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A New Orientation in Confucian Learning in Mid-Eleventh-Century China

ABSTRACT:
In this article, I examine the thought of three Song-dynasty intellectuals – Chen Xiang, Wang Ling, and Wang Kaizu – in an effort to shed light on the development of a new intellectual orientation in Confucian thought that appeared between the late 1030s and late 1060s. This intellectual orientation was characterized by the belief in a universal human nature, the view of the *Dao* as *a priori*, the assumption that humanity and the things and affairs of the world existed as a unity, and the treatment of the *Zhongyong* and *Mencius* classics as important intellectual resources for grounding the above claims. The writings of Chen and the two Wangs can help elucidate the transition away from *guwen* ideas and towards this new orientation in Confucian thought. Their intellectual views are also important because they have the potential to refine our understanding of the larger intellectual milieu in which Daoxue was produced and in which it developed.

KEYWORDS:
Chen Xiang, Wang Ling, Wang Kaizu, Confucian learning, Daoxue

Scholars of Northern Song intellectual history have long noted the emergence of new intellectual developments in the mid-eleventh century.[1] In the thirty-odd years separating the Qingli-era 慶曆 reforms from the New Policies, a number of thinkers of varied intellectual persuasions began to criticize, and reconsider, the types of Confucian learning then in vogue.[2] By the 1050s and 1060s, the influence exerted by members of the *guwen* 古文 movement, which had been a key voice of protest against contemporary forms of Confucian learning in the first half of the century, gradually began to wane as literati started to reas-

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[1] Among contemporary scholars, Tsuchida Kenjirō, Peter Bol, and Yu Yingshi have all persuasively argued that Confucian thought began to change dramatically in the mid-11th c. See Tsuchida Kenjirō 土田健次郎, *Dōgaku no keisei* 道学の形成 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 2002), pp. 7–12; Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), chap. 2; and Yu Yingshi 余英時, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie: Songdai shidaifu zhengzhi wenhua yanjiu* 朱熹的歷史世界, 宋代士大夫政治文化研究 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 2003) 1, pp. 67–102.

[2] In his preface to the chapter in *Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元學案 dealing with Shi Jianzhong 士建中 and Liu Yan 劉顏, the Qing scholar Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755) noted the emer-

sess the views of older contemporaries as well as those held by earlier generations.[3] From this larger reassessment of the Confucian tradition, there emerged several new positions formulated by some of the leading intellectuals of the mid-eleventh century, such as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101). These positions advanced novel conceptions of the human condition, the relationship between the cosmos and humanity, and the proper way to cultivate the self and order society.

Studies of Northern Song intellectual history have by and large focused on the thought of those just mentioned and their close associates: without question they all played an extremely important role in the political and intellectual milieu of the time. An unfortunate side effect of this focus, however, is that there has been relatively little attention paid to other Confucian intellectuals active during this transitional period. If we look closely at the ideas being advanced in between the late 1030s and late 1060s, it is evident that there were a number of thinkers who proposed innovative conceptions of the issues and concerns being debated at the time.[4] Understanding what these thinkers were saying is necessary to approach a complete comprehension of the intellectual changes taking place during these decades as well as to gain a firmer grasp of the development of Northern Song Confucian thought.

As a preliminary step in this direction, in this article I examine the views of three individuals – Chen Xiang 陳襄 (1017–1080), Wang Ling 王令 (1032–1059) and Wang Kaizu 王開祖 (c.1035–1068) – who

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gence of several schools of thought during the Qingli period, asserting that "during the Qingli era, scholarly traditions arose in all corners of the empire 慶曆之際, 學統四起." He further argued that many of these schools played an influential role in the subsequent development of Confucian thought over the second half of the 11th-c. See Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Song Yuan xue'an*, ed. Yang Jialuo 楊家駱 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1991), p. 142.

[3] In this article, I use the word "learning" to translate the Chinese character *xue* 學, which was the general term Song literati employed to refer to their intellectual thought and moral practice. As Peter Bol has observed, "learning" is a suitable English translation because, like *xue,* its overall meaning can encapsulate scholarly study, self-cultivation and various types of ethical conduct. See Peter K. Bol, *Localizing Learning: The Literati Enterprise in Wuzhou, 1100–1600* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2022), pp.1–2.

[4] One of the more complete accounts of the intellectual developments taking place during this period is Guan Changlong's historical study of Daoxue's development over the course of the Song; see Guan Changlong 關長龍, *Liang Song Daoxue mingyun de lishi kaocha* 兩宋道學命運的歷史考察 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2001), pp. 35–98. In contrast to Guan's cursory descriptions of the numerous different Confucian schools that emerged in between the 1030s and 1060s based primarily on *Song Yuan xue'an*, I focus on the specific ideas advanced by three individuals – Chen Xiang, Wang Ling and Wang Kaizu. My goal is not to provide a general survey, but rather to identify the significance of the positions advanced by these three men within the larger history of Northern Song thought.

were all well known in their day, but who by and large have been ignored in contemporary studies of Northern Song thought.[5] Although they did not represent a single school of Confucian learning, there is some evidence to indicate that they knew one another or at least were aware of one another's reputations.[6] In addition, they shared a number of things in common: they were all southerners; they were professional educators for at least a part of their lives; they disagreed with certain trends in contemporary ideas and teachings; and they sought out new ways to conceptualize the *Dao* and cultivate the self. In their writings, they engaged with issues raised by the proponents of *guwen*, such as the inadequacy of traditional methods of Confucian learning, the utility of *wen* 文 as a vehicle for transmitting *Dao,* the role played by Confucian worthies in propagating and defending this *Dao,* the relationship between the Nature and the emotions,[7] and the proper means of cultivating the self. As we shall see, while they by and large refrained from directly repudiating *guwen*, they clearly were not satisfied with *guwen* positions on these matters and they did not remain beholden to them in

[5] I have decided to focus on these three not only because most of their key writings are datable to the period between the Qingli reforms and the Song-court's New Policies, but also because they were not proponents of any of the more noteworthy Confucian schools of the time. In addition, there is no evidence indicating that they studied directly with Hu Yuan 胡瑗 (993–1059), who mentored a number of intellectuals such as Xu Ji 徐積 (1028–1103) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) that would later engage with many of the intellectual issues discussed here.

[6] Sun Jue 孫覺 (1028–1090) may have served as an indirect link between Chen Xiang and Wang Ling in that he was identified as the former's student and the latter's teacher. However, given the four-year age difference between Sun and Wang, his designation as Wang's teacher should probably be read as an expression of respect rather than as evidence of an actual pedagogical relationship. Moreover, as will become apparent below, despite sharing a common intellectual orientation, the views of Chen and Wang Ling differed considerably, which suggests that Sun's transmission of Chen's teachings, if in fact such a transmission occurred, failed to have a discernible impact on his thought. In addition, there is a short epistolary reply from Chen Xiang to Wang Kaizu which survives in the former's literary collection. Wang's original letter is no longer extant, but in his reply, Chen urges Wang to return to government service when the time is right. Despite these tenuous connections, there is no evidence that the three individuals studied here developed deeper relationships or influenced one another's thought in any significant way. See Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳, eds., *Quan Songwen* 全宋文 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 2006; hereafter *QSW*), vol. 80, *j.* 1742, pp. 72–73; vol. 50, *j.* 1086, pp. 149–50.

[7] In this article I use the term "Nature" (in uppercase to distinguish this specialized usage) to refer to the human nature, or what Chinese thinkers identified as the inherent moral dispositions and/or developmental potential that differentiated human beings from other types of sentient creatures. As we shall see, the thinkers discussed here believed that the Nature became endowed within human beings as a result of the natural process of creation and transformation that underlay the production of the cosmos and all things in it. They further held that this cosmological connection meant that human beings possessed the innate potential to form a unity with the myriad things of the universe.

their writings.[8] Put simply, they began to think about these core Confucian issues in new ways and, in the process, they gave impetus to the larger effort pushing Confucian thought in new directions. In fact, we can discern in their writings a concerned engagement with many of the issues and themes that would come to figure prominently in Confucian discourse in the second half of the eleventh as well as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These themes and issues included:

The universality of the human condition

Chen and the two Wangs assumed that everyone was endowed with a common human nature that served as the foundation for personal development. Although several earlier Confucian thinkers, most notably Mencius, Xunzi and Li Ao 李翺 (ca. 774–836), had proposed a universal human nature, in the early Song, the views of Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) held sway for many Confucian intellectuals, including most, but not all, adherents of *guwen*.[9] Han's theory not only maintained that different people received different qualitative endowments of this human nature, but further contended that sages were born rather than made.[10] In the second and third decades of the eleventh century, there was a great deal of debate over the Nature's role in an individual's intellectual and moral development, and by the 1040s and 1050s an ever-increasing number of thinkers began to endorse the position that the gulf between the ancient sages and ordinary men was neither set in stone at birth nor insurmountable.[11] An important corollary of this position, adopted by many of its proponents, was that the Natures of all humans were one and the same and that the moral perfection of the sage could be achieved through diligent study and unrelenting effort.[12]

[8] Despite the efforts of *guwen* proponents to link their ideas to their literary style, it is clear that many of their contemporaries viewed them separately. For this reason, I think that it is important to distinguish between *guwen* as a mode of writing and *guwen* as a more or less coherent set of intellectual positions. In particular, while the *guwen* style of writing would continue to remain popular throughout the period studied here, many of the ideas advanced by its proponents would come to be questioned and eventually fall out of favor.

[9] Although he followed Han's positions on the *Dao* of the sages and the importance of writing in the ancient style, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) famously rejected Han's conception of the Nature, asserting that it was not an important issue in the context of self-cultivation. In Ouyang's view, there was nothing innately endowed within the self that determined one's future moral development, and in this sense all human beings were alike. See *QSW* 35, *j.* 735, pp. 38–39.

[10] Han discusses the problem of the Nature and the innate differences between sages and worthies in his essays "Yuanxing" 原性 and "Shengshi Yanzi bu erguo lun" 省試顏子不貳過論. See Han Yu 韓愈, *Han Changli ji* 韓昌黎集 (Taipei: Heluo tushu, 1975), *j.* 1, pp. 11–13; *j.* 2, p. 72.

[11] For a discussion of these debates, see my "Lüfu yu Bei Song sixiangshi" 律賦與北宋思想史, *QHXB* 清華學報 NS 51.2 (2021), pp. 408–16.

[12] Importantly, this did not mean that all men were born with equal intelligence and talent; it was just that the different capacities of individuals could not be attributed to the Nature.

The Dao *as* a priori *and inherent in the cosmos*

There was a movement away from the humanism found in the *guwen* position, which claimed that ancient sages created the *Dao* on the basis of their assessment of the needs of the people,[13] and towards the position that the *Dao* had a prior cosmological basis that was discovered by the sages. When combined with the belief in a universal human condition, this conception of the *Dao* held out the possibility that people today had the capacity to realize it as well. In other words, the goal of learning was not simply to emulate the sages and interiorize the lessons of the classics to the best of one's ability; rather, it was to become a sage oneself and realize the *Dao* personally, directly and in an unmediated fashion.

Unity between the self and the world

Chen and the two Wangs maintained that understanding the *Dao* required self-development and interaction with worldly things and affairs. They further held that these two activities were intricately related; that is, one could not cultivate the self in isolation, but rather needed to do so within the flow of worldly events. An important corollary of this position was that one's degree of cultivation, and whether one was a moral person or not, was determined by how one interacted with people, things, and affairs. Entities external to the self thus came to be regarded as integral to one's internal cultivation, a position rooted in the notion that the self and the cosmos were tied together and that they were, in fact, ultimately one. Unity between the self and the world became a fundamental assumption underlying Confucian theories of self-cultivation, and the realization of this unity, which involved the actualization of both socio-political and cosmological order, was regarded as the ultimate goal of the process of cultivating the self.

The increasing popularity of Mencius *and* Zhongyong

In addition to the *Yijing,* which served as an important resource throughout this period, in the mid-eleventh century the ideas found in *Mencius* and *Zhongyong* began to assume a prevalent role in shaping Confucian thought on the human condition, the *Dao*, and self-cultivation.[14]

[13] Han Yu expressed this position in his essay "Yuandao" 原道. It continued to be upheld by many *guwen* proponents in the Song such as Ouyang Xiu and Li Gou 李覯 (1009–1059).

[14] As Yu Yingshi has pointed out, the study of *Zhongyong* started to receive increased attention in the second decade of the 11th c., when it was chosen as a topic in the examinations. However, despite a scattering of references from the 1020s to the 1040s, it was not until the middle of the century that it came to be cited and discoursed upon more regularly. See Yu, *Zhuxi de lishi shijie*, pp. 129–45. The same can be said of the text of *Mencius;* while it was

As readers familiar with Song dynasty thought will surely recognize, these are some of the fundamental ideas and texts that would later come to play an extremely important role in the Daoxue 道學, or Neo-Confucian, movement. While Chen and the two Wangs did not engage with these ideas and texts in the same way or in the same degree of detail as the founders of Daoxue, their writings nonetheless demonstrate that a broader circle of Confucian intellectuals than has hitherto been recognized regarded them as important.[15] Their discussions of these issues further suggest that several ideas foundational to the Daoxue position were being contemplated and debated by a number of contemporary thinkers with no concrete intellectual ties to one another or to Daoxue's founding members.[16] By closely examining the thought of Chen Xiang, Wang Ling and Wang Kaizu, it is possible to attain a better understanding of this pivotal period and see how different literati interpreted concepts and problems that would come to play a significant role in subsequent Confucian thought. In addition to being valuable in its own right, this more complete understanding has the potential to refine our perspective on the larger intellectual milieu from which Daoxue was produced and within which it developed.[17]

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written about in the early Song, such discussions focused more on Mencius' political stances, not his conceptions of the Nature, *Dao*, or self-cultivation. On the relative lack of interest in *Mencius* in the early-Northern Song, see Xu Hongxing 徐洪興, "Tang Song jian de Mengzi shengge yundong" 唐宋間的孟子升格運動, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 5 (1993), pp. 101–16; and Liu Chengguo 劉成國, "Lun Tang Song jian de 'zun Yang' sichao yu guwen yundong" 論唐宋間的'尊揚'思潮與古文運動, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 3 (2011), pp. 68–81. In addition, in his classic study of Song views of Mencius, Xia Changpu does not note any interest in Mencius' theories of the mind and Nature before the early proponents of Daoxue. See Xia Changpu 夏長樸, "Mengzi yu Songru" 孟子與宋儒, in *Li Gou yu Wang Anshi yanjiu* 李覯與王安石研究 (Taipei: Da'an, 1989), pp. 257–94.

15 My approach here has been influenced by that adopted by Tsuchida in his analysis of Chen Xiang in *Dōgaku no keisei*. Although I disagree with Tsuchida's categorization of Chen as a representative of local learning, I heartily endorse, and have benefited from, his view that Chen Xiang and Cheng Yi were interested in a common set of intellectual problems. Tsuchida does not explore the implications of this finding in depth, choosing instead to focus his analysis on the views of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), Hu Yuan, Wang Anshi and Su Shi, as well as the influence exerted on Daoxue by Buddhism and Daoism. See Tsuchida, *Dōgaku no keisei*, pp. 66–90.

16 It is important to indicate that there were a number of other individuals during the period studied here who made an effort to break away from the approaches to Confucianism found in *guwen* and the inherited commentarial tradition. The most significant intellectual orientation harbored by such individuals, which would greatly influence later conceptions of the cosmos, relied on the numerology advanced in the *Yijing* and the Han-era *Taixuan jing* 太玄經 in order to reconceptualize the relationship between the cosmos and humanity. See my "Northern Song Intellectual Discourse on Yang Xiong's *Taixuan jing*," *QHXB* NS 44.4 (Dec., 2014), pp. 541–87; and "Using Numbers to Comprehend the Cosmos: An Analysis of Liu Mu's *Yishu gouyin tu*," *TP* 104 (2018), pp. 294–337.

17 I want to state clearly here that my objective in this study is not to show that Chen and the two Wangs influenced the founders of Daoxue. Rather, it is to shed light on a larger tran-

CHEN XIANG

Chen Xiang, who hailed from Fuzhou 福州 in Fujian 福建, was the most professionally accomplished, and certainly the best known, of the three individuals examined here.[18] Chen would attain renown for being a member of a group of intellectuals collectively known as the "four masters 四先生." His reputation also grew because of his efforts to build schools and educate the populace in the various districts where he served as a local official, for his being a staunch opponent of the New Policies, for playing a key role in drafting proposals to reform imperial rituals, and for serving as an emissary to the Liao regime in the north. According to his record of conduct (*xingzhuang* 行狀), during his youth Chen studied Confucian thought with an uncle as well as various old *ru* 儒 who lived in the locales where his father was posted as a government official.[19] The record of conduct asserts that he did not learn much from these old *ru,* and that it was not until he returned home at the age of eighteen after his father's death that his intellectual views began to develop and mature. At this time, in the mid-1030s, he befriended three young literati from Fuzhou – Chen Lie 陳烈, Zhou Ximeng 周希孟, and Zheng Mu 鄭穆. Together they started to reassess the Confucian tradition and propagate their ideas among the local populace.[20]

Chen's record of conduct describes the efforts of the "four masters" – the three just mentioned, plus Chen Xiang – to correct misguided forms of learning and spread their vision of the Confucian *Dao* as follows:

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sition in Confucian thought that took place during this period, which involved a movement away from *guwen* positions on the Nature, the *Dao*, and self-cultivation. Chen and the two Wangs are important because they are at the forefront of this transition, and because their writings provide a snapshot of the broader shift taking place in Confucian theorizing at this time. The primary goal of this article is to demonstrate that we can discern the beginnings of a new intellectual orientation in their approach to Confucianism, an orientation that would come to play an important role in subsequent Confucian thought.

18 On Chen's life, writings, and thought, see Tsuchida, *Dōgaku no keisei*, pp. 66–90; Chen Zhong 陳重, "Jianlun Chen Xiang *Zhongyong jiangyi* de sixiang neihan" 簡論陳襄'中庸講義'的思想內涵, *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊 (2013.2), pp. 12–16; Chen Zhong, "Yibian *Zhouyi* shi wushi: Chen Xiang Yixue sixiang zhilun" 一編周易是吾師, 陳襄易學思想摭論, *Zhouyi yanjiu* 周易研究 117 (2013.1), pp. 17–24; Shi Yongle 時永樂, "Chen Xiang *Guling xiansheng wenji* Song kanben kaobian" 陳襄'古靈先生文集'宋刊本考辨, *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中國典籍與文化 (2013.2), pp. 105–11; Cheung Hiu Yu 張曉宇, "Bei Song taimiao shixiang zhengyi zhong de lixue linian" 北宋太廟時享爭議中的禮學理念, *Rao Zongyi guoxueyuan yuankan* 饒宗頤國學院院刊 8 (2021), pp. 217–50; and Zheng Xiong 鄭熊, "Dui chuantong ruxue zhi dao de yanxu: lun Sima Guang, Chen Xiang deng de *Zhongyong* yanjiu" 對傳統儒學之道的延續, 論司馬光、陳襄等的'中庸'研究, *Xibei daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 西北大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 41.6 (2011), pp. 102–7.

19 *QSW* 104, *j.* 2271, pp. 85–92.

20 On the four masters, see Cheung Hiu Yu 張曉宇, "Xuetong siqi xia de Bei Song guli

> The four masters possessed ancient bearing and lofty conduct. They sharpened their abilities by learning from one another, with the jointly held expectation that they would [one day] be personally responsible for shouldering the weight of the world. At this time, students indulged themselves in ornate prose, and competed with one another via the grandiosity of [their compositions] in order to attain fame. The so-called doctrines of "knowing heaven and realizing the Nature" were all branded as impractical and no literati spoke of them. Chen and the three masters were thus alone in proclaiming this *Dao* along the coast, and those who heard what they had to say at first laughed at them incredulously; however, the four masters did not alter [their views]. They defended them with increased resolution, personally practiced them at home, and propagated them throughout the local villages. In the end, people had faith [in their teachings] and were transformed. Fathers and elder brothers all directed their sons and younger brothers to request to become their followers. Because of this, the literati of Min revered them, calling them the four masters. Although there were [still local] individuals who were arrogant, rash, lazy, defiant and impossible to lead, they did not dare act inappropriately towards them. Thereafter, the reputation of the four masters spread to all corners of the realm and their students increased daily with those under Chen's tutelage being in the clear majority.[21]
>
> 四人者, 氣古行高, 磨礲鐫切, 相期天下之重爲己任. 是時學者方溺於雕篆之文, 相高以收名聲, 所謂知天盡性之說皆指以爲迂闊, 而士亦莫之講也. 公與三人者獨以斯道鳴於海隅, 聞者始皆笑之而驚, 四人者不爲變, 守之益堅, 躬行於其家, 由家達於州閭, 人卒信而化之, 父兄皆飭其子弟請從之. 由是閩中士人宗之, 謂之四先生, 雖有誕突惰傲不可率者, 不敢失禮於其門. 已而四先生之名且傳之四方, 從之學者日益衆, 然出公之門顯者居多.

The above description of the four masters' efforts to promulgate their teaching in coastal Fujian repeats the complaint, frequently found in the writings of *guwen* proponents, that students at the time valued literary style over true learning. However, in contrast to *guwen,* the teaching of the "four masters" was grounded in the cosmos and the human na-

yundong: Chen Lie shiji de yige sixiangshi kaocha" 學統四起下的北宋古禮運動, 陳烈事跡的一個思想史考察, *Xin shixue* 新史學 30.2 (2019), pp. 111–67. Unfortunately, only a handful of the writings of the other three masters have survived to the present.

[21] *QSW* 104, *j.* 2271, pp. 85–92. The popularity of the four masters is also mentioned in Chen's funerary inscription and in an inscription written for the Chen family ancestral shrine. See *QSW* 172, *j.* 3748, pp. 25–28; 48, *j.* 1044, pp. 222–27.

ture; as Chen's record of conduct states, it was dedicated to "knowing heaven and realizing the Nature." The record of conduct further notes that, despite an initial skeptical response from their fellow literati, the four persisted in promoting "this *Dao,*" and through the power of their personal example they eventually succeeded in convincing large numbers of students to study with them.

Chen's record of conduct, as well as several other biographical accounts, suggest that the four masters most likely formulated their views between the years 1035 and 1042. This was the period separating Chen's return home from his reception of the *jinshi* degree, after which he took up local office in Pucheng 浦城. During the late 1030s and early 1040s, adherents of the *guwen* movement were making waves in elite circles with their arguments critiquing current forms of education and their advocacy for political reform. Chen was clearly sympathetic to the movement's goals. After becoming an official, he formed relationships with Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067) and Fu Bi 富弼 (1004–1083),[22] two individuals with strong ties to the *guwen* movement's political leadership, as well as with the students of one of its most important educators and theorists, Hu Yuan 胡瑗.[23] Chen's surviving writings further reveal that he engaged with several theories and concepts that played significant roles in *guwen* thought. For example, in his "Reply to Liu Taibo" ("Da Liu Taibo qi" 答劉太博啓), he postulated a relationship between *wen* and *Dao* that was clearly indebted to the metaphors advanced by earlier *guwen* figures such as Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), maintaining that "*wen* is the boat that transports the *Dao* 文者載道之舟."[24] He also parroted the *guwen* rhetoric surrounding the lineage of former worthies, which held that Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC–18 AD), Wang Tong 王通 (584–617) and Han Yu composed texts to protect the sages' *Dao* from heterodox attacks and ensure its transmission to posterity.[25] Like the *guwen* adherents Shi Jie 石介 (1005–1045) and

22 The funerary inscription for Cai Xiang, who was also from Fujian, notes that he formed relationships with the four masters and admired their learning and conduct. See *QSW* 38, *j.* 756, pp. 377–80. Chen also composed a letter to Cai where he mentions that he had become acquainted with Fu Bi and Ouyang Xiu. See *QSW* 50, *j.* 1086, p. 156. There are five letters to Fu Bi contained in Chen's literary collection.

23 In *Song Yuan xue'an*, Quan Zuwang 全祖望 notes that two of Hu's students, Sun Jue 孫覺 and Guan Shifu 管師復, also studied with Chen. See Huang, *Song Yuan xue'an*, p. 128. In his comments, Quan further identifies Chen's thought as a forerunner 前茅 to that advanced by Cheng Yi and Zhang Zai.

24 *QSW* 50, *j.* 1086, pp. 154–55.

25 See, for example, his "Yu Xu Taibo lun *Chunqiu* shu san" 與許太博論春秋書三 and the fourth question in his "Ceti liudao" 策題六道 (*QSW* 50, *j.* 1086, pp. 166–67; 50, *j.* 1087, p. 180). For a discussion of how the Song adherents of *guwen* interpreted the role played by these

Sun Fu 孫復 (992–1057), he moreover employed this lineage to justify and champion the efforts of his contemporaries to defend and propagate this *Dao* in the present.[26]

However, despite these personal relationships and his endorsement of several *guwen* ideas, Chen's intellectual views diverged from those of dedicated *guwen* advocates in important ways. Most significantly, even though he agreed with the *guwen* contention that the *Dao* could be conveyed through writing, his conception of what this *Dao* entailed differed fundamentally.[27] In contrast to the *guwen* claim, which was derived from the argument advanced in Han Yu's "On the Origin of the Way" ("Yuandao" 原道), that the sages created the *Dao* to meet the moral and material needs of the people, Chen asserted that the *Dao* was *a priori* rather than *a posteriori*, that it was inherent in the fabric of the cosmos and not the product of human ingenuity. It was thus discovered, not created, by the sages in antiquity. An important early composition in which Chen discussed his conception of *Dao*, proper learning, and self-cultivation was his "Preface Sending off Student Zhang Heng" ("Song Zhang Heng xiucai xu" 送章衡秀才序), written in 1044.[28] Given the early date of this piece, it is likely that its statements regarding the doctrine of "knowing heaven and realizing the Nature 知天盡性" comported with the teachings being advanced by the four masters in Fujian during the late 1030s and early 1040s. As we shall see, the positions set forth in the preface are somewhat crude and unsophisticated; however, even at this early stage in his intellectual development Chen's interest in providing a cosmological basis for the *Dao,* and his belief that the goal of self-cultivation involved attaining harmony with the cosmos, are clearly evident.

In the first half of the preface, Chen lays out his understanding of how the sages and worthies of antiquity were able to comprehend, and harmonize with, the *Dao* of heaven and earth.

> I have observed heaven, earth, humans and things and [concluded that] they have a tendency that can be harmonized with. The key

figures in the transmission of the sages' *Dao*, see my "*Guwen* Lineage Discourse in the Northern Song," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 44 (2014), pp. 1–32; and He Jipeng 何寄澎, *Tang Song guwen xintan* 唐宋古文新探 (Taipei: Daan, 1990), pp. 251–86.

26 See, e.g., his "Yu Sun yunshi shu" 與孫運使書 (*QSW* 50, *j.* 1084, pp. 126–27).

27 Chen's position is similar in certain respects to that of Zhou Dunyi, who also supported the *guwen* claim that writing was a vehicle for expressing the *Dao,* while differing in his conception of what this *Dao* entailed.

28 For the date of this piece, see Chen Ye 陳曄, ed., "Guling xiansheng nianpu" 古靈先生年譜, in Wu Hongze 吳洪澤 and Yin Po 尹波, eds., *Songren nianpu congkan* 宋人年譜叢刊 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 2003) 3, p. 1602.

> to seeking harmony with what is square and round under heaven lies in knowing the compass and the square; the key to seeking harmony with what is light and heavy under heaven lies in knowing the scale. The *Dao* of heaven and earth is difficult to penetrate; the spiritual and illumined are difficult to understand; and the principles of the myriad things are difficult to make uniform. When the sage realizes his mind and achieves sincerity in this regard, there is nothing that he cannot penetrate, nothing that he cannot understand, and nothing that he cannot make uniform. Sages are those who harmonize with heaven and earth. Worthies seek harmony with the sage.[29]
>
> 予觀天地人物, 有可合之勢. 求合乎天下之方圓者, 在知規矩; 求合乎天下之輕重者, 在知權衡. 天地之道, 難通也; 神明, 難明也; 萬物之理, 難齊一也. 聖人盡心而誠焉, 罔不通, 罔不明, 罔有不齊一. 聖人者, 天地之合也. 賢人者, 求合乎聖人者也.

Chen here contends that heaven and earth have particular trends or tendencies that can be known and harmonized with. He defines the achievements of the sages in cosmological terms, asserting that the reason they can attain harmony with heaven and earth is because they understand the appropriate means of assessing them. Importantly, he suggests that the sages attained this knowledge due to their realization of the mind and their attainment of sincerity, which in turn is what enabled them to penetrate the *Dao*, understand the spiritual and illumined, and unify the principles of the myriad things. That is, the sages attained the capacity to comprehend, and harmonize with, the cosmos by first cultivating themselves. Chen moreover posits a distinction between sages and worthies, noting that whereas sages directly harmonize with the universe, worthies seek to harmonize with the actions of the sages. This suggests that for Chen those who have yet to fully realize their minds and attain sincerity lack the capacity to directly intuit the workings of the cosmos and thus need to emulate the sages in order to match with it.

Chen continues the preface by posing a problem: how is it possible to harmonize with the sages given that they rarely appear? He writes:

> However, since sages do not appear in every age, how can we harmonize with them? I say: when they are present then harmonize with their persons; when they are gone then harmonize with the classics. Yan Yuan harmonized with the person [of Confucius],

[29] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1087, p. 172.

> whereas Mencius, Xunzi, Yang [Xiong] and Han [Yu] harmonized with the classics. Their task was the same: be fond of study in order to realize the mind; make the mind sincere in order to realize things; infer from things in order to realize principle; illuminate principle in order to realize the Nature; integrate with the Nature in order to realize the spirit. It was simply this.[30]
>
> 然則聖人不世出, 烏乎合? 曰: 存則合乎人, 亡則合乎經. 顏淵氏合乎人, 孟、荀、揚、韓合乎經. 其事則同: 好學以盡心, 誠心以盡物, 推物以盡理, 明理以盡性, 和性以盡神, 如是而已.

In this passage, Chen makes several important claims about learning and cultivating the self. He argues that regardless of whether or not one has personal access to the instruction of a sage, one can still match with the sages by studying the classics. He asserts that Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong and Han Yu, four of the worthies championed within *guwen* for defending the *Dao* and propagating it via *wen,* demonstrated the veracity of the latter method. He then proceeds to explain that the process of cultivating the self through instruction by the sage or through the study of the classics was one and the same: it involved a dynamic interaction between the self and the world in which one studied to realize the mind; used this realized mind to investigate the external world; inferred from things to realize principle, which in turn enabled one to actualize the Nature and become spiritual. Although Chen does not clearly define what he means by these different activities, it is evident that he viewed learning and self-cultivation as being focused on the task of understanding the connection between the self and the things and affairs of the world.

Chen continues the preface with some words of encouragement for its recipient Zhang Heng, before turning to a brief discussion of what one can learn from each of the classics. He concludes the piece by addressing the difficulty of understanding the classics given the numerous different commentaries produced over the ages. He writes:

> Someone asked: "Those who discourse on the classics are many, so whom should we follow?" I replied: "What use are those forced interpretations? When sincerity is attained then one harmonizes with the classics; when the classics are attained then one harmonizes with the sages; when the sages are attained then one harmonizes with heaven." Someone asked: "How can we know that you are correct and have faith in [what you say]?" I replied: "If you interrogate it against the classics and seek assistance from the four

[30] Ibid.

> [ancient] masters (Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong and Han Yu), then how could you harbor doubt and not have faith?"[31]
>
> 或曰: "説經者多矣, 焉攸從?" 曰: "烏用彼穿鑿也? 誠至則經合, 經至則聖人合, 聖人至則天合矣." 或曰: "焉知子是而信之?" 曰: "質諸經, 輔以四子, 何疑而不信哉?"

Chen here weighs in on an important topic of debate at the time regarding the best way to adjudicate between different interpretations of the classics. His position, which would eventually attain a broad consensus, contends that cultivating the self enabled one to intuit the correct meaning of these texts. Chen further maintains that harmonizing with the classics represents but one step in the process of self-cultivation that continues with harmonizing with the sage and ends with the attainment of harmony with heaven.

The ideas expressed in the above preface are indicative of a new orientation in Confucian thought that began to emerge at the time. Although expressed in the above preface in rudimentary form, its key parts contained the following claims: all individuals are born with the capacity through learning to understand the *Dao*, and even become sages; this *Dao* is found within the classics, but it is at the same time larger than the political, cultural, and literary achievements of the sages; it is inherent in the cosmos, it extends to all things, and is timeless. A final claim is that the process of realizing this *Dao* required cultivating the self and interacting with things and affairs in an effort to achieve a state of harmony or unity with the universe. It is important to note that the different elements of this orientation did not originate in the Song; they were voiced in, and were derived from, the classics and the writings of earlier Confucian philosophers. However, it was not until the 1040s and 1050s that Song thinkers started to engage with, and combine, these elements in a comprehensive way that clearly distinguished their orientation from the views professed in the Tang and early Song.

Chen would expand upon many of the undeveloped notions contained in his "Preface Sending off Student Zhang Heng" (see above) in several of his subsequent writings. For example, in a directive 劄子 criticizing Wang Anshi, he asserted that all men possess a mind that is capable of determining right from wrong, and that this mind most likely emerged from the "nature of principle and righteousness 理義之性" that is common to everyone, including the sages.[32] In his "Reply to

[31] Ibid., p. 173.

[32] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1081, pp. 57–59.

Student Xu Hong" ("Da Xu Hong xiucai shu" 答徐洪秀才書), he conceded that while attaining sagehood is difficult, it could nonetheless be achieved through diligent effort. He moreover suggested that the process of becoming a sage had to transpire via interaction with the myriad things, for they formed the ineluctable backdrop against which birth and transformation took place.[33] And, in a letter to Yuan Feng 元絳 (1009–1083), he referenced the text of *Mencius* to underscore his belief in the unity of the self and the universe, claiming that "heaven and earth, the spiritual and illumined, the myriad things, ritual and music are all complete within the self."[34]

Chen's most important musings on the human condition, the *Dao*, and self-cultivation are found in his various compositions related to *Zhongyong,* which include his "Discourse on Sincerity and Illumination" ("Chengming shuo" 誠明說), a rhapsody (*fu* 賦) on the connection between *chengming* 誠明 and the Nature, and his commentary on select passages from a commentary titled *Zhongyong jiangyi* 中庸講義 of 1060.[35] The latter is his most comprehensive statement on the *Zhongyong* even if it did not eventually survive in its entirety. In the commentary's opening lines, Chen lays out his conception of the work's purport, asserting that "*Zhongyong* is a text about ordering the Nature."[36] He further maintains that, although the work was recorded by Zisi 子思, it is filled with quotations from Confucius and thus it faithfully transmitted "the sage's learning on principle and the Nature."[37]

Due to spatial considerations, I limit my discussion of Chen's *Zhongyong* commentary to his explanation of its famous opening lines: "What is bestowed by heaven is called the Nature; to accord with the Nature is termed *Dao*, and cultivating the *Dao* is called the teaching."[38] As will become apparent below, Chen's interpretation of these lines contains detailed discussions of the *Dao*, the human nature, the prob-

[33] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1085, pp. 134–35.

[34] 天地、神明、萬物、禮樂皆備於己. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1085, pp. 141–42. The original passage, which states that "the myriad things are complete within me 萬物皆備於我矣," is from *Mencius* 7A.4. See D.C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 182.

[35] *Zhongyong jiangyi* was part of a larger commentary on *Liji* titled *Liji jiangyi* 禮記講義. For a brief analysis of Chen's views on the text, see Chen, "Jianlun Chen Xiang *Zhongyong jiangyi*." For a larger survey of Northern Song interpretations of *Zhongyong*, see Junghwan Lee, "'Jiaohua' 教化, Transcendental Unity, and Morality in Ordinariness: Paradigm Shifts in the Song Dynasty Interpretation of the 'Zhongyong,'" *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42 (2012), pp. 151–233. On the date, see Chen Ye 陳曄 ed., "Guling xiansheng nianpu" 古靈先生年譜, vol. 3, p. 1603.

[36] 中庸者, 治性之書. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, pp. 217.

[37] 聖人理性之學. Ibid.

[38] 天命之謂性, 率性之謂道, 修道之謂教. Ibid.

lem of good and evil, and the difficulties inherent in cultivating the self through interacting with things and affairs. He begins (regarding the line "What is bestowed by heaven is called the Nature") by referencing the mind of the four sprouts (*siduan* 四端) from a passage in *Mencius*,[39] to which he adds a fifth sprout that corresponds with the fifth core Confucian virtue, namely faith (*xin* 信). Implicitly identifying the five sprouts with the Nature, Chen argues that all human beings are endowed with this mind, and that the ability to use it does not depend on study. Following this discussion, Chen makes an important assertion regarding the *Dao* and its connection to the Nature: "This Nature arises from the *Dao* together with heaven and earth. The *Dao* exists prior to heaven and earth."[40] In this way, Chen identifies the *Dao* as the origin of heaven, earth, and man.

Chen continues his exegesis of the first third of the *Zhongyong's* opening passage by providing a detailed cosmogony that explains how heaven, earth, and man were produced from the *Dao*.

> The *Dao* changes and transforms and thus there is *qi,* form, and the Nature. These three are together established and each of the five materials is furnished therein. *Qi* rises and ascends in order to create heaven, and thus there is the brightness of the five stars; form sinks and descends in order to constitute earth, and thus there is the materiality of the five phases; the Nature is endowed in between the two to produce humans, and thus there is the *Dao* of the five constants… This then is [how] the Nature of man arises from the *Dao* together with heaven and earth and [explains why it] is more spiritual than that of the myriad things. Among all things with blood, breath, and sentience, [man] is their master.[41]
>
> 道有變化, 故有氣也、形也、性也, 三者并立, 而五材各具焉. 氣升而上以爲天, 故有五星之明; 形降而下以爲地, 故有五行之質; 性命於兩間以爲人, 故有五常之道… …則是人之性與天地同出於道, 而神於萬物. 凡有血氣心知之類, 統爲之主.

Positing the *Dao* as the origin of all things, Chen asserts that its movement begets *qi,* form, and the Nature, which separately account for the production of heaven, earth, and man.[42] Later in his commentary,

[39] Mencius' discussion of the four sprouts is found in *Mencius* 2A.6; Lau, *Mencius,* pp. 82–83. Mencius identified the four sprouts as natural moral tendences in the minds of all human beings that demonstrated the innate presence of the virtues of benevolence 仁, righteousness 義, ritual propriety 禮, and wisdom 智.

[40] 是性也, 與天地同出於道. 道者, 先天地而有. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, pp. 217.

[41] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, pp. 217–18.

[42] The claim that the *Dao* served as the origin of the universe was a novel position at this

Chen defines the *Dao* not only as the origin of heaven, earth, and man, but also as *tong* 通, or that which permeates and connects all things. He contends that the text of *Zhongyong* is the foundation of the *Dao* and that the work's name derives from the fact that "all under heaven can follow it and connect everywhere."[43]

Chen's discussion of the line "according with the Nature is termed *Dao*" describes the reasons why some individuals, despite being endowed with the Nature from the *Dao*, fail to properly access it and attain harmony with heaven and earth.

> When a person's nature has yet to come into contact with things, it is completely good. When it comes into contact with things and emotions arise, then the seven feelings of joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire become manifest. Thus, with respect to emotions, there are those that are good and not good; if the Nature drives the emotions, then they are good…... if the emotions plunder the Nature, then they are evil… … If people are able to follow the Nature of the five constants and proceed, and not be moved or forced by emotions or desires, then this *Dao* will be constantly preserved. Thus, following it is called the *Dao*, separating from it is contra the *Dao*.[44]
>
> 凡人之性未接於物, 莫非善也. 接於物而情生, 則有喜怒哀懼愛惡欲七者形焉. 故情有善有不善, 以性行情, 情則善矣… 以情盜性, 情則惡矣… . 人能循是五常之性而行, 不爲情欲之所遷奪, 則其道常存. 故循之謂道, 離之非道也.

Chen here attributes people's failure to follow their Natures to the emotions that arise within them when they interact with things. He argues that these emotions can be either good or evil, and that the latter "plunder" the Nature and make it impossible for one to "follow" it. Since the Nature is produced from the *Dao*, this failure to follow it also prevents one from according with the *Dao* in one's conduct.

In this conception of the human condition, the key problem is how to teach people to interact with things in such a way that their emotional responses conform to, rather than contravene, the Nature. Chen addressed this problem in his commentary on the last part of the

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time. The majority of Chen's contemporaries tended to refer to this cosmological origin as *taiji* 太極 or *taixu* 太虛, and argue that the *Dao* represented the process via which the original stuff of the cosmos divided, interacted, and developed into the entities and forces that comprised the material and spiritual worlds.

[43] 道者, 通也, 天下由之無所不通, 故謂之道. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, p. 222.

[44] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, p. 218.

opening line – "cultivating the *Dao* is called the teaching" – where he asserted that the sages taught the people how to recognize the Nature and recover it.

> The sages knew that the people's natures moved when stimulated by things, and so they cultivated and illuminated what was inherent in the Nature, and taught this to the people of the world, which caused them to know what to emulate so they could return to the *Dao*. This is what is called the teaching. However, is it the case that there are no differences between the Natures of the people and that of the sage? The Nature of the sage is sincere and without movement, illuminated without delusion; thus, false emotions are not able to move it. The Nature of the common man cannot overcome emotions; one's desires stir internally and one interacts with things externally. One is unable to return to [the Nature] resulting in the *Dao* being destroyed. This is how they are different.[45]
>
> 聖人知人之性感物而遷, 因其性之所自有, 修而明之, 以教天下, 使人知所則傚, 而復歸於道, 夫是之謂教也. 然則人之性無以異於聖人之性? 聖人之性誠而不動, 明而不惑, 故情僞莫能遷焉. 衆人之性不勝其情, 欲動乎內, 物交乎外, 不能以自反, 其道遂亡. 此所以異也.

Having already identified the endowment of the Nature as the same among all men, Chen here seeks to explain the difference between the condition of the Nature in sages and ordinary people. The key distinction lies in the relationship between the Nature and the emotions; unlike the sage, common people are unable to control their desires and emotions in their interactions with things, which prevents them from returning to the original nature and acting consistently in a morally correct manner. Chen continues the above passage by asserting that all human beings are endowed with the mind of the five virtues at birth. The fact that they possess these virtues is due to the Nature; their subsequent loss in individuals who fail to cultivate themselves is due to the emotions. He concludes by stating that "if one does not rectify the emotions, one has no means of returning to the Nature."[46] For Chen, the task of rectifying the emotions and returning to the Nature is precisely what the *Zhongyong*'s concept of "the teaching 教" means.

In his *Zhongyong* commentary, Chen thus advanced the following salient points: first, he maintained that the main purport of the text was its concern with "ordering the Nature 治性"; second, he identified the *Dao* as the origin of heaven, earth and man, and the impetus behind

[45] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, pp. 218–19.
[46] 不正其情, 無以反其性. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, p. 219.

creation and transformation; third, he contended that the Nature came into existence concurrently with heaven and earth, that it was inherently good, that it was the source of the five virtues, and that it was the same in all men; fourth, he designated the emotions as the source of evil, contending that they arose in response to one's interaction with things and affairs and prevented one from realizing the goodness in the Nature; and fifth, he argued that rectifying the emotions was the key to recovering the Nature and becoming a sage. In the latter portions of the commentary, Chen asserted that recovering the Nature is what enabled one to complete the Natures of people and things, create order in the world, and become one with heaven and earth.[47]

Chen advocated this program of learning and self-cultivation, grounded in the *Zhongyong*'s doctrines, to the emperor. This is seen in his essay "Discourse on Sincerity and Illumination" ("Chengming shuo" 誠明說), which he submitted to the throne soon after Shenzong's ascension in the late 1060s. In the "Discourse," as well as in a separate memorial he wrote around the same time,[48] Chen argued that the key to becoming an effective ruler lay in getting the emotions to conform to the Nature, at which point they would be impartial and not selfish. Once the ruler achieved this level of cultivation, his emotional responses would no longer be personal or one-sided, but rather would comply with what was commonly shared by the people of the world.[49] Although he does not state so explicitly, given his view of the Nature, it seems clear that Chen intended for this standard of impartiality to apply generally to the population as a whole. That is, making one's emotions correspond to the Nature in one's interactions with things resulted in an unbiased course of action that comported with what was common to all. The logic seems to have been that since everyone's Nature was the same, and derived from the *Dao*, then when one's emotions corresponded with it, they would be correct and unprejudiced in the sense that they were based in this universal standard and not one's own personal predilections.

The above positions concerning the *Dao* and the human condition were formulated by Chen, in probable consultation with the other three masters, between the 1030s and the 1060s. Although he had contact with some of Hu Yuan's disciples and later recommended Hu

[47] 能聖能智則可以盡人物之性, 成天下之盛德大業, 而與天地爲一. *QSW* 50, *j.* 1089, p. 221.

[48] See his "Fu zhao xiuzhu shangdian zhazi" 赴召修注上殿劄子, *QSW* 50, *j.* 1079, pp. 13–17.

[49] *QSW* 50, *j.* 1079, p. 17.

for office,[50] there is no evidence that he studied directly with Hu or any of the other famous teachers of the day. His various biographies note that his views were formulated in part as a reaction against what he identified as the problematic intellectual trends of his time. While he was not openly opposed to *guwen*, he clearly had a different vision of Confucian learning rooted in the *Zhongyong*, *Mencius*, and also the *Yijing*. Eschewing *guwen* notions of the *Dao*, the Nature, and self-cultivation, he argued that all men were endowed with the same good nature, that this Nature was derived from the *Dao*, and that this *Dao* was eternal and thus discovered, rather than created, by the sages. The above writings also demonstrate that he regarded unity as a good and maintained that humans and the myriad things were interrelated. He further problematized mankind's interactions with things and affairs, arguing that self-cultivation made it possible to overcome partial biases habituated within the self and act correctly in accordance with the *Dao*. Finally, he maintained that his ideas were universal, applying equally to the emperor and his subjects, and that the key to ruling successfully lay in the emperor's personal implementation of his program of self-cultivation.

WANG LING

Wang Ling is best known today for his poetry and for the close friendship he formed with the famous political figure Wang Anshi in the 1050s, prior to the latter's assumption of the post of prime minister.[51] Wang Ling spent the majority of his short life in Yangzhou and its environs, where he went to live with a great-uncle following the untimely death of his parents at the age of five. From the late 1040s until his death in 1059, Wang made a living as a tutor and educator, and he never participated in the exams or served in government.[52] Although he

[50] See *QSW* 50, *j.* 1084, pp. 106–8. Tsuchida Kenjirō uses these loose affiliations to construct a large network of Confucian intellectuals, tying Ouyang Xiu and Hu Yuan to both Chen and the founders of Neo-Confucianism. See Tsuchida, *Dōgaku no keisei*, pp. 70–82. Although these individuals certainly knew of each other's reputations, there is no concrete evidence that they influenced one another's thought in any significant way, or formed a network that spread a singular vision of Confucian learning.

[51] Currently, scholars have overwhelmingly focused on Wang's poetic production and the relationships he formed with several prominent literati such as Wang Anshi and Su Shi. See, e.g., Wang Yao 王瑶, "Wang Ling yu Wang Anshi jiaowang zonglun" 王令與王安石交往綜論, *Beifang wenxue* 北方文學 (Nov., 2012), pp. 22–24. For a discussion of Wang's intellectual positions, see Liu Xiao 劉瀟, "Wang Ling sixiang yanjiu" 王令思想研究, M.A. thesis (Hebei daxue, 2009).

[52] Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬, ed., "Wang Ling nianpu" 王令年譜, in Wu Hongze 吳洪澤 and Yin Po 尹波, eds., *Songren nianpu congkan* 宋人年譜叢刊 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 2003) 4, pp. 2285–313.

died at a young age, he left behind a substantial literary corpus, which contains over seventy letters and essays as well as close to five hundred poems. Despite his productivity, it is important to bear in mind that his surviving writings are youthful compositions written before the age of thirty, and that Wang, unlike many of his longer-lived contemporaries, was denied the opportunity to reevaluate or reconsider his ideas. Given this background, it is perhaps to be expected that there are statements made in his various writings that on the surface appear somewhat contradictory or inconsistent. In what follows, rather than dwell on the discrepancies between the positions set forth in different pieces, I focus instead on Wang's general approach to Confucian learning and interrogate how he conceived of the *Dao* and self-cultivation.

As was the case with Chen Xiang, Wang Ling's writings reveal an interest in, and engagement with, several positions that played an important role in the *guwen* movement, including its castigation of Buddhism, criticism of contemporary forms of learning, and interest in revealing the intellectual contributions of the lineage of former worthies. With respect to Buddhism, Wang composed two pieces in which he criticized the religion and its deleterious impact on Chinese culture and society. In his "Replying to Liu Zihou's Preface to Shi Haochu in Place of Han Tuizhi" ("Dai Han Tuizhi da Liu Zihou shi Haochu xu" 代韓退之答柳子厚釋浩初序), Wang adopted the voice of Han Yu to rebut the defense of Buddhism Liu Zongyuan put forth in his "Preface Sending off Monk Haochu" ("Song seng Haochu xu" 送僧浩初序).[53] Wang focused his criticism on Liu's contention that Buddhism had doctrines that corresponded with those found in the *Yijing* and the *Analects*. Rejecting this claim, he devoted the piece to refuting the notion that Buddhism shared anything in common with Confucianism. In his "Comments on Mozi" ("Shu Mo hou" 書墨後), he compared the harm done by Mozi and Yang Zhu in antiquity to that imposed by Buddhism and Daoism in his day. He concluded that the damage caused by the latter teachings was far more serious, and he praised Han Yu for his excoriation of Buddhism and his defense of the Confucian *Dao*.[54]

As for contemporary Confucian learning, Wang agreed with the *guwen* critique of the widespread use of paraphrastic commentaries as the primary vehicle for understanding the purport of the classics.[55]

[53] *QSW* 80, *j*. 1741, pp. 51–54. This essay was referenced in Zhang Shangying's 張商英 (1043–1122) "Hufa lun" 護法論 and it is also briefly discussed in Shao-yun Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2019), pp. 50–52.

[54] *QSW* 80, *j*. 1744, pp. 97–99.

[55] See Wang, "Da Liugong Zhuwei zhi shu" 答劉公著微之書, *QSW* 80, *j*. 1742, pp. 70–72.

He lamented the fact that many literati focused on literary craft as opposed to literary substance, and in the process wound up disregarding the importance of the *Dao* and virtue.[56] He moreover echoed the movement's positions that the state should invest in schools to educate the elite and that students needed to take responsibility for their own progress in learning.[57] Finally, he frequently referenced the lineage of former worthies in his writings, holding them up as models for students to emulate.

Yet, despite his engagement with the above *guwen* positions, Wang also composed writings that were critical of certain individuals with ties to the movement. For example, in his "Letter Written on the Occasion of Reading Shi Jie's 'On the Origins of Disorder'" ("Du Shi Jie yuanluan yinshu" 讀石介原亂因書), he sympathized with Shi Jie's ambition to implement activist governance and political reform, but found fault with his writings' failure to attract widespread support.[58] And in his "Preface to *Explaining Mencius*" ("*Shuo Mengzi* xu" 說孟子序), he deprecated Han Yu's understanding of the *Dao*, asserting that it paled in comparison to Mencius and further that it ranked as the least sophisticated among the five former worthies.[59]

Although Mencius had been praised by Han Yu, during the first century of the Song neither Mencius nor his eponymous work attracted widespread interest, a situation that would begin to change markedly in the mid-eleventh century. Wang Ling was at the forefront of the intellectual trend that found value in Mencius' thought and which sought to uncover the ways in which he shed light on the Confucian *Dao*. In addition to his "Preface to *Explaining Mencius*," Wang composed an essay and a poem on the text, both titled "On Reading *Mencius*" ("Du *Mengzi*" 讀孟子); he also started work on a commentary that remained unfinished at the time of his death.[60] In contrast to Chen Xiang, how-

[56] See Wang, "Da Lü Jifu shu" 答呂吉甫書, *QSW* 80, *j.* 1743, pp. 88–91.

[57] See Wang, "Shishuo" 師說 and idem, "Zhao xueshuo ji xingshu" 招學說寄興叔, *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, pp. 109–11; *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, pp. 112–14. In the latter piece, Wang argues that all individuals who study with diligence can attain utmost sincerity 至誠 and achieve success in their efforts to realize the *Dao*. He moreover asserts that a common problem that prevents students from accomplishing this goal is their failure to hold themselves to the same standards to which they hold others.

[58] *QSW* 80, *j.* 1744, p. 102.

[59] The "Preface" is also noteworthy for calling attention to several contradictory positions held by the former worthies – Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong and Han Yu. This is one of the first essays to highlight the differences between the worthies' intellectual stances, which served to undercut the *guwen* claim that the worthies formed a defined intellectual lineage that continued and promoted the *Dao* of the sages. See *QSW* 80, *j.* 1744, pp. 103–4.

[60] See Wang Anshi 王安石, "Ti Wang Fengyuan jiang *Mengzi* hou" 題王逢原講孟子後, *QSW* 64, *j.* 1398, p. 278.

ever, who turned to *Mencius* to bolster his conceptions of the Nature and self-cultivation, in his surviving writings on the text, Wang did not explicitly endorse Mencius' notion of the human nature or his views on the cultivation of the self.[61] Instead, he praised Mencius for his political acumen in responding to the chaos of the Warring States,[62] and because his intellectual positions came closest to those of Confucius as presented in the *Analects*. He advanced the latter position in his "Preface to *Explaining Mencius*," where he delineated his views on the trustworthiness of the inherited textual tradition and how an individual in the present should approach the Confucian classical corpus. As noted above, it is in this essay that we can also see his most detailed discussion of the lineage of former worthies.

Wang begins the "Preface" by repeating the well-worn *guwen* conceit regarding the decline of the sages' *Dao* and the rise of heterodox teachings. However, rather than dwelling on the socio-political tragedy caused by the *Dao's* decline, he transitions quickly to a discussion of a related problem: given that later interpreters of the classics were influenced by heterodox views, how can individuals know which interpretations to trust? In his attempt to answer this question, Wang notes that the situation confronting students today is further complicated by two additional factors. The first is that Confucius' teachings were gathered together and written down by his disciples after his death; even though portions of his teachings were preserved, they unfortunately are incomplete. The second is that because thinkers who came after Confucius construed his teachings differently, it was difficult for students to adjudicate the correctness of their competing views. Keeping these two factors in mind, Wang suggests that individuals today could turn to the former worthies for guidance. He maintains that among the writings of the former worthies – Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong and Han Yu – Mencius' positions came closest to those found in the *Analects*. Yet, this did not mean that one should adhere blindly to the doctrines advanced in the text, for as he stated towards the end of the "Preface," it was incumbent upon students to determine for themselves what is correct and incorrect with respect to the *Dao*.[63]

Wang advocated the adoption of this critical attitude towards the classics in several of the letters he wrote to his contemporaries. For

61 Wang mentions Mencius' theory of the good human nature in "Jiaoshuo song Du Jian" 交說送杜漸; however, he does not explicitly endorse his conception of the Nature even though he suggests that Mencius sincerely believed in it. See *QSW* 80, *j*. 1744, pp. 94–95.

62 See "Du *Mengzi*" 讀孟子, *QSW* 80, *j*. 1744, pp. 104–6.

63 *QSW* 80, *j*. 1744, pp. 103–4.

example, in "Reply to Lü Jifu" ("Da Lü Jifu shu" 答呂吉甫書), Wang discussed the difficulties involved in determining which *Shijing* 詩經 poems shed light on the *Dao*.[64] Rather than blindly following the opinions of earlier commentators on the text, he recommended that students base their exegetical stance on that adopted by Confucius and Mencius.

> Confucius and Mencius once said, "The author of this poem knew the *Dao*." This implies that [they felt] there were other poems that did not measure up to the *Dao*… . Granted that there were many old poems that attained the *Dao* of the sages, but still how could the ones that did not match with the [views of the] sages be few? …. There is a poem that states: "He neither hates nor covets, what does he do that is not good?"[65] [With respect to this, Confucius] said, "this *Dao*, how is it sufficient to achieve goodness?"[66] [Another poem states]: "How can [you say that] I do not think of you? It is [because your] residence is far away."[67] [Confucius] then said, "This shows [he] is not thinking of him, not that there is any great distance."[68] Now how could it have been the case that Confucius [sought to] slander the *Odes*? Words have those that are inappropriate; [some of] their meanings fail to fully realize [the matter at hand]. Thus, I say: How can students adhere [blindly] to the poems and have complete faith in them?[69]
>
> 孔、孟嘗言曰 "作是詩者其知道", 則其他有不及道者矣. …古詩之得聖人之道者多矣, 其有不合於聖人者, 豈少乎? …其詩有曰 "不忮不求, 何用不臧", 則曰"是道也, 何足以臧"; "豈不爾思, 室是遠而", 則曰 "未之思也, 夫何遠之有". 夫孔子豈毀詩者耶? 言之有不便, 義之有不盡耳. 固曰學者豈可執詩以盡信乎?

Although Wang's comments here center rather closely on the *Shijing* classic, his position had a larger implication; namely, that the content of the classics could not serve as an unerring guide to the *Dao* of the sages. Yet, this did not mean that students should abandon their study of these texts. Rather, Wang contended that they needed to interrogate

64 In the relevant portion of the letter, Wang begins his discussion by defending his earlier statements regarding *Shijing*, in which he asserted that the odes in the classic were "not words to be modeled 非法言," and that "Confucius and his disciples did not write poems 孔子弟子不爲詩." In his effort to explain what he meant by these claims, he maintained that Confucius did not believe that all of the odes comported with the *Dao*. See *QSW* 80, *j*. 1743, pp. 89–90.

65 This is from the *Shijing* ode titled "Xiongzhi" 雄雉.

66 *Analects*, 9.27. See D.C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 100.

67 This poem is not found in the extant *Shijing*, but in *Analects* 9.31.

68 *Analects*, 9.31; Lau, *Analects,* p. 100.

69 *QSW* 80, *j*. 1743, p. 90.

them critically to see the ways in which they either matched or did not match with the teachings of the sages. This stance put the onus of understanding squarely upon the self; it also suggested that the *Dao* had a foundation outside of texts.

Wang described his understanding of the *Dao*, the human nature, and self-cultivation in a lengthy essay titled "Discourse on the Nature" ("Xingshuo" 性說). As we shall see, although his positions on these matters differed considerably from those set forth by Chen Xiang, the two men based their arguments in a similar set of assumptions; namely, that all people are endowed with a common nature, that this Nature ties the self to the world on a fundamental level, that it is the foundation for human development, and that the *Dao* was not something created by the sages but was instead inherent in the cosmos. In addition, despite his veneration of Mencius, and his claim that most of his contemporaries endorsed the Mencian view of the Nature as intrinsically good,[70] Wang proposed a very different notion of the Nature in this piece. Near the beginning of the essay, which is organized as a catechism, Wang discussed the origin of the Nature as follows:

> Someone asked: "From where then does the Nature emerge?"
>
> I answered: "Above, it goes back countless generations; below, it extends for countless generations. Its origin is my mind. I [can] extend my mind to penetrate the minds of the myriad things; they are one mind."[71]
>
> 曰: "然則性何出也?"
>
> 曰: "上而億萬世, 下而億萬世, 其源, 吾心是也. 推吾心以通萬物之心, 一心也."

Wang here makes several important claims about the Nature: it is timeless; its origin is in each person's individual mind; and one can comprehend the minds of the myriad things by extending this mind because the minds of everything are one. As we shall see, Wang used this emphasis on unity and common origins, which appears throughout the essay, to link people to things and affairs and buttress his argument that self-cultivation needed to take place within the flow of worldly events.

The essay continues with the interlocutor asking if the Nature is the origin of the myriad things. Wang replies by asserting that it is what gives rise to heaven, earth, and man:

[70] Wang advances this claim in his "Zhengming" 正命, *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, pp. 118–20.
[71] *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, p. 107.

> If it is like this, then is the Nature the source of the myriad things?
>
> [The Nature] is vast and without form or image; it is quiescent and without omens or signs. Even if there were no sun or moon, *yin* and *yang* would not be able to obscure it; even if there were no thunder or lightning, *qi* and image (i.e., natural phenomena) would still have a means of responding to it. Heaven is boundlessly endowed with it and ascends; earth is submissively endowed with it and descends. The sun and stars are endowed with it and thereby serve as warp and woof; mountains and rivers are endowed with it and are thereby fused together [into a common landscape]. Then humans are introduced between them and are endowed with its essence.[72]
>
> 是則性者萬物之源乎?
>
> 廓而無形像也, 寂而無兆朕也. 不日不月, 陰陽不能晦也, 不雷不霆、氣象所由應也. 天蒼然稟之而上也, 地隤然稟之而下也. 日星稟之, 所以經緯也; 山川稟之, 所以融結也. 然則人介其間, 稟之粹者也.

Wang here describes the Nature as vast and quiescent, asserting that its endowment is what enables heaven and earth to separate and attain their respective positions. He moreover carves out a special place for humanity among the myriad things, arguing that human beings differ from heaven and earth with respect to the quality of their endowment, which Wang refers to here as the essence of the Nature.

Having identified the Nature as the origin of heaven, earth, man, and the myriad things, Wang turns to an extended discussion of why human beings fail to realize this Nature within themselves. He argues that it becomes obscured over time by the stimulation of *qi* and the arousal of emotions,[73] which cause one to become bogged down in one's responses to things and affairs and prevent one from returning to the origin 反其源. The constant bombardment of things and affairs circumscribes and limits one's senses, which eventually leads to a battle within the self between likes and dislikes as well as right and wrong. He continues by noting how this results in the delimitation of one's perspective and prevents one from perceiving the world as the sage does:

72 Ibid.

73 Wang contends that it is possible to attain a state of clarity without thought or action; however, people have a tendency to become attached to this state of clarity, which leads to the arousal of emotions and the stimulation of *qi*. According to Wang, this causes one to descend into material form 溺之形質, a state in which one becomes bombarded by things and affairs; such a situation prevents one from returning to the Nature. See *QSW* 80, *j*. 1745, p. 107.

> One uses a carpenter's ink-line to differentiate the crooked from the straight,[74] but does not realize that not using the line and the ink is how the crooked and straight are [actually] made. One uses ice and coal-ash to equalize cold and heat, but does not realize that not using ice and ash is how one [truly] understands cold and heat. Ah, the great *Dao* is brilliant and pervades all between heaven and earth. Why is it that people of the age do not arrive at it? The reason why they fail is because good and evil emotions bind them. The good say: "I preserve this. If one were to discard what I preserve, then what *Dao* would exist?" The evil say: "I preserve this. If one were to discard what I preserve, then what *Dao* would exist?" The good are mired in the good, the evil are mired in evil; they are obstinate and do not know the changes of the sage.[75]
>
> 以繩墨辨曲直也, 而不知不繩不墨所以爲曲直也; 以冰炭等寒暄也, 而不知不冰不炭所以通寒暄也. 噫, 大道昭昭, 彌綸於天地間, 奈何世人之不達也. 世之人所以不達者, 善惡之情爲之縛也. 善者曰: "吾守是. 捨吾守, 何道之有也?" 惡者曰: "吾守是. 捨吾守, 亦何道之有也?" 善者泥於善, 惡者泥於惡, 頑然封執而不知聖人之變也.

Wang here implicitly compares good and evil to external tools and materials like the carpenter's line or ice and ash. Individuals seek to use these things to achieve a desired result, but they become dependent upon them and do not understand that such dependence prevents them from succeeding in the goal of arriving at the *Dao*. Wang's discussion identifies the *Dao* as pervading the universe, and he suggests that the sage can realize it because he remains free from fixed perspectives and understands change.

Wang's assertion that the sage adheres to neither good nor evil prompts the interlocutor to ask whether Wang's position in fact equates good with evil. Wang responds emphatically that while both good and evil are derived from the emotions, it does not mean that they are equal. He compares them to dew and frost; while both originate from water, and have the capacity to provide moisture, one nurtures while the other destroys. As was the case with good and evil, fixating on the differences between dew and frost causes people to overlook common origins and prevents them from seeing the underlying whole. It is important to emphasize that Wang's position here does not entail moral ambiguity; rather, he recognizes that the consequences of good and evil

[74] This metaphor is also found in the "Jingjie" 經解 chapter of *Liji* 禮記 as well as several sections of *Xunzi* 荀子.

[75] *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, p. 108.

differ. While he cautions against blindly adhering to good over evil due to the negative consequences this stance unleashes in the mind, he acknowledges in the latter half of the essay that the ancient sages created teachings and institutions in order to encourage people to stop engaging in incorrect and evil behaviors.

Before advancing this claim, however, Wang first reiterates his contention that good and evil are the product of the emotions and not tied to the Nature. He asserts that the battle between good and evil emotions that occurs within the self makes it difficult to return to their underlying unity,[76] which Wang identifies as the Nature. For Wang, returning to the Nature 復其性 thus requires that one forget about good and evil and eliminate the arousal of emotions within the self. He writes:

> I replied: "As for enlightened individuals, they neither abide in goodness nor get stuck in evil. If good and evil are forgotten, then likes and dislikes attain equilibrium; when likes and dislikes attain equilibrium, then things and the self are equal. When things and the self are equal, then there is quiescence and a lack of emotions between them. Thus, one is able to be on par with *taixu*."[77]
>
> 曰: "夫明覺之人, 不留善也, 不滯惡也. 善惡忘則好惡平, 好惡平則物我等, 物我等則湛然無情於其間, 故能與太虛等矣."

The problem with the concepts of good and evil for Wang is that they lead to separation and alienation; they divide the self from things and make it impossible to realize unity. He maintains that once one forgets these distinctions, and recognizes one's equality with things, one is able to become quiescent and emotionless.[78] He compares this state to *taixu* 太虛, or "great vacuity," a concept denoting the original state of the universe before differentiation into individual forces and entities occurred. In making this comparison, Wang suggests that it is indeed possible to return to the "one mind" that he identified as the origin of the Nature at the beginning of the essay by adopting this method of perceiving the world and acting within it.

But what does the return to this unitary mind mean in practice? How can one act within the world while quiescent and emotionless? Wang does not address this problem directly; however, he ardently de-

[76] Although his conception of the Nature differed, Sima Guang also described the task of cultivating the self in terms of an internal battle between good and evil emotions. See his "Shan'e hunbian" 善惡混辨, *QSW* 56, *j.* 1220, p. 164.

[77] *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, p. 108.

[78] In advancing this position, Wang differed from the majority of his contemporaries who felt that emotions were required to effectively interact with things and affairs.

nies that the achievement of this mental state required that one embrace "non-action," or *wuwei* 無爲, arguing instead that the sages' realization of the Nature and recognition of the equality of the myriad things engendered empathy for their fellow human beings and spurred them to enact concrete policies.[79] He writes:

> The [number of] children in the world is incalculable. Among them there are those who are incorrect and turn their backs on what is right, and those who are evil and forget the good. The sages have never forgotten these two types of individuals in their minds. When the sages' minds became ill at ease, they thought about crafting regulatory measures and implementing them. The sages [created] principles, regulations and transformative education in order to pacify the root of all under heaven; they [established] institutions and laws in order to reveal the sincerity of all under heaven; they [set up] seals of authority and measurements in order to publicize the fairness of all under heaven; and they [crafted] punishments and commands in order to restrain the wickedness of all under heaven. This is the means via which the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is the *Spring and Autumn Annals,* the *Rites* and *Music* are the *Rites* and *Music*, the *Book of Change* is the *Book of Change,* and the *Odes* and *Book of Documents* are the *Odes* and *Book of Documents*. Ah! All those who realized this *Dao* in antiquity were sages.[80]
>
> 天下之子, 不可計也, 非而悖於是者有矣, 惡而忘於善者有矣. 非而悖於是, 惡而忘於善, 聖人未嘗忘於心也. 心不安, 則思有制作行於其間矣. 紀綱教化, 所以敦天下之本也; 典章法度, 所以開天下之誠也; 符璽　斛, 所以公天下之平也; 刑法號令, 所以檢天下之姦也. 春秋以是爲春秋也, 禮、樂以是爲禮、樂也, 易以是爲易也, 詩、書以是爲詩、書也. 噫! 古之達此道者, 皆聖人也.

Wang here embraces the basic position advanced within *guwen* regarding the creation of order in antiquity, which maintained that the sages empathized with the people's struggles and crafted the institutions of government and the moral teachings of Confucianism in an attempt to ameliorate them. The classics described the sages' efforts in this regard, and Wang asserts that these descriptions are the texts' defining feature. Yet, despite these similarities with the *guwen* position, Wang diverges from their stance in that he does not equate the sages' political and moral teachings with the *Dao,* which he instead describes, in a previ-

[79] Taking cues from *Daode jing* 道德經, Wang identifies the sage as the "mother of the world 天下之母" and assures the reader that the sage would never willingly forget his children.

[80] *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, pp. 108–9.

ous passage, as permeating the universe. He furthermore differentiates his point of view by contending that the sages' creation of these teachings resulted from their success in returning to the original nature. His argument thus constitutes an attempt to ground the government and moral culture of antiquity in the sages' recovery of the human nature shared by all human beings.

This objective is evident in the lines that immediately follow the above excerpt, where Wang cites a *Mencius* passage that relates the legendary Yi Yin's 伊尹 statement that those who realize the *Dao* first have a responsibility to enlighten those who come after them.[81] He interprets this in the following way:

> Yi Yin realized the *Dao* of this people. Above it goes back for countless generations, and below it extends for countless generations. If you discard what we call the Nature, it is not possible to realize it. Ah! The sages have passed and their institutions and statutes have perished. How many people [can be said] to know our *Dao*? Later ages neither cultivated virtuous conduct nor manifested humanity and righteousness, causing the people of the world to collapse and adopt boorish customs without even being aware of it. This is all the fault of not knowing the Nature.[82]
>
> 伊尹覺斯民之道, 上而億萬世, 下而億萬世, 捨吾所謂性者, 無可覺者矣. 噫, 聖人沒, 典法淪喪, 知吾道者, 幾人也? 後之世, 德行不修, 仁義不著, 使天下之人泯泯然入頑獷之俗而不自知者, 皆不知性之罪也.

Wang asserts that the realization of the *Dao* depends on knowing the Nature; the moral decline following the demise of the sages is directly attributable to people's failure to return to it. Thus, the argument in his essay "Xingshuo" 性說 represents an effort to ground the Confucian *Dao* in both the cosmos and the self.[83] As the origin of the heaven, earth, mankind, and the myriad things, the Nature tied the self to the world. People unwittingly severed this original unity, however, by allowing predilections and emotions to disturb their minds, which prevented them from realizing the common foundation underlying the self and things. The ancient sages sought to enlighten others and guide them towards the realization of the Nature by creating political institutions

81 *Mencius* 5A.7; Lau, *Mencius,* pp. 146–47.

82 *QSW* 80, *j.* 1745, p. 109.

83 In several of his other writings, Wang employs the term *Dao* relatively more mundanely when referring to methods of learning or forming relationships. In contrast to those usages, I think it is clear that the *Dao* he describes in "Xingshuo" refers to a comprehensive Way that is inherently present in the universe and which can only be realized through the adoption of a proper mental disposition that allowed one to return to the Nature.

and moral norms, which were later passed down via the classics. The objective of Confucian teachings was thus to instruct people to recover this Nature, and enable them to attain direct insight into the source of the *Dao* and the universe.

WANG KAIZU

The final figure analyzed here, Wang Kaizu, was born into a family of modest means from Yongjia 永嘉, Zhejiang 浙江. After receiving the *jinshi* degree in 1053 before the age of twenty, Wang was assigned to a local post in Chuzhou 處州, which was a short distance from his hometown. Yet, despite these seemingly propitious beginnings, his official career would come to an abrupt and unexpected end the following year after he failed a controversial decree exam. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that none of the candidates passed, Wang decided to resign his post in protest and return to Yongjia to establish an academy at the foot of Dongshan 東山. He taught there until his untimely death in 1068 at the age of thirty-two, and during his brief tenure he purportedly attracted hundreds of students and attained a sterling pedagogical reputation.[84]

Unfortunately, very little information about Wang's life survives in the historical record; we have no extant literary collection, record of conduct, or funerary inscription, and he did not receive a biography in the extensive standard-history *Songshi* 宋史. With the exception of his *Ruzhi bian* 儒志編, the only surviving documents connected with Wang Kaizu that date from the Northern Song period are two letters, one each from Chen Xiang and Wang Anshi; those regrettably do not relate any significant information about Wang's life or thought.[85] While the "Yiwenzhi" 藝文志 treatise from *Songshi* lists a work titled *Ruzhi* 儒志 that is attributed to Wang,[86] the work is not listed in any of the pri-

[84] For basic introductions to Wang's life and thought, see Zhou Mengjiang 周夢江, *Ye Shi yu Yongjia xuepai* 葉適與永嘉學派 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992), pp. 35–46; Zhao Zhao 趙釗, "Wang Kaizu *Ruzhi bian* yanjiu" 王開祖'儒志編' 研究, M.A. thesis (Zhejiang daxue, 2010); and Lu Minzhen 陸敏珍, *Songdai Yongjia xuepai de jiangou* 宋代永嘉學派的建構 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue, 2013), chap. 1.

[85] See *QSW* 50, *j.* 1086, pp. 149–50; and 64, *j.* 1393, p. 180. The content of Chen's letter is discussed in n. 5, above. In the letter from Wang Anshi, which was a reply to Wang Kaizu, Wang Anshi notes that he has heard of Wang Kaizu's reputation and received a selection of his writings. He also deflects the praise Wang Kaizu purportedly showered upon him in his original letter seeking to establish a relationship, asserting that he does not deserve to be compared to such literary luminaries as Ouyang Xiu, Yin Shu, and Cai Xiang. In the reply, Wang Anshi also offered to introduce him to Li Gou and Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019–1083).

[86] *Songshi* 宋史 205, p. 5174.

vate bibliographies that date from the Southern Song. Much later, the editors of the Qing imperial manuscript library *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 included it and noted that the version they used (still extant today) was compiled in the Ming dynasty by Wang Xun 汪循 (1452–1519) during the time when he served as an official in Yongjia.[87] To this edition are appended several essays, including a preface, an intellectual biography, a postface, and an encomium, which date variously from the Southern Song to the Ming. These writings were composed by individuals who hailed from, or received an official posting to, Yongjia, and they without exception sought to elevate the importance of both Wang's learning and the Yongjia school of Confucian thought.[88]

Both the fact that *Ruzhi bian* was lost sometime after its compilation and reconstituted in the Ming and its use by the supporters of the Yongjia intellectual tradition to trace the origins of their learning back to the mid-eleventh century (prior to the formation of Daoxue), together raise questions about the text's provenance and authenticity.[89] It is impossible to verify the degree to which the extant text differs from the original listed in the *Songshi*'s "Yiwenzhi" treatise; however, its content and style are largely consonant with Northern Song norms. *Ruzhi bian* consists of an eclectic mix of entries on a wide range of topics, including historical questions related to antiquity,[90] the differences between the *junzi* 君子 and the *xiaoren* 小人, the authenticity of the influential "Xici zhuan" 繫辭傳 commentarial section of *Yijing*,[91] and the proper method

87 Wang Kaizu 王開祖, *Ruzhi bian* 儒志編 (SKQS edn.; *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 [Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1983]), vol. 696, p. 781.

88 The identification of Wang as the founder of the Yongjia intellectual tradition began in the Southern Song and Yuan. He is labeled as such by both Chen Qian 陳謙 and Wang Duzhong 王都中in their writings in praise of his learning. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, pp. 803–4.

89 In his *Yongjia xue'an* 永嘉學案 and *Ouhai yiwen* 甌海軼聞, Sun Yiyan 孫衣言 (1815–1894) conducted an in-depth analysis of *Ruzhi bian* and its transmission history. Although Sun cast doubt on the content of some of the writings on the text by later figures in the Southern Song, and maintained that one of Wang Kaizu's descendants was responsible for changing the title from *Ruzhi* to *Ruzhi bian*, he nonetheless viewed the work as authentic. For a detailed study of Sun's evidentiary scholarship on the text, see Zhao Shiwei 趙世瑋, "Sun Yiyan *Yongjia xue'an* Ruzhi, Tang'ao, Jingxing san xiansheng diwei kao" 孫衣言'永嘉學案'儒志、唐奧、經行三先生地位考, *Danjiang Zhongwen xuebao* 淡江中文學報 34 (2016.6), pp. 217–55. In addition, writings concerning the text that circulated from the Southern Song until the Qing are discussed at length in Sun Yirang's 孫詒讓 *Wenzhou jingji zhi* 溫州經籍志 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang gongli tushuguan 浙江公立圖書館, 1915), *j.* 14, pp. 1–7.

90 Wang's stress on historical inquiry has led some scholars to assert that he influenced the Southern Song Yongjia school's emphasis on statecraft and practical policy. See Zhou Mengjiang 周夢江, "Yongjia xueshu kaichuangzhe Wang Kaizu: Songdai zhexue tonglun zhiyi" 永嘉學術開創者王開祖, 宋代浙學通論之一, *Hangzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 杭州師範學院學報 2 (1990), pp. 44–50.

91 A Qing-era scholar, Yao Jiheng 姚際恆, begins his discussion of the authenticity of "Xici zhuan" by quoting Wang's views. Importantly, Yao does not cast doubt on the provenance of

of interpreting ancient texts, among many others. The entries, which in all likelihood were recorded and compiled by Wang's disciples,[92] moreover do not conform to a single discursive mode. Straightforward pronouncements are interlaced with dialogues of varying length, aphorisms, and deep dives into the meaning of the classics, particularly *Shijing, Zhouli* 周禮 and *Chunqiu* 春秋. Interestingly, only a handful of the entries in the work deal with issues under consideration here such as self-cultivation, the Nature, and the *Dao*. Wang's discussions of those matters have been placed at the beginning of the text, and they were similar to those advanced by Chen Xiang and Wang Ling in that they were cursory and somewhat unsystematic. Despite this, later thinkers tended to highlight these more philosophically-oriented entries in order to justify their assertion that Wang discovered the true *Dao* before the early proponents of Daoxue. While acknowledging that there is no way to conclusively demonstrate that the received version of the text does not differ significantly from the original, the chances of it being a wholesale forgery are, I think, quite small.[93] For this reason, I have decided to interpret the received text of *Ruzhi bian* as a Northern Song work that represents Wang's thought.

In the discussion below, I focus on the first several passages in the text, which concern the connection between the cosmos and humanity, the proper way to order the mind and cultivate the self, and the human nature. I begin with its opening entry, which contains a meditation on concepts found in the early classics *Yijing* and *Zhongyong*. The first portion of the passage, which was frequently cited in later appreciations of Wang's thought, mentions the importance of "returning" 復 in connection with the Nature.[94] The tendency to cite only the initial part of the entry has resulted in the obscuration of its larger purport,

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Wang's *Ruzhi bian*. See Huang Yunmei 黃雲眉, *Gujin weishu kao buzheng* 古今僞書考補證, (Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1980), p. 1.

92 This is suggested in the preface to the text composed by the Qing-era editors of *Siku quanshu*, which asserts that it consists of records of his lectures 講學之錄. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 781. It should also be noted that two passages from the extant text are quoted in an earlier encomium to Wang, dated to the late-12th c., that was composed by the Yongjia native Chen Qian.

93 Most significantly, the text does not read as a forgery made by someone with the intent to demonstrate that Wang's philosophical positions predated those of Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao. The entries that discuss core Daoxue concepts such as the cosmos, the Nature, and self-cultivation are relatively few in number and comparatively unsophisticated.

94 All three thinkers examined here stress the notion of "returning" to the Nature, a concept first popularized in Confucian circles by the Tang thinker, Li Ao, in his "Fuxing shu" 復性書. Interestingly, however, neither Chen nor the two Wangs cite Li's work in their discussions of the Nature and the degree to which they were influenced by his ideas is unclear.

which was intended to show how four *Yijing* hexagrams, namely, "Fu" 復, "Wuwang" 无妄, "Daxu" 大畜, and "Yi" 頤, revealed important clues about the process of self-cultivation.[95] Such selective citation should not however detract from the importance of Wang's invocation of *Zhongyong* at the conclusion of the entry, which clearly represented an effort on his behalf to link the fundamental purports of the *Yi* and the *Zhongyong* to one another. The following quotation contains the opening passage in its entirety:

> The [hexagram] "Fu" (return) is the residence of the Nature; "Wuwang" (without error) is the source of sincerity; "Daxu" (great nurturing) is the point of return of the *Dao*; and "Yi" (nourishment) is the manifestation of virtue. Thus, when the cultivated man returns, this is sufficient to know the Nature; when he is without error, this is sufficient to establish sincerity; when he greatly nurtures, this is sufficient to possess forbearance; and when he nourishes, this is sufficient to care for things. Knowing how to return [to the Nature], the cultivated man is able to know the Nature; knowing the Nature, he is able to establish sincerity; establishing his sincerity, he is able to nurture virtue; nurturing his virtue, he is able to develop the myriad things and match with heaven and earth. The origins of the *Zhongyong*'s statements on extending the human nature, assisting heaven and earth and caring for the myriad things are in this![96]
>
> 復者, 性之宅也; 無妄者, 誠之原也; 大畜者, 道之歸也; 頤者, 德之施也. 故君子復, 足以知性; 無妄, 足以立誠; 大畜, 足以有容; 頤, 足以育物. 知其復則能知性, 知性則能立誠, 立其誠則能畜德, 畜其德則能發育萬物而與天地配矣. 中庸之言, 推乎人性, 贊天地而育萬物, 其原於此乎!

Wang reads these four hexagrams from the *Yi* as laying out the proper path that an individual must traverse to cultivate the self. One begins by returning to, and understanding, the Nature. This act of introspection is followed by the development of sincerity, a state he defines later in the text as denoting self-completion.[97] One then extends this completed self into the world in an effort to nurture the myriad things and match with heaven and earth. He concludes by asserting that the *Yi*'s description of self-cultivation served as the source of the *Zhongyong*'s claims on how

[95] These four *Yijing* hexagrams occur as numbers 24–27 in succession in the so-called standard ordering. Their connections to one another are discussed in the "Xugua" 序卦 portion of *Yijing*'s crucial set of early commentaries. The link between "Fu" and self-cultivation is spelled out in the hexagram's image statement given at the hexagram's first line.

[96] Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 783.

[97] Ibid.

extending the Nature enabled an individual to participate in the larger cosmological process of nurturing the myriad things. Thus, like Chen and Wang Ling, Wang Kaizu held that self-cultivation was grounded in the original nature, involved the recovery of this Nature,[98] and further necessitated interacting with worldly things and affairs.

In contrast to Wang Ling, but like Chen Xiang, Wang Kaizu conceived of the Nature as the foundation of moral conduct and the good. In his discussions of the Nature, Wang sought to rebuke scholars who drew a hard and fast line between the Nature and the emotions, and who identified the former with goodness and the latter with evil.

> As for the emotions, when they are rooted in the Nature, they are correct; when they depart from the Nature, they are incorrect. If students do not seek their root and speak of them as being separated from the Nature, then how could they [arrive at the conclusion that the feelings] are not evil? Now when people enter into the path of self-abandonment and depravity,[99] we point at them and say: "[this is due to] evil emotions." [Their state] did not originate in self-abandonment and depravity, for these are originally not present within the self. [It is only when] one holds fast to the mind incorrectly that one then enters into [this state]. With respect to the emotions of worthy individuals, it is not that they do not stir; it is that they can be stirred and not become frenzied.[100]
>
> 夫情, 本於性則正; 離於性則邪. 學者不求其本, 離性而言之, 奚情之不惡? 今有人入於放辟邪侈之途, 指之曰: 情惡也. 不原乎放辟邪侈, 在我則本無有焉. 執心不正, 而後入也. 賢者之於情, 非不動也, 能動而不亂耳.

Wang here maintains that evil conduct is not due to anything inherent in the emotions; it arises when people depart from the Nature and adhere to incorrect mental states. He goes on to suggest that the arousal of emotions is not something that should be repressed; rather one should emulate Confucian worthies whose emotions arose in a controlled fashion because they were rooted in the Nature.

In the above passage, Wang Kaizu indicates that adhering to the mind in an incorrect manner is what causes people to give their evil emotions free reign and become alienated from their Natures. For Wang, the mind was thus the key to cultivating the self and "recovering" the

98 In a separate passage, Wang identified "return" (*fu* 復) with one's origin (*ben* 本). He further argued that "those who are skilled at investigating their origins are [also] skilled at speaking about the human nature 善探其本者, 善言人之性也." Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 785.

99 This phrase is from *Mencius* 5A.7; Lau, *Mencius,* pp. 146–47.

100 Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 785.

Nature, and in his *Ruzhi bian* he described in detail how one should go about rectifying it. Wang linked the ordering of the mind to the development of sincerity (*cheng* 誠), which he identified as the defining characteristic of humanity, maintaining that it was what distinguished humans from birds and beasts. For Wang, sincerity was an internal state that became manifest when one positively transformed people and things. He claimed that at its utmost point of development it could extend far beyond the self to fill the immensity of heaven and earth. Wang moreover asserted that the preservation of sincerity was the best means of "taking back 收" the "lost mind 放心" a concept that played an important role in Mencius' discussions of self-cultivation.[101]

In the entry immediately following the one that alludes to Mencius' "lost mind," Wang introduced three different methods of mental cultivation. The first, "regulating the mind 制心," referred to the practice of focusing one's mental attention on one's body; the second, "ordering the mind 治心," denoted the ability to establish and preserve mental equanimity when either sitting still or in motion; and the third, "nourishing the mind 養心," designated the state where "the transformation of heaven and earth, the illumination of the sun and moon, the movement of the four seasons, and the changes of the myriad things are all complete within me 天地之化, 日月之明, 四時之行, 萬物之變, 皆備於我."[102] The phrase "complete within me" is a reference to *Mencius*,[103] and building upon Mencius' views, Wang identifies "nourishing the mind" as the highest state of mental cultivation attained by the sages. In this state, the distinctions between self and other dissolved, allowing an individual to attain unity with the myriad things of the cosmos.[104]

Despite Wang's designation of *yangxin* as the pinnacle of mental cultivation, the extant version of *Ruzhi bian* does not explicate it at length. Of the three types of cultivation mentioned in the above passage, Wang discussed the second, "ordering the mind," in the most detail. As

[101] The phrase Wang employs, *shou fangxin* 收放心, differs slightly from Mencius' *qiu fangxin* 求放心 (seeking the lost mind). The phrase *shou fangxin* is also found in the "Biming" 畢命 chapter of *Shangshu* 尚書.

[102] Wang continues by describing this state as being "internally replete" (*neichong* 內充), adding that this was how the sages used their minds. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 784.

[103] See *Mencius* 7A.4; Lau, *Mencius,* p. 182. Although the theory that the myriad things are "complete within me" would later go on to play an extremely important role in Daoxue thought, it did not receive much attention in the period studied here. The only earlier Northern Song instance I have been able to find is Chen Xiang's use of a similar phrase, noted above, which substituted the first-person pronoun *ji* 己 for *wo* 我.

[104] In a separate passage in the text, Wang asserted that "the minds of all under heaven are one 天下之心一也," which suggests that the development of sincerity and the recovery of the lost mind enable one to realize this unity. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 785.

we shall see, Wang's conception of ordering the mind shows signs of having been influenced by Confucius' notion of the "four nots 四毋," as well as Mencius' doctrines of the "originally good mind 良心" and "nourishing *qi* 養氣."[105] The most comprehensive discussion of "ordering the mind" contained in *Ruzhi bian* was precipitated by a question on whether or not there was a *Dao* that figured into the constant maintenance of a state of joy 樂. Wang replied in the affirmative, asserting that this *Dao* simply consisted of ordering the mind. He continued by indicating that the foundation for ordering the mind lay in refraining from four types of action (the four nots): "do not be indulgent 毋縱; do not be inflexible 毋拘; do not follow things 毋從物; and do not pursue the past, wealth, or status 毋追徃富貴." The first two categories concerned one's internal mental control, while the last two pertained to the manner in which one interacted with things and affairs. The former spoke to one's mental state prior to engaging with the outside world, whereas the latter concerned the attitude one needed to adopt when engaging with external things to prevent the mind from becoming disturbed.

In his extended discussion of the "four nots," Wang asserted that human beings were innately endowed with an "originally good mind" (see above).[106] The term was first used by Mencius to denote people's inherent possession of moral qualities such as benevolence 仁 and righteousness 義.[107] Like Mencius, Wang maintained that this kind of mind could be lost by failing to actively nourish it or by engaging in activities that led to its obscuration. He felt that the four nots represented the most damaging types of behaviors in this regard, as they made it impossible to fully exhibit the originally good mind in one's dealings with the world. With respect to being indulgent, Wang argued that it caused one to lose control of the mind, leaving it without a sense of direction. Similarly, being inflexible made it impossible for one to act freely in ways that were appropriate to the situation. As for the latter two "nots," Wang cautioned against becoming attached to external things and affairs, recommending that one refrain from rashly following after things as they passed through one's field of observation. One also needed to retain a state of detachment from wealth and status, and instead focus on developing innate moral qualities that were waiting to

[105] While Wang imitated Confucius' identification of four actions to be avoided, he altered Confucius' original set of four nots (*wuyi* 毋意, *wubi* 毋必, *wugu* 毋固, *wuwo* 毋我) and proposed a new grouping that better reflected his concern with cultivating the mind. See *Analects*, 9.4; Lau, *Analects,* p. 96.

[106] Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 785.

[107] *Mencius* 6A.8; Lau, *Mencius,* pp. 164–65.

receive full expression.[108] For Wang, achieving this state, where one engaged with the world, but was not constrained by it, represented "ideal joy 良樂."

The entry continues with the interlocutor asking Wang about the proper method for nourishing *qi.* As with the Nature and the mind, Wang's views on nourishing *qi* were indebted to passages in *Mencius,* particularly one that contains a lengthy discussion on how to develop "overflowing *qi* 浩然之氣."[109] Like Mencius, Wang contended that the task of nourishing *qi* was linked to the mind, and he proposed as a guide a new list of "four don'ts 四勿," being different from the "four nots" mentioned above, but intended to complement them.[110] In his discussion of the "four don'ts," he highlighted the mind's important role in self-cultivation:

> Those skilled at nourishing the mind are also skilled at nourishing *qi.* The mind moves and then [one's] *qi* becomes obstructed; the mind ponders things external to it and then [one's] *qi* becomes attenuated and exhausted. There is nothing that does not originate in the mind.... The cultivated man settles his mind, makes his *qi* flow smoothly and harmonizes with the movement and quiescence of heaven, earth and the four seasons. Although the things of the world arrive before me in a chaotic manner, how could they disturb me?[111]
>
> 善養心者, 善養氣也. 心動則氣窒, 心外慮則氣昏耗矣, 莫不原乎心焉...君子平其心,順其氣,與天地四時, 同其動靜, 雖天下之物雜至焉, 能干我哉?

As in his discussion of the Nature, here Wang Kaizu suggests that the cultivation of the mind eradicates barriers between the self and the world, and enables one to harmonize with the cosmos. Although Wang does not posit a direct link between the mind and the Nature in *Ruzhi bian*, as his statements about "recovering" the Nature and "taking back" the lost mind make clear, his understanding of both concepts was rooted in the notion that they were originally good and that their authentic, unadulterated states needed to be recovered or restored. Returning to this original state, which allowed one to seamlessly mesh with the ebb and flow of affairs, was the ultimate goal of self-cultivation.

108 Wang's discussion drew inspiration from *Mencius* 3B.19 and 6A.15.

109 *Mencius* 2A.2; Lau, *Mencius,* pp. 76–80.

110 These additional four don'ts are: "don't be submissive 勿役, don't be reckless 勿枉, don't be overly inquisitive 勿問, and don't allow the pursuit of knowledge [to disturb one's mental composure] 勿知." Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 785.

111 Ibid.

The above analysis of *Ruzhi bian* demonstrates that Wang Kaizu, like Chen Xiang and Wang Ling, was interested in, and had begun to theorize about, several issues concerning self-cultivation and the human condition that would come to figure prominently in Daoxue going forward. Indeed, Wang actually employed the term Daoxue to refer to his own mode of learning. In the last *Ruzhi bian* entry, in response to a question concerning the value of Xunzi's and Yang Xiong's thought, Wang maintained that "Daoxue had not been illuminated since the passing of Mencius 由孟子以來, 道學不明."[112] The content of this entry echoed the closing section of Han Yu's "On the Origin of the Way" ("Yuandao" 原道), in which Han declared that Mencius' understanding of the *Dao* exceeded that of Xunzi and Yang, and that the *Dao* had failed to be passed down after Mencius' death. However, in contrast to Han as well as several of his followers in the Song, who together held that Xunzi and Yang Xiong had continued to elucidate and defend the Confucian *Dao* in their writings, Wang did not acknowledge their efforts in this regard.[113] Ignoring the contributions of Confucian thinkers who lived after Mencius, he boldly declared that he would "take on the tasks of propagating the *Dao* of Yao and Shun,[114] discoursing on the governance of Wen 文 and Wu 武, blocking the paths of the debauched and heterodox, and opening up the gate of the sovereign standard 我欲述堯舜之道, 論文武之治, 杜淫邪之路, 闢皇極之門."[115] The revitalization of this *Dao*, in other words, was something he viewed as his personal responsibility.[116]

112 Ibid., p. 802. In a separate passage, Wang indicates that among later thinkers Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) thought was close to that of Mencius.

113 This claim was also advanced by Cheng Yi in the funerary inscription he wrote for his brother, Cheng Hao. See *QSW* 80, *j.* 1758, pp. 356–57.

114 In contrast to Chen, Wang did not posit the *Dao* as the origin of heaven, earth, and the human nature, and in *Ruzhi bian* he did not directly associate it with cosmological entities or forces. In those entries that mentioned the *Dao* as an overarching Confucian "Way," he asserted that it was transmitted in the classics, that it needed to be practiced and not just discoursed upon, that ancient ministers such as Yi Yin were able to preserve the *Dao* within them and put it into practice in caring for the people, and that students needed to focus their intent on realizing it. Despite the absence of a direct assertion that the *Dao* was inherent in the cosmos, I think that the passages analyzed above in which Wang speaks of harmonizing with heaven and earth, and asserts that the changes of the myriad things are complete within the self, indicate that he not only viewed self-cultivation in cosmological terms but further held that returning to the Nature and recovering the lost mind would restore the original unity between the self and the universe. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, pp. 786, 797, 794, 797.

115 Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, p. 802.

116 Several later intellectuals used this last entry as their key piece of evidence to argue that Wang should be regarded as the true founder of not only the Yongjia school, but also of the larger Daoxue tradition. These claims are advanced in Chen Qian's Southern Song biographical account of Wang's scholastic accomplishments and Wang Duzhong's Yuan-era encomium lauding Wang's achievements. See Wang, *Ruzhi bian* (SKQS edn.), vol. 696, pp. 803–4. The

CONCLUSION

As this examination into the thought of Chen Xiang, Wang Ling and Wang Kaizu demonstrates, in the middle decades of the eleventh century a number of literati began to reassess Confucian learning and promote new ideas on the proper way to cultivate the self and engage with the world. To be clear, such topics were not new; they had been the subject of sustained interest and debate since the time of Confucius himself. However, in the context of eleventh century Confucian thought, the intellectual orientation that Chen and the two Wangs adopted in their approach to these topics differed from that of their immediate predecessors in important ways. Most significantly, while they engaged with certain ideas promoted within *guwen,* they clearly sought to move beyond that school's reliance on texts and writing, and ground Confucian learning in the Nature and the cosmos. Building on positions first advanced in the texts of *Mencius, Zhongyong* and *Yijing,* they articulated a vision of Confucian learning that involved the recovery of the human nature and the cultivation of the self through interaction with the world. While their individual positions differed, they nonetheless all maintained that there was a foundation within the self that enabled individuals to personally apprehend and realize the *Dao,* not simply by emulating the sages' conduct and studying the lessons found in the classics, but rather by striving to become sages themselves. This new orientation moreover took unity between the individual and the world as an underlying reality that could be realized through diligent study and mental cultivation.

Significantly, although Chen and Wang Kaizu exchanged letters, there is no concrete evidence that Chen and the two Wangs formed any type of deep intellectual relationships or that they directly influenced one another's thought. This suggests that there was a broader groundswell of interest in these topics at the time than has hitherto been recognized, and that this interest was not due to the efforts of a small coterie of trailblazing thinkers. Put simply, this period was one of startling creativity and exploration with respect to the human condition, the relationship between humanity and the cosmos, and self-cultivation. Due to the vast number of texts that have been lost, we will never be able to know the full extent of the theorizing on these issues that occurred at the time; however, the material we do have points to a great

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contemporary scholar Lu Minzhen also makes this argument in "Wang Kaizu ji qi guannian: Lianluo weiqi qian de Daoxue sixiang" 王開祖及其觀念, 濂洛未起前的道學思想, *Zhongguo zhexueshi* 中國哲學史 (2009.3), pp. 19–26.

deal of contemporary engagement with problems that would go on to play a key role in Confucian learning for the remainder of the Song, in particular the Daoxue position.

I think that recognizing this has the potential to complicate, or at least more fully flesh out, the narratives of Daoxue's development that have come to achieve dominant positions in contemporary scholarly discourse. The vast majority of studies on Northern Song intellectual history have tended to view Daoxue's emergence either as a continuation of the learning of Hu Yuan, Shi Jie and Sun Fu (the so-called "three masters of the early Song" *Songchu sanxiansheng* 宋初三先生),[117] or as primarily a reaction against Buddhism, Daoism, *guwen,* and/or Wang Anshi's New Learning. However, the examples of Chen and the two Wangs show that other like-minded figures of the time were theorizing on many of the intellectual issues at the core of the Daoxue position. The founders of Daoxue were by no means unique in either the problems they considered or the manner in which they considered them.

Yet this raises the question of why Daoxue succeeded. What made it different? Although space precludes a thorough discussion of the topic here, if we look at the thought of Cheng Yi, which went on to have the greatest influence over the later development of Daoxue in the Southern Song, it strikes me that one important reason for his success lay in his construction of a coherent theoretical apparatus that not only tied humans to the cosmos but which also undergirded his claims about the human nature and moral conduct.[118] In particular, his notions of principle and material force (*li* 理 and *qi* 氣) provided a conceptual frame-

[117] Zhu Xi was one of the first to suggest that the "three masters" influenced the development of Daoxue, a claim that was amplified in *Song Yuan xue'an*. A great deal of scholarship has been produced on this matter, particularly in the last two decades of the twentieth century. For a critique of the positions advanced in this body of scholarship, see Huang Furong 黃富榮, "Cong jinnian dui Songchu san xiansheng de yanjiu tandao san xiansheng dui Songdai lixue de yingxiang" 從近年對宋初三先生的研究談到三先生對宋代理學的影響, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 22 (1991), pp. 323–34. Of the "three masters," Hu Yuan had by far the greatest impact on the thought of his contemporaries; however, unlike Chen and the two Wangs, he (as well as Sun and Shi) did not posit a human nature common to all (Hu argued that the sages' endowments of the Nature were more complete than those of ordinary men) or advocate unity between the self and the cosmos. In these two senses, his perspective differed from the orientation discussed here.

[118] There are several other factors that were important. Cheng outlived many of his peers and managed to cultivate a number of devoted students who actively promoted his teachings after his death. See Cheung Hiu Yu, "Consolidation of the Cheng School: Yang Shi and Yin Tun in the Early-Twelfth Century," *AM* 3d ser. 34.1 (2021), pp. 111–46. In addition, the adherents of Daoxue combined philosophical and cultural claims into their learning, and also offered literati a common fellowship that gave them a valuable role to play in society. See Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, pp. 100–14; and Hoyt Tillman, "A New Direction in Confucian Scholarship: Approaches to Examining the Differences between Neo-Confucianism and Tao-hsüeh," *Philosophy East and West* 42.3 (1992), pp. 455–74.

work for understanding how one could develop the self and become a sage, how this development was grounded in the connection between the self and the world, and how it resulted in the realization of unity. The sophistication and cohesiveness of Cheng's mature views stand in contrast to the relatively cursory and scattershot positions advanced by Chen and the two Wangs, whose ideas did not measure up to the more systematic doctrines Cheng used to justify a similar set of assumptions about the human condition and the cosmos. Yet, despite this, I think it is important to recognize that their basic approach to, and presuppositions about, Confucian learning, as well as their understanding of what such learning should entail, were more alike than different. That is, they should be understood as manifestations of a new orientation in Confucian thought that arose in the mid-eleventh century.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

QSW Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳, eds., *Quan Songwen* 全宋文