see Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Theories of History* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959): 22-34.

33. In chapter 27, Xunzi follows Kongzi by employing a quote from the *Odes* to make an analogy between self cultivation and the art of lapidary. He says, "Human beings are to the study of culture as jade is to cutting and polishing. And so the *Odes* says, 'Like cutting, like filing, like grinding, like polishing.'" See *Analects* 1.15 for the same idea. Cf. pp. 3-4.

34. Adapted from Watson, *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings*, p. 22.

35. Adapted from Watson, *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings*, p. 16. In this passage, Xunzi paraphrases Kongzi. For the similar passage in the *Analects*, see 15.31. Compare Xunzi's view with that of Kongzi, as described in chapter 1, pages 2-3. I discuss this issue in considerable detail and in relation to Mengzi's thought in "Thinking and Learning in Early Confucianism."

朱熹

4. Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi (1130-1200 C.E.) is without doubt the most influential Chinese thinker since the classical age, and understanding his thought is essential for anyone who seeks to understand subsequent Chinese history.[1] One could offer a number of explanations for why Zhu had such a profound, pervasive, and persistent effect on later Chinese thought, but among the most important reasons of all are his sheer brilliance and remarkable industry.[2] A combination of genius and diligence enabled him to bring together the various strands of texts, practices, and ideas that had accumulated around the Confucian tradition and weave them into a powerful and coherent system of thought.[3] He stands as one of the greatest synthesizers in world history.

Several scholars[4] have likened Zhu Xi to Aquinas, and in certain respects such a comparison is neither unwarranted nor unrevealing. As an interpreter of an earlier master, Mengzi, Zhu does resemble Aquinas's relationship to Aristotle. But, in other respects, such a comparison is inappropriate and can be misleading. For example, Zhu Xi fully identified with Mengzi, philosophically, personally, and spiritually, in a way Aquinas did not and could not identify with the pagan, Aristotle. Zhu Xi saw himself as *replaying* the role of his fellow Confucian Mengzi in his own time, fighting against Daoism and Buddhism, and keeping the Jin "barbarians" at bay, just as Mengzi had fought Yang and Mo and kept the "barbarians" of his own time from overrunning China.[5] In these and other regards, the comparison with Aquinas breaks down.

But though Zhu Xi saw himself as fighting off the twin banes of Daoism and Buddhism, his thought was deeply influenced by these two traditions, often in ways of which he was unaware. Both in what he inherited from earlier Neo-Confucian thinkers and in his own philosophizing, Zhu employed a set of concepts and a way of thinking that finds few if any parallels in the thought of early Confucians such as Mengzi. The origin of these new concepts and ways of thinking can be traced to the accumulated influence of Daoism and Buddhism; the terms of art and philosophical styles of these grand traditions came to dominate the Chinese intellectual scene in the period between the first and eighth centuries. In turn, these traditions and the ways of thinking associated with them were transformed as they were synthesized by Chinese intellectuals. Zhu Xi saw the world, himself, and his tradition in these new, hybrid terms and categories.

Zhu Xi developed and made clear the views of earlier Neo-Confucian thinkers, notably Cheng Yi (1033-1107 C.E.),[6] in ways that helped to reestablish the preeminence of the Confucian tradition. In particular, Zhu's new views on human nature and the mind enabled him to provide

a "solution" to what was a perennial Confucian problem: reconciling the claim that human nature is good with the all-too-evident bad behavior of large numbers of people. But with the rise of a new and radical conception of what it meant for human nature to be "good," this perennial problem became increasingly pronounced and pressing in the Song dynasty. In order to appreciate this and other aspects of Zhu Xi's thought and the views of the later Confucian philosophers we will examine, it is necessary to have some grasp of the complex set of metaphysical ideas and theories that came to dominate Chinese philosophical thought of this period. The presentation here is compact and selective; we will focus only on those facets of this broad and complicated interaction that bear directly on our guiding concern: moral self cultivation. In particular, we will explore some of the ways in which Neo-Confucian views of human nature and the mind were influenced by Daoist and Buddhist ideas, and how Zhu Xi incorporated such ideas into his own philosophical system.[7]

Early Buddhists[8] believed that all suffering (and every other imperfect aspect of the world), arises ultimately as a result of mistaken views about the self and the nature of reality. Specifically, early Buddhists claim that most people fail to realize that the self and the things in the world are fundamentally "empty"; i.e., they do not exist independently and they do not endure. The belief in an independent and enduring self or soul is particularly problematic, for it generates desires that, given the nature of things, are impossible to satisfy. Simply put, we believe that we and the things we desire endure, but in fact we and all things are in a constant state of coming into and passing out of being. Nothing lasts. But, because of our belief in an independent and enduring self, we crave such continuity. And so, these false views about the self and reality inevitably result in incessant and unending dissatisfaction and deepening and more damaging ignorance.

The way out of this sad state is to develop right views about the self and the world, to see the true nature of reality. One with right views realizes that the desires that had tormented her ultimately are *unreal* (i.e., "empty"), they don't correspond to anything out there in the world, and that she too is unreal, only a temporary phenomenon, the result of the accumulated effects of past causes and conditions. Such a realization has the power to relieve the incessant feeling of dissatisfaction that is thought inevitably to haunt those who cling to the delusion of an independent and enduring self.

Through its interaction with indigenous Chinese thought, particularly Daoism, Buddhism underwent considerable changes.[9] One such change bears directly on our present concern. The early Buddhist notion that all the imperfect aspects of reality are ultimately unreal

became transformed into the idea that our less savory aspects are not *really* part of our nature. In other words, certain of our desires—those that lead to strife and dissatisfaction—are thought to be not *unreal* but *unnatural*.

As a consequence of this shift in view, Chinese thinkers gradually modified the Buddhist understanding of emptiness and in a sense filled it in with a more robust picture. The things of the world, and of course this included the self, were still fundamentally empty of independent and enduring being, but this now was seen as a consequence of their sharing a common, fundamental nature: a lively, caring, transpersonal Buddha-nature. Ignorance of the true nature of the self was still the cause of all suffering, but now ignorance was conceived of as the failure to realize that Buddha-nature is our true nature.[10]

The Buddhist project, particularly in the Chan school (more commonly known in the west by its Japanese name, Zen), became the discovery and release of one's inherent Buddha-nature. This was accomplished by paring away the selfish desires and false views that obscure this lively, innate, and perfect nature. In the language of texts like the *Platform Sutra*, one needs to clean one's spiritual mirror.[11] One does this by realizing that the "dust" obscuring one's mirror—and the mirror itself—are nothing more than self-generated, self-imposed, and self-sustained delusions. These obscurations are empty or unreal, in the sense that they are not *natural*.[12] Such deformations and delusions would simply disappear if only we could fully engage and bring into spontaneous play our true and fundamental nature.

However, though they themselves are ultimately unreal, these delusions have very severe consequences. For just as the illusion of a motion picture can cause one to feel very real fear, anger, or sorrow, these false views about the self and the world cause deluded individuals to hate and fear, lust and grieve. And since the objects of these emotional disturbances are not real, such people have no hope of finding satisfaction regarding them. The only way to escape from this most unsatisfactory state is to realize the true nature of the self and the world. We must realize that in our natural or original state, the self is fundamentally connected to every aspect of reality, we are all aspects of the universal Buddha-nature. This realization has the power to relieve our former distress and anxiety, since we are no longer alienated from and opposed to a world of "others" and "objects." Such an understanding gives rise to a feeling of profound peace and universal compassion toward all sentient beings.

The image of the mind as a mirror, or alternatively, as the calm surface of a body of water which reflects all things perfectly, is not original to Buddhism, it comes from the *Zhuangzi*.[13] When Zhuangzi

says that the sage "uses his mind like a mirror"[14] he means that the sage reacts to the world in perfect harmony with the way it is by allowing his innate nature to spontaneously and pre-reflectively manifest itself. This view of human nature deeply influenced the notion of Buddha-nature which developed among Chinese Buddhists and this, in turn, had a profound influence on Neo-Confucian conceptions of human nature. In particular, all three traditions tended to see human nature as having two fundamental aspects: a pure, original mode and an adulterated, instantiated mode. Neo-Confucians began to talk about an "original nature" and a "material nature." The former is perfect and complete, the latter flawed and in need of refinement.

Under the influence of these new, hybrid notions, Mengzi's claim about the original goodness of human nature came to be understood as referring to the original, perfect, and pure state of human nature—not to certain of its nascent tendencies. In his profoundly influential commentary on the *Mengzi*, Zhu Xi interpreted Mengzi's term *duan* 端 "sprout [of goodness]" as *xu* 緒 a "clue" or "indication" of what the underlying nature was *really* like.[15] He came to see self cultivation not as the *development* of incipient tendencies but as the *recovery* or release of this "original nature" by refining one's imperfect and obscuring "material nature."

In order to fill out Zhu Xi's *recovery model* of moral self cultivation, we need to describe two additional central terms of art and see how he used these to explain his theory of human nature and the mind. The first term, *li* 理 "pattern" or "principle," in early Daoist thought, meant the underlying patterns and processes that run throughout the world. Different things contribute to these patterns and processes and possess their own individual structures, which are parts of this larger, grand scheme. Under the influence of Buddhist philosophy, this notion of *li* changed dramatically. Most importantly, the underlying structure of the universe came to be seen as *completely present* in every mote of dust.[16] Each aspect of reality was thought to reflect all the other aspects, and so all the world was present in each and every particle of it.[17] However, for reasons that will be explained below, Neo-Confucians believed that a given thing only manifests certain particular *li* and this is what makes the thing the kind of thing it is.

For Neo-Confucian thinkers, *li* is both descriptive and normative; when things follow *li* they are as they ought to be, i.e., they are *natural*. When things do not follow *li* they are "deviant" or "perverse." *Li* is present in and provides the proper standard for all things, plant or animal, living or inert. Consider the following question and Zhu Xi's response:

> [Question] "*Li* 'principle' is what is received from Heaven by both human beings and other creatures. Do things without feelings also possess principle?"
>
> [Answer] "Of course they have principle. For example, a ship can go on water while a cart can go only on land."[18]

Li gives form and meaning to all things but is itself without perceptible form or meaning. In order to possess either, it must be embedded in *qi* 氣 "energy" or "lively matter."[19] *Qi* is that of which the world is made. It is not inert matter, and it comes in various grades of impurity. The purer, more "limpid" *qi* tends to rise, is warm and active. Impure, "murky" *qi* tends to sink, and is cool and lethargic. The *qi* of different things, to varying degrees, obscures the *li* within them and only allows some of it to shine through. So while all things equally possess all the *li*, their different endowments of *qi* make them different, since each thing only manifests certain of the *li*. Moreover, given that *qi* exists in different grades of purity and is constantly churning around, when people are generated out of *qi*, their endowments naturally differ in purity. One's individual endowment is referred to as one's *cai* 才 "capacity" or "talent," and this determines, at least to begin with, how aware one is of the various principles in the world. Those with a better endowment of *qi* are naturally "clearer" about how things are. The purer one's *qi*, the more *li* shines forth and the more one understands.

> [Someone asked] "Human beings and other creatures all receive the *li* of Heaven and earth to serve as their nature and the *qi* of Heaven and earth to serve as their physical shape. The reason people have different characters is because [their *qi*] has different degrees of turbidity or purity. [But] in the case of other creatures, I do not know whether the difference is due to their endowment of *li* being incomplete or whether it is the result of obscurity and obstruction of their endowment of *qi*."
>
> [Zhu Xi replied] "Their limited capabilities are all due to the *qi* which they receive. For example, take dogs or horses. Their physical constitution being what it is, they are only capable of certain activities."[20]

Since each thing possesses all the *li*, in theory at least, each and every thing is innately endowed with perfect knowledge. But human beings are unique among things in that we alone have the ability to realize this knowledge completely by refining our *qi* to a highly tenuous state which allows all the *li* to shine forth. Most important, this allows us to realize complete and perfect knowledge of moral "patterns" or "principles." This

endowment, something like a complete set of innate ideas,[21] is our basic *xing* 性 "nature." But, as I mentioned earlier, Neo-Confucians introduced a novel twist by positing a distinction between our *benxing* 本性 "original nature," which is *li* in itself, and our our *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性 "material nature," which is *li* embedded in *qi*. Zhu Xi often does not explicitly distinguish when he is talking about our "original" as opposed to our "material" nature, but what he means is almost always clear from context. In the following passage, he is very specific and presents an excellent summation of the ideas I have been discussing.

> [Someone asked] "Since material nature differs in its degree of impurity, [is it not the case that] there are partial and complete endowments of Heavenly nature?"
>
> [Zhu Xi replied] "It is not the case that there are partial and complete [endowments of Heavenly nature]. It is like the light of the sun or the moon. If one is on open ground then one sees all of the light, but if one is inside a thatched hut, then some of the light is blocked and obscured, some is seen while some is not. The impurity results from an impurity of the *qi*, so naturally there is obstruction, as if one were inside a thatched hut. But in the case of human beings, it is possible to penetrate the blockage and obstruction. As for animals, they too have this same nature, but it is restricted by their physical constitutions which produce blockage and obstruction that is so severe, it cannot be penetrated. As for the benevolence manifested by tigers and wolves,[22] the sacrifices performed by jackals and otters and the proper social norms followed by bees and ants, these are the few places where they are able to penetrate their innate blockage and obstruction, like a thin shaft of light shining through a crack. As for apes, since their physical form is similar to human beings, they are the most intelligent of animals, only lacking the ability to speak."[23]

Corresponding to the two aspects or modes of "original" and "material" nature, Zhu Xi describes two aspects or modes of mind, *daoxin* 道心 "the mind of the Way" and *renxin* 人心 "the human mind."[24] As we cultivate ourselves, we move from the latter mode to the former; we clarify the *qi* in which the mind is embedded until the principles therein shine forth, suspended and unobstructed in the most rarefied of *qi*. Other creatures have lesser levels of awareness of *li* as a direct result of their "denser" endowments of *qi* which, unfortunately, they cannot refine. This spectrum of awareness passes down through plants to inanimate objects whose *qi* is so dense that they lack any degree of consciousness at all. Human beings, as noted earlier, are uniquely able to refine their *qi* and move from relative ignorance to a complete and

comprehensive knowledge of the world. But this knowledge is something they already have within them; the process of refining one's *qi* allows one to recover this inherent knowledge.[25]

Zhu Xi's *recovery model* of self cultivation can be viewed as having two primary aspects and a mediating state which unites them. The first aspect consists of *cunxin* 存心 "preserving the mind" by *zun dexing* 尊德性 "honoring the virtuous nature."[26] The practice of *jingzuo* 靜坐 "quiet sitting" was the primary method for carrying out this half of the task.[27] The goal was to gather together and calm one's mind, and thereby protect it from the obscuring effects of agitated emotions and desires.[28] In a calm state of mind, one's *qi* tended to settle and the principles of the mind were more easily brought into awareness and manifested. But, as important as this practice was, it alone would not advance one's grasp of principle, and quiet sitting could become a liability to moral progress if one allowed it to become an end unto itself. In order to supplement this practice and guard against the slide into quietism, Zhu Xi advocated a second component, *dao wenxue* 道問學 "pursuing inquiry and study." This half of the task consisted primarily of a practice called *gewu* 格物 "investigating things," which meant studying, on the one hand, the classical texts of Confucianism and, on the other, the various events and phenomena one encounters in the course of daily life—all with the aim of grasping the ruling *li* behind these objects of investigation.[29]

Uniting both these halves of the task of self cultivation was the attitude of *jing* 敬 "reverential attention."[30] This state of mind was to be maintained throughout self cultivation, whether engaged in the task of "preserving the mind" or "pursuing inquiry and study." It is difficult to say exactly what this state of mind is like, but perhaps it is best to think of reverential attention as an attitude of calm perseverance, seriousness, and reflection in the midst of the ongoing activity of self cultivation.

One of the great strengths of Zhu Xi's method of self cultivation is that it provided students of the Way with a definite procedure and clear criteria for study. The very idea that one must engage in self cultivation implies the need for some standard, other than one's own spontaneous intuitions. But to what standard does one appeal and how is one to approach this task? Earlier Confucians faced a similar problem, though with much different metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. As we have seen, they appealed to the traditional rites as well as to a set of classical texts.[31] And yet, even among these early Confucians, there was a heated debate, most notably represented by the disagreement between Mengzi and Xunzi, concerning how much of moral self cultivation involved *intuiting* knowledge through a process of thinking or reflecting,

as opposed to *acquiring* it through a course of learning. As will become clear, the disagreement between Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, the next thinker we will discuss, can be seen as a retelling of this debate in the very different philosophical language of Neo-Confucianism.

Zhu Xi relied heavily on his interpretation of the texts of Neo-Confucianism to provide clear criteria to students of the Way, and he arranged these texts into a systematic course of study, thus providing them with a definite program of learning. One was first to study the *Four Books*: the *Daxue*, *Zhongyong*, *Mengzi*, and *Analects*.[32] Next, one was to study the original *Five Classics*: the *History*, *Rites*, *Odes*, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and *Changes*. Only the first and third of these were among the texts of our earlier Confucian thinkers, though Xunzi may also have used some version of the second. The third stage of study consisted of a careful reading of the official dynastic histories, which of course did not exist prior to the Han dynasty and hence were unknown to Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi. The three stages of Zhu Xi's curriculum were thought to represent specific aspects of his program of learning: first, *theory*; next, *paradigmatic cases*; and finally, more general and extensive *applications*. Within each of these stages were subdivisions. For example, of the *Four Books*, one was to begin with the *Daxue*. Quoting Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi's introductory remarks on the *Daxue* begin:

> The *Daxue* is a surviving work of the Confucian school and is the gate through which the beginning student enters into virtue. It is only due to the preservation of this work that the order in which the ancients pursued their learning may be seen at this time.[33]

The *Daxue* was an obscure chapter from a larger work called the *Liji* "Rites" until it was elevated to canonical status during the Song dynasty.[34] In this process, the original text was altered significantly, first by Cheng Yi and then again by Zhu Xi. These changes included adding material to the original text, but perhaps the most important change concerned the reordering of part of the text. Zhu propagated a version that put *gewu* "the investigation of things" before *chengyi* 誠意 "making one's thoughts sincere." This was one of the central issues of contention between Zhu Xi's school and what was to become the Lu-Wang School.[35] Essentially, the ordering Zhu follows suggests that one must first acquire an understanding of *li*, through the process of *gewu* "the investigation of things," and then through *jing* "reverential attention" to these principles, one comes to *chengyi* "make one's thoughts sincere," i.e., embody the *li* in every thought, feeling, and action. A more charitable reading would insist that, for Zhu Xi, the process of making

one's thoughts sincere occurs *as* one investigates things *with* an attitude of reverential attention.

By anchoring his learning in the mastery of a corpus of texts, Zhu Xi sought to avoid an overreliance upon individual intuition, which he perceived as posing the danger of drifting into radical subjectivism. This was his central criticism of Lu Xiangshan's approach. Zhu sought to set up a standard which could be used to judge between competing claims regarding the true course of the *Dao*, and then determine which claims were correct. It might seem that what he recommends simply pushes the criterion up one level, for people can always discover that they disagree over what the texts mean. Zhu Xi was aware of this, and had several responses. First, his program of learning required one to apply one's interpretation of the classics to the actual affairs of life. He believed that this requirement would winnow out erroneous interpretations, for those that accorded with the *Dao* would work the best. Only they reflected how the world really was.

In addition to this, Zhu Xi insisted that one needs a comprehensive understanding of the classics. Initially, in a given case, one's interpretation might well be mistaken, but Zhu believed that broad inquiry would eventually force one to abandon idiosyncratic views and be led toward the correct understanding. Zhu also urged students to debate among themselves in order to arrive at a better understanding. And, of course, students were also to consult with their teachers concerning their interpretations. In combination, this broadly based and multifaceted approach presents a powerful method of learning, but, as with all such proposals, it raises characteristic problems of its own. One such issue, which became a topic of debate among Neo-Confucians, is the tension between the need for both *bo* 博 "breadth" and *yue* 約 "a grasp of the essential."

Basically, the idea is that one needs to study extensively in order to appreciate fully the nuance and texture of a given moral principle. At the same time, throughout one's extensive study, one must be ever striving to discern and embrace the underlying and unifying principle at work. This second aspect of study is critical; without it, the work of learning becomes an endless gathering of unconnected facts. Wang Yangming was later to criticize Zhu Xi's approach as leading inevitably to such a fragmented, unproductive, and ultimately pointless accumulation of information. One can see how this might occur, and this criticism was no doubt an accurate description of some Neo-Confucians.

Wang insisted that any separation between *knowledge* and *action* (and Wang was speaking primarily about moral knowledge and action) would result in the pursuit of the former as an end unto itself. At its worst, the pursuit of knowledge, particularly knowledge of the classics,

becomes a means for self-aggrandizement and personal profit. This was an acute problem for Chinese intellectuals of this time. For the path to official position and advancement required success in the imperial examinations, and mastery of the classics, which formed the core of the examinations, was indispensable for such success.

To respond to such criticism on Zhu's behalf, one might first point out that Zhu never advocated knowledge for knowledge's sake; he always united the tasks of *dao wenxue* "pursuing inquiry and study" and *zun dexing* "honoring the virtuous nature" with the attitude of *jing* "reverential attention." Study of the classics was never divorced from moral self cultivation. Moreover, it seems eminently reasonable to insist, as Zhu Xi does, that extensive study and lively debate is needed as a sort of proving ground for one's intuitions. Without some kind of pull toward objectivity it seems one can easily fall into a kind of solipsism. If one believes, as Zhu Xi did, that a proper understanding of a set of sacred texts is critical, if not necessary, for self cultivation, it seems wise to engage in philological and historical study, and to consider carefully what others have said and do say about the text. This kind of comprehensive, synthetic approach is well represented by Zhu Xi's own commentaries. For example, his commentaries on the *Four Books* is appropriately called "*Collected* Commentaries on the *Four Books*." It is not just Zhu Xi's personal musings on these texts; it is a collection of the philological, historical, textual, and interpretive efforts of many commentators throughout history, combined, synthesized, and augmented by Zhu's own views.

Zhu Xi believed that there was a single correct interpretation of the classics, that anyone who worked at them long enough, with dedicated effort and sincerity, would arrive at this same understanding, and that this proper understanding would transform the individual. In other words, the study of these texts was not just enriching or edifying, it was *enlightening*. That was the whole point of study. In order to grasp the full significance of these texts, one had to become a certain kind of person, and this required one to understand how the lessons contained in the classics applied in the actual world of daily human life. It also required one to maintain a certain calmness and purity of mind while engaged in this study. Though mastery of the Confucian canon was central to Zhu Xi's method of self cultivation, it was not an isolated pursuit. Alone, it would not result in moral enlightenment. However, he did seem to believe that for almost everyone it was the necessary starting point for self cultivation.

> With regard to the way of learning, nothing is more urgent than a thorough study of principles; and a thorough study of principles must of necessity consist in book-learning. . . . As a result, the words and the deeds [of the ancient sages] have all become permanent and fundamental exemplars for later generations to emulate. . . . These visible traces and necessary results are all contained in the classics and histories. A person who wishes to have a thorough knowledge of the principles in the world without first seeking for them [in the classics and histories] is one who wishes to go forward but ends up standing right in front of a wall. This is why we say "a thorough study of principles must of necessity consist in book-learning."[36]

Zhu Xi believed that textual study, properly pursued and augmented with the other practices we have examined, eventually would result in a comprehensive grasp of the truth. This is powerfully stated in his commentary on the fifth chapter of the *Daxue*.

> Once one has exerted effort in this way for a long time, there will come a day when one achieves a wide and far-reaching penetration. Then one will apprehend the internal and external, refined and coarse qualities of all things, and one's mind, in its entirety and in its every application will be perfectly clear.

When all is said and done, Zhu Xi relies on personal intuition to decide when one has achieved such a state; however, it is an intuition which comes only after extensive study, broad application, and careful reflection. His method of moral self cultivation was a protracted process of refining the self in order to recover the inherent *li* within. Wang Yangming will argue that this is the right aim but the wrong approach. Wang insists that we must concentrate on this inherent intuition, from the very start. If we do not, we will never bring this capacity into full play. This initial *discovery* is the most critical moment in the process of moral self cultivation.

As was mentioned earlier, Zhu Xi's and Wang Yangming's disagreement can be seen as a replaying of the argument between Xunzi and Mengzi over whether thinking and reflection was the way of moral self cultivation or whether one needed to acquire the moral sense through learning. To state the disagreement in overly simple terms: if Xunzi and Zhu Xi are correct, then becoming moral requires understanding and transforming oneself in light of the wisdom of past sages. If Mengzi and Wang are correct, then the sages and the classics at best may prove helpful to the task of becoming moral, but they are not a necessary part of moral self cultivation.[37] This tension, between the inherited wisdom of the past and the original intuitions of contemporary individuals, reemerges and courses throughout the Confucian tradition. It is visible

most often in debates between rival interpreters of the tradition over the proper means of self cultivation, though, as we have seen, this issue involves related concerns such as the true character of human nature. At different times, one side of this polarity rather than the other tended to be emphasized, though at no time was one pursued in complete isolation from the other. Like the notions of subjectivity and objectivity themselves, this proved to be an irreducible yet highly productive tension.[38]

Notes

1. A number of recent studies on Zhu Xi's life and thought have greatly improved our understanding of him. Outstanding among these are: Wing-tsit Chan, ed., *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1986); Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi: New Studies* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Daniel K. Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); and Hoyt C. Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendency* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). For a remarkably insightful description of the rise of the distinctively Song dynasty milieu in which Zhu Xi worked, see Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours:" Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). While Bol does not address the influence of Buddhism on the thinkers of this period, he still captures the tenor of the *zeitgeist* and particularly how it differs from what came immediately before it.

2. A good summary of Zhu Xi's achievements is provided by Wing-tsit Chan in his *Chu Hsi: Life and Thought* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987). In particular, see "Chu Hsi's Completion of Neo-Confucianism," pp. 103-38.

3. In particular, his work on texts contributed to his influence on later generations. Zhu Xi was the first to group together the *Analects, Mengzi, Daxue*, and *Zhongyong* as the "Four Books." Since he completed this work, in 1190, these texts served as the focus of Confucian thought, and from 1313 until 1905, his commentaries on the four books provided the basis for the civil service examinations. Zhu Xi's extensive and elegant commentarial work provided a systematic, coherent, and powerful interpretation of the Confucian canon. This monumental textual work distinguished Zhu Xi from thinkers like Wang Yangming and secured the success of his school. For an important comparative study of commentarial traditions that throws considerable light on this aspect of Confucianism, see John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

4. For example, see J. Percy Bruce, *Chu Hsi and His Masters* (London: Probsthain, 1923) or Olaf Graf, *Tao und Jen Sein und Sollen im sungchinesischen Monismus* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970).

5. For this reason alone, it is unfortunate that thinkers like Zhu Xi have come to be known in the west as "Neo-Confucians." They did not—as Neo-Platonists, Neo-Kantians, or Neo-Hegelians did—think of themselves as offering a *new and improved* version of Confucianism (though some did believe that they "filled-in" implicit lacunae in the tradition). They saw themselves as the legitimate inheritors and defenders of the one true tradition.

6. The most sophisticated study of the thought of Cheng Yi is by A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, reprint (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1992). For an analysis of the general view of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, see his article, "What Was New in the Ch'eng-Chu Theory of Human Nature," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 138-57. Note though that Graham—like many scholars who work on Neo-Confucianism—failed to appreciate the ways in which Buddhist thought influenced these later Confucians. For some of the ways this affects Graham's analysis, see Mark Berkson, Review of *Two Chinese Philosophers* in *Philosophy East and West* 45.2 (February, 1995): 292-7.

7. My account of Zhu Xi's thought, and Wang Yangming's as well, is predicated on the assumption that Neo-Confucians had developed a rich and complex metaphysical scheme that finds little precedent in early Confucian thought and that there is a close and critical relationship between this metaphysical scheme and their ethical philosophy. This point seems sadly underemphasized in contemporary scholarship. A notable and important exception is Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

8. I realize that not all early Buddhists hold precisely the views I present here, but I believe that views like these are held by many representatives of the Buddhist position and that these views, or something very much like them, are fundamental to the Buddhist point of view. For an introduction to the Buddhist perspective, see Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, reprint (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

9. For a general introduction to Buddhism's arrival and transformation in China, see Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964). For a study of the interaction between Buddhism and indigenous Chinese traditions, see Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959). See also the monumental work by Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988): 63-297.

10. For philosophical accounts of "Buddha Nature," see Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989): 96-115, and Sallie B. King, *Buddha Nature* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).

11. See Phillip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967): 128-44.

12. In texts like the *Platform Sutra*, we find the language shifting back and forth between claims that this obscuring dust is *unreal* and that it is *not part of our original nature*.

13. For an excellent general study of this idea, see Paul Demieville, "Le Miroir Spirituel," *Sinologica*, 1:2 (1947): 112-37. For a translation of this essay, see "The Mirror of the Mind" in Peter Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1987): 13-40.

14. See Burton Watson, tr., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968): 97. Cf. 142.

15. Zhu Xi's commentary on *Mengzi* 2A6 reads, in part, "*Duan* 'sprout' means *xu* 緒 'clue' or 'the end of a thread.' Because of the manifestation of these feelings, one can glimpse the original state of the nature. It's as if there were something hidden inside but one can see clues or indications of it on the outside." See *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注.

16. For a study of this term, see Wing-tsit Chan, "The Evolution of the Neo-Confucian Concept of *li* as Principle," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, n.s. 4.2 (1964): 123-49. As helpful as this study is, it tends to underestimate the influence of Buddhism, especially the Huayan School (see n. 17). As we will see, the Neo-Confucian concept of *li* is much more than the earlier Daoist view of *li* as the grand design of the universe. It carries the added feature that the entirety of this design is present and discernible in every aspect of the universe.

17. This idea was often expressed through the metaphor of Indra's Net, an infinite net of jewels, each jewel reflecting all the others. This image appears in the *Treatise on the Golden Lion*, a famous and influential work of the Huayan School. For a translation, see Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960): 329-33. For studies of the Huayan School of Buddhism, see Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1983) and Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, pp. 116-38 .

18. Adapted from Wing-tsit Chan, *Source Book*, p. 623.

19. Earlier, we saw Mengzi rely upon this notion in his discussion of the "flood-like *qi*" (see p. 20). But by Zhu Xi's time, the meaning of this term had taken on complex metaphysical senses not fully visible and at times wholly foreign to its earlier cluster of meanings.

20. Cf. Chan, *Source Book*, p. 620.

21. I use the word *idea* with some trepidation since Neo-Confucians did not propose any kind of "picture" model.

22. Here and in what follows, Zhu Xi is referring to certain animal behavior, such as the "benevolence" wolves and tigers show to their young. Such phenomena serve as evidence for the universal presence of *li*. These creatures only partially manifest this particular *li* because the nature of their *qi* only allows a certain amount of it through. The *qi* of other creatures and things is so dense that none of this particular *li* is manifested. Many westerners are tempted, by passages like this, to equate *li* with Platonic Forms. This is a mistake. *Li* per se don't make a given thing the kind of thing it is. Actually, it is the fixed endowment of *qi* which makes a given thing the kind of thing it is. For *qi* determines which *li* get manifested.

23. Cf. Chan, *Source Book*, p. 621.

24. Zhu is invoking a well-known distinction first seen in the *History*, where we find the lines, "The human mind is precarious; the mind of the Way is subtle. . ." Cf. Legge, *The Shoo King*, p. 61.

25. Since the mind contains the principles of all things, once cultivated, it understands not only itself but the workings of all things. Thus Zhu Xi's theory of *li* and *qi* accomplishes many of the same philosophical goals as Plato's recollection theory. It enables him to explain the daunting problem of how we come to understand the world: the principles in our mind match up with the principles of the things out there in the world. This latter idea is retained in the modern Chinese word *lihui* 理會 "to understand." Literally it means *li* "principles" *hui* "meet," i.e., the principles within one's mind "meet" or "match up with" the principles of the phenomenon under investigation. Since we are endowed with the *li* at birth, Zhu Xi's theory, unlike Plato's, does not require a belief in reincarnation.

26. Zhu derives both these and the complementary set of special terms below from the twenty-seventh chapter of the *Zhongyong*. Here and throughout his work, the notions of the mind and the nature are more or less synonymous for Zhu Xi.

27. For a discussion of the role of meditation in Zhu Xi's thought, see Julia Ching, "Chu Hsi on Personal Cultivation," in Chan, ed., *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 282-4. The distinctions I draw between "preserving the mind" and "pursuing inquiry and study" and the mediating attitude of "reverential attention" were seen by Zhu Xi as aspects of a single task. One cannot help but see them as Confucian correlates to the Chan practices of *ding* 定 "meditative calm," *hui* 慧 "insight," and *yixingsanmei* 一行三昧 "mindful practice," respectively. As texts like the *Platform Sutra* make clear, these too are but aspects of a single task.

28. Zhu Xi did not have a set method for how to carry out "quiet sitting." It was not a developed technique of meditation with specific postures and practices designed to bring one to specific states of consciousness. It was

more a period of dedicated calm in which one was to reflect upon and restore oneself.

29. Different Confucian thinkers understood this term in distinct and different ways. For a brief discussion and comparison of its different senses, see my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, pp. 81, 107-8. See also D. C. Lau, "A Note on *ko-wu*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 30 (1967): 535-37.

30. This is the same character that was used in early Chinese discussions of the need for the king to "revere" his virtue. See the Introduction, pp. x- xi.

31. It is important to realize, though, that earlier Confucians appealed to a much more limited set of canonical texts. The notion of a "classical text" was not explicitly described until the time of Xunzi.

32. As was noted earlier, Zhu Xi was the first to assemble these texts into a set. It should also be noted that *none* of these texts, with the possible exception of the *Analects*, was studied by any of the earlier Confucians we have discussed. And, of course, it was not studied by Kongzi or his immediate disciples.

33. Chan, *Source Book*, pp. 85-6.

34. Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) was the first to treat the text as an independent work. For a brief but illuminating discussion of its history, see Chan, *Source Book*, p. 85 note 5.

35. This rather loose designation refers to those associated with the thought of Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139-1193 C.E.) and Wang Yangming. This group is opposed to the Cheng-Zhu School, those associated with the thought of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. For a study of Lu Xiangshan's thought, see Huang Siu-chi, *Lu Hsiang-shan: A Twelfth Century Chinese Idealist Philosopher*, reprint (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1977).

36. The translation is by Yü Ying-shih. See his "Morality and Knowledge in Chu Hsi's Philosophical System," in Wing-tsit Chan, ed., *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, p. 233. Yü discusses the issue of the role of book-learning on pages 233-5 and 245-7.

37. This is overly simple because Zhu Xi's and Wang Yangming's profoundly different assumptions about human nature and very different metaphysical beliefs complicate any such comparison. However, as to the method of self cultivation, such a generalization holds true and is revealing.

38. Though he does not state it quite this way, I take this to be at least consistent with a theme that runs throughout the early work of Thomas Nagel. It informs many of the essays in his classic work *Mortal Questions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See especially the essay entitled "Subjective and Objective," pp. 196-213.

王陽明

5. Wang Yangming

It is, of course, impossible to give an adequate picture of *any* person's life and thought in the span of a single chapter. In the case of Wang Yangming (1472-1529 C.E.),[1] one feels this difficulty even more acutely, for he seems to have lived not just one but several lives. He was a scholar, a poet, a renowned calligrapher, a successful provincial governor, a triumphant general, and the most influential and charismatic moral teacher of his day.[2] I will concentrate on this last aspect of his life, and, in keeping with the theme of the present study, will focus my attention primarily upon his method of self cultivation.

Like Zhu Xi, Wang saw himself as the inheritor and defender—against enemies both within and without—of Confucianism. In particular, he saw himself as the true disciple and defender of Mengzi, the fourth-century B.C.E. Confucian whose thought we explored in chapter two. I have argued that Mengzi taught a *development model* of moral self cultivation in which people, through practice and reflection upon their innate and fragile moral sense, could develop and extend these "moral sprouts," until they became strong and vital moral dispositions.

In the previous chapter, I also argued that profound changes had occured in the Confucian intellectual paradigm in the course of the nearly fifteen hundred years separating thinkers like Zhu Xi from Mengzi, and I sought to explain briefly some of those changes that most affected the issues surrounding moral self cultivation. By Wang's time this major shift in Confucian moral thinking had been in place for several hundred years. As noted earlier, the sources of this shift can be traced to the rise and reign of Daoist and Buddhist thought that began around the first century C.E. and only began to subside around the ninth century.[3] Though the tide of Daoist and Buddhist thought began to ebb, its influence remained, and the course of Chinese philosophy had changed dramatically under this influence.

One result of the broad and complex interaction of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism was a profound shift away from Mengzi's *development model* of moral self cultivation, which was grounded in his distinctive theory of human nature, to theories that were based on comprehensive metaphysical theories about the world. We saw a clear manifestation of this shift in Zhu Xi's thought and it is a distinctive feature of every Neo-Confucian thinker. Mengzi's ethical theory was grounded in assumptions about moral psychology and a philosophical anthropology, i.e., theories about what kinds of creatures human beings are and how they act as social creatures. By Zhu's and Wang's time, ethical theories were grounded in views about universal moral principles, lying unnoticed or obscured beneath the hustle and bustle of day-to-day

activities. These theories now provided the warrants for how one should organize and live one's life. Mengzi's theory that we all possess moral sprouts, a young and fragile moral sense that requires concerted and prolonged effort to nurture to maturity and refinement, had become a belief in an innate and fully formed *moral mind*: a complete and perfect moral guide that was buried beneath our selfish desires.

One can see this philosophical difference manifested in a dramatic shift in metaphors. Wang did not talk about "sprouts" or employ Mengzi's panoply of agricultural images. He spoke of the moral mind as *the sun shining behind clouds* and *a clear, bright mirror hidden beneath dust*. Our moral sensibilities were fully formed and quite formidable *faculties* that were obscured by the "clouds" and "dust" of selfish desires.[4] These are images Mengzi never used and this is not only because they are borrowed from Buddhist texts which he had not seen, they reflect a set of assumptions about the nature of human beings and the universe which he did not share or ever entertain.

This had profound effects on both the possibilities for and conceptions of the process of moral self cultivation. It led to what I refer to as *recovery* or *discovery models* of moral self cultivation.[5] These new models of self cultivation opened up exciting and attractive new possibilities. For example, Wang and other later Confucians could and did talk about the experience of dramatic and complete moral *enlightenment*.[6] Given their views, it became possible to awaken to complete and perfect moral knowledge; one could *discover* and bring fully into play one's innate moral mind. Some believed this goal could be reached with a single moment of sincere effort; indeed Wang believed such an effort constituted proper practice. These kinds of ideas are completely foreign to Mengzi; it simply is impossible to *develop* like this. While Zhu Xi holds his own unique version of these views, in Wang they assume a distinct and dramatic form.

While Mengzi advocated the persistent and careful cultivation of one's moral sprouts and Xunzi urged us to acquire a second, moral nature through persistent study and practice, later Confucians increasingly concentrated, sometimes exclusively, on the elimination of one's *selfish desires*. These later Confucians exhibit a passionate and at times frenetic preoccupation with the goal of moral enlightenment and with the challenge of maintaining unceasing, internal vigilance over their each and every thought. Their aim is to develop and sustain a state of mind in which they constantly monitor themselves for the slightest trace of selfishness. For them, moral self cultivation comes to resemble the tasks of relieving oneself of and guarding against self-deception. Since one already possesses a complete and perfect moral mind, the challenge is to identify it, engage it, and preserve it from obscuration. The source of

obscuration also lies within the self—misguided applications of the mind that generate selfish desires. Wang's teachings purport to offer a unique form of *moral therapy*, designed to address this pernicious form of self-deception.

I will explore three distinctive aspects of Wang's general theory of moral self cultivation. The first of these, *the unity of knowledge and action*, is Wang's most well known teaching and was mentioned briefly in my discussion of Zhu Xi's method of self cultivation above.[7] The question of the relationship between moral knowledge and action is an idea with a very old pedigree in China (and elsewhere as well). Wang's particular version of it has had a profound influence on later East Asian thought and culture.[8] It still exerts great influence and retains strong appeal. For example, in one of Yukio Mishima's great novels, *Runaway Horses*, Wang's teaching is ardently embraced by the central figure, Isao.[9] It culminates in his assassination of a powerful member of a *zaibatsu* ("corporate conglomerate") which Isao and others believe is undermining their society. Isao's *knowledge* of the malignant nature of the *zaibatsu* precipitated his *action*. As Wang argued, such knowledge is the beginning of action and such action the completion of knowledge.

While the nature of the relationship between moral knowledge and action involves familiar problems about issues like the reason-giving force of moral propositions, claims about a *unity* of knowledge and action might strike one as a bit strange at first, for it seems that we often *know* we should (or should not) act in a certain way and yet we fail to act accordingly. Wang would simply deny this, but we have to understand much more about how he saw things in order to appreciate *why* he would hold such a view and what such a denial entails.

The problem of the relationship between moral knowledge and action is not unique to China, nor is China the only place where we find disagreement over how to address this issue. At first glance, Socrates seems to say something very similar to Wang; he believed that we could never act against knowledge. If we *knew* the good we would *do* the good, and if someone did not do the right thing, it must be the case that this person simply lacked complete knowledge of the good.[10] However, as we shall see, Socrates' view ends up being significantly different from Wang's. Socrates had an intellectualist view of moral action; he didn't fully appreciate how appetites, passions, and desires often interfere with our rational knowledge of what is right and prevent us from acting appropriately. In his own unique fashion, Wang was very concerned with just these aspects of human behavior and much of his philosophy concerns how to manage these various aspects of the self. In addition, Wang believed that moral knowledge brought forth new and needed

desires and affections; whereas, on the Socratic model, knowledge could at best redirect our inherent desires, appetites, and passions.

Given his understanding of things, Socrates did not have an adequate way to account for or accommodate problems like *weakness of will*. Later thinkers in the early Greek and western tradition developed more elaborate pictures of moral psychology in which different parts of the self could be in conflict with one another.[11] They also developed views of the self in which our different parts could influence and shape one another.[12] In time, the idea of a distinct mental power, the *will*, was introduced, as a way of bridging the gap that one often finds looming between the course of action we know we should take and what we actually do.[13] Of course, the notion of will, while answering certain vexing questions concerning the phenomenon of moral failure, generates special difficulties of its own. In particular, as a moral teacher, it leaves one in a difficult bind. For, when someone claims she *knows* what is right to do yet finds that she cannot act in accordance with her knowledge, if you are convinced that she does in fact know, all that seems to be left to do is to insist that she *just do it!* But what is a teacher to do if, as is often the case, the student insists, "I'm trying as hard as I can but find that I still can't do it!"?

This admittedly brief and selective survey of issues prepares the ground for our discussion of Wang's view of *the unity of knowledge and action*. Wang did not approach the problem of moral failure—cases where one knows one should act in a certain way but fails to so act—in terms of a Socratic lack of knowledge or Augustinian weakness of will. He had a different set of philosophical tools with which to work; prominent among them was a distinction between *zhenzhi* 眞知 "real knowledge" and *changzhi* 常知 "ordinary knowledge."[14] Later Confucians believed that there was a significant difference between *knowledge about* something and *knowledge of* something. The former kind of knowledge is "ordinary" in the sense that it is commonplace, most everyone has it. The latter kind of knowledge is "real" in that it arises out of personal experience and brings together both cognitive and affective types of knowing. This distinction is not universally applicable. For example, it doesn't apply to imaginary objects, like unicorns, which no one has *knowledge of*. But it may remain meaningful even in cases of highly abstract knowledge, such as mathematical knowledge; there is a significant difference between knowing about a given geometric proof and grasping its significance in the way a great mathematician does.[15] But Wang and his fellow Confucians were not much interested in these kinds of cases; they were primarily interested in moral knowledge and in this regard the distinction between "real" and "ordinary" knowledge does some major work.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand and appreciate the distinction between *real* and *ordinary* knowledge is to follow the Confucian practice

of explaining things by means of parable. Cheng Yi[16] captured the distinction between these two types of knowledge in a memorable way and used it to describe the relationship between moral knowledge and action. He said:

> *Real knowledge* is different from *ordinary knowledge*. I was once with a farmer who had been mauled by a tiger, when someone happened to mention that a tiger was mauling people in the area. [Naturally], everyone was alarmed. But this one farmer had on his face an expression that differed from the rest. Everyone, even a child, knows tigers maul people, but they do not possess *real knowledge*. It is only *real knowledge* if it is like that of the farmer. When people continue to do what they know they should not do, this is because they do not *really know* it is wrong. If they *really knew*, they would not do it.[17]

Real knowledge embraces both proper cognitive and affective aspects. In cases requiring moral action, one not only knows what to do but finds oneself properly motivated to do so. In genuine cases of real knowledge, an agent simply spontaneously moves toward the proper end. Those who possess such knowledge cannot but act in accordance with it; this is what separates them from most of us, who possess only ordinary knowledge. *Real knowledge* is self-activating in the same way that genuine virtues are; when faced with situations of a certain kind, a person with *real knowledge* will simply respond in an appropriate manner. There is no need to perceive, select, judge, and will; this is to have three acts too many. The perfected person responds like a mirror, accurately and immediately "reflecting" the situation at hand.[18]

On one occasion, Wang sets forth his views on this issue while answering one of his disciples. The disciple said:

> "Now there are people who, despite knowing they should be filial to their parents and respectful to their elder brother, cannot be filial or respectful. From this it is clear that knowledge and action are two separate things."
>
> [Wang replied, "In this case, knowledge and action] have already been separated by selfish desires; this is not the original state of knowledge and action. There have never been people who know but do not act. Those who know but do not act, simply do not yet know. . . . Thus the *Daxue* ("Great Learning") gives us examples of *real knowledge and action*, saying it is 'like loving a beautiful color or hating a bad odor.'"[19]

As mentioned earlier, Wang believed we all possess an innate, perfect, and fully formed moral mind which, in some deep sense, always knows

what we ought to do. But selfish desires interfere with the operation of this innate moral mind, our ever-present moral conscience, obscuring its effectiveness and bringing about the "separation" of knowledge and action. As Wang goes on to explain in the same passage,

> It is like a person with a stuffed-up nose. Even if he sees a malodorous object before him, he does not smell it, and so he does not hate it. This is simply not to know the odor. This is just like the case of saying someone [who does not act appropriately] knows filial piety or brotherly respect. That person must have already acted with filial piety or brotherly respect before he can be said to know them. One cannot say he knows filial piety or brotherly respect, simply because he knows how to say something filial or brotherly.

From his theoretical claim about the unity of knowledge and action, Wang draws the practical conclusion that one cannot possess *real knowledge* until one has actually acted in the appropriate way. For Wang, you cannot know what courage is until you have acted courageously and you cannot really understand what compassion is until you have acted compassionately. Someone who really "knows" courage or compassion will spontaneously act in a courageous or compassionate manner, whenever these are called for.

It should seem a bit odd that Wang considers the cases of hating a bad odor and loving a beautiful color as *actions*. We tend to regard these as *affections*—not *actions*.[20] However, Wang would insist that they are part of a continuum of *knowing*, *feeling*, *intending*, and *acting*. He expresses this organic unity of knowing and acting with the formula "Knowledge is the beginning of action and action the completion of knowledge."[21] Wang sees the problem of moral failure and the solution to the problem very differently from either Socrates or Augustine. For Socrates, the person who fails to act morally simply needs to know more. For Augustine, she needs to engage in an act of will. But for Wang, such a person needs to *become sincere,* i.e., be true to her innate moral mind. One accomplishes this by eliminating the obscuring influences of one's selfish thoughts.[22]

One often gets the impression that Wang saw himself as a spiritual *therapist* rather than a philosophical *theorist.* His primary concern was getting people moving in the right direction. A number of aspects of his philosophical position appear at best problematic and others are left rather vague. But in teaching individual students he is always clear, direct, and to the point. Often one can feel the power of his personality and the energy of his exchanges with students. It is clear that a great deal was at stake in these meetings and conversations. However, it is equally clear that much of what Wang accomplished was more the result of his inspiring presence and dramatic delivery than it was a consequence of the cogency of his arguments.[23]

Let us now turn to another aspect of Wang's theory of moral self cultivation and discuss what he thought we needed to do in order to become sincere. According to Wang, people deluded themselves and, in the process, lost sight of their innate moral mind. He believed the causes of this unfortunate phenomenon were numerous, but we shall restrict our attention to one cause which he seemed to find particularly bothersome, perhaps because it concerned a mistake in how to pursue self cultivation itself. This problem can best be described as the overintellectualization of the task of self cultivation.

Wang believed that in order for self cultivation to work, it had to directly concern the actual activities of one's own life. For example, one of Wang's disciples, who was an official, complained that he had inadequate time for self cultivation because he was so busy listening to litigation.[24] Wang jumped on this opportunity to make two related points to this disciple. First, he told him that he had ample opportunity to engage in self cultivation, for whenever he was listening to legal cases he could examine himself to see whether he was being perfectly sincere. During these times, he should guard against the intrusion of even the slightest selfish thought which would interfere with his performance as a fair and good judge. Second, this kind of opportunity is his only *real* opportunity for moral improvement. What he took to be moral self cultivation—studying some classic or engaging in meditation—isn't the best kind of self cultivation at all. At best, such pursuits might help him to avoid going further astray, but they will never help him advance. More likely, they will interfere with his moral growth, for he will come to regard them as ends unto themselves. This not only distracts attention from the true work of self cultivation—which must take place in the arena of one's own life—but over time, it will lead him to begin competing with others over who knows more about the classics, or he will mistake meditative calm as the goal and drift into quietism.

Wang described this aspect of his teachings in terms of a passage from the *Mengzi*, in which Mengzi talked about the need to continually work on the task of self cultivation. Wang understood a line from this passage in his own particular way. Mengzi had said, *biyou shiyan* 必有事焉 "always work at self cultivation."[25] Wang took this to mean, "[in self cultivation] always work on *your own personal problems*." That is to say, if you don't have your own problem to work on, self cultivation simply won't work. In fact, such effort often has extremely negative results. It can lead one away from genuine moral engagement and result in a profound alienation from morality and an obsession with selfish

pursuits. Trying to improve oneself morally, in the absence of some actual, personal moral problem was, according to Wang:

> just like cooking rice by heating a pot. If one does not put in water and rice, and only concentrates on adding fuel and starting the fire, I don't know what kind of thing you will cook up. I am afraid the pot will crack before the fire can be properly adjusted.[26]

Wang's point here can be understood in terms of the earlier discussion between ordinary and real knowledge. One will never attain real knowledge of morality unless one works on real problems. And the only real problems—those that engage one's heart and challenge one to become aware of and work to eliminate the selfishness that stands in the way of moral imporvement—are those that one confronts (or avoids) every day, in one's own life.

If I were to apply Wang's teaching to my own life, which of course he would insist I do if my goal is real knowledge, I would see many reasons for concern and only some for hope. This in itself might be seen as progress, since it generates some sense of my need for and the demanding nature of moral improvement. Since I am interested in ethics, Wang would want me to be careful not to confuse *knowing about* ethical philosophy with *being* a better person. While few philosophers would confuse these two (and none should), we do tend to believe—perhaps wrongly or at least too strongly—that a *theoretical* understanding of ethical issues plays a central role in becoming a better person. Instead, Wang emphasized the need to cultivate certain affective states and saw these as playing a critical *cognitive role* in moral understanding.[27] Wang would also warn me not to become obsessed with my interest in ethical philosophy or even my desire to become moral, for these too can become impediments to moral well-being. Either of these might lead me to ignore or even trample over family, friends, students, and colleagues in order, on one hand, to win professional success and recognition, or, on the other, to pursue a grim and lonely conception of moral improvement.

On the positive side, if I take up and follow Wang's advice, I will see that I have ample—practically speaking, unlimited—opportunities for moral self cultivation. For the proper objects of my moral attention are the actual affairs of my everyday life. I don't need to wait for dramatic opportunities that require moral courage, compassion, and wisdom of heroic proportions. Quite the contrary, I should concentrate on more modest moral challenges. I should work on monitoring and correcting my behavior as a son, husband, teacher, colleague, friend, etc. These areas of life present me with *real* moral problems, real in the sense that working through them will have efficacious results on my own moral

progress. Here again we clearly see the therapeutic orientation of Wang's thought.

I have described Wang's ideal method of self cultivation as, in at least one respect, more "modest." But it is important to realize that, taken as a whole, it is rather demanding; he insisted on uninterrupted self-scrutiny. He wanted us to maintain constant inner scrutiny of every thought and be ever-vigilant against the intrusion of selfishness. If we could sustain this state of uninterrupted inner vigilance, our innate moral minds would recognize each and every selfish thought as it arose. Such awareness in itself had the power to eliminate the selfishness, provided of course that our self-knowledge was sincere.[28] Wang describes this state in a dramatic and most memorable passage:

> This effort must be carried out continuously. Like eradicating robbers and thieves, one must resolve to wipe them out completely. In idle moments one must search out and discover each and every selfish thought for sex, wealth, fame and the rest. One must resolve to pluck out and cast away the root of the sickness, so that it can never arise again. Only then may one begin to feel at ease. One must, at all times, be like a cat catching mice—with eyes intently watching and ears intently listening. As soon as a single [selfish] thought begins to stir, one must conquer it and cast it out. Act as if you were cutting a nail in two or slicing through iron. Do not indulge or accommodate it in any way. Do not harbor it, and do not allow it to escape.[29]

I would like to explore one final aspect of Wang's views on self cultivation, which I will call the *existential flavor* of his teachings. Wang's beliefs about an innate moral mind and the need to pursue self cultivation in the affairs of one's own life led him to see moral choice as extremely context-sensitive, and the moral life as an intensely personal and rather isolated affair. We can understand these aspects of his thinking as results of his desire to reorient people to the critical importance of personal commitment in pursuit of the moral life, but it led Wang to be an extremely iconoclastic Confucian and gave his teachings what I am calling a kind of *existential flavor*.[30]

For example, one of Wang's earliest disciples, his brother-in-law Xu Ai, in a preface to the work now known as the 傳習錄 *Chuanxilu*, tells us that one day Wang noticed a student recording his instructions.[31] Wang admonished this disciple saying that he taught in the same way a doctor prescribes medicine, he diagnoses the problem with each student on a case-by-case basis, supplies and adjusts the dosage of the appropriate medicine, and in this way *cures* each student's spiritual malady. If someone writes down these prescriptions and starts passing them out to

people on the street, he will not only not help them, he will probably cause them great harm!

Of course, the student, and all his fellow students as well, immediately stopped writing down Wang's teachings. However, a short time later, the student who had been admonished by Wang discovered Xu Ai making a record of what the master had said. He immediately upbraided Xu Ai by repeating the words of the master. Xu calmly responded that he remembered the master's words well enough, and that unfortunately it seemed as if only *he* had truly understood them. For, as Xu Ai went on to explain, Wang's warning to not record his teachings was itself a prescription for a given ailment, a teaching tailored to a specific occasion and individual; it did not apply *now*, to Xu Ai.

This example illustrates the highly context-sensitive nature of moral judgment and the intensely personal character of moral decision in Wang's school. In Wang and his disciples we see a true religious faith in the power of the innate moral mind; they regarded it as a faculty, akin to seeing or hearing, that allowed them to realize what is right in each and every situation they encountered. If one could keep selfish thoughts from clouding the moral mirror of one's innate mind, it would spontaneously and accurately "reflect" the true dimensions and precise features of every situation that came before it. Borrowing a term from the *Mengzi*, Wang referred to this innate moral faculty as *liangzhi* 良知 "pure knowing."[32] One of his poems well represents his faith in the power of this inner light.

> The thousand sages are all passing shadows;
> *liangzhi* alone is my teacher.[33]

For Wang, one should always steer by one's own inner light; first, because each moral choice is original and unique, and, second, because only such choices provide one with genuine opportunities for moral self cultivation. Such views led him, among other things, to a less reverential attitude toward the Confucian tradition. He once said:

> In learning, the important thing is to get it with the mind. Even words from the mouth of Kongzi, if one seeks in one's mind and finds them to be wrong, dare not be accepted as true. . . . Even words from the mouth of an ordinary person, if one seeks in one's mind and finds them to be correct, dare not be regarded as false.[34]

Wang went so far as to imply that we would be better off without the Confucian classics themselves, since at best these are records of past examples of the moral mind at work. At one point, he even condones the infamous "burning of the books" by the notorious first emperor of the Qin dynasty.[35] According to Wang, we cannot improve ourselves by mimicking the classics, for *our* task is here, at hand, in our own lives. The classics and the sages themselves had no clear role to play in Wang's conception of the Confucian tradition. They cannot offer one *real knowledge* and pose potential threats to genuine practice.

The individuality of moral self cultivation led Wang to present the moral life as one which often led to a kind of righteous isolation.[36] Wang's followers had an awesome moral duty that compelled them to act in ways that most people simply could not understand. He once described this situation:

> There have been times when a man sees his father, son or brother falling into a deep ravine and drowning. He cries out and goes crawling, half-dressed and barefoot, stumbling and falling [in a mad dash] to save them. He dangles from dangerous cliffs and precipices in order to reach them. Looking on are some "proper gentlemen," who chattering and laughing amongst themselves and ceremoniously bowing to one another, consider the man to be insane, for so discarding proper etiquette—stripping off his clothes, crying out, stumbling and falling like this. . . . But [this man] pays no mind even to the danger of drowning, much less is he concerned about being ridiculed as insane! . . . There is nothing wrong with people saying that I am insane. The minds of all people throughout the world are the same as my mind. While there still are people who are insane—how can I not be so? While there still are people who have lost their minds—how can I not lose mine.[37]

In Wang, we see a radical version of Mengzi's moral intuitionism and a unique expression of the Confucian vision. Though iconoclastic in many ways, Wang himself was a consummate Confucian gentleman, a dedicated official, and a tireless moral teacher. His commitment to the moral life and his belief that this life consists of the cultivation of the self and the improvement of society, with the ultimate goal being the perfection of both, reveals him to be an original and worthy member of Kongzi's lineage.

Notes

1. Tu Wei-ming has written an interesting work on Wang's early life, a Neo-Confucian version of Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther*. See his *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976). Julia Ching's study of Wang's spiritual quest is also most valuable. See *To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

Wing-tsit Chan has produced the most important translation of Wang's teachings. See his *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). Julia Ching's translation of Wang's philosophical letters is also an important source. See *The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1973). My *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition* compares aspects of Wang's ethical philosophy to aspects in Mengzi's thought and argues that Wang represents a distinct and quite radical form of the Mengzian vision.

2. Chang Yü-ch'üan wrote a most helpful series of articles on Wang's political and military accomplishments. See his "Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman," *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 23: 30-99, 155-7, 319-75, 473-517. A reprint of these articles is now available: (Arlington, VA: University Publications of America, 1975).

3. This is not to say that Daoism and Buddhism did not continue to be influential or develop after this point in Chinese history. However, Confucianism regained considerable strength and influence beginning around this time and there was a true renaissance of Confucian thinking.

4. For Wang's use of the sun and clouds imagery, see Chan, *Instructions*, sections 21, 62, 76, 167, and 171. For the mirror and dust imagery, see sections 207, 237, 255, 289, and 290. This of course only gives us examples from one record of Wang's teachings; these are not the only examples nor the only metaphors he uses to convey his view of things.

5. I use the former to refer to Zhu Xi's view and the latter to Wang Yangming's. While these two models share many similar assumptions, they tend to diverge over the issues of how accessible moral knowledge is and what is the necessary or best way to engage this knowledge and get it to inform one's perceptions, judgments, and actions.

6. Wang uses the character *wu* 悟 "enlightenment" (familiar to many in the west by its Japanese pronounciation, "satori") some thirty times in the course of the major collection of his teachings, the *Chuanxilu*. This character and this general way of talking about moral development are not found anywhere in the *Mengzi*. The idea that some people are able to attain an immediate understanding of the true nature of the mind and that this itself is true practice can be seen most clearly in the famous "Teaching in Four Axioms" (Chan, section 315). This conversation, between Wang and his two most advanced students, finds a clear parallel in chapter 16 of the *Platform Sutra*.

7. See p. 51.

8. Perhaps the earliest explicit reference to this problem is found in the *History*, where a minister named Fu Yue declares to his king that, "It is not knowing that is difficult but acting." See James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3, The Shoo King*, reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970): 258. For a study of the history of this idea from

Wang Yangming to Mao Zedong, see David S. Nivison, "The Problem of 'Knowledge' and 'Action' in Chinese Thought Since Wang Yang-ming," in Arthur F. Wright, ed., *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953): 112-45.

9. See Michael Gallagher, tr., *Runaway Horses* (New York: Pocket Books, 1975): 353-4.

10. Socrates purportedly put forth this view in the *Protagoras* (349e-361c). See W. K. C. Guthrie, tr. (London: Penguin Books, 1979).

11. For example, in Book IV of the *Republic* (412b-427c), Plato introduces a tripartite picture of the soul in which the passionate and appetitive parts vie with our desire for the good, which is associated with the rational part of the soul. See the *Republic*, G. M. A. Grube, tr., C. D. C. Reeve, rev. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992).

12. Aristotle presents his view of the intellect's ability to shape the passions and appetites through habituation to the good in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1103a15-1103b25 and 1144b1-1145a5). See Terence Irwin, tr., (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985). For an extremely helpful study of Aristotle's view of moral learning, see M. F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to be Good," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980): 69-92. For an essay that focuses on the executive role that the intellect plays in this process, see Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of the Intellect in Virtue," in the same volume, pp. 201-19.

13. In *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, Albrecht Dihle argues that Augustine is the first to articulate a distinct mental power, *voluntas* ("will"), which directs and orders human desires and that this discovery arose out of his personal struggle as described in the *Confessions*.

14. For a discussion of the early development of this distinction, see my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, pp. 66-7.

15. Wang's distinction in some ways resembles Gilbet Ryle's distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how." People can know that dribbling a basketball entails handling it in a certain specific way and yet may be wholly incapable of so handling it. They know what dribbling is but lack the know-how to do it. See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949): 25-61.

16. See p. 43.

17. *Henan Chengshi yishu*, 2A:2b-3a (*SBBY*).

18. This is Wang's way of talking, and it conveys his view of things very well. However, the mirror metaphor breaks down at a certain point: for mirrors do not *act*, whereas the sage surely does. Cf. pp. 45-6.

19. Adapted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 5.

20. This point was first made by David S. Nivison. See his "Review of *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming* by Wing-tsit Chan and *Instructions for Practical Life* by Goodrich Henke," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 84.4 (1964): 437.

21. See Chan, *Instructions*, section 5. Wang also uses the formula, "Knowledge and action advance together." See sections 133, 136.

22. I follow the standard practice of translating the Chinese character *cheng* 誠 as "sincere" with the qualification that this means "true to one's innate moral mind." A. C. Graham sought to bring out this sense of the word by translating it as "integrity." See his *Two Chinese Philosophers*. The idea is that a thing is *cheng* when it is as it ought to be, i.e., when it follows its *li*. And so being sincere for Wang means realizing or bringing into being the true state of one's nature. This is appropriately thought of as "integrity."

23. In some respects, Wang was a kind of spiritual coach, but he was also a kind of *guru* figure to his disciples. For an interesting study that explores the various facets of Wang as a religious teacher by applying insights borrowed from Kierkegaard, see Lee H. Yearley, "Teachers and Saviors," *The Journal of Religion*, 65.2 (April, 1985): 225-43.

24. For this passage, see Chan, *Instructions*, section 218. Cf. 137 and 294. In the latter passage, we find Wang himself listening to and resolving a difficult legal case in a most ingenious manner.

25. For a more complete discussion of this aspect of Wang's teaching, see my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, pp. 83-4, 89-90.

26. See my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, p. 84. Cf. Chan, *Instructions*, section 186.

27. One's affective state can play a critical role in how one perceives a given situation. For example, when a totally heartless person, walking home on a winter's night, comes upon a shivering homeless person blocking his path, all he might see is an obstacle to his progress. Such a deficiency proved tragic for King Lear: "[He] that will not see, because he does not feel" (*King Lear*, 4.1, 70-1). See Kenneth Muir, ed. (London: Methuen and Company Ltd. 1952): 151. I owe the reference to Bryan W. Van Norden.

28. See Chan, *Instructions*, sections 241, 290.

29. See my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, p. 85. Cf. Chan, *Instructions*, section 39.

30. Okada Takehiko sees Wang's thought as strongly existential. See his "Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism," in Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970): 121-44. David S. Nivison offers some important qualifications to such a view. See his "Moral Decision in Wang Yang-ming: The Problem of

Chinese 'existentialism'," *Philosophy East and West*, 23.1-2 (1973): 121-38. I have explored this issue in more depth in an article discussing these two early treatments. See "Existentialism in the School of Wang Yangming" in Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed., *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture*, (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Press, 1996): 250-64. See also Nivison's response on pp. 336-41 of the same volume.

31. The *Chuanxilu* is the work translated by Chan and Henke. A translation of the preface can be found in Appendix I of my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, pp. 115-16.

32. The term occurs only once, in 7A15, and there lacks the special sense it has in Wang's use. Roughly speaking, for Mengzi it described a nascent capacity while for Wang it described an innate faculty.

33. *Wang Wenchenggong quanshu*, 20.632b (*SBCK*).

34. Chan, *Instructions*, section 173.

35. For this reference and a general discussion of Wang's attitude toward the classics, see my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*, pp. 102-112. For an account of the burning of the books by the Qin, see Derk Bodde, *China's First Unifier: A Study of the Ch'in Dynasty as Seen in the Life of Li Ssu* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938): 22-4, 162-6.

36. Wang's own moral enlightenment occured during a time of deep isolation, when he unjustly was banished to Guizhou. So, in his own case, the moral conviction arose *out of* isolation. I owe this observation to Betsy Lancefield.

37. Cf. Chan, *Instructions*, section 181.

by Zhang Xuecheng. For a discussion, see Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsueh-ch'eng 1738-1801*, pp. 150-1.

38. Yan began to study medicine in 1656 (see *Nianpu, sui* 22) and began to practice around two years later (see *Nianpu, sui* 24).

39. Huang Di, along with Qi Bo below, are ancient paragons of the medical profession and co-authors of the *Suwen*. The *Jingui* and *Yuhan* are other early works on the art of healing.

40. *Cunxue bian, juan* 1 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 50. Cf. Freeman, *Preservation of Learning*, pp. 81-2.

41. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, George Lawrence, tr., J. P. Mayer, ed. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969), p. 287. For a contemporary study of American habits of the heart, see Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, reprint (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986) and *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

戴震

7. Dai Zhen

Dai Zhen (1723-1777 C.E.) is the best known and most respected thinker of China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911 C.E.).[1] His intellectual contributions are remarkable in their breadth alone; he produced significant works on mathematics, astronomy, geography, philology, phonetics, and philosophy. He is best known for his philological studies and for his contributions to the Imperial Library Compilation known as the *Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 "Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries."[2] I will focus on an aspect of his work for which he was neither well known nor particularly respected, at least in his own lifetime: his ethical philosophy.[3] In particular, in keeping with our stated theme, I will explore his view of moral self cultivation.

Dai's ethical philosophy is extremely original and distinctive among Confucian thinkers. This is probably why his contemporaries were a bit perplexed by this aspect of his thought and why he remains little understood or appreciated even in our own time. Unlike other Neo-Confucians, Dai did not espouse the assiduous practice of rites; he did not practice or advocate a life of constant inner scrutiny, nor did he engage in quiet sitting. His method of self cultivation was much more cerebral or academic in character. He saw moral improvement exclusively as an intellectual, scholarly endeavor. Dai was never a moral teacher, in the style of Zhu Xi; much less was he a kind of spiritual *guru* in the manner of Wang Yangming. He was a rather withdrawn and bookish person, but one who had a genuine intellectual passion for moral knowledge. And if he was right in believing that a proper understanding of the classics was the key to moral improvement, there would be little need or room for spiritual guides or gurus.[4]

Some interpreters of Dai's thought see a deep tension, if not an outright conflict, between his dual interests in ethical philosophy and philological studies.[5] I will argue that such an understanding of Dai's thought misses the essence of his philosophy. For Dai there was no genuine philosophy outside of philology, and true philology was *always* philosophical in nature. Philology was the very method of philosophy. The introduction to one of Dai's two main philosophical essays, the *Yuan Shan* 原善 "On the Good," shows that such a view was the motivation and guiding assumption of this important work.[6]

> I first composed the *Yuan Shan* in three chapters [but] I feared that students would be misled by their individual interests, and so I drew supporting passages from the classics and used these to explain and verify my work. I separated the three chapters and made each of them an opening [section] and then supplemented each of these [with supporting passages from the classics] to form three books, grouping together material that agreed in kind and meaning so each point and every detail was clearly displayed.
>
> The Ways of Heaven and human beings are revealed completely in the great lessons of the classics. But since the present age is so far removed from the wisdom of the sages of old, among those who study the classics, none is able to gain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of them. Habituated by what they see and hear, they accumulate falsehoods and turn them into "truths". . . .

Dai explains how he had originally written a rather speculative philosophical essay in three parts, concerning the central terms of art in Confucian thought. But he realized that in order to carry forth his argument, he needed to present evidence for the positions he described by quoting from the classics. Consequently, he divided up the original essay into three parts and used each of these to introduce extended examples drawn from various classical texts. It is possible to interpret Dai as saying that he used the classics to verify truths that he had arrived at through a process of philosophical reflection, but a careful reading of this preface and his other work shows that Dai believed that the process that led him to a true understanding of the Way worked in very much the opposite direction, it was *derived from* a proper understanding of the truths inscribed in the classics. For him, the projects of philosophy and philology were coextensive; one found the truth by getting the classics *right* and one got the classics right by doing careful textual work.

> It is precisely because sheer speculation cannot lead one to the philosophical ideas of the sages of antiquity that one has to seek them from the ancient classics. Since messages contained in the surviving records have gradually fallen into oblivion due to the expanse of time between the past and the present, one therefore has to seek them through philological studies [of the classics]. Thus only if philology is clear, can the ancient classics be understood; and only if the classics are understood, can the sages' philosophical ideas then be grasped.[7]

This paragraph, as well as many other things that Dai said, can be understood as his particular interpretation of Kongzi's teaching that, "Study without reflection is a waste. Reflection without study is a danger."[8] According to Dai, learning requires that one reflect on a specific corpus of texts in a specific way. One needs to reflect upon the classics in the sense of submitting them to careful, critical, and comprehensive philological analysis. Only in this way could one be sure of arriving at a proper understanding. "Reflection" in the sense of "sheer speculation" could only lead one astray. Once one appreciates this aspect of Dai Zhen's vision, one can see why he wrote the kinds of philosophical books he did and why he focused on the kinds of problems he chose to explore. Both the *Yuan Shan* and his magnum opus, the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證 "The Meaning of Terms in the *Mengzi* Explained and Verified,"[9] are philological explorations of classical Confucian philosophy. These works were organized around two guiding aims: a refutation of contemporary *misunderstandings* of the classics and an *exposition* of the true meaning of these cherished texts. Dai was greatly concerned with disabusing the people of his age of their mistaken interpretations of the classics. He fervently believed that the views current in his age were deeply stained by Daoist and Buddhist influences, and he sought to expurgate these and return to the original meaning of the classics. These points are elegantly and powerfully made in the preface to the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

> Mengzi disputed [the doctrines of] Yang and Mo. [But] later people are accustomed to hearing the doctrines of Yang, Mo, Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddha. Moreover, they have used these doctrines to disrupt and confuse the doctrines of Mengzi. This is why those who come after Mengzi again cannot refrain [from engaging in debate].[10] Were I unable to understand this, then that would be the end of it. But to understand and not speak out—that would be disloyalty! I would be turning my back on the learning of the sages and worthies of old and distancing myself from the benevolence of the good people of my own age and those of later generations. Apprehensive about this, I composed the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*. Han Yü[11] said, "To follow the teachings of Yang, Mo, Lao, Zhuang, and the Buddha with the hope of reaching the Way of the sage, is like navigating a closed off harbor or cut off lake with the hope of reaching the sea. And so, those who seek to gaze upon the Way of the sage must begin with Mengzi."

Dai was a strong ethical realist, and he believed that one approached moral truth by getting clear about the facts of the matter. The knowledge one gains through study leads to moral understanding. For him, self cultivation consisted in a systematic, critical, comprehensive, careful, and thorough study of the classics; in his own terms, study nourishes one's

Though he criticizes them relentlessly, Dai is actually closer to Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming than he is to the early Confucians he claimed to defend and sought to emulate. First, like Zhu and Wang, Dai believes that we *already* possess appropriate moral feelings. The problem is that we also have many inappropriate feelings that obscure and interfere with those that are correct. In contrast, Mengzi believed that appropriate feelings need to be cultivated; our nascent sprouts must be strengthened, expanded, and extended in order to fulfill the demands of morality. Xunzi believed that appropriate feelings need to be acquired; we have some desires and feelings that can be conscripted into the moral cause but even these are like raw clay, in need of shape and texture. Second, for Dai our central problem is that we have too many feelings and need to weed out the inappropriate ones—those that are "mere opinion." For him, the process of self cultivation is a filtering-out of erroneous influences, namely, any thought, inclination, or desire that is *si* 私 "selfish." This is much closer to Zhu's or Wang's view than it is to any early Confucian. In general, Neo-Confucians saw moral self cultivation more as a paring-away of the bad rather than a building up of the good—however the later is conceived. What is distinctive about Dai is the degree to which he relies upon the intellect and specifically upon scholarly endeavor to achieve this end.

Given this picture of Dai's ethical philosophy, it would seem that he is not altogether clear about an issue that is central to Mengzi's theory of moral self cultivation. Recall that for Mengzi, morality is satisfying in the same way that good food and pleasant sights and sounds are satisfying. For him, a special kind of joy marks the moral act as moral. This joy also makes moral self cultivation possible, by providing positive reinforcement for the good actions one performs. Dai clearly endorses the idea that *any* moral action one does produces a feeling of joy, if only one reflects upon it.

> When Mengzi said, "Principle and righteousness please my mind just as the flesh of grass and grain fed animals pleases my palate," this was not a metaphor. Whenever one does something that accords with principle and righteousness, one's heart and spirit will always be joyful and contented.[16]

However, as we have seen, Dai believes that in order to *recognize* something as a case of principle or righteousness, one must already have passed it through the golden rule's universalizability test. It would seem that one can experience the joy of moral action only after one has discovered what is *necessary* and understands the *unchanging standard* behind one's action.[17]

And so Dai seems to require a second-order knowledge of the necessary moral standard in order to experience the joy of moral action. While Mengzi does believe that in order to appreciate the joy of moral action we must be aware of the fact that we are motivated by our moral sense, he does not seem to require the kind of abstract understanding Dai insists upon, as a prerequisite to experiencing the joy of moral action.[18] Perhaps the way to relieve this apparent tension within Dai's thought is to understand him as saying that we will enjoy every truly moral action that we perform, but we will only experience the *full joy* of such actions when we understand their underlying principles completely. Such a position, though not explicitly held by Mengzi, would seem to be consistent with his general picture of moral self cultivation.

Much of Dai's philosophical project involved a refutation of the views of thinkers like Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. He believed that such thinkers had unknowingly incorporated Daoist and Buddhist ideas into the Confucian school and perverted its message. Dai relied upon rather straight-forward philological arguments in order to make his case against the Neo-Confucians. For example, he repudiated the notion that the mind contained *li* "principle" or that it is principle[19] by deploying careful philological arguments supported by extensive classical references.[20] He argued decisively and convincingly, that in the classical texts of Confucianism, the term *li* never had the kinds of senses that Neo-Confucians later ascribed to it According to Dai, Zhu and Wang had lost sight of the fact that *li* simply meant "good order." It is the orderly pattern of the universe which we can come to understand through careful examination and study. It is not *within us* already; it is something we come to realize through acquiring certain kinds of knowledge and augmenting this with a systematic application of the Confucian golden rule.

> In the Six Classics, the *Analects* and *Mengzi* and even in the various biographies and other records [from ancient times], one does not often see the character *li* "principle." But nowadays even the most ignorant people, no matter how perverse or dissolute, will quickly invoke the notion of *principle* whenever they decide an affair or upbraid another. Ever since the Song dynasty, it has become the common practice and established custom to regard *principle* as if it were a thing received from Heaven and lodged in the heart and mind, and to take the opinions of the heart and mind as according with principle.[21]

Dai Zhen had begun with a faith in the classics and the sages, and his careful, objective study of the language and history of these convinced him that the true meaning of the classics had been lost. He believed that

he had arrived at their truth by relying on careful research and reasoning, and this in turn convinced him that the truth of the classics itself is rational and demonstrable. The truth of the classics must itself be an *unchanging standard*, something that is *necessary*. But if the classics themselves are simply a manifestation of this unchanging standard and one can arrive at this standard through the careful application of the Confucian golden rule, it would seem as if one should be able to realize the standard simply by appeal to the rule. Why would one need to proceed by way of the classics?

It seems as if Dai has climbed the ladder of the classics and could, at this point, very well have kicked it away. He did not, and it is clear why he did not; he never considered doing philosophy in any way other than *through* the classics. In this he remained true to some of the oldest promptings within the Confucian tradition. He saw his quest to discern the teachings of the sages as a task of *finding* not *making*, more a matter of *xue* "study" than *si* "reflecting."[22] For him, providing an account of *why* one does what one does is a task one can only approach *after* one has mastered the classics. It is only through such a course of study that one can *become* the kind of person who will make the right choices; this in turn provides one with the understanding necessary for discerning the pattern behind one's actions. In this respect, moral understanding is regarded as like the knowledge of a craft. For Dai, as for many Confucians, rules, such as the golden rule, were never regarded as free standing justifications for action.[23]

Because Dai relied on intellect over moral intuition, many scholars have likened him to Xunzi, and the comparison is neither unwarranted nor unhelpful. Yet we must recognize that, in respect to the classics and the sages, their philosophies are very different. Xunzi had faith that a calm and careful analysis of traditional rituals and norms would eventually convince anyone that they are the unique solution to life. But he insisted that one could only come to such an understanding by diligently *practicing* these traditional forms for many years under the strict discipline and guidance of a proper teacher. Those who are just beginning to learn the Way are largely unaware of the reasons that justify the things they practice. They are simply to obey their teachers and apply themselves diligently until they have enough experience and information to begin to see how the whole thing fits together. For Xunzi, one's *practice* of the *Dao* runs far ahead of one's *understanding* of it. For this reason, there was never any danger of dispensing with the lessons of the classics and the examples of the sages. Xunzi saw individual moral intuition as a threat to tradition. In particular, he worried that Mengzi was advocating a form of intuitionism that left no clear role for either the classics or the sages.[24]

In principle, it would seem that Dai Zhen is open to a similar charge, since he appears to have believed that one could *reason* one's way to moral truth through the careful application of the Confucian golden rule. Had he taken just one more step and regarded the rule as a decision procedure for generating only and all proper actions, he would have been open to such criticism; he might well have ended up following one influential steam of contemporary western ethical philosophy, a stream which has little interest in appeals to traditional wisdom. But Dai did not see things this way. He was very much a traditionalist and dedicated his life to discovering and making clear the genuine truths of the Confucian tradition and distinguishing these from the dross of Daoism and Buddhism. He never separated his ethical philosophical principle (universalizability) from his philology (the study of the classics). Had he done so, he might have seen some of the notorious problems that arise when one takes this final step, but had he taken it, he would no longer have been a traditional Confucian self cultivationist.

Notes

1. For a brief biography of Dai Zhen, see "Tai Chen," in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1911)*, vol. 2, Arthur Hummel, ed. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943-44): 695-700. Brief descriptions of his philosophy with selected translations can be found in Chan, *Source Book*, pp. 709-22 and Fung, *History*, pp. 651-672. A general introduction, now quite dated, can be found in Mansfield Freeman, "The Philosophy of Tai Tung-yuan," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 64 (1933): 50-71. See also the translations noted below.

2. For a good discussion of Dai's different kinds of work and his place in Chinese intellectual history, see Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

3. Dai Zhen is still not well understood or appreciated as a philosopher. Wing-tsit Chan purportedly explains why Dai did not exert a great deal of influence in his own age by saying his doctrines "are not really profound." See Chan, *Source Book*, p. 711.

4. There was a fascinating and on going debate within the Confucian tradition regarding what the proper role and function of a teacher was. Many Confucians wrote essays with titles like *Shi shuo* 師說 "Discourse on Teachers" often criticizing earlier views and arguing for their own specific perspective. For an example of such an essay, see the translation of Han Yü's *Shi shuo* in Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Burton Watson, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960): 374-5.

5. For example, Yü Ying-shih argues that throughout his life, Dai was torn between the competing claims of philosophy and philology until in the end philosophy won out. See his "Tai Chen's Choice between Philosophy and Philology," *Asia Major*, n.s. 2.1 (1989): 79-108.

6. There is a translation of this work by Cheng Chung-ying, but unfortunately it is unreliable and obscures the structure and plan of the original text. See Cheng Chung-ying, tr., *Tai Chen's Inquiry into Goodness* (Honolulu, HI: East West Center Press, 1969).

7. Translation by Yü Ying-shih. See his "Tai Chen's Choice," pp. 83-4.

8. *Analects* 2.15. See Chapter 1, p. 2 and Chapter 3, p. 37.

9. There are several translations of this work now available. The most recent version is Ann-ping Chin and Mansfield Freeman, tr., *Tai Chen on Mencius: Explorations in Words and Meanings* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990). This is generally an unreliable work. A much better translation is Torbjörn Lodén, tr., "Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 60 (Stockholm: 1988): 165-313. The best translation of the text is by John W. Ewell, Jr., "Reinventing the Way: Dai Zhen's *Evidential Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in Mencius* (1777)" (Berkeley, CA: Unpublished PhD Dissertation in history, 1990).

10. Dai Zhen is drawing a comparison between himself and Mengzi as defenders of the faith who "could not but engage in disputation," the point being that neither he nor Mengzi was fond of disputation. See *Mengzi* 3B9. Cf. the discussion of Zhu Xi's relationship to Mengzi above, p. 43.

11. Han Yü (768-824 C.E.) is often considered to be one of the central figures in the revival of Confucianism. The quote is from a preface entitled *Song Wang xiucai* ("Parting Praise for Licentiate Wang") in *Han Changli quanji*, 20.7a-b (*SBBY*).

12. See section 9 of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

13. Dai focused upon the notion of *shu* 恕 "sympathetic understanding," the ability to gauge what others desire by reflecting upon one's own desires. Cf. *Mengzi* 7A4.

14. See section 2 of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

15. From section 43 of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

16. *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, section 8. The quoted lines are from *Mengzi* 6A7.

17. This appears to be true at least for those who are starting out on the process of moral self cultivation. An individual who has developed a thorough and complete understanding of moral principles through a life of study and reflection, having formed her mind so that it is in complete accord with principle, might no longer need to engage in this intellectual exercise.

18. Mengzi's long exchange with King Xuan of Qi in *Mengzi* 1A7 shows that the king did not fully appreciate or enjoy his sparing of the ox until Mengzi led him to see that it was motivated by his moral sprouts.

19. The views of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, respectively.

20. For example, see sections 1 through 10 of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

21. Section 5 of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.

22. Here again we can see Dai's views as elaborate reflections of one of Kongzi's basic teachings. In *Analects* 7.1, Kongzi insists that he is one who *shu er bu zuo* 述而不作 "transmits rather than creates." Cf. Chapter 1, p. 1.

23. I have argued that the golden rule can never provide such a freestanding justification for action. By itself, it proves inert; it must be embedded in a surrounding ethic in order to function effectively. See my "Reweaving the 'one thread' of the *Analects*."

24. As we have seen, this cannot be considered a fair criticism of Mengzi's position. However, it is not altogether inappropriate in the case of Wang Yangming; many of his later followers clearly took the idea of intuitionism to a radical extreme.

version of this work are Mark Berkson, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, Shari Ruei-hua Epstein, Eric L. Hutton, Paul Kjellberg, T. C. Kline III, Pauline Chen Lee, Joel Sahleen, Edward Gilman "Ted" Slingerland III, and Mark Ty Unno.

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Notes

1. Readers may be familiar with Mengzi through his Latinized name "Mencius," but in this volume I will employ the former. Similarly, "Confucius" is a Latinization of 孔夫子 *Kongfuzi* "Great Teacher Kong," but I will use his most common Chinese name, Kongzi.

Introduction

Before turning to the seven individual thinkers and their respective theories of self cultivation, let us begin by exploring the more general question of why the Chinese originated and maintained such an enduring concern with the issue of moral self cultivation. For while such a concern with self cultivation is by no means unique, the prominence that this theme has enjoyed throughout different Chinese traditions—Daoist and Buddhist as well as Confucian—is distinctive. For example, while certain western thinkers, notably Aristotle, were deeply interested in self cultivation, this was not as central a theme in the western ethical tradition taken as a whole. Western philosophers have been much more concerned with trying to define what the good is and worrying about how, if at all, one can come to know the good. Chinese thinkers have focused instead on the problem of how to become good. Moral self cultivation is one of the most thoroughly and regularly discussed topics among Chinese ethical philosophers. Why this is so is a complex issue. Parts of the account that I provide are admittedly speculative and to some degree the narrative presented here offers a cropped and idealized picture of a much more involved and extensive story. Nevertheless we can be confident that one very early notion—the concept of virtue—played a central role in the development of Chinese theories of self cultivation.

The story we are interested in can be traced at least as far back as the twelfth century B.C.E., the latter part of a period known as the Shang dynasty, and is recorded on animal bones and shells, that were used for divination, and ceremonial vessels and instruments of bronze.[1] In these inscriptions, we encounter an early form of a Chinese character that now is written 德 and which in the modern Mandarin dialect is pronounced *de* "virtue."[2] In these early contexts, *de* "virtue" was a kind of power that accrued to and resided within an individual who had acted favorably toward a spirit or another person. The favor shown could be some common act of kindness or in the case of a spirit the presentation of an appropriate sacrificial offering. It was believed that the recipients of such favorable treatment would naturally feel a psychic debt toward their benefactor and this feeling would, in turn, engender a desire to *bao* 報 "respond to" or "repay" the *de* "virtue" or "kindness" shown to them.

A related notion at the center of this cluster of concepts is another character, *de* 得 "to get" or "gain," which is etymologically related to *de* "virtue," phonetically, graphically, and semantically. One who has *de* "virtue" *de* "gets," i.e., "has some hold on" someone; virtue is a kind of power. In the context we are examining, it is specifically a power over

others but one that, as we shall see, paradoxically cannot be used to manipulate others for one's own private ends.

In later, but still quite old sources, the notion of *de* "virtue" finds various but related expressions. These share the general sense that the *de* of a given thing is its inherent power or tendency and in particular its natural effect on other people and things. So, for example, we find passages in which a woman's sexual attractiveness is described as a manifestation of her womanly *de*.[3] A person or thing can have bad as well as good *de*[4] but in either case those who come within the presence of a person's *de* will be influenced by it—the nature of the influence often depending upon the character of the affected as well as the nature of the *de* involved. Across the different meanings this character has, *de* retains the sense of an inherent, spontaneously functioning power to affect others.

In the early oracle bone inscriptions, the notion of *de* is almost always found in contexts concerning rulers and had the sense of that virtue particular to a good ruler: royal virtue. Royal virtue enabled a king to accomplish a great deal but most importantly it enabled him to *de* "get" the endorsement of various Nature and ancestral spirits. Such support was thought to be necessary for him to gain and maintain his rule, for those spirits could—if properly induced—intercede on the ruler's behalf with the high god *Shangdi* 上帝 "The Lord on High," who ultimately controlled the forces of Nature and human destiny.

It is not altogether clear how one originally comes to possess royal virtue. It may be that virtue, at first, was something that *Shangdi* or *tian* 天 "Heaven" *ming* 命 "orders" or "decrees" for certain individuals. That a given person possesses virtue and is granted *tianming* 天命 "Heaven's Mandate" to rule, could simply be a matter of "fate," a meaning that the character *ming* had and still retains.[5] Or perhaps, even at this early stage in its history, *de* was thought to be something that one must earn through the accumulation of good acts. In any event, only a ruler who maintained a proper relationship with the spiritual world—and this entailed regular sacrifices and proper piety as well—could preserve his *de* "power" to rule.

With the emergence of a new ruling line, known to us as the Zhou dynasty, around the eleventh century B.C.E.,[6] the notions of *ming* "fate" and *de* "virtue" began to change.[7] A new sense of *ming* came into use in discussions about a king's ability to rule and the legitimacy of his rule. In such contexts, *ming* no longer had any strong connotation of "fate"; it came to mean the "Mandate (of Heaven),"[8] something a ruler could either earn or forfeit. An improper ruler, one who neglected his ritual duties, dissipated his *de*, while one who was scrupulous in his conduct preserved and could even augment his personal power. The king now was thought to have a moral and religious obligation to *jing* 敬 "revere" or "take

reverential care of" his virtue. He did this primarily by paying strict attention to his ritual duties as king. These duties were numerous and varied, but underlying them all is the idea that the king must put the good of the people before the satisfaction of his personal desires. At times, the king might even be called upon to put himself at risk in order to benefit his people.[9] A king who failed to revere his virtue, by indulging his personal desires at the expense of his royal duties, would dissipate his virtue. His power would grow weak and eventually he would lose "Heaven's Mandate" to rule. In such a case, the *ming* "mandate" to rule would pass to another ruler or line who have demonstrated their moral worthiness to rule.

The Zhou rulers invoked the idea of a change in the Heavenly mandate to explain and legitimate their success over the preceding Shang dynasty, whose rulers they depict as profoundly self-indulgent and corrupt. They also used it to diagnose their own failures. For example, when the Zhou ruler was defeated by a coalition of local lords and border peoples in 771 B.C.E., it was interpreted as a testament to his personal moral failure. It seems that this particular king was fascinated with a lovely concubine named Baosi who took inordinate delight in having the king light the series of beacon fires used to summon his loyal vassals in times of attack.[10] To amuse Baosi the king had the fires lit on a number of occasions and his vassals dutifully rallied their armies and came to his defense. But after a number of such false alarms, they tired of this game, and when the real attack came, the fires were lit, but the call for help went unanswered. This ruler faltered and his rule failed because he put his own selfish interests before his role-specific duties as king.

The duties incumbent upon a king were defined by an increasingly explicit and complicated set of ceremonies and social practices known collectively as the *li* 禮 "rites" or "rituals." These included everything from formal, high religious ceremonies to the conduct of government and, as in the story above, included such things as one's personal deportment and behavior. Since everything the ruler did contributed, in some measure, to the character of his *de*, almost everything he did took on great significance. One can begin to see how the trajectory of this line of thinking leads naturally to a concern with moral self cultivation.

During this period, we see two related shifts in the Chinese religious and philosophical paradigm that were important for the emerging ethical consciousness. First, an appeal to kinship was no longer seen as sufficient grounds to legitimate one's rule. Heaven's Mandate was no longer simply viewed as a hereditary right, a question of fate. Rather, the right to rule was thought to depend upon the ritual propriety of the ruler.[11] But maintaining ritual propriety was not simply acting in a certain way; much more important was acting out of proper motivations.[12] Second,

and this is critical, the virtuous disposition of the agent is what was valued—not simply the agent's overt behavior. These features of Zhou dynasty ethical and religious thought became central tenets of later Confucian philosophy and were developed with increasing sophistication as the tradition evolved. But the unmistakable precedents for these ideas can be seen in very early literature, such as the following passage from the *Zuozhuan*:

> The Duke said, "My fragrant sacrifices have been plentiful and pure. The spirits certainly will support me."
>
> [His minister] replied, "I have heard that the spirits in fact have no personal favorites but favor only a person's virtue. Thus the *History* says, 'August Heaven has no personal favorites; it only supports those with virtue.' It also says, 'It is not the sweet millet that is fragrant; bright virtue alone is fragrant.'"[13]

The idea that a kindness received has the power to induce the recipient to respond in kind continued to be an important aspect of the concept of *de* and contributed to the development and conception of what were to become key Confucian virtues. This mutual dynamic of *de* "virtue" or "kindness" and *bao* "response" was thought to be in the very nature of things; some early thinkers seemed to believe it operated with the regularity and force of gravity. At the very least, it was thought to be a natural and spontaneous tendency of human nature.[14] In poetry of the period, we find examples such as the following:

> There are no words left unanswered,
> No *de* "kindness" left unrequited [without *bao*].[15]

In the case of the relationship between children and their parents, the felt "psychic debt" of the kindness received was thought, in principle, to be beyond the possibility of repayment and could only be addressed by cultivating and maintaining an attitude of thankful parental reverence or *xiao* 孝 "filial piety" throughout one's lifetime.

> Oh father, you begat me!
> Oh mother, you nourished me!
> You supported and nurtured me,
> You raised me, and provided for me,
> You looked after me and sheltered me,
> In your comings and goings,
> You [always] bore me in your arms.
> The kindness [*de*] I would repay [*bao*]
> Is boundless as the Heavens![16]

The love and devotion one was to show toward one's parents was to extend even beyond their lifetimes, for one was expected to maintain sacrifices to them, as they took their place among one's ancestors, and continue to remember and revere their spirits. The power of their *de* extended beyond their lives, reaching out and influencing their descendants. But just as in the case of royal virtue, we see in later period writings an emerging attempt to ethically justify such practices. Just as one owed a good ruler deference and obedience because of his virtue, one owed one's parents reverence as an expression of the boundless love that one had received from them.[17] In both cases, it was thought that one would spontaneously feel the desire to respond in kind to the good that one has received and would take joy in so responding.

In the Zhou written records, the notion that a ruler with proper virtue has the power to attract and retain capable ministers and loyal subjects to serve him became increasingly prominent. Virtue was thought to exert a powerful influence over others that allowed a good ruler to rule without resorting to force. For example, in the *Zuozhuan* we find passages such as the following:

> The marquis declared, "Fighting with these multitudes, who can withstand me? What city could sustain their attack?"
>
> The reply was, "If you, my king, were to pacify the feudal lords through the power of virtue, who would dare not to submit?"[18]

This was roughly the state of things when Kongzi or "Confucius" came on to the scene. Together, he and his immediate followers began to form these ideas into a more coherent system of thought. Kongzi focused on and continued to develop the notion of *de* as a moral term of art. He emphasized and possibly originated the idea that anyone could cultivate their *de*. Moral self cultivation became the ideal of every *junzi* 君子 "cultivated individual."[19] *De* was seen as an endowment each person receives at birth, an inheritance one either cherishes and develops or ignores and squanders.[20] For Kongzi, *de* was less and less a matter of birth or one's relationship with powerful spirits.[21] Increasingly, it came to mean something like moral charisma: the natural attraction one feels toward morally great individuals, the same kind of feeling that people claim to have experienced in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. However, *de* did retain a paranormal power to affect others. Kongzi believed that the virtue of a cultivated individual could sway the masses just as wind sways the grasses.[22] He believed that the "gravity" of a ruler's *de* attracts and retains good and loyal subordinates and subjects just as the north star attracts and holds the other stars in their orbits, circling around it.[23]

In the following chapters we will explore the process by which Kongzi and his later followers thought one could come to possess and develop *de*. We will see that they emphasized different and diverse aspects of this task and at times overtly and sometimes heatedly disagreed with one another about this central and critical issue. But we will see that they all believed one could fundamentally transform oneself, that such transformation was necessary in order to live an ethically satisfying and spiritually fulfilling life, and that it had the power to affect those around one in dramatic and profound ways. Thus the cultivation of virtue was of paramount importance for both self and society.

These different thinkers further believed that a transformation of the self fulfilled a larger design, inherent in the universe itself, which the cultivated person could come to discern, and that a peaceful and flourishing society could only arise and be sustained by realizing this grand design. Cultivating the self in order to take one's place in this universal scheme describes the central task of life for these and all Confucians and is the topic of the present study.[24]

Notes

1. The best introductions to this period of Chinese civilization are: Kwang-chih Chang, *Shang Civilization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980) and David N. Keightley, ed., *The Origins of Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983). For a more concise treatment that compares the development of early Chinese civilization with that of early Greece, see David N. Keightley, "Early Civilization in China: Reflections on How It Became Chinese" in Paul S. Ropp, ed., *Heritage of China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990): 15-54. For an edifying introduction to Shang oracular inscriptions, see David S. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978). The most illuminating and thorough introduction to early bronze inscriptions is Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

2. The history of this concept is much richer than what I will present here. I am interested only in that part of its story which contributes directly to the issue of moral self cultivation. The best studies of the notion of *de* in early Chinese thought are Donald J. Munro's "The Origin of the Concept of Te" in his *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969): 185-197 and David S. Nivison's "'Virtue' in Bone and Bronze" and "The Paradox of Virtue," both in *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, Bryan W. Van Norden, ed. (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1996): 17-43.

3. *Zuozhuan* Duke Xi, 24th year. See James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, *The Tso Chuen*, reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970): 192. See Nivison's discussion of this passage in *The Ways of Confucianism*, p. 33.

4. For example, in the *Shujing* we find expression like *xiongde* 凶德 and *e'de* 惡德 "bad tendencies." See James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, *The Shoo King*, reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970): 244, 256.

5. One can see a vestige of this early world view in the modern Chinese word for "revolution," which is *geming* 革命 (literally: *ge* "stripping" the *ming* "mandate"). For a study of early philosophical senses of *ming*, see Edward G. Slingerland, "The Conception of *Ming* in Early Chinese Thought," *Philosophy East and West*, 46.4 (1996): 567-81.

6. The traditional date for the Zhou conquest of the Shang, 1122 B.C.E., now is generally thought to be wrong, though scholars disagree as to what the correct date is. David S. Nivison proposes 1045 in his "The Dates of Western Chou," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43 (1983): 481-580. David W. Pankenier argues for 1046 in his "Astronomical Dates in Shang and Early Chou," *Early China*, 7 (1981-82): 2-37.

7. For a concise yet incisive review of the evolution of the notion of *de*, see the entry "Tao and Te" by David S. Nivison in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987): 282-86.

8. For a good discussion of the emergence of this concept, see Herrlee G. Creel, "The Mandate of Heaven" in *The Origin of Statecraft in China*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 81-100.

9. In his discussion of an oracle bone inscription dating from around 1200 B.C.E., David S. Nivison describes how a Shang king puts himself beneath or at risk before the spirits. Nivison says, "In this rite in which the king as diviner-intermediary assists another person to get well . . . because of his willingness to put himself in danger on behalf of another, his *de*, 'virtue,' is magnified." See "'Virtue' in Bronze and Bone," in *The Ways of Confucianism*, chapter 3. The same dynamic can be seen in chapter 20 of the *Analects*. There we see King Tang pronounce to the spirits, "If I in my own person do any wrong, let it never be visited upon the many lands. But if anywhere in the many lands wrong is done, let it be visited upon my person." Arthur Waley, tr., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Vintage Books, 1938): 231.

10. This story appears in the *Zhoubenji* chapter of the first official history of China, Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 "Records of the Historian." For an exploration of the legend of Bao Si, see Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999).

11. While they accepted the practice of hereditary rule, early Confucians argued that virtue trumped heredity as a qualification to rule. They believed

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Philip J. Ivanhoe

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