

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 scholars⁴ 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 Buddhists⁸ 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 *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 dexting* "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 Ascendancy* (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.