their true nature.

At one point in his exposition, CHEN Chun links *ming* to a theory of creativity (*zaohua* 造化) based on the four originating principles of the *Yijing* (Chen 1986: 42, 37, 106; Zhang 2004: 200, 236, 239–240). These four origins or principles are taken to represent the four phases in the evolution of any process: (1) inception, (2) development, (3) maturation, and (4) fruition. Hence *tianming* 天命 is the very coherent principle of life and the actual process by which life is embodied in the creatures of the world. Decree is the relational trait that helps to unify coherent principle and vital energy as a state or function of creative action (dynamics).

### *Supreme Ultimate*

In most respects whatever is said about the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) will be a repetition of what is assumed about coherent principle. As Zhu states, *taiji* is a species, albeit a very special one, of coherent principle. Every person has a special, specific *li* that is unique in terms of the patterned state or condition within the field of the *dao*. This *li* as *taiji* resides within each person, and can also aid in the investigation and comprehension of the *li* of the myriad things of the world by means of the coherent analogy of being as a unity of state/condition, and function. But there is a distinct difference in the functionality of the two kinds of coherent principle. The *li* that are known through the investigation of things are the informing coherent principles of those things and not the principle of the knower as a person. This does not imply that the other *li* are passive in the internal constitution of those other things. Quite to the contrary, the self-creativity of any particular person is intimately connected with the person's appropriation of the decree as manifested in the *taiji* for the person. In a sense a person's decree is what the person is commanded to be, while the Supreme Ultimate is what the person ought to become because of the command if and only if the command is manifested properly and completely through proper self-cultivation. In this unique respect the Supreme Ultimate is to be discriminated from all other objective and subjective species of principle.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> There was, as needs to be remembered, a great debate about the proper interpretation of the Supreme Ultimate. Zhu followed ZHOU Dunyi's lead in making this a critical concept of the emerging *daoxue* school, but other scholars were much less impressed with the Confucian pedigree of the term, especially when it was linked, as Zhou and Zhu did, with the notion of Ultimateless (*wuji* 無極). Of course, *taiji* does have an impeccable source within the hallowed text of the *Yijing*. Although CHEN Chun admitted that the concept of the Supreme Ultimate was not clarified until ZHOU Dunyi wrote his commentary on the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, he even maintained that *wuji* had a legitimate Confucian heritage (Zhang 2004: 294; Chen 1986: 120).



Generally speaking, *taiji* has two main meanings for ZHU Xi's *daoxue*. The first is the most important, and when it is contrasted with the second, part of the source of confusion about *daoxue* usage becomes clearer when we keep these two sets of meaning in mind. The first meaning is axiological: *taiji* is the highest normative synthesis of values to be found in any creature, object, or action whatsoever. It represents the perfected goal of each individual and also the perfection of the whole cosmos as *dao*. The second meaning defines the function of the Supreme Ultimate as the norm of perfection of the *yin yang* forces. It is the condition or state (*ti* 體) of this activity, whereas *ming* is the function (*yong* 用) of the actual operation. As Zhu states, "Coherent principle is the condition of heaven; *ming* is the function of principle" (Zhu 2002: 14:215).

This is the usage that has caused hermeneutical problems for later scholars. When Zhu talks about *taiji* in this mode, he often has recourse to such metaphors as a man riding a horse or the trigger of a crossbow. The first metaphor, the rider on a horse, caused some later Confucians to wonder if it might be the case of dead coherent principle riding a live vital energy, which would imply the contradiction of a directionless flow of energy in the universe, or at least a disconnect between principle and vital energy at some fundamental level. Both metaphors were discussed at by the great Yuan scholar WU Cheng 吳澄 (1249–1333), and Wu pointed out how neither metaphor really helped solve the philosophical problem of the true nature and role of *taiji*.<sup>18</sup>

Zhu's main point is missed if we continue discussing *taiji*'s function as "doing" something such as riding upon or triggering vital energy. In itself *taiji* does none of these things because it is a form, a pattern, a state or condition of coherence and not an agent like *yin yang* 陰陽 or *wuxing* 五行. The activity is symbolized by *ming* 命 in this case as the direction to be taken by *qi* as configured by *yin/yang* and the *wuxing*. In Zhu's philosophy, to ask for the reasons for any kind of action is to ask about the kinds of things that act and not the terms, even the functional or action terms, with which these things are described. The Supreme Ultimate is a term for explaining how things act and not the action itself, except as this action is considered in abstraction from the creative act, which is plainly implausible for Zhu. *Taiji* is definitely something that can be stipulated, but this does not mean that it is something that exists or subsists in abstraction from the concrete reality of the world.

Someone asked about *taiji*. The Master said: The Supreme Ultimate is only the supreme good and perfected principle of the *dao*. Each person has a *taiji* and each thing has a *taiji*. ZHOU Dunyi has said that the Supreme Ultimate is the most perfect and best manifested virtue of heaven, earth, man, and the myriad things. (Zhu 2002: 17:3122)

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent discussion of Wu Cheng's contribution to this debate, see Gedalecia (1999). It should also be pointed out that the great Korean scholars Yi T'oegye (1501–1570) and Yi Yulgok (1536–1584) debated this issue with great care as part of the justly famous Four-Seven Debate in sixteenth-Century Korea. Levey (1991) has an extended discussion of these issues. Li Minghui (2005) has also contributed a major study to this fascinating debate.

The most important characteristic of the Supreme Ultimate is that it is instantiated in every creature, object, or event and becomes complete by the process of the reception and cultivation of *ming*, although it only reaches its highest perfection in human self-actualization (*cheng* 誠).

Zhu, respecting the unity of the world based on the process of selection and evaluation choice, says “The Supreme Ultimate is the coherent principle of the myriad things of heaven and earth” (Qian 1971: 1:263). Then, how can he claim that *taiji* is both in each thing as its normative coherent principle and also be the generalized principle in the cosmos? Zhu says, “The Supreme Ultimate is the most exalted good and supremely perfect principle of the way” (Zhu 2002: 17:3122). For Zhu, the fundamental state or condition of *taiji* is that it functions as a goal or lure for the decision of the person to be self-determined and fully actualized (*cheng*). The Supreme Polarity functions as a goal or lure that the emerging creature should seek to actualize in order to realize its maximum potential for completing its own nature. The goal is specific to each person and can be seen as a process of becoming fully moral, with all the twists and turns involved in the complexities and ambiguities of life. It is an end, a goal, but not an end that can be predetermined because the effort, the will, and resolve to become moral can transform even the vagaries of chance and fortune. The process of self-cultivation is not blindly teleological or foreordained. By noting the perfection of the Supreme Ultimate as an ethical goal, Zhu is affirming a fundamental axiology, a creation of true values as a unifying trait in his cosmology.

A second meaning of *taiji* is developed from the first meaning because the myriad things manifest the Supreme Ultimate as a goal for perfecting the entire cosmos. Therefore, as CHEN Chun notes by quoting the *Yijing*, change itself is the transformation of *yin* and *yang* such that “The principle of the transformation of *yin* and *yang* is the Supreme Ultimate. . . . That which is the pivot of the myriad transformations, the basis of the variety of things, explains the meaning of *taiji*” (Zhang 2004: 290–291; Chen 1986: 115, 117). This kind of explanation of the Supreme Ultimate in no way contradicts the first meaning and shows the connection of *taiji* as a condition or state (*ti*) intimately connected to *ming*’s role as the function of the process of creativity. It simply takes the ethically perfecting nature of the Supreme Ultimate for granted, and pushes on to show how this nature becomes explicit in the cosmic process of generation with cessation.

In the final analysis, Zhu’s *taiji* is the *telos* of all things collectively and of the individual things separately—and this kind of dialectically complex definition is no doubt the reason for so much debate about what Zhu actually meant by his theory of the Supreme Ultimate. According to Zhu:

Originally there is only one *taiji*; yet each of the myriad things manifests it, such that each in itself contains the Supreme Ultimate in its entirety. This is like the moon, of which there is one in the sky, and yet, scattering its reflection upon the rivers and lakes, it is seen to be everywhere. But one cannot say from this that the moon itself has been divided. (Li 1977: 49:10b–11a)

Zhu’s concept of *taiji* is a reflective and creative river, lake, or mirror manifesting all reality: the ethical unity of coherent principle as assembled in the *dao* of

all that was, is now, or ever will be. The Supreme Ultimate has, as one of its definitions, the symbolic function of evoking the feeling that things ought to be the best they can become, or, in Zhu's terms: "To speak of the supreme extension of the body of the *dao*, this is to talk about *taiji*" (Qian 1971: 1:279). Of course, this is just the kind of hopeful conflation of the 'is' and 'ought' that drives post-Hume Western philosophers wild. It is a kind of pansophy on a grand scale in speculative philosophy that has fallen completely out of favor in modern Western philosophical circles.

Furthermore, *taiji* has a normative or formal side: it is the goal of the events and things as they seek to manifest their own coherent principle in a particular state or condition, most importantly ethical norms, for human beings. Its instantiation in *qi* must also be considered. Even though *taiji* is not concrete *per se*, Zhu thought that any description of the actual world had to rely on *taiji* as a state or condition for *ming*'s ordering process. The Supreme Ultimate plays a vital role in the constitution of everything whatsoever. It is the normative goal for the configuration of the functionality of *qi* in the same way that the heart/mind manifests humaneness (*ren* 仁) as the unifying trait for human nature and feeling. Zhu's depiction of *taiji* as the goal of *tianming* 天命, as the highest form of coherent principle, points to its relational and triadic structure in his *daoxue* discourse yet again.

### *Axiological Goals (de 德) of Cheng 誠, Zhong 中, and He 和*

Above I have outlined the basic tripartite structure of Zhu's cosmological architectonic based on the conceptual clusters of state or condition, function, unification, and goal. Yung Sik Kim (2000) has done a brilliant job of presenting how Zhu goes about discussing the order, emergence, and details of the natural world spinning forward and out from the ceaseless creativity (生生不息) of the *yin yang* and *wuxing* forces and energies generated by the fusion of coherent principle and vital energy. Yet there is another aspect of Zhu's worldview that demands attention, namely his adamant assertion that all human thought, action, and passion must be governed by moral norms, the axiology of the *dao*. Zhu never strayed far from declaring that no aspect of the *daoxue* speculative cosmological architectonic was merely intellectual reflection; *daoxue* was a methodology with an aim, an ultimate goal that was always ethical in nature. In other places I have argued that Zhu's worldview supports a realistic and pluralistic primordial axiology in the sense that Zhu's consistent overriding concern was the flourishing of certain values within a relational cosmos of ceaseless creativity (Berthrong 1998, 2008). At a practical level these were the values of the five great virtues of humaneness, rectitude, civility, wisdom, and faithfulness. Moreover, although Zhu contested any notion of art for arts sake, he did believe that one of the outcomes of self-cultivation was the creation of *siwen* 斯文 "this culture of ours."

*Wen* 文 is the ideal of a civilized society and one of the greatest of the early sages was the revered King Wen of the Zhou dynasty. *Wen* is the goal of

harmony *he* 和. It is always salient to remember that any Confucian will be as concerned with the harmonious patterns of society as she or he would be about personal self-actualization. Every *wen* or civilized society must have harmony *he*. The famous political adage that the king without and the sage within is always upheld as representing the linked sides of the one coin of social life. Although ZHU Xi never played a major role at the Southern Song court, we know that he was vitally concerned about the politics of his day and believed that the true test of any society was that it would manifest the true marks of a civilized society (Yu 2003), a true *siwen* “this culture of ours.”

There are many ways to articulate what Zhu taught about the cosmology and axiology of values—these are both moral virtues but they can also manifest themselves as fine poetry, painting, and calligraphy as the aesthetic domain of a civilized society. I will briefly sketch a view of these human goals commensurate with the architectonic approach developed above. Although it would be more traditional to give a list of the critical Confucian virtues, what is important for a study of Zhu’s cosmology is to show how he placed these virtues within his worldview, especially via the use of self-actualization (*cheng* 誠) as the method by which the five constant virtues become manifested in human action and social organization. For instance, in the social realm between the individual and the state, Zhu was a passionate advocate of the family compact system designed to provide social welfare beyond the confines of the natal family to entire clans. The rationale for the cosmological goal of this method of harmonious self-actualization is to become centered (*zhong* 中) and harmonious (*he* 和) by means of the process of self-actualization (*cheng* 誠).

ZHU Xi recognized two major definitions of *cheng*: a historical exegesis and a *daoxue* extension into the realm of self-actualization. The historical meaning of *cheng* is the state or intention of being sincere *chengque* 誠慤 (Zhu 2002: 14:240) and Zhu acknowledged that this is a perfectly adequate rendering in many cases. But he also wrote: “*cheng* is that which really has *li*,” and “*cheng* is real,” and finally “*cheng* is *li*” (Zhu 2002: 14:239–240). Zhu is indicating that in its most essential mode *cheng* provides us with a process for organizing the harmony and balance within the proper state or condition of anything that is. He is indicating that in its most essential mode *cheng* provides us with a process for organizing the harmony and balance in anything that is. As we shall see below, when we become conscious of *cheng* by means of self-examination, we become aware and conscious of the process wherein *cheng* is the real, the concrete, the actual—that which is in harmony and balance as Zhu would like to phrase it. Moreover, intention itself is a form of consciousness per se. For instance, when we intend to become reverent (*jing* 敬), we are conscious of our moral effort to become reverent in our mind/heart.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For CHEN Chun’s discussion of *jing* 敬 reverence see Chen (1986: 100–103). Chen does begin, oddly it seems to me, by stating that *jing* and *cheng* are not related. I take this to mean that there is no close philological connection although there is certainly a close philosophical connection. For the Chinese text see Zhang (2004: 281–283).

Using the example of a fan (an example Zhu likes to use often), he explains that if nature *xing* is like the fan, then *cheng* can be compared to this fan being well formed, that is, harmonious and balanced when we cool ourselves with its use (Zhu 2002: 14:240). *Cheng* becomes symbolic of complete perfection without a flaw (Zhu 2002: 16: 2121). In discussing CHENG Yi's notion that being firmly established is reverence (*jing* 敬), he adds "the unity itself is *cheng*" (Zhu 2002: 14:242). He explains:

*Cheng* is the way of heaven. *Cheng* is coherent principle which is self-determination without being falsely ordered. How to realize *cheng* is the way of humanity (*ren* 仁). It is to carry out this real *li* and therefore to make an effort to realize it. Mengzi said "All things are complete in us"—this is *cheng*. "[There is no greater delight] than to be conscious of *cheng* upon self-examination"—this is how to realize *cheng*. Self-examination is merely to seek (*cheng*) in oneself. *Cheng* refers to the fact that all things are complete without defect. (Zhu 2002: 16:2106–2107)

The architectonic of state/condition, function, and unification always linked to the goal of the manifestation of personal and social civility is here manifest again: there is the way of heaven, the way of humanity, and their mediation through the process of *cheng* ending in realized humaneness. If *ren* is the core of Zhu's ethics, *cheng* is the actualizing process which provides proper active solidity and depth of meaning within an axiological cosmology.

Of course, Zhu extensively discussed moral anthropology and ethics. In this presentation of Zhu's cosmological architectonic I have sought to delineate an outline of the deep architectonic structure of his worldview, the fundamental concepts, traits, and themes that have caused generations of Confucian scholars to recognize the highly organized nature of his philosophical worldview. The details are embedded in a highly structured and refined axiological architectonic, a cosmology of state or condition (*ti* 體), function (*yong* 用), unification (*he* 和), and ultimate goals (*de* 德). The axiological goals tie the architectonic inextricably to the moral vision that informs all of his discourse about the ten thousand things. Like all great Confucian philosophers Zhu asked not only what *is* but what *ought* to be and how the *ought* could become a living reality for human beings, and indeed the whole cosmos.

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