

Neo-Confucianism



Zhang Huang, *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* 1623

The following selections are from three important Neo-Confucian philosophers. The first is Zhou Dunyi (Chou Tun-I) (1017-1073), the most important of the early Neo-Confucian cosmologists. Included here is his explanation of the *Taiji* (太極) or “Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate.” The illustration here is from a later version which connects the *Taiji* with the eight trigrams from the *Book of Changes* rather than with the Five Agencies as Zhou explains it. The second selection from Zhou is from his commentary on the *Book of Changes*. What follows after are selections from the two Cheng brothers, Cheng Hao (Ch’eng Hao 1032-1085) and Cheng I (Ch’eng Yi 1033-1108), founders of the Cheng Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism, noteworthy for the development of the concept of principle (*li* 理), an essential feature of Neo-Confucianism. All selections are taken from *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* compiled and translated by the 20th century Neo-Confucian philosopher Wing-Tsit Chan. The comments included within the selections are from Professor Chan.

Zhou Dunyi (Chou Tun-I)

1. AN EXPLANATION OF THE DIAGRAM OF THE GREAT ULTIMATE

The Ultimate of Non-being and also the Great Ultimate (*Taiji/T'ai-chi* 太極)! The Great Ultimate through movement generates *yang*. When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquillity the Great Ultimate generates *yin*. When tranquillity reaches its limit, activity begins again. So movement and tranquillity alternate and become the root of each other, giving rise to the distinction of *yin* and *yang*, and the two nodes are thus established.

By the transformation of *yang* and its union with *yin*, the Five Agents of Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth arise. When these five material forces (*qi/ch'i* 氣) are distributed in harmonious order, the four seasons run their course.

The Five Agents constitute one system of *yin* and *yang*, and *yin* and *yang* constitute one Great Ultimate. The Great Ultimate is fundamentally the Non-ultimate. The Five Agents arise, each with its specific nature.

When the reality of the Ultimate of Non-being and the essence of *yin*, *yang*, and the Five Agents come into mysterious union, integration ensues. *Ch'ien* (Heaven) constitutes the male element, and *k'un* (Earth) constitutes the female element. The interaction of these two material forces engenders and transforms the myriad things. The myriad things produce and reproduce, resulting in an unending transformation.

It is man alone who receives (the Five Agents) in their highest excellence, and therefore he is most intelligent. His physical form appears, and his spirit develops consciousness. The five moral principles of his nature (humanity or *jen*, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness) are aroused by, and react to, the external world and engage in activity; good and evil are distinguished; and human affairs take place.

The sage settles these affairs by the principles of the Mean, correctness, humanity, and righteousness (for the way of the sage is none other than these four), regarding tranquillity as fundamental. (Having no desire, there will therefore be tranquillity.) Thus he establishes himself as the ultimate standard for man. Hence the character of the sage is “identical with that of Heaven and Earth; his brilliancy is identical with that of the sun and moon; his order is identical

with that of the four seasons; and his good and evil fortunes are identical with those of spiritual beings.”¹ The superior man cultivates these moral qualities and enjoys good fortune, whereas the inferior man violates them and suffers evil fortune.

Therefore it is said that “*yin* and *yang* are established as the way of Heaven, the weak and the strong as the way of Earth, and humanity and righteousness as the way of man.”² It is also said that “if we investigate the cycle of things, we shall understand the concepts of life and death.”³ Great is the *Book of Changes*! Herein lies its excellence! (*Chou Tzu ch’üan-shu*, chs. 1-2, pp. 4-32).

Comment. This Explanation has provided the essential outline of Neo-Confucian metaphysics and cosmology in the last eight hundred years. Few short Chinese treatises like this have exerted so much influence. Although the whole concept owes much to the *Book of Changes*, it is to be noted that it rejected the idea of the Eight Trigrams of the *Book of Changes* and used the Five Agents instead, thus showing that the system was the product of Chou Tun-i’s own speculation.

A great amount of literature has grown up on the history of the diagram and on the concept of the Great Ultimate. So far as philosophy is concerned, most Neo-Confucianists have followed Chou although they have differed in many details. However, two of Chou’s ideas have aroused considerable criticism. One is the idea of the Non-ultimate. One of the famous debates between Chu Hsi and Lu Hsiang-shan (Lu Chiu-yüan, 1139-1193) was over this idea. The word *erh* in the opening sentence means “and also” or “in turn.” But it can be interpreted in the sense of “and then,” in which case, the Non-ultimate and the Great Ultimate would be two separate entities. This was precisely what Lu Hsiang-shan was objecting to, as he saw in Chou Tun-i a bifurcation of reality as two. On the other hand, Chu Hsi claimed that Chou never meant that there is a Non-ultimate outside of the Great Ultimate, that the Non-ultimate is the state of reality before the appearance of forms whereas the Great Ultimate is the state after the appearance of forms, and that the two form a unity. This interpretation has been accepted by most Neo-Confucianists, including most prominent ones like Ts’ao Tuan (Ts’ao Yüeh-ch’uan, 1376-1434) and Hsüeh Hsüan (Hsüeh Ching-hsien, 1392-1464).

The other idea that has attracted much criticism is the Taoistic idea of tranquillity. Chu Hsi took pains to explain that Chou meant tranquillity to be the basis for activity, and that of the four moral qualities of the sage (the Mean, humanity, correctness, and righteousness), the first two connote activity while the latter two connote tranquillity. This explanation is both arbitrary and unconvincing. Similarly, Li Kuang-ti (1642-1718) tried to justify Chou by saying that his statement in the *Explanation*, “Having no desire, there will therefore be tranquillity,” means the same thing as his statement in the *T’ung-shu*, “Having no desire, one is vacuous while tranquil and straightforward while in action,” and that in Chou’s mind tranquillity is never divorced from activity. It is true that in the *T’ung-shu* itself, activity and tranquillity are spoken of together.” In fact, activity is mentioned alone several times and tranquillity not even once alone. But so far as the *Explanation* is concerned, the emphasis on tranquillity is undeniable. It is far better to admit his Taoist influence and to point out that in spite of it, he steered Neo-Confucianism away from it.

2. PENETRATING THE BOOK OF CHANGES

Ch. 1. Sincerity, Pt. 1

Sincerity (*cheng/ch’eng* 誠) is the foundation of the sage. “Great is the *ch’ien*, the originator! All things obtain their beginning from it.”⁴ It is the source of sincerity. “The way of *ch’ien* is to change and transform so that everything will obtain its correct nature and destiny.”⁵ In this way sincerity is established. It is pure and perfectly good. Therefore

¹ *Changes*, commentary on hexagram no. I, *ch’ien* (Heaven). Cf. Legge, trans., *Yi King*, p. 417.

² *ibid.*, “Remarks on Certain Trigrams,” ch. 2. Cf. Legge, p. 423.

³ *ibid.*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 4. Cf. Legge, p. 353.

⁴ *ibid.*, commentary on hexagram no. 1, *ch’ien*. Cf. Legge, p. 213.

⁵ *ibid.*

“the successive movement of *yin* and *yang* constitutes the Way (*Tao*). What issues from the Way is good, and that which realizes it is the individual nature.”⁶ Origination and flourish characterize the penetration of sincerity, and advantage and firmness are its completion (or recovery). Great is the Change, the source of nature and destiny!

Ch. 2. Sincerity, Pt. 2

Sagehood (*Shengren/Sheng jen* 聖人) is nothing but sincerity (*Cheng/Ch'eng* 誠). It is the foundation of the Five Constant Virtues (humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness) and the source of all activities. When tranquil, it is in the state of non-being, and when active, it is in the state of being. It is perfectly correct and clearly penetrating. Without sincerity, the Five Constant Virtues and all activities will be wrong. They will be depraved and obstructed. Therefore with sincerity very little effort is needed [to achieve the Mean]. [In itself] it is perfectly easy but it is difficult to put into practice. But with determination and firmness, there will be no difficulty. Therefore it is said, “If a man can for one day master himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to humanity.”

Ch. 3. Sincerity is the Subtle, Incipient, Activating Force (*Qi/Chi* 氣) of Virtue

Sincerity [in its original substance] engages in no activity, but is the subtle, incipient, activating force giving rise to good and evil. The virtue of loving is called humanity (*ren/jen* 仁), that of doing what is proper is called righteousness (*yi* 義), that of putting things in order is called propriety (*li* 禮), that of penetration is called wisdom (*zhi/chih* 智), and that of abiding by one's commitments is called faithfulness (*xin/hsin* 信). One who is in accord with his nature and acts with ease is a sage (*sheng* 聖). One who returns to his nature and adheres to it is a worthy. And one whose subtle emanation cannot be seen and whose [goodness] is abundant and all-pervasive without limit is a man of the spirit (*shen* 神).

Ch. 4. Sagehood

“The state of absolute quiet and inactivity” is sincerity. The spirit is that which, “when acted on, immediately penetrates all things.”⁷ And the state of subtle incipient activation is the undifferentiated state between existence and nonexistence when activity has started but has not manifested itself in physical form. Sincerity is infinitely pure and hence evident. The spirit is responsive and hence works wonders. And incipient activation is subtle and hence abstruse. The sage is the one who is in the state of sincerity, spirit, and subtle incipient activation.

Ch. 5. Caution about Activity

When activity is directed along its correct course, we have the Way (*dao/tao* 道). When its operations are harmonized, we have virtue (*de/te* 德). The violation of humanity, of righteousness, of propriety, of wisdom, and of faithfulness is depravity. Any activity of depravity is disgraceful. When pushed to a high degree, it is even dangerous. Consequently, the superior man (*chün tzu/junzi* 君子) is cautious about his activity.

Ch. 6. The Way

The way (*dao/tao* 道) of the sage (*sheng* 聖) is nothing but humanity (*ren/jen* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), the Mean (*zhong/chun* 中), and correctness (*zheng/cheng* 正). Preserve it and it will be ennobling. Practice it and it will be beneficial. Extend it and it will match Heaven and Earth. Is it not easy and simple? Is it hard to know? (If so), it is because we do not preserve, practice, and extend it.

Comment. Note that “humanity, righteousness, the Mean, and correctness” is a quotation from the *Explanation of the Diagram*. This treatise repeats the *Explanation* four times (chs. 6, 16, 20, 22). As a matter of fact, as Chu Hsi has said, the entire treatise is an elaboration on the *Explanation*.

Ch. 20. Learning to Be a Sage

“Can one become a sage through learning?” “Yes.”

⁶ *ibid.*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 5. Cf. Legge, pp. 355-356.

⁷ *ibid.*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 10. Cf. Legge, p. 370

“Is there any essential way?” “Yes.”

“Please explain it to me.”

“The essential way is to [concentrate on] one thing. By [concentrating on] one thing is meant having no desire (*wuyu/wu-yü* 無欲). Having no desire, one is vacuous (*hsü*, being absolutely pure and peaceful) while tranquil, and straightforward while in action. Being vacuous while tranquil, one becomes intelligent and hence penetrating. Being straightforward while active, one becomes impartial and hence all-embracing. Being intelligent, penetrating, impartial, and all-embracing, one is almost a sage.”

Comment. Confucianists had never advocated having no desire. Mencius merely advocated having few desires.⁸ The Taoist influence here is obvious. Hitherto, it was only a Taoist and Buddhist method of moral cultivation, but from now on, it became a Confucian method too. But as Chu Hsi said, Chou went too far, and as the prerequisite for concentrating on one thing, Ch’eng, had to substitute seriousness (*jing/ching* 精) for desirelessness, evidently in order to eliminate this Taoist influence.

Ch. 21. Impartiality and Understanding

Whoever is impartial toward himself will be impartial toward others. There has never been a person who is partial toward himself and yet impartial toward others. Doubt arises when understanding is not perfect. With understanding there will be no doubt. To say that to be able to doubt is to understand is as far wrong as a thousand miles off the mark.

Ch. 22. Principle, Human Nature, and Destiny

Only the intelligent can understand the manifestations and concealments (of the operations of *yin* and *yang*). Strength may be good or it may be evil. The same is true of weakness. The ideal is the Mean.

The myriad things are created and transformed out of the two material forces and the Five Agents. These Five Agents are the basis of their differentiation while the two material forces constitute their actuality. The two forces are fundamentally one. Consequently, the many are [ultimately] one and the one is actually differentiated in the many. The one and the many each has its own correct state of being. The great and the small each has its definite function.

Comment. This is the most important chapter, because, as the title indicates, it deals with the three basic subjects in Neo-Confucianism: human nature (*renxing/jen-hsing* 人性), principle (*li* 理), and destiny (*ming* 命). Strangely enough, none of the words appears in the chapter. According to Chu Hsi, the first sentence deals with principle, the next three deal with nature, and the rest deals with destiny. But as Sun Ch’i-feng pointed out, destiny refers to the endowment by Heaven and nature refers to what is inherent in man and things, and both are principle. Chu Hsi identifies the one with the Great Ultimate. The fundamental Neo-Confucian tenet, that substance is one but its manifestations are many, is here succinctly stated. As Chu Hsi said, “The one and the many each having its own correct state of being means that principle, is one but its manifestations are many.” Thus in this chapter are found the three major subjects of Neo-Confucianism and one of its most fundamental tenets.

Ch. 37. Impartiality

The way of the sage is nothing other than absolute impartiality.

Someone asked, “What does that mean?”

I said, “Heaven and Earth are nothing other than absolute impartiality.”

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Chan, Wing-tsit. “The Neo-Confucian Metaphysics and Ethics in Chou Tun-I,” in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963. pp. 460-480.

⁸ *Mencius*, 7B:35.

The Cheng-Zhu School

Cheng Hao (Ch'eng Hao)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF THE TWO CHENG

1. On Understanding the Nature of *Jen* (Humanity *ren/jen* 仁)

The student must first of all understand the nature of *jen*. The man of *jen* forms one body with all things without any differentiation. Righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi/chih* 智), and faithfulness (*xin/hsin* 信) are all [expressions of] *jen*.

[One's duty] is to understand this principle (*li* 理) and preserve *jen* with sincerity (*cheng/ch'eng* 誠) and seriousness (*jing/ching* 精), that is all. There is no need for caution and control. Nor is there any need for exhaustive search. Caution is necessary when one is mentally negligent, but if one is not negligent, what is the necessity for caution? Exhaustive search is necessary when one has not understood principle, but if one preserves *jen* long enough, it will automatically dawn on him. Why should he have to depend on exhaustive search?

Nothing can be equal to this Way (*Tao*, that is, *jen*). It is so vast that nothing can adequately explain it. All operations of the universe are our operations. Mencius said that "all things are already complete in oneself" and that one must "examine oneself and be sincere (or absolutely real)" and only then will there be great joy.⁹ If one examines himself and finds himself not yet sincere, it means there is still an opposition between the two (the self and the non-self). Even if one tries to identify the self with the non-self, one still does not achieve unity. How can one have joy?

The purpose of (Chang Tsai's) "Western Inscription" is to explain this substance (of complete unity) fully. If one preserves it (*jen*) with this idea, what more is to be done? "Always be doing something without expectation. Let the mind not forget its objective, but let there be no artificial effort to help it grow."¹⁰ Not the slightest effort is exerted! This is the way to preserve *jen*. As *jen* is preserved, the self and the other are then identified.

For our innate knowledge of good and innate ability to do good are originally not lost. However, because we have not gotten rid of the mind dominated by habits, we must preserve and exercise our original mind, and in time old habits will be overcome. This principle is extremely simple; the only danger is that people will not be able to hold on to it. But if we practice it and enjoy it, there need be no worry of our being unable to hold to it.

SELECTED SAYINGS

3. There is no creature in the world that does not possess sufficient principle (*li* 理). I have always thought that rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, brothers, and husbands and wives have somewhat failed to fulfill their functions.

4. Man is not the only perfectly intelligent creature in the universe. The human mind (in essence) is the same as that of plants and trees, birds and animals. It is only that man receives at birth the Mean of Heaven and Earth (balanced material force).

5. "The operations of Heaven (Nature) have neither sound nor smell." Their substance is called Change; their principle (*li* 理), the Way (*dao/tao* 道); and their function, spirit (*shen* 神). What Heaven imparts to man is called the nature (*xing/hsing* 性). To follow the law of our nature is called the Way. Cultivation according to the Way is called education. . . . What exists before physical form [and is therefore without it] constitutes the Way. What exists after physical form [and is therefore with it] constitutes concrete things. Nevertheless, though we speak in this way, concrete things are the Way and the Way is concrete things. So long as the Way obtains, it does not matter whether it is present or future, or whether it is the self or others.

6. Sincerity is the way to unify the internal and the external. "Without sincerity there will be nothing."¹¹

⁹ Mencius, 7A: 4.

¹⁰ Mencius, 2A: 2.

¹¹ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 25.

7. “What is inborn is called nature (*xing/hsing* 性).”¹² Nature is the same as material force (*qi/chi* 氣) and material force is the same as nature. They are both inborn. According to principle, there are both good and evil in the material force with which man is endowed at birth. However, man is not born with these two opposing elements in his nature to start with. Due to the material force with which men are endowed some become good from childhood and others become evil. Man’s nature is of course good, but it cannot be said that evil is not his nature. For what is inborn is called nature. “By nature man is tranquil at birth.”¹³ The state preceding this cannot be discussed. As soon as we talk about human nature, we already go beyond it. Actually, in our discussion of nature, we only talk about (the idea expressed in the *Book of Changes* as) “What issues from the Way is good.”¹⁴ This is the case when Mencius speaks of the original goodness of human nature. The fact that whatever issues from the Way is good may be compared to the fact that water always flows downward. Water as such is the same in all cases. Some water flows onward to the sea without becoming dirty. What human effort is needed here? Some flows only a short distance before growing turbid. Some travels a long distance before growing turbid. Some becomes extremely turbid, some only slightly so. Although water differs in being clean or turbid, we cannot say that the turbid water (evil) ceases to be water (nature). This being the case, man must make an increasing effort at purification. With diligent and vigorous effort, water will become clear quickly. With slow and lazy effort, water will become clear slowly. When it is clear, it is then the original water. Not that clear water has been substituted for turbid water, nor that turbid water has been taken out and left in a corner. The original goodness of human nature is like the original clearness of water. Therefore it is not true that two distinct and opposing elements of good and evil exist in human nature and that each of them issues from it. This principle is the Mandate of Heaven. For anyone to obey and follow it is the Way. For anyone to follow it and cultivate it so that he attains his function [corresponding to his nature] is education. From the Mandate of Heaven to education, one can neither augment nor diminish [this function]. Such is the case of Shun, who [obeying and following the Way], possessed his empire as if it were nothing to him.¹⁵

Comment. This passage has aroused considerable critical comments. In the *Chu Tzu yü-lei* (Classified Conversations of Chu Hsi), there is more discussion on it than on almost any other subject concerning the Ch’engs. Ch’eng Hao used the expression “What is inborn is called nature,” which is the same as Kao Tzu’s saying, and thus seems to follow Kao Tzu’s theory that by nature man is born morally neutral or that his nature is a mixture of good and evil. But as Chu Hsi has pointed out, no such idea is intended. From the fact that water is clear originally, and turbid only when flowing has started, it is clear that Ch’eng meant two natures, namely, man’s basic nature, which is originally good, and his physical nature, which involves evil. Actually Ch’eng Hao did not depart from the general Neo-Confucian position so far as human nature is concerned. The trouble arises from ambiguity in the passage. One possible explanation for his using an expression identical with Kao Tzu’s is perhaps that its emphasis was on the process of production and reproduction.

8. Good and evil in the world are both the Principle of Nature. What is called evil is not original evil. It becomes evil only because of deviation from the Mean (*zhong/chun* 中). Yang Chu (440—360 B.C.?) and Mo Tzu (fl. 479—438 B.C.) are examples of this.

Comment. This utterance has been most severely condemned by Neo-Confucianists. It seems to destroy one of the foundations of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, namely, that nature, which is identical with principle, is good, and it also seems to tolerate evil. Judged by his whole philosophy, nothing is further from his mind. He merely echoed Mencius’ contention that things are unequal (see sec. 15). He accepted evil as a fact, but insisted on removing it. This is obvious in the preceding section.

¹² A saying by Kao Tzu ©. 420-c.350 B.C.E.). *Mencius*, 6A:3.

¹³ *Book of Rites*, “Record of Music.” Cf. Legge, trans., *Li Ki*, vol. 1, p. 96.

¹⁴ *Book of Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 5. Cf. translation by Legge, *Yi King* p. 353.

¹⁵ Paraphrasing *Analects*, 8:18.

22. “All things are already complete in oneself.”¹⁶ This is not only true of man but of things also. Everything proceeds from the self, only things cannot extend [the principle in them] to others whereas man can. However, although man can extend it, when has he augmented it to any extent? And although things cannot extend it, when have they diminished it to any extent? All principles exist in complete sufficiency and are openly laid before us. How can we say that (sage-emperor) Yao, in fulfilling the Way of the ruler, added anything to it, or Shun, in fulfilling the Way of the son, added anything to it? They are always there as ever before.

23. There is only one principle in the world. You may extend it over the four seas and it is everywhere true. It is the unchangeable principle that “can be laid before Heaven and Earth” and is “tested by the experience of the Three Kings.” Therefore to be serious (*jing/ching* 精) is merely to be serious with this principle. To be humane (*jen*) is to be humane with this principle. And to be faithful (*xin/hsin* 信) is to be faithful to this principle. (Confucius) said, “In times of difficulty or confusion, [a superior man] acts according to it.”¹⁷ (His pupil) also said, “I do not yet have the confidence to do so.”¹⁸ They could say this much. Principle is extremely difficult to describe.

24. The principles of things are most enjoyable.

25. There is nothing in the world which is purely *yin* (passive cosmic force) or purely *yang* (active cosmic force), as *yin* and *yang* are interfused and irregular. Nevertheless, there cannot be anything without the distinction between rising and falling, and between birth and extinction.

26. By “the state of absolute quiet and inactivity” and “that which when acted upon immediately penetrates all things,” is meant that the Principle of Nature is self-sufficient and from the very beginning lacks nothing. It does not exist because of sage-emperor Yao nor does it cease to exist because of wicked Chieh. The constant principle governing the relations of father and son and of ruler and minister are unchangeable. When has it moved? Because the Principle of Nature is unmoved, therefore it is described as absolutely quiet. Although it is unmoved, when acted on it reacts and penetrates, for the influence is not from without.

32. There is nothing outside of the Way, and there is no Way outside of things. Thus within heaven and earth there is nowhere without the Way. Right in the relation of father and son, the way of father and son lies in affection, and right in the relation between ruler and minister, the way of ruler and minister lies in seriousness. From these to being husband and wife, elder and younger, and friends, there is no activity that is not the Way. This is why “The Way cannot be separated from us for a moment.”¹⁹ This being the case, to renounce human relations and to do away with the Four Elements (Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind) [as the Buddhists try to do] is to deviate very far from the Way. Therefore “a superior man in dealing with the world is not for anything or against anything. He follows righteousness (*yi* 義) as the standard.”²⁰ If one is for or against anything, there will be distinction between him and the Way and that would not be Heaven and Earth in their completeness. In the learning of the Buddhists there is seriousness to straighten the internal life but no righteousness to square the external life. Therefore those who are rigid become like dry wood and those who are relaxed end up in recklessness. This is why Buddhism is narrow. Our Way is different. It is to follow our nature, that is all. The Sage has fully explained this in the *Book of Changes*.

33. Principle and the mind are one, and man cannot put them together as one.

34. When none of the myriad things is not adjusted, that is the Mean maintained at all times according to the Principle of Nature.

35. Nature and man are basically not two. There is no need to speak of combining them.

36. It would be incomplete to talk about the nature (*xing/hsing* 性) of man and things without including material force (*qi/chi* 氣) and unintelligible to talk about material force without including nature. (It would be wrong to consider them as two.)

37. Due to (the interaction of) the two material forces (*yin* and *yang*) and the Five Agents (of Metal, Wood, Water,

¹⁶ *Mencius*, 7A: 4.

¹⁷ *Analects*, 4:5.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 5:5.

¹⁹ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch.1.

²⁰ *Analects*, 4:10.

Fire, and Earth), things vary as weak and strong in thousands of ways. What the sage follows, however, is the one principle. People must return to their original nature, [Which is identical with principle].

40. Humanity (*ren/jen* 仁) implies impartiality, that is, to make (the moral principle) human. Righteousness (*yi* 義) means what is proper, the standard for weighing what is of greater or smaller importance. Propriety (*li* 禮) means to distinguish (to determine ranks and functions). Wisdom (*zhi/chih* 智) is to know. And faithfulness (belief) (*xin/hsin* 信) means “We have it.” All things have nature. These Five Constant Virtues are nature. As to commiseration and so forth (the sense of shame, the sense of deference and compliance, and the sense of right and wrong),²¹ they are all feelings. Whatever is aroused is called feeling. (One’s nature is naturally self-sufficient. Faithfulness merely means “We have it.” It shows itself only because of disbelief. Therefore faithfulness is not mentioned among the Four Beginnings.)

41. There is one basis for the Way. Some have said that it is better to embrace the mind with sincerity than to embrace sincerity with the mind, and it is better to enter into man and things with sincerity than to become a triad with Heaven and Earth with it. That would mean two bases. To know that there are not two bases is the way to be genuinely respectful and to bring peace to the world.

42. “What exists before physical form [and is therefore without it] is called the Way. What exists after physical form [and is therefore with it] is called a concrete thing.”²² If anyone regards purity, vacuity, oneness, and greatness as the Way of Nature, he is speaking in terms of concrete things and not the Way.

43. “Heaven and earth have their fixed positions and yet the system of Change operates in them.”²³ Why not say man operates in them? Because man is also a thing. If we say spirit operates in them, people would look for it only in spiritual beings. It is also all right to say principle or sincerity operates in them. Change is purposely mentioned in order that people may silently remember it and realize for themselves.

44. In the “Appended Remarks,” (of the *Book of Changes*) it is said, “What exists before physical form [and is therefore without it] is called the Way. What exists after physical form [and is therefore with it] is called a concrete thing.”²⁴ It is also said, “*Yin* and *yang* are established as the Way of Heaven; the weak and the strong as the way of Earth; and humanity and righteousness as the Way of man.”²⁵ It further says, “The successive movement of *yin* and *yang* constitutes the Way.”²⁶ *Yin* and *yang* also exist after physical form, and yet here they are called the Way. This expression clearly distinguishes what exist before and after physical form. From the beginning the Way is nothing but this. The important thing is that man must in his own mind appreciate this truth.

46. “Seriousness (*jing/ching* 精) is to straighten one’s internal life and righteousness is to square one’s external life.” This is the way to unify internal and external life. (The Buddhist way of internal and external life is incomplete.)²⁷

49. Seriousness overcomes all evil. (11 :2b)

50. Mencius said, “Humanity is the distinguishing character of man. When embodied in man’s conduct it is the Way.”²⁸ This is what the Doctrine of the Mean means when it says that “to follow human nature is called the Way.” *Jen* is to humanize. “Seriousness is to strengthen the internal life and righteousness is to square the external life.” This means *jen*. If one purposely uses seriousness to straighten his internal life, it will not be straightened. Must one be [purposely] straight in the practice of humanity and righteousness? If one is “always doing something without

²¹ Referring to the Four Beginnings discussed in *Mencius*, 2A:6.

²² *Book of Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 12. Cf. Legge, p. 377.

²³ *ibid.*, ch. 7. Cf. Legge, p. 360.

²⁴ *ibid.*, ch. 12. Cf. Legge, p. 377.

²⁵ “Remarks on Certain Trigrams,” ch. 2. Cf. Legge, p. 423.

²⁶ “Appended Remark,,” pt. 1, ch. 5. Cf. Legge, p. 355.

²⁷ Ch’eng’s own note. The quotation is from *Changes*, commentary on hexagram no. 2, *k’un* (Earth). Cf. Legge, p. 426.

²⁸ *Mencius*, 7B: 16.

expectation,”²⁹ one will be straight. For if one can practice seriousness to straighten the internal life and righteousness to square the external life, one can be harmonious with things. This is why it is said that “as seriousness and righteousness are established, one’s virtue will not be an isolated instance.”³⁰ Thus the man of *jen* has nothing in opposition to him. He can wander over the four seas and always hits the mark.

76. The Buddhists do not understand *yin* and *yang*, day and night, life and death, or past and present. How can it be said that their metaphysics is the same as that of the Sage?

77. The Sage extends his mind of impartiality and exhausts the principle of Heaven, Earth, and all things to the utmost, each according to its proper function. But the Buddhists are all devoted to their own selfishness. How can their doctrines be the same as that of the Sage? The Sage follows principle and therefore his doctrines are even, straight and can easily be practiced. But the machination of the heterodox school requires so much effort. It is not natural. Therefore it is far, far wrong.

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Chan, Wing-tsit. “The Idealistic Tendency in Ch’eng Hao,” in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963. pp. 518-543.

Cheng I (Ch’eng Yi)

SELECTED SAYINGS

3. The mind of one man is one with the mind of Heaven and Earth. The principle of one thing is one with the principle of all things. The course of one day is one with the course of a year.

4. True knowledge and ordinary knowledge are different. I once saw a farmer who had been wounded by a tiger. When someone said that a tiger was hurting people, everyone was startled. But in his facial expression the farmer reacted differently from the rest. Even a young boy knows that tigers can hurt people, but his is not true knowledge. It is true knowledge only if it is like the farmer’s. Therefore when men know evil and still do it, this also is not true knowledge. If it were, they would surely not do it.

To devote oneself to investigate principle to the utmost does not mean that it is necessary to investigate the principle of all things in the world to the utmost nor does it mean that principle can be understood merely by investigating one particular principle, it is necessary to accumulate much and then one will naturally come to understand principle.

28. Essentially speaking, the way of *jen* may be expressed in one word, namely, impartiality. However, impartiality is but the principle of *jen*; it should not be equated with *jen* itself. When one makes impartiality the substance of his person, that is *jen*. Because of his impartiality there will be no distinction between himself and others. Therefore a man of *jen* is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of *jen*, while love is its function.

29. “When you go abroad, behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest. Employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice.”³¹ [When Confucius said that], he meant nothing other than seriousness (*jing/ching* 精). Seriousness means unselfishness. As soon as one lacks seriousness, thousands of selfish desires arise to injure his humanity.

30. In the state of absolute quiet and inactivity, all things are luxuriantly present. When it is “acted upon and it

²⁹ *Mencius*, 2A:2.

³⁰ *Changes*, commentary on hexagram no. 2, *k’un* (Earth). Cf. Legge, p. 420.

³¹ *Analects*, 12:2.

immediately penetrates all things,”³² the action is merely action from within. It is not that there is something outside with which to act on it.

31. To investigate things in order to understand principle to the utmost does not mean that it is necessary to investigate all things in the world. One has only to investigate the principle in one thing or one event to the utmost and the principle in other things or events can then be inferred. For example, when we talk about filial piety, we must find out what constitutes filial piety. If principle cannot be investigated to the utmost in one event, investigate another. One may begin with either the easy or the most difficult, depending on the degree of one’s capacity. There are thousands of tracks and paths to go to the capital. Yet one can enter if he has found just one way. Principle can be investigated to the utmost [in this way] because all things share the same principle. Even the most insignificant of things and events has this principle.

33. “The successive movement of *yin* and *yang* constitutes the Way.”³³ This principle is very profound and cannot be explained. The Way is that through which *yin* and *yang* operate. The very term “material force” (*qi*/*chi* 氣) implies a duality and the very expression “opening and closing” implies one thing acting on another. Wherever there is a duality, there is always such an action. The Way is that through which opening and closing operate, and opening and closing are the same as *yin* and *yang*. It is wrong for the Taoists to say that material force comes from the vacuity. There is no time sequence in *yin* and *yang* or in opening and closing. It should not be said that there is *yin* today and *yang* tomorrow. Take, for example, man’s body and shadow. As they are simultaneous, it should not be said that a man has his body today and his shadow tomorrow. To have them is to have them at the same time.

34. To know the Mandate of Heaven (*Tianming* 天命) means to understand the Principle of Heaven (Nature) (*Tianli* 天理). Surely to receive the mandate (*ming*, destiny) means to get the retribution of Heaven. Destiny is what has been decreed by Heaven. It is like a command. The retribution of Heaven is always like a shadow or an echo. It is normal to have its retribution and it is abnormal not to get the retribution. However, upon careful examination, we know that retribution is inevitable. Only because people seek it with shallow and limited views, they say that it is irregular. Furthermore, the Mandate of Heaven cannot be changed except by a man of virtue.

36. There is no Way independent of *yin* and *yang*. What makes [the material force] *yin* or *yang* is the Way. *Yin* and *yang* are material force (*qi*/*chi* 氣). Material force is what exists after physical form [and is with it], whereas the Way is what exists before physical form [and is without it]. What exists before physical form is hidden.

37. When a thing disintegrates, its material force is forthwith exhausted. There is no such thing as material force returning to its source. The universe is like a vast furnace. Even living things will be burned to the last and no more. How can material force that is already disintegrated still exist? Furthermore, what is the need of such a disintegrated material force in the creative process of the universe? It goes without saying that the force used in creation is vital and fresh.

39. The material force of the true source is the source from which material force is produced and is not mixed with external force. It is nourished and cultivated only by external force. It is like fish in water. The life and nature of fish are not made by the water, but they must be nourished and cultivated by water in order that they may live. Man’s position in the force of the universe is not different from that of fish in water. As to the nourishment of food, it is a way in which man is nourished and cultivated by external force. And as to inhaling and exhaling of breath, it is only the operation of opening and closing. The breath that has just been exhaled is not the material force that is inhaled in the next breath. But the true source can create material force by itself. The material force that is inhaled simply enters the human body when the body closes. This material force is not needed to assist the true source.

41. *Question*: “Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of humanity.”³⁴ Does that mean that *jien* can be achieved through filial piety and brotherly respect? *Answer*: No. It means that the practice of humanity begins with filial piety and brotherly respect. Filial piety and brotherly respect are items in the practice of humanity. It is all right to say that they are the root of the practice of humanity but not all right to say that they are the root of humanity itself. For humanity is nature, while filial piety and brotherly respect are its function. There are in our nature only humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Where do filial piety and brotherly respect come in? The controlling factor is

³² Quoting *Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 10. Cf. Legge, *Yi King*, 370.

³³ *Book of Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 5. Cf. Legge, p. 355.

³⁴ *Analects*, 1:2.

love, and there is no greater love than to love parents. Hence it is said, “Filial piety and brotherly love are the root of *jen*.”

70. Spoken of as one, Heaven is the Way (*Tao*) This is the meaning when it is said that “Heaven will not be in opposition.”³⁵ Spoken of in its different aspects, it is called heaven with respect to its physical body, the Lord (*Ti*) with respect to its being master, negative and positive spiritual forces with respect to its operation, spirit (*shen* 神) with respect to its wonderful functioning, and *ch'ien* with respect to its nature and feelings. *Ch'ien* is the beginning of all things. Therefore it is Heaven, *yang*, father, and ruler. Origination, flourish, advantage, and firmness are called the Four Moral Qualities. Origination is the beginning of all things, flourish the growth of all things, advantage the success of all things, and firmness the completion of all things.

71. Origination in the Four Moral Qualities is comparable to humanity in the Five Constant Virtues (humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness). Separately speaking, it is one of the several, but collectively speaking, it embraces all the four.

72. Destiny is what is endowed by Heaven and the nature is what things have received from Heaven.

73. In identifying himself with Heaven and Earth, sun and moon, the four seasons, and positive and negative spiritual forces, the great man identifies himself with the Way. Heaven and Earth are the Way. Positive and negative spiritual forces are traces of creation.

74. Humanity (*ren/jen* 仁) is universal impartiality; it is the foundation of goodness (*shan* 善).

75. Principle (*li* 理) in the world is one. Although there are many roads in the world, the destination is the same, and although there are a hundred deliberations, the result is one.³⁶ Although things involve many manifestations and events go through infinite variations, when they are united by the one, there cannot be any contradiction.

76. According to the principle of the world, nothing can last forever without activity. With activity, a thing will begin again when it ends, and can therefore last forever without limit. Among things in the universe, even as solid and dense as huge mountains, nothing can remain unchanged. Thus being long lasting does not mean being in a fixed and definite state. Being fixed and definite, a thing cannot last long. The way to be constant is to change according to circumstances. This is a common principle. . . . Unless one knows the Way, how can he understand the constant and lasting way of the universe and the constant and lasting principle of the world?

77. That which is inherent in things is principle (*li* 理) . That by which things are managed is moral principles.

78. The beginning and ending of all things are nothing but integration and disintegration. Positive and negative spiritual forces are the function of creation. If viewed from the causes of what is hidden and what is manifest, from the principle of life and death, and from the features of positive and negative spiritual forces, the Way of Heaven and Earth can be understood. . . . Activity and tranquillity have no beginning and yin and yang have no starting point. Unless one knows the Way, how can he understand this? Activity and tranquillity cause each other and thus changes and transformation are produced. What follows this Way is good. . . . Heaven and Earth do not share the anxiety of the sage. For Heaven and Earth do not act as master whereas the sage has a mind of his own. Heaven and Earth create and transform without having any mind of their own. The sage has a mind of his own but does not take an [unnatural] action. How perfect is the eminent virtue and great achievement of Heaven and Earth and the sage!³⁷

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Chan, Wing-tsit. “The Rationalistic Tendency in Ch’eng I,” in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963. pp. 544-571.

³⁵ *Book of Changes*, commentary on hexagram no. 1, *ch'ien* (Heaven). Cf. Legge, p. 417.

³⁶ Quoting *Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 2, ch. 5. Cf. Legge, p. 389.

³⁷ Quoting *Changes*, “Appended Remarks,” pt. 1, ch. 5. Cf. Legge p.356.