

'Purity' in Confucian Thought – Zhu Xi on *Xu*, *Jing* and *Wu*

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1. The Phenomenon of 'Purity'

In the history of Chinese thought, a number of key terms are used to describe an ideal state of existence involving the absence of certain deviant elements that can adversely affect one's response to the world. For convenience, we may refer to such a state of existence as a state of 'purity'. The phenomenon of 'purity' is captured by certain terms that describe what the heart/mind (*xin*), the site of both cognitive and affective activities, should ideally be like. These include *xu* (vacuous, empty), *jing* (still, inactive), and *wu* (not have, nothing), a term that is used to refer to the absence of something, whether it is human activity (*wei*), self (*wo*), emotions (*qing*), desires (*yu*), or thoughts and deliberation.

The idea of absence of deviant influences comes hand in hand with a conception of how one should ideally relate to things. The latter is embodied in terms that have to do with how things operate, such as *zi ran* (self-so) and *li* (principle, pattern), and terms that describe how the self should relate to things, such as *yin* (use as a basis, follow, adapt to). In addition, there are terms that have to do with imageries used to describe the ideal state of the heart/mind and its relation to things. These include terms referring to a mirror, water, fire, sun and moon, as well as such terms as *ming* (bright, clear), *qing** (clear) and *ju* (light up) that describe the ideal state of these things. For example, a mirror should

ideally be bright and clear (*ming*), water should be clear (*qing**), and fire (or the sun and moon) should serve to light up (*ju*) what is around it.

The above ideas assume a contrast between how one should ideally respond to things and the factors that can lead one astray. One pair of terms describing the contrast is *tian* (Heaven, Nature) and *ren* (humans); we should ideally model ourselves on *tian* in our operations and it is human influences of certain kinds that prevent us from doing so. Another pair is *gong* (impartial, public) and *si* (partial, private), or *gong* and *pian* (one sided); *gong* should characterize the state of one's heart/mind and *si* or *pian* is what could lead one astray.

Throughout the history of Chinese thought, different thinkers and texts place different emphases on these terms and interpret them differently. In this paper, my focus is on how these terms and the related concepts come together in the thinking of Zhu Xi (1130-1200). I will begin by considering the history of evolution of these terms, paying special attention to Zhuangzi (fourth century B.C.), Xunzi (third century B.C.), and Guo Xiang (d. 312), whose understanding of these terms has been particularly influential on Zhu Xi's thinking.

2. Zhuangzi

A prominent concept in the Zhuangzi is *xu*, which is used in a well known passage that discusses what constitutes 'fasting of the heart/mind'. Before discussing this passage, let us first consider the connotations of the term in texts up to early Han.

In early texts, *xu* is often contrasted with *shi* (real, truly so, with substance) (e.g., Xunzi 13/11a), just as *wu* (not have, nothing) is contrasted with *you* (have, exist) (Lunyu 8:5). It is also contrasted with two terms meaning “being full” or “filled up”: *ying* (e.g., Lunyu 7:26, Zhuangzi 6/7b) and *man* (e.g., Xunzi 6/11a, Zhuangzi 7/18a). Thus, *xu* has the connotation of being empty, unfilled, and is often paired with *kong* (empty) in the combination *kong xu* (e.g., Guoyu 19/10a, Mengzi 7B:12, Hanfeizi 1/1a, Lushichunqiu 18/22a). In addition, it can be used verbally in the sense of making empty (e.g., Mozi 5/5/24, 37/25/20).

Xu, being contrasted with *shi*, can also mean not real, deceptive, or without substance. It is used in conjunction with *jia* (deceptive, false) (e.g., Mozi 2/2/7, 2/2/11) and *wei** (human construct, false) (e.g., Zhuangzi 9/21b) to mean what is not true and deceptive. It can be used to describe names (e.g., Hanfeizi 14/7b, 20/3a), reputation (e.g., Liezi 7/2b), words (e.g., Xunzi 12/9a), speech (e.g., Hanfeizi 2/16a), proverbs (e.g., Hanfeizi 4/17b), or modesty (e.g., Zhuangzi 9/24b) without substance. It is used verbally to mean “not make real” or “not give substance to” – one can *xu* someone’s request in the sense of not granting it and thereby not making it real (e.g., Zuozhuan 13/23b).

Although *xu* is often contrasted with *shi*, the two are also related in interesting ways. Certain texts idealize individuals who, while *shi*, appears as if *xu* (e.g., Lunyu 8:5, Huainanzi 7/5a), while others refer to those who are also *shi* despite being apparently *xu* (e.g., Lushichunqiu 26/1a). The Zhuangzi talks about how one might opt for *xu* over *shi* and have excess simply because one does not store (10/19a), while the Liji talks about how one holds on to *xu* as if one were holding on to what is full (10/16b). There is even

reference to how, starting with *xu*, one ends up with *shi* (e.g., Zhuangzi 2/16a, Huainanzi 2/5a), or how *shi* comes from *xu* (e.g., Huainanzi 1/11a).

That *xu* is idealized in this way has to do with its connotation of receptivity and responsiveness. If one is *xu* in the sense of being vacuous or unfilled, then one is also open to receiving what is *shi*, namely what is real and substantive. Thus, a number of texts refer to how one uses *xu* to receive what comes in (e.g., Yijing 4/1a) and to await it (e.g., Hanfeizi 2/8b); there is even specific reference to using *xu* to receive *shi* (e.g., Huainanzi 7/5a). Furthermore, one whose heart/mind is *xu* will not have preconceptions and so will not have one's thoughts constrained (Hanfeizi 6/1a). This receptivity and the lack of prior constraints allow one to have a proper understanding of things – the Hanfeizi talks about how one who is *xu* will understand the *qing* (what is genuinely so, fact) of *shi* (1/10a). These connotations of *xu* are reflected in the idiomatic expression *xu xin* (e.g., Hanfeizi 2/3a, 2/11a), which refers to a state of the heart/mind that is able to receive without preconceptions. And because one is receptive and can grasp things accurately, one can also respond appropriately to situations (e.g., Huainanzi 1/8a).

So, *xu* carries the multiple connotations of being unfilled and without substance, and being receptive, unconstrained, and responsive in appropriate ways. Let us now return to the passage in the Zhuangzi in which we find a hypothetical dialogue between Confucius and Yan Hui about fasting of the heart/mind (2/7a-7b). The passage discusses how one should empty the heart/mind and instead await things and respond with *qi* (vital energies). This is presented in the context of a progression that appears like a reversal of a maxim of Gaozi's found in Mengzi 2A:2: "Do not listen with the ear; listen with the heart/mind. Do not listen with the heart/mind; listen with *qi*." *Xu* characterizes this state

of the person and *xu* is that in which *dao* (Way) resides. Such a state of the heart/mind is described by Yan Hui as ‘not having’ himself, a state endorsed by the hypothetical Confucius who goes on to talk about how one should reside in and flow along with what is unavoidable (*bu de yi*).

The emphasis of the passage is on the absence of guidance by the heart/mind, contrary to both Mencius’s and Gaozi’s positions as presented in Mengzi 2A:2. Mencius and Gaozi agree that the heart/mind should provide guidance to *qi*, while disagreeing on the source of such guidance – whether one derives it from ethical doctrines and place it in the heart/mind (Gaozi) or derives it directly from the heart/mind (Mencius). For Zhuangzi, the heart/mind should not provide such guidance, and instead one should respond with *qi* without direction from the heart/mind. Thus, *xu*’s connotation of being empty and being responsive is emphasized over that of being receptive. This emphasis on *xu* as emptiness is reflected in Yan Hui’s remark about ‘not having’ himself – one’s heart/mind does not give any direction, and so there is no ‘self’ at work in one’s response. The reference to the unavoidable reflects the idea of one’s flowing along with things, an idea that we will consider later.

Another important concept in the Zhuangzi is *jing*. *Jing* is often contrasted with *dong*, a contrast between not moving and moving, or between inactivity and activity (e.g., Lunyu 6:23). It is sometimes used to describe the inactive state of human beings when they are first born and before they interact with things (e.g., Liji 11/8b, Huainanzi 1/4a). In this context, *jing* is not viewed as a state preferred to *dong*; the two terms just describe whether one is, or is not, interacting with and responding to things.

Jing also characterizes the state of water when it is still and free from disturbance, and it is related to *ding*, a state when water is settled (e.g., Guanzi 16/2b, Daxue main text). When water is still, sediments will settle and water is clear (*qing**); it is when disturbed that water loses this clarity (e.g., Lushichunqiu 1/6b). Hence, *jing* is also related to *qing** (clear) and they occur in the combination *qing** *jing* (e.g., Laozi no. 45, Huainanzi 9/7a). And when water is clear, it acts like a mirror and can accurately reflect what is brought in front of it (e.g., Zhuangzi 2/17a, 10/18b-19a). In this context, *jing* is a desirable state of existence, by contrast to a state in which one is subject to disturbances that distort one's response to things. This idea of disturbance is found in the observation in the Huainanzi about how cravings and desires can disturb the nature of human beings which is originally *jing* (1/4a). In this sense, *jing* is contrasted with *dong* in the sense of disturbance (e.g., Mengzi 2A:2) but not with *dong* in the sense of activity, since one can be active (*dong*) while one's heart/mind is still (*jing*) and free from disturbance (e.g., Xunzi 15/4b). Indeed, being *jing* in this sense is a preparation for *dong* (activity), just as *xu* in the sense of receptivity and responsiveness is a preparation for *shi* (e.g., Zhuangzi 5/12a, Hanfeizi 1/10a).

Jing in the sense of being free from disturbance is often paired with *xu* in the combination *xu jing* (e.g., Hanfeizi 1/10a, 1/11a). The Liezi contrasts *xu* and *jing* with 'taking in' and 'projecting onto' (1/13a), and the Hanfeizi contrasts them with 'using the self' (2/11a). The Lushichunqiu describes the person who has attained *dao* (Way) as *jing*, and the person who is *jing* as without knowledge (*zhi*) (17/6b). Thus, *jing*, like *xu*, has to do with the absence of preconceptions that comes from the self and that can adversely affect one's response to things.

The Zhuangzi still uses *jing* in the sense of inactivity, by contrast to *dong* in the sense of activity (e.g., 10/18a). Often, it uses *jing* in the sense of being undisturbed, again pairing it with *xu* (5/12a). Interestingly, it relates *jing* to *xu* in apparently opposite directions. On one occasion, *xu* is supposed to lead to *jing* (5/12a); on another occasion, *jing* is supposed to lead to *ming* (brightness, clarity) and *ming* to *xu* (8/9a; cf. Lushichunqiu 25/7b). These two statements of the relationship can be reconciled by noting the different connotations of *xu*. *Xu*, in the sense of absence of factors that can potentially disturb the heart/mind, leads to *jing*, the still and undisturbed state of the heart/mind. This in turn enables the heart/mind to be clear, thereby leading to *xu* in the sense of proper responsiveness.

We saw how, in the passage about fasting of the heart/mind, Yan Hui talks about ‘not having’ himself. Other parts of the Zhuangzi also refer to losing (1/10a), not having (1/5a), or forgetting (5/20a) the self. Another passage refers to how Yan Hui forgets various things (3/14a-b) and still another passage brings up the idea of not having thoughts and deliberation (7/22a-b). One passage records a dialogue between Zhuangzi and Hui Shi, and Zhuangzi talks about how one should be without *qing* (*wu qing*) (2/22b-23b). This idea he explains in terms of the absence of likes and dislikes that can harm the body; instead, one should *yin zi ran*, or follow what is self-so. So, along with the emphasis on *xu* and *jing*, the Zhuangzi also advocates *wu* in the sense of not having, or eliminating, certain kinds of thoughts and deliberation, or likes and dislikes, an idea sometimes put in terms of not having or losing the self.

The expression “*yin zi ran*” takes us from a description of the ideal state of the heart/mind to a description of one’s ideal relation to things. *Yin* has the meaning of “using

as a basis”; in using something as a basis in the way one operates, one is also ‘following’ or ‘adapting’ to that thing in one’s operation. Aside from the use of *yin* in relation to *zi ran*, the Zhuangzi also uses it to describe how “this” and “that”, “it is so” and “it is not so”, mutually generate each other (1/14b-15a). The term is used in other texts to describe how one relates to things (Lushichunqiu 24/13b) and to people; the Shenzi talks about, presumably in relation to a ruler, how one uses the way people work for themselves as a way to relate to people, rather than making them work for oneself (1/4b-5a). The Lushichunqiu (17/13b, 17/21b) and Shen Buhai fragments (p. 376) explicitly describe *yin* as the way of the ruler, enabling the ruler to be still (*jing*), by contrast to the activity of officials. This probably refers to how the ruler makes use of the talents and abilities of officials without himself being actively involved in government.

The term *zi ran* refers to how things operate on their own; it is a prominent concept in the Laozi (e.g., Laozi nos. 25, 64), and other early texts also refer to the idea of following *zi ran* (e.g., Hanfeizi 8/12b, 8/14a, Lushichunqiu 3/13a-b). Besides speaking of *yin zi ran*, the Zhuangzi also speaks of following (*shun*) the *zi ran* of things (3/16b) and of responding with *zi ran* (5/20b). The idea is to not interfere with the way things operate on their own, and instead to flow along with it. The Zhuangzi regards *zi ran* as something unalterable (10/5b), and often highlights the notion of *bu de yi*, the unavoidable. Aside from using *bu de yi* in relation to one’s place in the political order (2/9a-9b, 2/10b; cf. 2/18a), the text also regards following *bu de yi* as close to the way of the sage (8/10b).

Three other terms are used in connection with the way one should interact with things: *shi** (what is timely), *xing ming** (nature and destiny), and *li* (principle, pattern).

The Zhuangzi observes that one should match (6/10a) or be at ease in (2/3b) *shi**; similar ideas are found in the Lushichunqiu (17/13b) and the Liezi, which also pairs *shi** with *ming** (6/11a). According to the Zhuangzi, one should give free rein to (4/5b) and be at ease in (4/15b) the *qing* (reality, fact) of *xing ming**. And one should follow *li* (9/23a) or the *li* of *tian* (2/2a, 5/20b, 6/2a). The term *li* is particularly important for our later discussion of Zhu Xi.

Li is used verbally in early texts in the sense of “give order to” (e.g., Guanzi 10/3b, Huainanzi 21/8a). It is often used in relation to another term *zhi**, meaning “bring order to” or “be in order” (e.g., Guanzi 16/3a, Hanfeizi 6/6b, Xiaoqing 7/1b), and is sometimes contrasted with *luan*, or disorder (e.g., Mozi 36/25/14). The Zhuangzi is probably using *li* in the sense of “bring order to” when it refers to how one *li* one’s heart/mind (8/27b) or one’s likes and dislikes (10/5b). *Li* pertains to things (*wu**) (e.g., Huainanzi 21/3a, Liji 11/15a-b, Zhuangzi 10/14a), and the ten thousand things differ in *li* (Hanfeizi 6/8a-b, Zhuangzi 8/30a-b). Sometimes, early texts regard *li* as pertaining not just to things (*wu**) but also to affairs such as *zhi* luan* (e.g., Hanfeizi 20/7b). *Li* is something to be conformed to (e.g., Mozi 3/3/15-17) or followed (e.g., Guanzi 13/8b, Hanfeizi 20/8a, Zhuangzi 10/18a). As such, it is often paired with *dao* (Way) (e.g., Hanfeizi 6/3b, Zhuangzi 6/3b, 10/17b) and *yi** (propriety) (e.g., Mengzi 6A:7, Lushichunqiu 18/19b, Guanzi 13/4a, Mozi 63/39/33). So, *li* resides in things and affairs, is the way things operate, and one’s response to things should involve following *li*.

Since one should flow along with things without interference from any preconception coming from the self, one’s relation to things is like that of accurately reflecting the way things are. This idea is found in a passage in the Zhuangzi that

comments on the stillness (*jing*) of the sage (5/12a-b). Just as still water can clearly reflect even one's beard and brow, the sage's heart/mind is still and can be the mirror of the ten thousand things. The superior person's heart/mind is also compared to a mirror that is *xu* – it does not store and yet is responsive to things (3/19a). The ideas of still water (2/17a) and of clear mirror that is free from dust (2/18a) are found elsewhere in the text. The idea of *ming* (brightness, clarity) also occurs frequently, at times compared to the brightness or clarity of the sun and moon (5/21a). The imageries of water and mirror also occur frequently in other early texts, and are sometimes mentioned in conjunction (e.g., Mozi 30/18/39, Huainanzi 1/3b).

What might prevent one's appropriate response to things are certain problematic influences coming from the self, and this idea the Zhuangzi presents through two related contrasts. One is that between *tian* (Heaven, Nature) and humans (*ren*). The way things operate on their own is *tian*, and to impose anything from one's heart/mind on one's response is for what is human to intrude into *tian*. Thus, the text idealizes not using the heart/mind to detract from *dao* (Way) and not using what is human to assist *tian* (3/2b; cf. 3/4a). As an example, that oxen and horses have four legs is due to *tian*, and to put a halter on a horse's head and pierce an ox's nose is due to humans (6/11b). Another contrast the Zhuangzi uses is that between *gong* (impartial, public) and *si* (partial, private). Flowing along with the *zi ran* of things and not allowing room for *si* will bring order to the world (3/16b), and *dao* is often related to the absence of *si* (8/30a-b; cf. 7/6a-b).

Si, when used to refer to what has to do with oneself, does not by itself carry any negative connotation. The Lunyu speaks of examining Yan Hui's *si* in the sense of

examining his ‘private’ life (2:9), and the Mengzi talks about attending to one’s own (*si*) affairs after having attended to public (*gong*) affairs (3A:3). However, *si* does often carry a negative connotation when contrasted with *gong*. *Gong* is opposed to another term *pian* (e.g., Hanfeizi 6/4a, Xunzi 2/6a, 7/9b), where *pian* has the connotation of being one sided or focusing on one part to the exclusion of others (Xunzi 2/6a). *Si* is a kind of *pian* that is focused on oneself; it is to focus on what is related to oneself in a way that prevents a balanced perspective. Thus, *gong yi**, or propriety that is ‘public’ or ‘objective’, is contrasted with resentment that is self-centered (*si*) (Mozi 9/8/20), with private (*si*) affairs (Xunzi 8/5a), or with selfish (*si*) desires (Xunzi 1/13a). The Hanfeizi contrasts *si* with *gong* (5/11b) and sometimes with *gong fa*, or public norms (2/1b). The contrast between *gong* and *si* and that between *tian* and humans are related in early texts, which describe the operation of *tian* as being without *si* (e.g., Shen Buhai fragments p. 358, Liji 15/12b-13a).

3. Xunzi

These ideas from the Zhuangzi are found in other early texts, though with different emphases and interpretations. For example, the Laozi highlights the notion of *zi ran*, using it not just to describe how one should flow along with the *zi ran* of things, but to characterize the sage himself (no.17). Also, not only is the sage himself characterized by *xu*, but the sage also seeks to render *xu* the heart/mind of the people (no. 3). As another example, the “Xin Shu Shang” chapter of the Guanzi is notable for its explication of some of the key terms. *Xu* is characterized as not storing and as a result not having pre-

conceptions (13/3b), and *yin* as not adding to or detracting from, and as letting go of oneself to follow things (13/4b-5a). *Yin* describes how the ruler makes use of the talents of the worthy (13/5b); those above should not take over the activities of those below, and should instead let them fully exercise their talents and abilities (13/1a, 13/2b-3a). More interestingly, these ideas are set in a Confucian context, with references to the Confucian ideas of *li** (rites) and *yi** (propriety) (13/3b-4a).

Of particular relevance to our later discussion of Zhu Xi is the way Xunzi deploys these terms. In the “Jie Bi” chapter of the Xunzi, both *xu* and *jing* are used to characterize the ideal state of the heart/mind (15/4b). The notion of *ming* (bright, clear) is also highlighted; the heart/mind is described as *qing** (clear) and is supposed to be *ming* just like the sun and moon (15/5b). The *qing** and *ming* of the heart/mind is illustrated by the imagery of water that is undisturbed (15/7a) and is compared to *tian* (14/2b). While deploying these ideas and imageries, which are similar to those found in the Zhuangzi, the “Jie Bi” chapter sets this discussion in a different context. It emphasizes how the clarity (*qing**) and brightness (*ming*) of the heart/mind is supposed to enable the heart/mind to discern *li* (15/7a).

As in other early texts, the Xunzi relates *li* to *zhi** (order) (1/8b, 7/12a, 16/6b, 17/4a-b), and talks about how education can *li* (bring order to) the nature of the common people (19/7a) and how the superior person *li* (bring order to) Heaven and Earth (5/7a). *Li* can pertain to things (*wu**) (15/9b) and affairs such as going against or going along with (12/9a). *Li* is something to be followed and accorded with (4/4a) and is related to *yi** (propriety) (10/8b, 19/3b). Given Xunzi’s view on how social distinctions are grounded

in their ability to give order thereby enabling satisfaction of human desires, he also relates *li* to *fen*, or social distinctions (12/12b, 17/1a).

In addition, he views *li* as something underlying *dao* (Way) (1/6a, 16/6b) and *li** (rites) (13/5a). It runs through the whole social order (11/14a, 15/9b) and is something that can be known or understood (*zhi*) (15/9b, 17/6a). The ideal state of the heart/mind enables it to grasp *li* (15/7a; cf. 16/8a-9a). It enables the heart/mind to understand (*zhi*) *dao* (Way), thereby enabling one to approve of (*ke*) *dao* and abide by it (15/4a-4b). The connection between understanding and following *dao* is so tight that Xunzi finds it inconceivable that one can truly understand *dao* without following it (16/9b).

This view of Xunzi's sets him apart from Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi emphasizes the connotation of emptiness in the term *xu*, seeing *xu* as a state in which one is free from guidance by the heart/mind. Xunzi, on the other hand, emphasizes the connotation of receptivity, seeing *xu* as a state in which the heart/mind is receptive to *li*, enabling it to discern *li*. The goal is not to eliminate guidance from the heart/mind, but to have its proper understanding guide one's behavior. Unlike Zhuangzi who sees the contribution of human beings as interfering with the operation of *tian*, Xunzi sees the former as distinct from and yet complementing the latter (11/9b). Xunzi's understanding of *ming* (brightness, clarity) is also different. For him, *ming* describes the clarity of one's understanding (*zhi*); study makes possible the *ming* of one's understanding and thereby ensures proper conduct (1/1a). Xunzi often emphasizes the *ming* of understanding (11/11b, 12/12a) or of the heart/mind (15/7a), comparing it to the *ming* of fire or of the sun and moon.

4. Guo Xiang

A number of the above themes continue to evolve in the Han and Wei-Jin period. The idealization of *xu* in the context of Confucian morality that we have seen both in the “Xin Shu Shang” chapter of the Guanzi and in the Xunzi continues in Han Confucian thought. For example, Jia Yi regards *xu* as the foundation and *shu* (method) as the branch of *dao* (8/3a-b). *Xu* is illustrated with the imagery of mirror and characterized in terms of the absence of preconceptions, while *shu* is characterized in terms of such Confucian qualities as *ren** (humanity), *yi** (propriety), and *li** (rites). Xunzi’s emphasis on understanding (*zhi*) and his view of it as a kind of brightness can also be found among thinkers of this period. Yang Xiong (53 B.C. – A.D. 18) regards understanding (*zhi*) as something that can light things up (3/2a-b), and Liu Xiang (77 – 6 B.C.) compares the way of the sage kings to the brightness of the sun or fire (3/6b). Liu Shao (third century) also compares wisdom to the brightness of the sun lighting up the day or of the candle lighting up the night (B/13a-b). Brightness enables one to grasp *li*, and the greater the brightness the further one sees. Another evolvment in the Wei-Jin period is the identification of *zi ran* (self-so) with *xing* (nature). Wang Bi (226-249) regards the ten thousand things as having *zi ran* as their *xing* (A/16b), and speaks of following the *zi ran* of things in parallel with following the *xing* of things (A/15a-b).

During this period, Guo Xiang develops certain ideas that are particularly relevant to our later discussion of Zhu Xi. According to Guo Xiang, everything has its *xing* (nature), *neng* (ability) and *fen* (appropriate position), and one should follow one’s *xing*, engage in affairs in a way that is appropriate to one’s *neng*, and live in accordance with

one's *fen* (1/1a). Different things have different *neng*; those suited to rule has the *neng* to employ officials, while those suited for a certain official position have the *neng* to carry out the responsibility of the office (5/13b-14a). *Fen* is used in the Xunzi to refer to distinguishing between different social roles (Xunzi 5/2b) as well as to the social distinctions that result (Xunzi 5/7b-8a, 6/1b, 6/3b). For Guo Xiang, *fen* refers to one's proper place in the social set up (1/13a); everything, however small or large, has its own *fen* (1/3b). *Fen* is often paired with *xing* in the expression *xing fen* (1/1a, 3/16a), and it is also related to *li* (1/2a), which pertains to everything (1/19a). *Fen* is also related to *zi ran* (1/24b), which is explained in terms of what is so by itself without one's activity (1/5a). Probably, the difference between these concepts is that *li* emphasizes that which resides in a thing and which governs its operation, *xing* emphasizes the thing's possession of *li*, *zi ran* emphasizes the fact that the thing can operate on its own given the *li* it has, and *fen* emphasizes the proper place of the thing given its *li*.

What is particularly noteworthy is Guo Xiang's repeated emphasis on the difference among things, especially the different abilities of people, an idea also found among other thinkers of the period such as Liu Shao (B/1b). In connection with the depiction in the Zhuangzi of the behavior of small and large birds, Guo notes that, whether small or large, each lives in accordance with its *xing* (1/2a) and in so doing, neither is to be admired or valued over the other (1/2b, 1/18a-b). This observation is extended to the social realm. Everything has its proper place (*fen*) in the social world, whether high or low, and the important thing is to live in accordance with one's proper place (1/13a). Someone suited to rule should employ able officials and not actively engage in the business of government, while someone suited to a certain kind of office

should conduct the affairs assigned to that office. Everything proceeds in accordance with *li* and *zi ran*, and this is what constitutes *wu wei* (5/13b-14a). *Wu wei* is not a matter of inactivity, but a matter of following one's *xing* and as a result being at ease (3/11b, 4/15b). In doing so, though one is socially engaged, one's heart/mind is at ease and engages in the free roaming that is idealized in the Zhuangzi (1/6b, 3/10b, 3/12a).

This view results in an understanding of the contrast between *tian* and humans different from that in the Zhuangzi. Guo Xiang does advocate ideas similar to the Zhuangzi, such as not having the self (*wu ji*) (1/5a) or heart/mind (*wu xin*) (3/14a). Like the Zhuangzi, Guo takes this to mean not having preconceptions that interfere with one's flowing along with the way things are (1/5a, 3/10b). However, for Guo, this in turn involves one's fulfilling one's proper place in the social order, and so implies social engagement of a kind appropriate to one's place (1/7b; cf. 3/15a). Like the Zhuangzi, Guo relates the operation of *tian* to *zi ran* (3/1a). However, since what is *zi ran* can include one's active social involvement, human activities of this kind are not opposed to *tian*. In connection with the example of oxen and horses in the Zhuangzi, Guo notes, contrary to the Zhuangzi, that it is the place of humans to ride horses and use oxen to plow, and so it is appropriate for humans to put a halter on a horse's head and pierce an ox's nose. Although such activities are due to humans, it has its foundation in *tian* and is not opposed to it. What is opposed to *tian* are only human activities of the kind that is excessive, not rooted in the proper place of human beings, such as over exerting horses and oxen in these activities (6/11b). Extending this to the social order, Guo sees active human participation in the social order as itself based on rather than opposed to *tian*.

5. Zhu Xi

We have seen how the range of ideas considered in relation to the Zhuangzi evolved over time, with new and interesting contributions by thinkers such as Xunzi and Guo Xiang. Xunzi's emphasis on the understanding of *li* and on how this understanding guides human conduct, and Guo Xiang's view that social engagement is compatible with the kind of free roaming of the heart/mind idealized in the Zhuangzi, are both shared by Zhu Xi. Other interesting developments can be found in the late Tang and early Song period. For example, Li Ao, who sees *xing* (nature) as originally good and *qing* (emotions) as potentially obscuring *xing*, highlights the imagery of water being made impure by sediments and fire being made dim by smoke (2/1a-b). The task of self-cultivation is to restore the original *xing*; through *xu*, one attains *ming* which will light up everything without omission (2/3a-3b; cf. 2/2a). Shao Yong emphasizes the idea of responding to things in accordance with its *li*, putting this in terms of viewing (*guan*) things with things (6/26b) or with the *li* in things (6/26a). Doing so and thereby going along with things is *xing*, while viewing things with the self, namely, with self preconceptions, is *qing* (8b/16a; cf. 8b/27b). By making the heart/mind like still water, the heart/mind will be *jing* and thereby *ming* (8b/25a). Li Ao's conception of self-cultivation as restoring the original *xing*, and Shao Yong's idea of responding to things in accordance with their *li*, are again shared by Zhu Xi.

Zhu Xi continues to emphasize the notion of *li* and relates it to *zi ran*. For example, *ren** (humanity) and *yi** (propriety) (Mengzi Huowen 26/3a), and *li** (rites) and *le* (music) (Yulei p. 2253), are all viewed as the *zi ran* of *tian li*. *Li* is also the way things

should be (*dang ran*) (Yulei p. 863, Lunyu Jizhu 2/11a, Lunyu Huowen 9/14b); furthermore, what is *zi ran* is also what cannot be otherwise (Mengzi Huowen 26/3a; cf. Yulei p. 414). In addition, *li* accounts for the way things are (*suo yi ran*) (Yulei p. 414, Mengzi Jizhu 2/6a). Everything has its *li* (Yulei p. 2892) and the difference between *li* and *dao* is that *dao* refers to the general and emphasizes the path that all should follow, while *li* refers to the specific and emphasizes the details (Yulei p. 99; cf. Yulei p. 840). *Li* is differentiated. The relation between ruler and officials has its *li*, which differs from the *li* pertaining to the relation between father and son; such differentiation of *li* is referred to as *fen* (Yulei p. 99). Thus, while *li* is one in that it runs through everything, its differentiations (*fen*) are varied (Commentary on Zhang Zai's Ximing 1/7a-7b, Yulei pp. 108-9).

Like Guo Xiang, Zhu sees human engagement in the social order as not opposed to *tian*. For him, to put a halter on a horse's head and pierce an ox's nose is itself to follow the *xing* of oxen and horses (Yulei pp. 1492, 1494-5) and is in accordance with *tian li* (Yulei p. 156). Guo Xiang grounds the social order in the different *li* pertaining to different human beings, making them suited to different social positions. While Zhu Xi does talk about human beings having different talents (*cai*), this has to do with their different ethical qualities rather than their different suitability to different social positions. Unlike Guo Xiang, the differentiation (*fen*) of *li* that Zhu focuses on has to do with the different *li* that pertains to different relations between different social positions, such as that between ruler and official or that between father and son. And it is in terms of this differentiation (*fen*) of *li* that he grounds the social order. It is appropriate for people to stand in different social relations to each other because there are different *li* pertaining to

different social relations, not because there are different *li* pertaining to different individual human beings. According to Zhu Xi, without differentiation of *li* in this sense, there will be no social distinction thereby resulting in the Moist idea of indiscriminate concern for all (Yulei p. 2521).

Like Xunzi, Zhu emphasizes how understanding (*zhi*) should guide action. Understanding guides action in the way that, in walking, one's eyes guide one's legs (Yulei p. 148). Understanding for Zhu Xi is a relation between the heart/mind and *li*, a relation put in a number of ways. The heart/mind can see (*guan*) *li* (Yulei p. 1983), and can light up (*ju*) *li* (Lunyu Jizhu 5/8a, Daquan 67/18a-b). In addition to the imageries of still water and clear mirror (e.g., Yulei p. 177), he also uses the imageries of fire (Yulei pp. 206, 265) and the sun and moon (Yulei p. 205), whose brightness lights up *li*. The difference from Xunzi is that, unlike Xunzi who regards *li* as something learnt, Zhu thinks the heart/mind already has *li* though it can be obscured. Thus, the heart/mind is originally a clear mirror (Daquan 67/3b-4a) though it can be obscured by dust (Yulei p. 267). Like Li Ao, he regards self-cultivation as a restorative process, comparable to the process of clearing the mirror to recover its original brightness (Yulei pp. 92-93).

Both Mencius and Xunzi assign a governing role to the heart/mind over the senses (Mengzi 6A:15, Xunzi 11/10a), and Mencius regards ethical failure as due to the senses being drawn unthinkingly by external objects (Mengzi 6A:15). This view of the relation between the heart/mind and the senses can be found in the Guanzi, which also assigns a governing role to the heart/mind (13/1a) and sees external objects as potentially leading the senses, and consequently the heart/mind, astray (13/6a; 16/3a). Zhu Xi, drawing on the "Le Ji" chapter of the Liji, also regards ethical failure as due to external things

leading human beings astray. The “Le Ji” chapter describes how, upon contact with things, likes and dislikes arise; these can lead to problems if they are not regulated. Such likes and dislikes are referred to as “human desires” (*ren yu*), which is contrasted with *tian li* (11/8b-9a). Zhu likewise traces the source of ethical failure to human desires (*ren yu*) (Yulei p. 224) or material desires (*wu* yu*) (Mengzi Jizhu 2/13b, 2/14b). While sometimes presenting human desires as consisting of such things as desire for food when hungry and for clothing when cold, which are not in themselves problematic (Yulei p. 2009), he more often refers to human desires as problematic as such, contrasting the *gong* of *tian li* to the *si* of human desires (Zhongyong Zhangju Preface/1a-2a, Yulei p. 225). In such contexts, he would describe eating and drinking as *tian li*, and the desire for delicious food as human desire (Yulei p. 224). In any instance, what he is opposed to is not desires as such, but desires coming from the self that goes beyond the basic desires that all human beings share.

His view on the emotions is similar. Commenting on Lunyu 6:3, which describes how Yan Hui does not transfer his anger nor repeat his errors, Zhu, following the Cheng brothers (Sui Yan 2/34b-35a, Yishu 18/22a), acknowledges that even the sage will be angry when appropriate (Yulei p. 2445). However, this anger is a response to the situation and does not come from the sage, and in that sense the sage has no anger (Yulei p. 776). Furthermore, after the incident is over, the anger that was initially an appropriate response goes away and is not stored in the sage (Yulei p. 2445). So, what Zhu is opposed to is not emotions as such, but emotions that are not called for by the circumstances and instead originate from the self.

The above account provides the background for understanding Zhu Xi's views on *wu*, *jing* and *xu*. Zhu's advocacy of *wu* is directed to the problematic elements, whether desires or emotions, that come from the self and are a form of *si*. The term *si* can be used in a neutral sense – it can refer simply to what pertains to oneself, such as one's senses and one's desire to meet basic needs such as food and warmth (Yulei p. 1486). More often, though, Zhu uses it to refer to something coming from the self that goes beyond these basics – selfish thoughts (*si yi***) are pre-conceptions that one has when approaching things (Yulei p. 185), and examples of selfish desires (*si yu*) include the form of problematic desires described earlier. In this sense, *si* is opposed to *gong* and obstructs the manifestation of *ren** (humanity) (Yulei pp. 117, 2455). *Ren** can be compared to the original brightness and clarity of a mirror, *si* to dust on the mirror, and *gong* to the absence of dust from the mirror (Yulei p. 2454).

As for *jing*, Zhu sometimes uses *jing* by contrast to *dong* to refer to one's state prior to interacting with things. *Xing* (nature) is *jing*, and *qing* (emotions), the activation of *xing*, is *dong* (Yulei p. 2517, or 251, or 2511). This contrast he takes to be the point of the observation in the “Le Ji” chapter of the Liji about how *xing* refers to stillness (*jing*) at birth, and how the desire (*yu*) of *xing* refers to activation upon contact with things (Daquan 67/8a-8b). Often, he uses the contrast between *jing* and *dong* to refer to the contrast between the unperturbed state of the heart/mind and a state of the heart/mind that is unsettled. In this sense, if the heart/mind is not *jing*, it would be fluctuating between different directions and would not be at ease (Yulei p. 278). *Jing* refers to a state when the heart/mind is not so torn, and is not vulnerable to uncertainty (Yulei p. 275, Daxue Zhangju 1b). And one can achieve this by holding on to *li* (Daxue Huowen 1/9a-10a).

Zhu Xi also uses *xu* in two related senses. The heart/mind is *xu* in the sense of being capable of storing; it is because the heart/mind is *xu* that it can store the many *li* (Yulei pp. 88, 2514); in that sense, there is *shi* within *xu* (Yulei p. 232). Since *li* for Zhu is already in the heart/mind, *xu* for him is not a matter of receptivity to *li* that one learns but a matter of capability of storing the multitude of *li* in the heart/mind. Zhu also uses *xu* in the sense of being free from what is *si* and what is *wei** (false, fake) (Yulei p. 1575). By being *xu* in this sense, one is able to observe *li* (Yulei p.155) and follow *li* (Yulei p. 145). This is the original state of the heart/mind prior to the influence of selfish desires (Yulei p. 94). Drawing on the idea of the ‘air in the early morning’ in Mengzi 6A:8, Zhu thinks that this is the state of the heart/mind in the early morning when one just awakens from restful sleep, though that state is soon lost after one starts interacting with things (Yulei pp. 349, 1393, 2875).

Returning to the phenomenon of ‘purity’, this was introduced earlier as an ideal state of existence involving the absence of deviant elements that can adversely affect one’s response to the world. What we have seen in this paper is that the phenomenon can be differently construed, depending on how one draws the line between proper responsiveness and what can detract from such responsiveness. For Zhuangzi, proper responsiveness involves allowing things to operate on their own without guidance from the heart/mind. Any intervention in the way things operate is seen as human intrusion, and even ordinary human activities like riding horses and using oxen to plow are seen as inappropriate human intrusion into the work of *tian*.

For Xunzi, proper responsiveness involves properly understanding the *li* that underlies the social order and responding to the world under such guidance. Human

activities can complete the work of *tian*, and are not problematic as such; it is only disturbances of the heart/mind that prevent proper understanding that constitute inappropriate intrusion. For Guo Xiang, proper responsiveness involves allowing each thing to follow its own *xing* and exercise its own *neng*, thereby occupying its proper place (*fen*) in the world. Human social engagement is compatible with the work of *tian*, as such engagement enables humans to take their proper place in the social order.

Like Xunzi, Zhu Xi sees proper responsiveness to the world as involving proper understanding of *li* and responding under its guidance. Like Guo Xiang, he sees social engagement as something that enables humans to truly partake in the operation of *tian*. He differs from Xunzi in regarding *li* as already in every human being though the understanding of *li* can be obscured. And he differs from Guo Xiang in grounding the social order not in the different *li* in different human beings, but in the different *li* that pertains to different social relations. ‘Purity’ for him involves the absence not of human thoughts, desires or emotions as such, but the absence of human thoughts, desires or emotions that are *si*, understood in terms of an unbalanced perspective due to certain self preoccupations or projections. *Wu* refers to the absence of these factors, while *xu* and *jing* characterize the state of the heart/mind that is free from disturbance by such factors.*

* Materials in this paper are based on research related to a book in progress, The Development of Confucian-Mencian Thought: Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming and Dai Zhen, sequel to Mencius and Early Chinese Thought (Stanford University Press, 1997). This paper is the second of a sequence of three papers. The first paper, ‘‘Wholeness’ in

Confucian Thought: Zhu Xi on *Cheng, Zhong, Xin* and *Jing*”, discusses the phenomenon of ‘wholeness’, which has to do with the idea of things coming together in entirety, without discord or discrepancy of any kind. ‘Wholeness’ entails the absence of deviant factors that can detract from the full presence of what is at issue, and so is related to the phenomenon of ‘purity’ discussed in this paper. The third paper, “Zhu Xi on *Gong* and *Si*”, discusses the nature of the deviant factors that can detract from the ‘purity’ of the heart/mind.

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Glossary

<i>Bu de yi</i>	不得以
<i>Cai</i>	才
<i>Dang ran</i>	当然
<i>Dao</i>	道
<i>Ding</i>	定
<i>Dong</i>	动
<i>Fa</i>	法
<i>Fen</i>	分
<i>Gong</i>	公
<i>Gong fa</i>	公法
<i>Gong yi*</i>	公义
<i>Guan</i>	观
<i>Jia</i>	假
<i>Jing</i>	静
<i>Ju</i>	炬
<i>Ke</i>	可
<i>Kong</i>	空
<i>Kong xu</i>	空虚
<i>Le</i>	乐
<i>Li</i>	理

<i>Li*</i>	礼
<i>Luan</i>	乱
<i>Man</i>	满
<i>Ming</i>	明
<i>Ming*</i>	命
<i>Neng</i>	能
<i>Pian</i>	偏
<i>Qi</i>	气
<i>Qing</i>	情
<i>Qing*</i>	清
<i>Qing* jing</i>	清静
<i>Ran</i>	然
<i>Ren</i>	人
<i>Ren yu</i>	人欲
<i>Ren*</i>	仁
<i>Shi</i>	实
<i>Shi*</i>	时
<i>Shu</i>	术
<i>Shun</i>	顺
<i>Si</i>	私
<i>Si yi**</i>	私意

<i>Si yu</i>	私欲
<i>Suo yi ran</i>	所以然
<i>Tian</i>	天
<i>Tian li</i>	天理
<i>Wei</i>	为
<i>Wei*</i>	伪
<i>Wo</i>	我
<i>Wu</i>	无
<i>Wu ji</i>	无己
<i>Wu qing</i>	无情
<i>Wu wei</i>	无为
<i>Wu xin</i>	无心
<i>Wu*</i>	物
<i>Wu* yu</i>	物欲
<i>Xin</i>	心
<i>Xing</i>	性
<i>Xing fen</i>	性分
<i>Xing ming*</i>	性命
<i>Xu</i>	虚
<i>Xu jing</i>	虚静
<i>Xu xin</i>	虚心

<i>Yi</i>	以
<i>Yi*</i>	义
<i>Yi**</i>	意
<i>Yin</i>	因
<i>Yin zi ran</i>	因自然
<i>Ying</i>	盈
<i>You</i>	有
<i>Yu</i>	欲
<i>Zhi</i>	知
<i>Zhi*</i>	治
<i>Zhi* luan</i>	治乱
<i>Zi</i>	自
<i>Zi ran</i>	自然