

Three Kinds of Confucian Thought:
Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, and Dai Zhen¹

Shun Kwong-loi 信廣來

Zhong Caijun 鐘彩鈞 ed., Confucianism in East Asian Perspectives: On Its Traditions

(東亞視域中的儒學: 傳統的詮釋) (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2013)

1. Introduction

In the later development of Confucian thought, different versions of Confucianism developed in the Song (960-1279), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) against the background of the different intellectual climates of these periods. In this paper, I will examine the ethical thinking of three representative figures of these periods, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Wang Yangming (1472-1528) and Dai Zhen (1724-1777), as illustrations of these three different developments of Confucian thought. As both Wang and Dai explicitly criticize the teachings of Zhu and his followers, I will use Zhu Xi as a point of reference in presenting the teachings of the other two thinkers. I will show that the different ethical views of the three can be traced to fundamental differences on two themes. The first concerns the relation between the heart/mind (*xin* 心) and pattern (*li* 理), and the second the relation between knowledge (*zhi* 知) and action (*xing* 行). Their respective positions on these two themes account for their different views on the source of ethical failure and on the self-cultivation process.²

Concerning the relation between the heart/mind and pattern, both Zhu and Wang believe pattern is in some sense already in the heart/mind. Ethical failure is conceived of

¹ This paper is based on my book manuscript, *Zhu Xi and Later Confucian Thought* (tentative title), currently under revision. Earlier versions of the paper were presented at the Columbia University Seminar on Neo-Confucianism, Columbia University, on October 14, 2011, and at the Fourth International Conference on Sinology, Academia Sinica, on June 20-22, 2012. I have benefitted from the comments of the participants. Part of this paper provides the basis for another paper, "Dai Zhen on Nature (*Xing*) and Pattern (*Li*)," forthcoming in the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. I am grateful to the editors of these two publications for agreement to this publication arrangement.

² As the focus of the paper is on differences in their ethical thinking, I have not discussed other differences, such as their different cosmological views, except in passing.

as a departure from this original and ideal state of the heart/mind, while self-cultivation is a restoration of this state. Dai rejects this position and believes that pattern is something that the heart/mind comes to grasp in things and affairs. Concerning the relation between knowledge and action, Zhu and Dai believe that, ideally, knowledge plays a guiding role in relation to action. Knowledge for them is a matter of the heart/mind's grasping pattern, where the way the heart/mind relates to pattern is akin to a perceptual relation. For Wang, on the other hand, when the heart/mind responds in its ideal state, although it may be described as having knowledge, such knowledge is just one aspect of a whole response without guiding the other aspects.

While Zhu and Wang both regard pattern as in some sense already in the heart/mind, they differ in the way they spell out this idea because of their different views on knowledge. Unlike Zhu who regards the heart/mind in its original state as already having a grasp of pattern that guides the heart/mind's responses, Wang regards pattern not as something grasped by the heart/mind in its original and ideal state, but as something revealed in its responses. While Zhu and Dai both emphasize knowledge because of their view that knowledge should ideally guide action, their difference on the relation between the heart/mind and pattern also leads to different views of the nature of the knowledge that the heart/mind should develop. For Zhu, because the heart/mind in its original state already has a grasp of the multitude of pattern that resides in all things and affairs, it should aim at restoring this state. For Dai, the heart/mind does not have this prior grasp of pattern to start with, and what it should aim at is not to grasp the multitude of pattern in all things and affairs, but to develop its *capability* of grasping pattern in each thing and affair that it encounters.

These differences between the three lead to different views of the source of ethical failure and of self-cultivation. For Zhu, ethical failure is explained in terms of the obscuring, by various forms of self-centeredness (*si 私*), of the knowledge that the heart/mind has in its original state. Self-cultivation involves restoring this knowledge by coming to grasp pattern through learning and enquiry and by attending directly to the heart/mind to pre-empt and correct the problematic influences of self-centeredness. Wang, by contrast, views knowledge as ideally just one aspect of the heart/mind's response without guiding the other aspects, and he regards ethical failure as due primarily to the

problematic influence of self-centeredness on the heart/mind's responses, without highlighting the obscuration of knowledge in the way Zhu does. As a result, self-cultivation involves primarily pre-empting and correcting such influences. Finally, Dai does not believe the heart/mind is already fully ethical in its original state; ethical failure is due not to the problematic influence of self-centeredness but to the failure of the heart/mind to fully develop its capability to grasp pattern. Accordingly, he does not emphasize the inner management of the heart/mind's activities, and instead view self-cultivation as primarily a matter of developing the heart/mind's capability of grasping the pattern in each thing and affair that it encounters.

From this brief overview, we see that Wang's and Dai's reactions to Zhu's teachings come from opposite directions. Of the two aspects of self-cultivation that Zhu equally emphasizes, Wang emphasizes the inner management of the heart/mind's activities while Dai emphasizes learning and enquiry, directed outwardly to such things as the study of classics or the examination of things and affairs. These differences between the three stem from their differences on the two themes highlighted earlier – the relation between the heart/mind and pattern and that between knowledge and action.

2. Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi's view of the relation between the heart/mind and pattern can be understood in the context of his comments on the idea of the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) highlighted in Zhou Dunyi's *Taiji Tushuo*. Taking the Great Ultimate to refer to pattern, Zhu notes that, just as pattern resides in each thing, there is a Great Ultimate in each thing.³ The relation between the Great Ultimate as such and the Great Ultimate in each thing is like that between the light coming from the moon and the moonlight that is reflected in each of the ten thousand rivers.⁴ On this view, the pattern in each thing is in some sense the same as, rather than being a part of, pattern as such – the relation is one of partaking in rather than one of splitting up. Zhu appears to have this view in mind in some of his explanations of the idea that pattern is one while at the same time

³ *Yulei* 1, 2371.

⁴ *Yulei* 2409.

differentiated (*li yi fen shu* 理一分殊), an idea originally put forward by Cheng Yi when commenting on Zhang Zai's thinking.⁵ Since pattern in its entirety is present in each thing, it is also present in its entirety in the human heart/mind. Zhu explicitly notes this point by saying that, just as a basket comprises all the intertwining threads, the heart/mind has in it the whole network of pattern.⁶

Following Cheng Yi, Zhu holds the view that the nature (*xing* 性) of humans is identical with pattern which resides in the human heart/mind (*xing ji li* 性即理).⁷ Nature, being identical with pattern, comprises the four ethical attributes humaneness (*ren* 仁), propriety (*yi* 義), observance of the rites (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). Still following Cheng Yi, he notes that, while nature is on the inside and cannot be directly observed, the four germs, which pertain to emotional propensities (*qing* 情), are the thread ends of nature that can be discerned, and one sees what nature is originally like by observing them.⁸ However, unlike Cheng Yi who regards the heart/mind as identical with nature and hence with pattern, Zhu distinguishes between them and instead endorses Zhang Zai's view that the heart/mind embraces nature and emotional propensities (*xin tong xing qing* 心統性情).⁹ Zhu's picture is that the heart/mind can grasp pattern, which is identical with nature, and on that basis can respond with the emotional propensities.¹⁰ Presented in terms of the distinction between substance (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用), nature is the substance and emotional propensities the function of the heart/mind.¹¹

As for the way the heart/mind relates to pattern, Zhu puts this in term of *zhi* 知, a term often translated as "knowing", as well as terms that suggest a kind of perceptual relation, such as *jian* 見 (to see) and *guan* 觀 (to view).¹² That he conceives of knowledge as a kind of perceptual relation between the heart/mind and pattern can also be seen from

⁵ *Yichuan Wenji* 5.12b; *Yulei* 2.

⁶ *Yulei* 100; cf. *Mengzi Huowen* 38.7b.

⁷ *Yishu* 22a.11a; *Yulei* 82.

⁸ *Cuiyan* 2.25a, *Yishu* 9.1a, 18.17b, 25.2b; *Mengzi Jizhu* 2.14a, *Yulei* 89.

⁹ *Yishu* 5.1a; *Xinglishiyi* 14.2a; *Yulei* 67, 323, 411, 2514.

¹⁰ *Yulei* 2797; cf. *Yulei* 64, 82, 88.

¹¹ *Yulei* 91, 96, 2513, *Mengzi Jizhu* 2.14b.

¹² E.g., *Yulei* 1983, 2086, 2262-2263.

his characterizing it in terms of *ming* 明, a term meaning brightness or clarity, and his describing how such brightness or clarity can light up pattern (*zhu li* 燭理).¹³ For him, this knowledge of pattern should guide action (*xing* 行), an idea consistent with his view that it is the heart/mind's grasp of nature, which is identical with pattern, that guides its responses in the form of emotional propensities. Knowledge guides action in the way that the eyes guide the legs when walking; in this sense, knowledge has priority (*xian* 先) over action even though action is more important (*zhong* 重).¹⁴

Having noted the guiding relation between the two, he goes on to say that, when one supposedly has knowledge and yet one's action does not reflect this, one's knowledge is still shallow (*qian* 淺). One needs to personally experience what one supposedly knows; only then can one's knowledge become *ming* 明 (bright, clear).¹⁵ And when one does not act although one supposedly knows, then one's knowledge is not genuine knowledge (*zhen zhi* 真知); someone with genuine knowledge will inevitably act.¹⁶ Thus, from his perspective, knowledge admits of degrees, and when one has genuine knowledge, one will inevitably act. When one does not act or acts with a lingering feeling that it is fine not to do so, one's knowledge is at best partial and not genuine.¹⁷

So, in its original and ideal state, the heart/mind clearly grasps pattern, and one will inevitably follow pattern with ease. What detracts from this state of the heart/mind is the obscuring effect of material force (*qi* 氣). For Zhu, material force fills the universe, and it is the same material force that all humans and things get when they come into existence.¹⁸ The endowment of material force can be different for different things, and this difference accounts for the difference among humans and things. However, the differences among humans are slight compared to that between humans and other

¹³ *Lunyu Jizhu* 5.8a, *Daquan* 67.18a-b.

¹⁴ *Yulei* 148.

¹⁵ *Yulei* 148.

¹⁶ *Daquan* 72.35a-35b

¹⁷ *Yulei* 154, 223, 391, *Daxue Huowen* 2.12b, *Daquan* 72.35a-35b.

¹⁸ *Yulei* 8, 2526.

things.¹⁹ While their endowment of material force might be impure, resulting in their not being fully ethical, the heart/mind of humans is able to make pure their material force, a capability not shared by other animals and things.²⁰

3. Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi

Wang shares in general terms Zhu's view that pattern in its entirety is already in the heart/mind, but disagrees on the way the heart/mind relates to pattern. For Zhu, the heart/mind grasps pattern in its original and ideal state, and this knowledge of pattern guides one's responses. Wang criticizes Zhu for having separated the heart/mind and pattern into two when they are fundamentally one, and he instead identifies the heart/mind with pattern.²¹ Such identification is also conveyed in his well known teaching that the heart/mind is pattern (*xin ji li* 心即理).²² At times, he speaks as if the teaching serves a pragmatic purpose, urging people to attend closely to their heart/mind, a pragmatic point with which Zhu would not disagree.²³ But his remarks elsewhere suggest that there is more content to his teaching that distinguishes his position from Zhu's.

In relation to the heart/mind, while still referring to nature as substance and emotional propensities as function, Wang notes that substance and function are the same, though substance has to do with the aspect that is difficult to know and function with the aspect that is more conspicuous and can be seen.²⁴ What he has in mind is explained in his comment that the heart/mind does not have any substance other than taking as its substance the right and wrong of its responses when affected by the ten thousand things.²⁵ This idea is illustrated by reference to the senses – for example, the eye does not have substance other than taking as its substance the colors of the ten thousand things that it

¹⁹ *Mengzi Jizhu* 4.21a.

²⁰ *Yulei* 1347.

²¹ E.g., *Chuanxilu* no. 33, p. 71; no. 66, p. 96.

²² E.g., *Chuanxilu* no. 3, p. 30; no. 94, p. 115.

²³ *Chuanxilu* no. 321, p. 372.

²⁴ *Wenlu* 4.2b.

²⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 277, p. 333.

perceives. Such remarks suggest that Wang and Zhu differ in the following manner. For Zhu, nature, which is identical with pattern, is the substance of the heart/mind in that in its original state, the heart/mind has knowledge of pattern, where such knowledge is akin to a kind of perceptual relation and guides the heart/mind's responses. For Wang, in its original state, there is no pattern for the heart/mind to relate to independently of the heart/mind's responses; instead, pattern resides in the responses of the heart/mind. But these responses also constitute the function of the heart/mind, and for this reason substance and function are not separate. On this view, pattern just resides in the responses of the heart/mind in its original state and does not exist independently of the heart/mind, a point that Wang puts by saying that there is no pattern outside of the heart/mind.²⁶

This difference between Zhu and Wang is intimately related to their different views on the relation between knowledge and action. As we saw, Zhu describes the relation between the heart/mind and pattern in terms of knowledge, which he thinks should ideally guide action. Wang's different view of the relation between knowledge and action is conveyed in his teaching about the unity of knowledge and action (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一). At times, he speaks as if this teaching highlights the point that corresponding action is needed before one can truly be said to have knowledge.²⁷ On other occasions, he emphasizes the pragmatic aspect of this teaching, and presents it as urging people to attend closely to their inner thoughts as well as outward behavior.²⁸ These two ways of explaining his teaching do not identify any substantive difference between Wang and Zhu, and the real difference between them emerges in other contexts.

On one occasion, having made the pragmatic point that his teaching serves to alert people to the importance of action, Wang adds that though the teaching is directed to certain defects among people of his times, it also describes what the substance of knowledge and action (*zhi xing ti duan* 知行體段) is originally like.²⁹ In response to a query by his student Xu Ai about people who know they should be filial but cannot act accordingly, he responds that, in such instances, knowledge and action are already

²⁶ E.g., *Chuanxilu* no. 32, p. 70.

²⁷ *Wenlu* 8.5b-6a.

²⁸ *Wenlu* 8.6a-6b; cf. 7.9b; *Chuanxilu* no. 226, pp. 302-303; cf. *Chuanxilu Xupian* no. 19, p. 400.

²⁹ *Wenlu* 6.6a.

separated by self-centered desires (*si yu* 私欲) and no longer reflect the original substance of knowledge and action (*zhi xing de ben ti* 知行的本體).³⁰ So, it appears that his teaching is also intended to convey a certain view about how knowledge and action are related in the original state of the heart/mind.

That relation is conveyed through the example from the *Daxue* of loving beautiful colors and hating bad odors.³¹ When one sees a beautiful color, one likes the beautiful color upon seeing it; it is not that one first decides one should like it and then likes it. That is, even if part of the response involves some kind of judgment, whether it be the judgment that the color is beautiful or that one should like it, one's liking the beautiful color is not guided by any such judgment. The same is true of one's hating a bad odor or one's liking delicious food.³² Extending this to contexts such as serving parents, one's heart/mind in its original state would move one to serve parents in a certain way upon awareness of their situation, without depending on any judgment that one should so act, even if one's response might involve some such judgment. This view stands in contrast to Zhu's according to which knowledge guides action. According to Wang, there is no such guidance relation when the heart/mind responds in its original state – knowledge and action are just different aspects of one single response without the former guiding the latter.

This way of explaining Wang's teaching is compatible with the two other explanations described earlier. While the former concerns what the original state of the heart/mind is like, the latter two explanations present the teaching as directed to those who have deviated from this original state. The teaching serves to urge such people to take action seriously, making the point that corresponding action is needed for one to have genuine knowledge, where action also includes the minute movements of the heart/mind. Thus, in response to the query by Xu Ai described earlier, and after having explained his teaching in relation to the original state of knowledge and action, Wang

³⁰ *Chuanxilu* no. 5, pp. 33-34.

³¹ *Chuanxilu* no. 5, pp. 33-34; see *Daxue* chapter 6.

³² *Chuanxilu* no. 132, pp. 165-166.

adds that his teaching is also directed to people who have deviated from this original state.³³

Wang's teaching about the unity of knowledge and action helps us further understand his teaching that the heart/mind is pattern. In the original and ideal state, the heart/mind responds in a certain way to a situation it confronts, and pattern is constituted by this way of responding. While one might, in the process of so responding, come to have the thought that one should respond in that way and in that sense have knowledge, that knowledge is part of the response and is not something independent of and guiding the response. Pattern is revealed in and does not exist independently of the heart/mind's responses in the original state; this differs from Zhu's view that the heart/mind in its original state grasps pattern in a way that guides one's responses. In this way, it follows from the teaching of the unity between knowledge and action that it is an error to seek pattern outside the heart/mind.³⁴

This linkage between the two teachings is explicitly stated by Wang in response to the question whether knowledge and action are really one or whether this teaching is just a way to urge learners to act on what they have learnt.³⁵ In this context, Wang reiterates that knowledge and action really are not separate in the original state of the heart/mind; once one realizes this, one sees that pattern should not be sought outside of the heart/mind. For example, it is because the heart/mind responds in a filial way toward parents that there is the pattern of being filial; if the heart/mind had not so responded, there would not have been the pattern of being filial. From Wang's perspective, Zhu has already separated the heart/mind and pattern by first speaking of pattern in things and affairs and then insisting that pattern also resides in the heart/mind. Probably, the separation refers to the fact that Zhu regards pattern as residing in the heart/mind only in the sense that the heart/mind originally has a grasp of pattern, unlike Wang himself who regards pattern as residing in the responses of the heart/mind as such.

³³ *Chuanxilu* no. 5, pp. 33-34.

³⁴ E.g., *Wenlu* 8.6a-6b.

³⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 133, pp. 166-167.

Wang refers to the original substance of the heart/mind as *liang zhi* 良知, or the truly good knowledge, a term he takes from the *Mengzi*.³⁶ Given his views about the unity of knowledge of action, the truly good knowledge operates not just by making judgments about right and wrong, but also by moving one to like what is right and dislike what is wrong.³⁷ That is, though the term *zhi* 知 in *liang zhi* 良知 might seem to emphasize knowledge, the truly good knowledge for Wang has to do with the general disposition of the heart/mind to respond to situations in the manner described earlier, in which judgments about how to respond are just part of, without guiding, the response as a whole, which includes not just one's thoughts but also the way one acts and the way one is moved affectively. For Wang, the truly good knowledge is self-sufficient in that it encompasses all pattern in the manner just described, and does not depend on seeking pattern from the outside.³⁸

4. Dai Zhen and Zhu Xi

Dai Zhen agrees with Zhu that knowledge guides action, but differs on the way the heart/mind relates to pattern. To understand this difference, let us consider his views on the relation between pattern on the one hand, and emotional propensities (*qing* 情) and desires (*yu* 欲) on the other. Dai regards the nature of animals as comprised of their physical makeup (*xie qi* 血氣) and conscious awareness (*zhi jue* 知覺). Humans surpass other animals in their conscious awareness, and he refers to the conscious awareness in humans as the knowing heart/mind (*xin zhi* 心知); for him, the physical makeup and knowing heart/mind comprise the nature of humans.³⁹ Drawing on ideas from the “*Yueji*” chapter of the *Liji*, he believes that when nature, or more specifically the physical makeup that is part of nature, is activated upon being affected by things, desires arise; these are the desires of nature, which are the same for all humans.⁴⁰ They include the tendencies

³⁶ E.g., *Chuanxilu* no. 8, p. 40; no. 118, p. 140; no. 152, p. 214; cf. *Mengzi* 7A:15.

³⁷ *Chuanxilu* no. 288, p. 341.

³⁸ *Chuanxilu* no. 8, p. 40; no. 183, p. 264.

³⁹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, p. 2; no. 9, p. 8; no. 20, p. 25; no. 21, pp. 29-30; no. 30, pp. 40-41; no. 38, p. 50.

⁴⁰ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, p. 2.

exhibited by different parts of the body, such as the tendencies of the senses to go after certain sensory objects.⁴¹ These tendencies, especially the tendency to eat and drink, help nourish the physical makeup of humans, enabling them to grow from weak to strong.⁴² As for emotional propensities, he cites joy, anger, sorrow and contentment (*xi nu ai le* 喜怒哀樂) as examples, and describes them as nature's response when one comes into contact with things; like desires, he ascribes emotional propensities to the physical makeup.⁴³

Dai relates pattern to both emotional propensities and desires. Pattern is a matter of emotional propensities not being lost; there is no instance of one's attaining (*de* 得) pattern without attaining (*de* 得) the emotional propensities.⁴⁴ Pattern is a matter of not being excessive or deficient in relation to emotional propensities; to arrive at pattern, one needs to use one's emotional propensities to gauge the emotional propensities of others, thereby ensuring that the emotional propensities of all attain their proper balance.⁴⁵ Dai also explains pattern in terms of desires by saying that it is by regulating desires and avoiding excess that one follows the pattern of Heaven.⁴⁶ Having compared nature to water and desires to the flow of water, he further compares following the pattern of Heaven to the legendary Yu's channeling water in such a way that it is regulated and not overflowing.⁴⁷ On several occasions, he mentions emotional propensities and desires together in relation to pattern. According to him, by regulating desires, one is able to be not excessive or deficient with regard to the emotional propensities, thereby attaining the pattern of Heaven.⁴⁸ And to regard pattern as a matter of emotional propensities not being lost is also to regard pattern as residing in desires.⁴⁹ From these remarks, we see that, for

⁴¹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 8, pp. 6-7; no. 30, p. 40.

⁴² *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 9, p. 8; no. 28, p. 37; no. 30, p. 40.

⁴³ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 30, p. 40.

⁴⁴ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, pp. 1-2; no. 3, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 11, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 11, p. 10; cf. *Mengzi* 4B:26.

⁴⁸ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 11, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 10, p. 8.

Dai, emotional propensities and desires are intimately related and that pattern is explained in terms of its relation to both.

The way this relation goes is partly spelt out in the way he elaborates on the Confucian idea of *shu* 恕, explained in the *Lunyu* in terms of not imposing on others what one would not wish to be done to oneself.⁵⁰ With regard to the desires of nature, my desires are the same as others' and it is from desires that likes and dislikes arise. The ethical task is to avoid indulging in one's desires, which involves pursuing one's likes and dislikes to the neglect of others' likes and dislikes. To do so, one should turn back on oneself and think about one's own emotional propensities should one suffer from others' indulging in their desires. This is what it means to use one's own emotional propensities to gauge the emotional propensities of others. By doing so, the emotional propensities attain their proper balance, one's likes and dislikes are properly regulated, and one comes to follow the pattern of Heaven.⁵¹ He also relates emotional propensities and desires in other contexts. For example, citing the reference to desires in the *Lunyu* and to dislikes in the *Daxue* in connection with the idea of using oneself to gauge the situation of others, he says that desires and dislikes are the common emotional propensities of the people and that it is by using one's emotional propensities to gauge those of others that one seeks pattern.⁵² Elsewhere, he also describes as emotional propensities the way one would respond if others were to treat oneself in the way one proposes to treat others, presumably taking this to explain the kind of emotional propensities of oneself that one uses to gauge the emotional propensities of others.⁵³

From the way he discusses emotional propensities and desires, it appears that the two are related in the following manner. Humans share certain desires of nature that take the form of parts of one's body being drawn toward certain things, such as the senses being drawn toward certain sensory objects. As one becomes aware of such tendencies when one comes into contact with things, one comes to form likes and dislikes, and such likes can also be described as desires in a more reflective sense. That is, it is no longer

⁵⁰ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 5, p. 4; see *Lunyu* 15.24.

⁵¹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, pp. 1-2.

⁵² *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 5, pp. 4-5.

⁵³ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 11, p. 10.

just a matter of parts of one's body being drawn unreflectively toward certain things, but a matter of one's person as a whole liking such things with an awareness of what it is that one likes. One's liking certain things moves one to go after them. On the other hand, one's dislike is a response to certain contemplated or actual situations involving oneself, including situations in which one is deprived of certain things by others who indulge in their own desires. Such likes (or desires of the more reflective kind) and dislikes are the emotional propensities of humans, and are manifested in responses such as joy, anger, sorrow and contentment.

As one is moved by one's likes and dislikes, there is a tendency to pursue what one likes to the neglect of others' likes and dislikes. To follow pattern, one not only has to understand that humans share the same basic unreflective tendencies, but that they also share more reflective responses, including likes and dislikes, and emotional responses such as joy, anger, sorrow and contentment. To do so, one has to use one's own emotional propensities to gauge the emotional propensities of others, and understand how others would react to one's treatment of them by turning back on oneself and reflecting on how one oneself would react if similarly treated by others. The goal is to go beyond satisfying one's desires by also satisfying others' desires, and to go beyond attaining one's emotional propensities by also enabling others to attain their emotional propensities, so that everyone's desires are appropriately satisfied and emotional propensities appropriately attained.⁵⁴ By attainment of emotional propensities, Dai probably has in mind being able to take joy in certain things and to avoid dissatisfaction – he sometimes cites passages in the *Mengzi* about how humane government involves the ruler's sharing his enjoyment with the common people and ensuring that there is no dissatisfaction among them.⁵⁵

With regard to both emotional propensities and desires, he works with some conception of a proper balance of each – he speaks of properly regulating desires so that one is not excessive with regard to them, and of being neither excessive nor deficient in regard to emotional propensities so that they attain their proper balance.⁵⁶ Probably, what

⁵⁴ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 30, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁵ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 10, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁶ E.g., *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 2, p. 2; no. 3, p. 2; no. 5, p. 3; no. 11, pp. 10-11.

constitutes the proper balance of each has to do with whether the extent of, and the means by which one secures, the satisfaction of one's desires and attainment of one's emotional propensities will prevent others from equally doing so. Attaining the proper balance enables people to mutually nourish their lives, this being the way of the sages.⁵⁷

Dai regards the above account as opposed to Zhu's thinking. In criticism of Zhu and his followers, he notes that the ancients seek pattern in the context of emotional propensities and desires, unlike people nowadays who seek pattern outside of the latter.⁵⁸ According to him, Zhu and his followers view pattern as if it were a thing that resides in the heart/mind and that humans receive from Heaven.⁵⁹ Zhu does hold the view that humans have received pattern from Heaven, and occasionally speaks of pattern as a thing (*wu* 物), as when he describes the four germs as the outer thread-end of a certain thing, namely pattern or nature, on the inside.⁶⁰ This view, according to Dai, separates pattern from emotional propensities and desires in that pattern, unlike Dai's own view, is not derived from the latter.⁶¹ This point by Dai does capture a substantive difference between him and Zhu, as Zhu does not regard pattern as derived from considerations of emotional propensities and desires in the way that Dai does even though it serves to regulate them.

Turning to Dai's view of the knowing heart/mind (*xin zhi* 心知), the other aspect of nature, he thinks that the knowing heart/mind manifests itself in knowledge (*zhi* 知), where the objects of knowledge are such things as beauty and ugliness, right and wrong, as well as various human relations.⁶² He particularly emphasizes the heart/mind's capability of make the fine discriminations that constitute clarity with regard to pattern.⁶³ Citing *Mengzi* 6A:7, he thinks that the heart/mind's capability of discerning pattern is like the senses' ability to discern their respective sensory objects. The way the heart/mind reaches out to pattern is like the way a fire lights up objects, an analogy that reinforces

⁵⁷ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 11, p. 10, no. 15, p. 18.

⁵⁸ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 43, p. 59.

⁵⁹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 5, pp. 3-5; no. 10, p. 10; no. 13, pp. 11-13; no. 14, p. 13; no. 40, p. 53; no. 41, p. 54.

⁶⁰ *Mengzi Jizhu* 2.14a.

⁶¹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 5, p. 5; no. 10, p. 10.

⁶² *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 28, p. 37; no. 30, p. 40.

⁶³ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 4, p. 3.

the idea that the heart/mind's relation to pattern is akin to a perceptual relation.⁶⁴ In this regard, Dai is like Zhu, and he also shares Zhu's view that the heart/mind's knowledge of pattern should guide action. According to him, the ethical task is to first acquire knowledge through inquiry, and then practice in human relations and daily activities that with regard to which the knowledge of one's heart/mind is not obscured.⁶⁵ And it is only after one has exercised one's capability to know that one who seeks satisfaction of one's own desires and attainment of one's own emotional propensities will broaden this to satisfying the desires and attaining the emotional propensities of others.⁶⁶ The highest accomplishment for humans is to develop the knowledge of the heart/mind to attain clarity, and Dai explicates the four ethical attributes highlighted by Mencius in these terms.⁶⁷

Despite such similarities, there is one important difference between Zhu and Dai. For Zhu, the ethical task is to restore the heart/mind's knowledge of the multitude of pattern that the heart/mind originally has. For Dai, however, the ethical task is not a matter of restoring the knowledge of pattern that has been lost, nor is it geared toward eventually grasping all the multitude of pattern. Instead, it is a matter of developing the *capability* of the knowing heart/mind to the point when it can grasp the pattern in any affair it encounters; that is, the emphasis is on being *able* to know the pattern in any affair one encounters, not on acquiring knowledge of all the multitude of pattern. In presenting the analogy with the brightness of fire, what he emphasizes is how the clarity of the knowing heart/mind is capable of lighting up what it encounters, rather than its already knowing the pattern in all things and affairs prior to such encounters.⁶⁸

5. Zhu Xi on Ethical Failure and Self-Cultivation

⁶⁴ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 6, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 40, p. 54.

⁶⁶ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 30, p. 41.

⁶⁷ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 6, p. 6; no. 15, p. 18; no. 21, p. 29.

⁶⁸ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 8, p. 8; cf. no. 6, p. 6.

As discussed, Zhu Xi believes that the heart/mind in its original state already has knowledge of the multitude of pattern, and humans are in that sense already fully ethical. He ascribes ethical failure to the varying qualities of material force, and in this connection, he often shifts to speaking of human desires (*ren yu* 人欲) or material desires (*wu yu* 物欲).⁶⁹ This account he partly draws from the “*Yueji*” chapter of the *Liji*, according to which desires arise when humans are affected by external things, resulting in likes and dislikes; when the likes and dislikes are unregulated, badness arises.⁷⁰ Following the “*Yueji*” chapter, Zhu refers to the resulting problematic elements as human desires and sometimes as material desires.⁷¹ Presumably, the two notions refer to the same psychological elements but with different emphases, the latter emphasizing the attractive force of external things and the former the lack of regulation of one’s likes and dislikes on the part of humans.

He also speaks of the self-centeredness (*si* 私) of such desires, which he refers to as self-centered desires (*si yu* 私欲).⁷² This notion is used alongside the notion self-centered thoughts (*si yi* 私意).⁷³ The difference between the two is probably that the latter involve deliberate thoughts and emphasize the heart/mind’s wanting to do something, while the former need not involve deliberate thoughts and can include the desires of the senses.⁷⁴ Self-centeredness has to do with the heart/mind’s failure to take a balanced perspective, resulting in one’s putting undue weight on one’s own relation to things or to those close to oneself. It is self-centeredness of this kind that obscures the insight into pattern that the heart/mind originally has, as a result of which one is not fully ethical.

Given this account, one can work on the heart/mind to pre-empt the arising of self-centeredness and to correct it when it does arise. Alternatively, one can seek to restore the insight into pattern that one originally has by inquiring into the pattern in

⁶⁹ E.g., *Yulei* 66, *Daxue Zhangju* 1a, *Daxue Huowen* 2.16a-16b, *Daquan* 74.20a.

⁷⁰ *Yulei* 2252, *Daquan* 67.8a-8b.

⁷¹ E.g., *Mengzi Jizhu* 2.13b, 2.14b, *Yulei* 982.

⁷² E.g., *Zhongyong Zhangju* 1a-2a, 5b, *Daxue Huowen* 2/17a, *Mengzi Huowen* 26.8a-8b., *Yulei* p. 2584; *Mengzi Jizhu* 3/1a.

⁷³ E.g., *Yulei* 1046, *Zhongyong Huowen* 3.31b.

⁷⁴ *Yulei* 1585-1586.

things and affairs. Zhu emphasizes both aspects of self-cultivation – inner management of the heart/mind’s activities, and inquiry to regain knowledge of pattern. In connection with the former, he highlights a number of ideas, such as *jing* 敬, *jie shen kong ju* 戒慎恐懼, *shen du* 慎獨, and *ke ji* 克己. *Jing* (seriousness) can be directed to an undertaking or an affair one is dealing with, or it can refer to a posture without a specific object.⁷⁵ It involves one’s being constantly alert and gathering oneself so that one is not distracted by rambling thoughts or desires.⁷⁶ As a result, the heart/mind is one (*yi* 一) in the sense of being focused, and is also in control (*zhu* 主).⁷⁷ In addition, Zhu describes *jing* as an attitude of caution and fearfulness, relating it to the idea of *jie shen* 戒慎 (caution) and *kong ju* 恐懼 (fearfulness) from the *Zhongyong*.⁷⁸ Thus, *jing* involves a focus of attention, freedom from distractions, caution, fearfulness, and alertness. Such a posture pre-empts the effect of self-centeredness and ensures proper response, thereby helping to preserve the original goodness of the heart/mind.⁷⁹

Another way to manage the activities of the heart/mind is *shen du* 慎獨, an expression that occurs in several early texts including the *Zhongyong* in which its occurrence is preceded by a reference to how the superior person is cautious (*jie shen* 戒慎) about what he does not see and fearful (*kong ju* 恐懼) about what he does not hear.⁸⁰ Zhu interprets *du* 獨 to refer to what others do not know about but one oneself alone (*du*) knows about.⁸¹ It has to do with the incipient activities of the heart/mind that others do not know about, and *shen du* involves one’s cautiously attending to such activities.⁸² This serves both to prevent them from going astray and to correct them as soon as they start going astray. According to Zhu, the attitude of caution and fearfulness is directed to the

⁷⁵ *Yulei* 122-123.

⁷⁶ *Yulei* 494, 2405-2406, 2471, 2739-2740, 2767, 2788, 2935-2936.

⁷⁷ *Yulei* 210, 2464, 2467, 2635, 2744, 2788, 2851, 2854, 2927.

⁷⁸ *Yulei* 1740, 2471, 2767.

⁷⁹ *Yulei* 114, 316.

⁸⁰ *Zhongyong* chap. 1.

⁸¹ *Daxue Zhangju* 6a-6b, *Zhongyong Zhangju* 2a, *Zhongyong Huowen* 3.10b-11a, *Yulei* 567, 1504.

⁸² *Yulei* 567, 1504.

possibility of some activity of the heart/mind going wrong without assuming that the heart/mind is actually engaged in any specific activity. By contrast, *shen du* is directed specifically to incipient activities that are actually taking place or about to take place. Thus, the former has to do with one's attitude when one's heart/mind has not yet been activated and the latter when it has already been activated.⁸³ As for *jing* 敬, it is a posture that should be maintained whether the heart/mind is active or inactive.

Another related notion is *ke ji* 克己 from the *Lunyu*.⁸⁴ The Cheng brothers take *ke ji* to mean overcoming the self-centeredness (*si* 私) in oneself; according to them, the pre-emptive function of *jing* renders *ke ji* superfluous (*jing ze wu ji ke ke* 敬則無己可克).⁸⁵ Zhu endorses this interpretation, taking *ke ji* to refer to the overcoming (*ke* 克) of the self-centeredness (*si* 私) of oneself (*ji* 己).⁸⁶ Its difference from *shen du* is that the latter emphasizes specifically the subtle and incipient activities of the heart/mind that are emerging, and can play a pre-emptive in addition to a corrective role. *Ke ji*, by contrast, refers specifically to correcting the problematic activities of the heart/mind that have arisen. *Jing* is like *shen du* in that it can also play a pre-emptive role, but it differs from *shen du* in two ways. Unlike *shen du*, it is a posture that one should maintain at all times, even before one starts dealing with affairs. And even in the context of dealing with a specific affair, *jing* is a posture directed to that specific affair, unlike *shen du* which is directed to the incipient movements of the heart/mind as it responds to that affair. Given the pre-emptive function of *jing* as contrasted with the corrective role of *ke ji*, Zhu endorses the Cheng brothers' comment that *jing* renders *ke ji* superfluous. *Jing* is like someone guarding the door, and *ke ji* someone fighting off intruders; when the person guarding the door is doing a good job, there will not be any intruder to fight off.⁸⁷

Aside from managing the heart/mind's activities, Zhu also emphasizes inquiry to regain the knowledge of pattern that has been lost. His views on this aspect of self-

⁸³ *Yulei* 1499, 1502-1503, 2469; *Zhongyong Huowen* 3.13a-13b.

⁸⁴ *Lunyu* 12.1.

⁸⁵ *Yishu* 15.11b, *Waishu* 3.1b.

⁸⁶ *Lunyu Jizhu* 6.10a, *Lunyu Huowen* 17.2a, *Yulei* 2453, 2584, 2834, 2872.

⁸⁷ *Yulei* 151.

cultivation are closely related to his interpretation of the idea *ge wu zhi zhi* 格物致知 from the *Daxue*, an interpretation that largely follows that of the Cheng brothers. He takes *ge* 格 in *ge wu* to mean arrive at, *wu* 物 to refer to things and affairs that one encounters, and *ge wu* to mean arriving at the pattern in things and affairs so that one can accord with pattern when dealing with them.⁸⁸ The actual specifics of *ge wu* are varied, including, for example, the study of classics and of history, knowing about how the ancients behave, discoursing on great figures of the past and present, learning about ways of dealing with affairs within the family and state, listening to what others have to say, examining various doctrines and figuring out which aspects are correct and which incorrect, finding out how to deal with things and affairs that one actually encounters, and examining the minute movements of the heart/mind.⁸⁹

As for *zhi zhi* 致知, he takes *zhi* 致 to mean extend; *zhi zhi* involves ‘pushing out’ (*tui* 推) one’s knowledge (*zhi* 知) so that it reaches its limit.⁹⁰ The goal is to come to grasp the pattern in all things and affairs so that our knowledge lights up all pattern clearly (*zhu li ming* 燭理明).⁹¹ *Ge wu* and *zhi zhi* are one process and not separate since, as we arrive at the pattern in things and affairs, our knowledge also expands. The difference between them is that *ge wu* emphasizes the individual things and affairs in which we seek pattern, while *zhi zhi* emphasizes the knowledge of our heart/mind which we seek to expand.⁹²

The pattern that is learnt, or the knowledge that is expanded, is originally in us though obscured by the impure endowment of material force, and this process is one of restoring the original goodness in us.⁹³ We should check the pattern that we have learnt against ourselves, making sure that it resonates with what is originally within ourselves.⁹⁴ We should think through what we have learnt to make sure that we personally grasp (*ti*

⁸⁸ *Daxue Huowen* 2.13a, *Yulei* 282-284, 289, 295, 2774, 2878-2879.

⁸⁹ *Daxue Huowen* 2.13a, *Yulei* 255, 284, 286, 287, 393, 421.

⁹⁰ *Yulei* 291, 296, 2774.

⁹¹ *Yulei* 296, *Daxue Huowen* 2.11b-12b.

⁹² *Yulei* 291-292, 294, 2908.

⁹³ *Yulei* 86, 155, 283.

⁹⁴ *Yulei* 382, 2618, *Daxue Huowen* 2.22a-22b, 2.24b-25a.

ren 體認) it, as well as act on what we have learnt so that we personally experience (*ti yan* 體驗) it.⁹⁵ Eventually, we would be able to light up pattern clearly (*zhu li ming* 燭理明), at which point we can follow pattern with ease and contentment, something possible because pattern is originally in us.⁹⁶

Zhu distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, that which comes from the senses (*jian wen zhi zhi* 見聞之知 or *wen jian zhi zhi* 聞見之知) and that which pertains to morality (*de xing zhi zhi* 德性之知). Before him, Zhang Zai drew a similar distinction, regarding the latter as a higher form of knowledge that is independent of the former, a view also shared by the Cheng brothers.⁹⁷ Zhu Xi differs by regarding the knowledge that pertains to morality as dependent on the knowledge that pertains to the senses, a position related to his emphasis on learning and enquiry. Although the sages might have been able to have the former without deriving it from the latter, the learner has to depend on the latter for the former. According to him, the learner has to engage in learning of the kind that depends on the senses, until he gets to the point when he can see the interconnections between what he has learnt, thereby enabling him to see pattern.⁹⁸

6. Wang Yangming on Ethical Failure and Self-Cultivation

While Wang Yangming shares Zhu's view that humans are in some sense fully ethical in their original state, he does not believe that this is a matter of the heart/mind's already having a grasp of the multitude of pattern. Instead, all that the heart/mind has in the original state is a disposition to respond to situations in certain ways, and pattern resides in the way the heart/mind responds but without guiding such responses. This difference leads to a difference in the way they view ethical failure. Unlike Zhu who regards it as a matter of the beclouding of the heart/mind's grasp of pattern, Wang regards it as a matter of the beclouding of the heart/mind's response as a whole. The

⁹⁵ *Yulei* 284, 412.

⁹⁶ *Daxue Huowen* 2.11b-12b.

⁹⁷ *Zhengmeng* 2.17a, 2.21a, 2.22a; *Cuiyan* 2.21b, 2.27a, *Yishu* 25.2a.

⁹⁸ *Yulei* 2519, 2537-38.

ethical task is not to restore the heart/mind's grasp of pattern, but to restore the original state of the heart/mind so that it can respond appropriately in a way in which knowledge and action are just different aspects of the response without the former guiding the latter.

Because of this difference between them, Wang also puts, by comparison to Zhu, much less emphasis on the kind of inquiry directed to acquiring a grasp of pattern. For him, pre-empting and eliminating the problematic activities of the heart/mind is the dominant focus in self-cultivation. Self-centered desires keep growing in the heart/mind like dust gathering on a mirror, and one needs to remove them constantly, as otherwise they would build up like layers of dust gathering on the mirror.⁹⁹ Examples of these problematic elements include the tendency to show off and impress, feeling happy when praised and distressed when criticized, or the tendency to criticize others.¹⁰⁰ One has to be constantly on the lookout for and correct such problems, like a cat watching out for and trying to catch a rat.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, one needs to attend not just to the conspicuous problems but also the underlying cause, just as someone who is ill needs to attend to the underlying illness and not just its symptoms.¹⁰²

That Wang downplays the kind of inquiry that Zhu highlights can be seen from the way he interprets *ge wu* 格物 and *zhi zhi* 致知. He takes *ge* 格 to mean “make correct” (*zheng* 正).¹⁰³ *Wu* 物 refers to the affairs that are the objects of one's thoughts (*yi* 意); when one's thought is directed to serving parents, then serving parents is a *wu*.¹⁰⁴ For him, *ge wu* refers to the process of correcting the problematic activities of the heart/mind, and given this interpretation, it follows that there is no thing (*wu*) outside the heart/mind for it to correct (*ge*), just as there is no pattern outside the heart/mind.¹⁰⁵ Wang criticizes Zhu's interpretation of *ge wu* in terms of seeking the pattern in things and affairs; it is

⁹⁹ *Chuanxilu* no. 64, p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ *Chuanxilu* no. 19, pp. 58-59; no. 105, pp. 127-128; no. 245, p. 315.

¹⁰¹ *Chuanxilu* no. 39, pp. 75-76.

¹⁰² *Chuanxilu* no. 76, p. 104; no. 167, pp. 237-238.

¹⁰³ *Chuanxilu* no. 86, p. 110; no. 137, pp. 176-177; *Daxuewen* 26.4b.

¹⁰⁴ *Chuanxilu* no. 6, pp. 36-37; no. 137, pp. 176-177; *Daxuewen* 26.4b.

¹⁰⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 6, pp. 36-37; no. 7, p. 39; no. 318, p.370.

misguided as there is no pattern in things and affairs outside of the heart/mind.¹⁰⁶ A student further adds that, if the heart/mind is already obscured, it would not be in a position to engage in the kind of inquiry that Zhu emphasizes; the important thing is to first remove the obscuration, just as a mirror covered by dust cannot accurately reflect without first wiping away the dust.¹⁰⁷ From Wang's perspective, Zhu is led to his interpretation of *ge wu* by treating the heart/mind and pattern as separate and by treating knowledge and action as separate.¹⁰⁸

As for *zhi zhi* 致知, Wang takes it to be the same process as *ge wu*.¹⁰⁹ According to him, *zhi* 致 means to reach out, *zhi* 知 refers to the truly good knowledge (*liang zhi* 良知), and *zhi zhi* refers to the process of allowing one's truly good knowledge to reach out.¹¹⁰ When a thought arises, the truly good knowledge can tell whether it is good or bad; this capability is seen from the observation in the *Daxue* that even an inferior person would try to hide his bad deeds and appear good when observed by a superior person.¹¹¹ Furthermore, not only can it know a good thought or a bad thought when one arises, it can also move one to advance what is good and eliminate what is bad, thereby preserving good and eliminating evil.¹¹² This capability is exercised in the context of *ge wu*. In correcting what is problematic, it is the truly good knowledge that recognizes and corrects the problematic activities of the heart/mind, and this exercise provides a sense in which the truly good knowledge reaches out. Furthermore, after it has corrected the problematic activities of the heart/mind, the truly good knowledge can then move one to do what is appropriate, and this provides yet another sense in which the truly good knowledge reaches out. For Wang, *zhi zhi* is a matter of letting the truly good knowledge reach out (*zhi liang zhi* 致良知) in these two ways, so as to make things and affairs accord with pattern.¹¹³ *Zhi zhi* provides the basis for *ge wu* in that

¹⁰⁶ *Chuanxilu* no. 135, pp. 171-172; no. 318, p. 370.

¹⁰⁷ *Chuanxilu* no. 62, p. 94.

¹⁰⁸ *Chuanxilu* no. 135, pp. 171-172; no. 137, pp. 176-177.

¹⁰⁹ *Chuanxilu* no. 148, p. 207; cf. no. 118, p. 140.

¹¹⁰ *Chuanxilu* no. 135, pp. 171-172.

¹¹¹ *Daxuewen* 26.4a; see *Daxue* chapter 6.

¹¹² *Chuanxilu* no. 71, p. 100; no. 206, p. 291.

¹¹³ *Chuanxilu* no. 135, pp. 171-172.

correcting the problematic activities of the heart/mind depends on the capability of the truly good knowledge to recognize and correct such problems.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, as one practices *ge wu*, the problematic activities of the heart/mind are corrected and one's truly good knowledge reaches out further; in this sense, *ge wu* also provides the basis for *zhi zhi*. As one keeps on working at this process, the reach of the truly good knowledge broadens over time, and one also comes to recognize more clearly the problematic activities of the heart/mind, thereby assisting in the practice of *ge wu*.¹¹⁵ This integral relation between *ge wu* and *zhi zhi* shows that they are just different aspects of the same process.

Wang's tendency to downplay learning and enquiry can also be seen from his comments in other contexts. For example, when his student Xu Ai asked whether one needs to learn the details of the rites related to serving parents, Wang responds that learning this kind of details should take just a couple of days and is of minor importance compared to ensuring that one's heart/mind is truly filial.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere, he makes a similar point: one should focus on the heart/mind rather than all kinds of details, as otherwise these details would end up bearing no relation to oneself.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, inquiry into such details, which involves the senses (*jian wen* 見聞), is itself a function of the truly good knowledge in that the truly good knowledge would move one to engage in such inquiry as needed.¹¹⁸ Such inquiry is of lesser importance, and the truly good knowledge does not depend on the kind of inquiry that has to do with the senses.¹¹⁹ This position stands in contrast to Zhu Xi's view that knowledge that pertains to morality depends on knowledge that pertains to the senses.

Wang further notes that learning is ultimately for the purpose of getting rid of the problematic elements of the heart/mind.¹²⁰ Just as food serves to nourish the body and would cause harm if not properly digested, learning serves to nourish the heart/mind and

¹¹⁴ *Chuanxilu* no. 239, p. 311.

¹¹⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 65, pp. 95-96; no. 225, p. 302; no. 239, p. 311.

¹¹⁶ *Chuanxilu* no. 4, p. 32.

¹¹⁷ *Chuanxilu* no. 67, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ *Chuanxilu* no. 168, pp. 239-240.

¹¹⁹ *Chuanxilu* no. 140, pp. 187-188; no. 168, pp. 239-240.

¹²⁰ *Chuanxilu* no. 96, p. 116; no. 111, p. 132; no. 172, p. 247.

learning broadly can cause harm if it is just a matter of storing what has been learnt.¹²¹ Even book study is ultimately for the purpose of correcting what is problematic in the heart/mind and preserving the pattern of Heaven.¹²² Basically, what Wang denies is the distinction between the two aspects of self-cultivation that Zhu highlights, one directed ‘inwardly’ to managing the heart/mind and the other directed ‘outwardly’ to learning and enquiry. Even when engaged in supposedly ‘external’ inquiry, one is at the same time attending to what is ‘internal’, namely, the heart/mind; conversely, even when engaged in supposedly ‘internal’ management of the heart/mind such as self-examination, one is not neglecting ‘external’ affairs in which one is engaged.¹²³

Even when discussing the inner management of the heart/mind, Wang disagrees with Zhu’s distinction between different exercises concerned with the inactive as opposed to the active state of the heart/mind. He notes that *jing* 敬 should be maintained whether when sitting in meditation or when engaged in affairs, and regards sitting in meditation as a good way to enable a student to learn to focus the heart/mind and quiet his thoughts.¹²⁴ But sitting in meditation is itself an activity, and he rejects Zhu’s distinction between an inactive and an active state of the heart/mind. Also, while Zhu takes the observation in the *Zhongyong* about caution and fearfulness regarding what one does not see and hear to refer to a state of the heart/mind when it is not yet activated, Wang takes this to be a description of the truly good knowledge itself.¹²⁵ The truly good knowledge should maintain a posture of caution and fearfulness over itself to ensure that it is not obscured and does reach out.¹²⁶ One should maintain this posture at all times; contrary to Zhu, one does not maintain this posture when the heart/mind is inactive, since maintaining this posture is already an activity of the heart/mind.¹²⁷ As for *shen du* 慎獨, Wang takes *du* to refer to the state of one’s heart/mind in general, and whether one is actively engaged in

¹²¹ *Chuanxilu* no. 220, p. 299.

¹²² *Chuanxilu* no. 11, p. 45; no. 316, p. 367; cf. no. 14, p. 53.

¹²³ *Chuanxilu* no. 174, pp. 249-250.

¹²⁴ *Chuanxilu* no. 39, pp. 75-76; no. 204, p. 288; no. 256, p. 320.

¹²⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 266, p. 326.

¹²⁶ *Chuanxilu* no. 329, p. 377; cf. *Wenlu* 5.8b.

¹²⁷ *Chuanxilu* no. 120, p. 142; no. 202, p. 286; *Chuanxilu Xupian* no. 48, p. 417; *Wenlu* 4.3a, 5.8b.

affairs or not, the state of one's own heart/mind is something that one alone (*du*) knows about. One should cautiously attend to it whether actively engaged in affairs or not, and it is again the truly good knowledge that knows the state of one's own heart/mind.¹²⁸

That one should vigilantly attend to the heart/mind whether actively engaged in affairs or not is because, if there is something problematic in one's response when actively engaged in affairs, this is itself a symptom of something problematic in one's heart/mind itself independently of its being engaged in affairs. For this reason, the task of *zhi zhi* should be undertaken at all times, without distinction between an inactive and active state.¹²⁹ Similarly, the task of *ge wu* runs through inactivity and activity – even when inactive, the supposed state of inactivity is itself a thing that can be made correct.¹³⁰ Similarly, caution and fearfulness, and *shen du*, are tasks that run through inactivity and activity, and they are not different tasks though they emphasize different aspects of the same task.¹³¹ In making these observations, Wang is criticizing the way those influenced by Zhu view the distinction between the inactive and the active as if it were a clear cut distinction and as if there were separate tasks of self-cultivation directed to the two states.¹³² But even in a state of supposed inactivity, the heart/mind still has awareness and so there is already activity; and even when the heart/mind is actively engaged with affairs, it ideally should still be settled in that it is not subject to disturbances, and this state can also be described as being still and inactive.¹³³ According to Wang, the truly good knowledge itself does not distinguish between an inactive and an active state of the heart/mind.¹³⁴ Drawing such a distinction is problematic as it can result in people's focusing too much on first devoting themselves to nurturing the heart/mind when inactive, thereby ending up being unable to respond properly when engaged in affairs.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ *Chuanxilu* no. 120, p. 142; no. 317, p. 369.

¹²⁹ *Chuanxilu* no. 167, pp. 237-238.

¹³⁰ *Chuanxilu* no. 87, p. 111.

¹³¹ *Chuanxilu* no. 323, p. 374.

¹³² *Chuanxilu* no. 307, p. 352; *Wenlu* 5.3a-3b.

¹³³ *Wenlu* 5.3a-3b; *Chuanxilu* no. 202, p. 286; cf. no. 157, pp. 220-221.

¹³⁴ *Chuanxilu* no. 157, pp. 220-221; cf. no. 262, p. 324.

¹³⁵ *Chuanxilu* no. 23, p. 62.

7. Dai Zhen on Ethical Failure and Self-Cultivation

As we saw, Dai Zhen thinks the primary source of ethical failure is a deficiency in knowledge, which Dai refers to as obscurity, or *bi* 蔽. He does acknowledge that there can be problems with one's emotional propensities and desires, which are rooted in the physical makeup, and not just with knowledge, which is rooted in the knowing heart/mind: desires can become self-centered (*si* 私), emotional propensities one-sided (*pian* 偏), and knowledge obscured (*bi* 蔽).¹³⁶ According to him, self-centeredness is a matter of satisfying one's own desires to the neglect of others' desires.¹³⁷ However, although he does describe self-centeredness of desires, which derives from the physical makeup, and obscurity of knowledge, which derives from the knowing heart/mind, as the two great problems of the world, he regards obscurity of knowledge as the more fundamental problem.¹³⁸ For example, he criticizes the views of those who emphasize getting rid of the self-centeredness of desires without also emphasizing getting rid of obscurity.¹³⁹ It is only after one has attained proper knowledge that one can go beyond oneself to also satisfy others' desires, and so it is by getting rid of obscurity that one also gets rid of self-centeredness.¹⁴⁰ In this regard, he differs from Zhu, for whom obscurity is a matter of beclouding the knowledge of pattern that one already has, this being a result of self-centeredness. For Dai, the relation between self-centeredness and obscurity goes in the opposite direction. It is obscurity that leads to our being unable to take into account others' emotional propensities and desires in appropriate ways, resulting in self-centeredness.

Because of this difference, Dai regards developing one's knowledge as the primary task in self-cultivation. In addition to studying the classics, one need to broaden one's acquaintance with things, inquire into details to resolve uncertainties, and

¹³⁶ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 30, p. 41.

¹³⁷ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 36, p. 48.

¹³⁸ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 10, p. 9.

¹³⁹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 42, p. 57.

¹⁴⁰ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 30, p. 41.

cautiously reflect on what one has acquired in the process.¹⁴¹ *Xue* 學, or learning, is mentioned along with *si* 思, or reflection, in the *Lunyu*, and *si* for Mencius describes the heart/mind's relation to pattern and propriety (*li yi* 理義) that is akin to a form of perception.¹⁴² Citing Mencius' remarks on *si*, Dai Zhen interprets *si* to refer to a discernment of pattern, which is refined and developed through learning until it attains a god-like clarity.¹⁴³ This process is presented as an advance from the narrow and small to the broad and large, or from being dim and hidden to being clear and discerning, until the knowing heart/mind attains clarity.¹⁴⁴ One analogy is that, just as the body grows from small and weak to big and strong via the nourishment of food and drink, one's moral character grows from being obstructed and dim to being sagely and wise via learning and enquiry.¹⁴⁵ Another analogy is to compare the knowledge of the heart/mind to the brightness of fire; just as the increased brightness of fire enables one to discern clearly not just objects further away but also the finer details of objects, the increasing clarity of the knowledge of the heart/mind enables one to discern the pattern in more things and affairs as well as the finer details of pattern.¹⁴⁶ As we noted, what Dai emphasizes is the heart/mind's capability of knowing the pattern in the things and affairs it encounters, unlike Zhu who emphasizes restoring the heart/mind's knowledge of pattern which has been lost. In presenting the analogy with the brightness of fire, what he emphasizes is how the clarity of the knowing heart/mind is capable of lighting up what it encounters; clarity for Dai Zhen is not a matter of the heart/mind's knowing all the pattern in things and affairs, but a matter of its being *capable* of knowing (*zu yi zhi* 足以知) the pattern in things and affairs when it encounters them.¹⁴⁷

While Dai conceives of self-cultivation primarily in terms of developing one's capability to know, he does not totally ignore the other aspects of self-cultivation having

¹⁴¹ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 40, p. 54; no. 41, p. 55.

¹⁴² *Lunyu* 2.15; *Mengzi* 6A:15.

¹⁴³ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 6, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 9, p. 8; no. 41, pp. 55-56.

¹⁴⁵ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 14, p. 15.

¹⁴⁶ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 6, pp. 5-6; cf. no. 8, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 8, p. 8; cf. no. 6, p. 6.

to do with the inner management of the heart/mind's activities, such as *jing* 敬 (seriousness), *jie shu kong ju* 戒慎恐懼 (caution and fearfulness), and *shen du* 慎獨. For example, in one passage, he discusses all three ideas, explaining *jing* and *jie shen kong ju* in terms of a posture of focus, alertness and caution, and explaining *shen du* in terms of ensuring the propriety of one's intentions and thoughts that are not conspicuous to others.¹⁴⁸ Still, he devotes relatively little attention to these ideas by comparison to developing one's capability to know pattern, reinforcing the observation that it is the latter that he regards as the fundamental task in self-cultivation. This contrasts with Zhu who, while sharing Dai's emphasis on knowledge and on its priority over action, also emphasizes the importance of these other ways of managing the heart/mind's activities.

8. Concluding Remarks

Two themes running through our discussion are the ways Zhu, Wang and Dai view pattern and the relation between the heart/mind and pattern, and the ways they view knowledge and the relation between knowledge and action. Their respective positions on these two themes affect their views on the source of ethical failure and the nature of self-cultivation. On the first theme, there is a similarity between Zhu and Wang at a general level, while Dai differs significantly from both. For both Zhu and Wang, pattern is in some sense already in the heart/mind, and ethical failure is conceived of as a departure from this original and ideal state of the heart/mind, while self-cultivation is a restoration of this state. Dai, on the other hand, explicitly opposes this position, and holds the view that pattern is something that the heart/mind comes to grasp in things and affairs. Though they share a similar view at a general level, Zhu and Wang still differ in the way in which they conceive of pattern as being already in the heart/mind, a difference that relates to their different views of the relation between knowledge and action.

On this second theme, there is a similarity between Zhu and Dai at a general level, while Wang differs significantly from both. Both Zhu and Dai hold the view that, ideally, when one acts, knowledge guides action in that the judgment about how one should act plays a guiding role in relation to the action. Knowledge for them is a matter of the

¹⁴⁸ *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* no. 12, p. 11.

heart/mind's grasping pattern, where the way the heart/mind relates to pattern is akin to a form of perceptual relation. For Wang, on the other hand, when the heart/mind responds in its ideal state, although it may be described as having knowledge, such knowledge is ideally just one aspect of a whole response without guiding the other aspects. This difference between Zhu and Wang accounts for the difference in the ways they view the relation between the heart/mind and pattern – unlike Zhu who regards the heart/mind as grasping pattern in a way akin to a perceptual relation, Wang regards pattern as itself revealed in the response of the heart/mind in its ideal state. At the same time, despite their similarities in this connection, Zhu and Dai still differ in that Zhu regards knowledge of pattern as already in the heart/mind in its original state, while Dai regards it as something to be acquired. For Dai, what is important is not to ensure that the heart/mind grasp the multitude of pattern in all things and affairs, but to ensure that it fully develops its *capability* of clearly grasping pattern in each thing and affair that it encounters.

The different views of Zhu, Wang and Dai on these two themes lead to different accounts of ethical failure and of self-cultivation. For Zhu, ethical failure is explained in terms of the obscuring effect of various forms of self-centeredness on the knowledge of pattern that the heart/mind has in its original state, and the fundamental ethical task is to restore this knowledge. Since this can be done by regaining the knowledge of pattern that the heart/mind has lost as well as by removing the self-centeredness that has led to the obscuring of this knowledge in the first place, self-cultivation involves both grasping pattern through learning and enquiry, and attending directly to the heart/mind to pre-empt and correct the problematic influences of self-centeredness. Accordingly, Zhu emphasizes both aspects of self-cultivation.

Wang views knowledge as ideally just one aspect of the heart/mind's response without guiding the other aspects. Unlike Zhu for whom the response is guided by the heart/mind's grasp of pattern, pattern for Wang is revealed through the heart/mind's response and does not exist independently of it. Accordingly, for Wang, ethical failure has to do with the problematic influence of self-centeredness on the heart/mind's responses as such, without specifically highlighting the obscuration of knowledge. Correspondingly, the primary task in self-cultivation is to pre-empt and correct such

problematic influence, and Wang places comparatively little emphasis on learning and enquiry.

As for Dai, he does not share the views of Zhu and Wang that the heart/mind is already fully ethical in its original state, or that ethical failure is primarily a matter of the problematic influence of self-centeredness. Accordingly, he does not emphasize the kind of inner management of the heart/mind's activities that Zhu and especially Wang emphasize, and instead regards self-cultivation as primarily a matter of the heart/mind's developing its capability to know pattern through learning and through examination of concrete things and affairs. Though he also speaks of the obscuration of knowledge, what he refers to is not the obscuring of the knowledge that the heart/mind already has, but the failure of the heart/mind to fully develop its capability to grasp pattern. He views self-centeredness as resulting from the obscuration of knowledge in this sense, unlike Zhu who regards the obscuration of knowledge as resulting from self-centeredness.

Both Wang and Dai consciously react to Zhu's thinking. Of the two aspects of self-cultivation that Zhu equally emphasizes, Wang highlights the inner management of the heart/mind's activities and downplays the kind of learning and enquiry that is directed outwardly to the study of classics and the examination of things and affairs. By contrast, Dai highlights this kind of learning and enquiry while paying relatively little attention to exercises directed toward the inner management of the heart/mind's activities. In this way, Wang's and Dai's reactions to Zhu's teachings can be viewed as coming from two opposite directions. These two kinds of response to Zhu, in turn, derive from the ways in which their respective views of the heart/mind's relation to pattern and of the place of knowledge differ from Zhu's.

Bibliography

Cheng Yi 程頤 and Cheng Hao 程顥. *Ercheng Cuiyan* 二程粹言 (*Cuiyan*) in
Ercheng Quanshu 二程全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

----- *Henan Chengshi Yishu (Yishu)* 河南程氏遺書 in *Ercheng Quanshu* 二程全書
(*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

----- *Henan Chengshi Waishu (Waishu)* 河南程氏外書 in *Ercheng Quanshu* 二程全書
(*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

----- *Yichuan Wenji* 伊川文集 in *Ercheng Quanshu* 二程全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要
edition).

Dai Zhen 戴震 *Mengzi Ziyishuzheng* 孟子字義疏証, 2nd ed. (Beijing, Zhonghuashuu 中
華書局 1982); all references follow passage and page numbers in this edition.

Daxue 大學 . Following Zhu Xi's division of the text into main text and chapters of
commentary in his *Daxue Zhangju* 大學章句 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).

Liji 禮記 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

Lunyu 論語 . All references follow the numbering of passages in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻
Lunyu Yizhu 論語譯注 2nd edition (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1980).

Mengzi 孟子 . All references follow the numbering of passages, with book numbers 1A-
7B substituted for 1-14, in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 *Mengzi Yizhu* 孟子譯注 2nd
edition (Zhunghua Shuju 中華書局, 1984).

Wang Yangming 王陽明 *Chuanxilu* 傳習錄. All references follow passage and page numbers in Chan Wing-tsit, *Wang Yangming Chuanxilu Xiangzhu Jiping* 陳榮捷 王陽明傳習錄詳註集評 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局 1983).

----- *Chuanxilu Xupian* 傳習錄拾遺, in Chan Wing-tsit, *Wang Yangming Chuanxilu Xiangzhu Jiping* 陳榮捷 王陽明傳習錄詳註集評 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局 1983). All references follow passage and page numbers in this edition.

----- *Daxuewen* 大學問 in *Yangming Quanshu* 陽明全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

----- *Wenlu* 文錄 in *Yangming Quanshu* 陽明全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

Zhang Zai 張載. *Xingli Shiyi* 性理拾遺 in *Zhangzi Quanshu* 張子全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

----- *Zhengmeng* 正蒙 in *Zhangzi Quanshu* 張子全書 (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).

Zhongyong 中庸. Following Zhu Xi's division of the text into chapters in his *Zhongyong Zhangju* 中庸章句 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).

Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 *Taiji Tuoshuo* 太極圖說 in *Zhou Dunyi Ji* 周敦頤集 (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1990).

Zhu Xi *Daxue Huowen* 大學或問 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).

----- *Daxue Zhangju* 大學章句 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).

- *Lunyu Huowen* 論語或問 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- *Lunyu Jizhu* 論語集注 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- *Mengzi Huowen* 孟子或問 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- *Mengzi Jizhu* 孟子集注 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- *Zhongyong Huowen* 中庸或問 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- *Zhongyong Zhangju* 中庸章句 (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 edition).
- Commentary on Zhou Dunyi's 周敦頤 *Tongshu* 通書 in *Zhou Dunyi Ji* 周敦頤集 (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1990).
- *Zhuzi Daquan* 朱子大全 (*Daquan*) (*Sibubeiyao* 四部備要 edition).
- *Zhuzi Yulei* 朱子語類 (*Yulei*) (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1986).