

PERSPECTIVES *from* RELIGION,
PHILOSOPHY, *and* PSYCHOLOGY

WHAT
IS THE
GOOD
LIFE?

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A Ruist (Confucian) Vision

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INTRODUCTION: THE RU TRADITION

Since Protestant missionaries arrived in China in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ru tradition has been prevalently labeled as “Confucianism” in English after the Latinized name of its founding teacher, Confucius (551–479 BCE), whose original honorary title in Chinese is Kongzi (孔子; Master Kong). However, contemporary scholars, particularly in the areas of comparative religion and philosophy, increasingly realize that this nomenclature was created in a special time of human history; in this chapter we will refer to the “Ru” tradition rather than to “Confucianism.”¹

The character *Ru* (儒) was adopted by Kongzi’s followers shortly after his demise to identify themselves in a period of “warring states” (戰國, fifth century to 221 BCE). In this extremely combative and chaotic era, many schools of thought competed with one another. Although contemporary scholars continue to debate the origin and meaning of the term *Ru*, we can discern its relatively stable semantics from the ways Ru wrote about it in the received Ruist classics.² From here, we find that a Ru can be defined broadly as a generally educated person who aims to harmonize the well-being of all involved beings in a civilization through inheriting, devising, and practicing appropriate (義, *yi*) familial, communal, and cultural conventions, which are termed as “rituals” (禮, *li*).³ In this way, the literal meaning of the character Ru, “being soft” (柔, *rou*), indicates

a distinctively humanistic path that Kongzi and his followers advocated in order to remedy human predicaments induced by the social turmoil of the times: there are intrinsically good, nonviolent dimensions of human nature, and through cultivating them, humans can build a humane (仁, *ren*) society in which all its participants can flourish.

This Ruist project of social reengineering was hardly successful during wartime. Nevertheless, when the wars ended and ancient Chinese civilization began to adopt the political pattern of unified empires in one dynasty after another, Ruism was soon established as state ideology sustained by a system of civil examinations, whose major purpose was to recruit officials from Ru literati to staff the empire's administrative bureaucracy.⁴ Because of this close connection to politics, Ruist learning was significantly influenced by the social and political changes that took place throughout numerous dynastic cycles, which in turn led to considerable variations internal to the Ru school of thought.

In this broad context, to present a synthetic Ruist understanding of the good life—in which, as we will see, “joy” is a paramount component—two periods of Ruism are of primary significance. The first is surely its classical period, when Kongzi and his eminent followers such as Yan Hui (521–481 BCE), Mengzi (372–289 BCE), and Xunzi (?–238 BCE) helped to pass down classics from ancient times and composed new ones to address their current needs. These classics formed a seminal foundation for Ruism's later evolution. The second was largely concomitant with China's Song (960–1279 CE) through Ming Dynasties (1368–1644 CE), but geographically, in this later period Ruism also extended to other Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. An intellectual feature of Ruism in this period is that while debating and incorporating ideas from other traditions such as Daoism and Buddhism, Ruism reorganized and reinterpreted its canon, developing a magnificent and largely self-coherent system that encompasses major aspects of philosophical and religious thought, such as spirituality, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and political theory. English scholarship normally designates Ruism in this period as “Neo-Confucianism,” but for the purposes of this chapter we will simply refer to the Ruism of this period as Song-Ming Ruism, after the names of the relevant dynasties.

Per this brief introduction of the Ruist thought and history, we will mainly draw on resources in the aforementioned two periods of Ruism in the following ways. Firstly, we will locate the key texts in which classical Ruists discussed joy and the good life, as the nature and place of joy here provides a helpful platform upon which a broader vision can be set out. The focus on joy as the affective norm (life feeling right) reveals crucial insights into the normative commitments concerning the circumstances and conditions (life going well) and the actions and desires (life led well) of the good life. Secondly, by invoking commentarial thoughts upon these texts, we will appeal to the wisdom of both periods of Ruism to respond to the tripartite hypothesis of the good life.⁵ We will argue that this tripartite framework is fit for analyzing its Ruist counterpart. However, the original vocabulary used to describe each dimension of the hypothesis will experience twists and turns while encountering the peculiarity of Ruist thought. While incorporating these specificities into the larger analytic framework, we hope Ruism's contribution to the volume will broaden our imagination and understanding of the good life.

THE JOY OF KONGZI AND YAN HUI (孔顏之樂)

To Ruists, it makes sense to explore their vision of the good life by asking about the place of joy within it, because this was a pivotal question asked by Ruists themselves at the beginning of Ruism's revival in the Song through Ming period:

Once upon a time, we learned with Zhou Dunyi. Quite often, he required us to search for whence Yan Hui and Kongzi derived their joy. The question is, for what reason were they joyful?⁶

"We" here refers to Cheng Yi (1033–1107 CE) and Cheng Hao (1032–1085 CE). Together with their teacher Zhou Dunyi (1017–1073 CE), the Cheng brothers were acclaimed by the later Ru tradition as among the most prominent, pioneering Ru thinkers of the Song dynasty. Yan Hui refers to the student whom Kongzi thought of, among all his students, as being the best at learning.⁷

The question discussed by these three Ru masters on “the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui” (孔顏之樂) hearkens back to texts composed in the classical stage of Ruism, such as:

Kongzi said, “What a worthy man is Yan Hui! Living in a narrow alley, subsisting on a basket of grain and gourd full of water—other people could not bear their worries over such a hardship, yet Hui never changes his joy. What a worthy man is Hui!” (*Analects* 6.11)

Kongzi said, “Eating plain food and drinking water, having only your bent arm as a pillow—certainly there is joy to be found in this! Wealth and eminence, if attained in an inappropriate way, concern me no more than the floating clouds.” (*Analects* 7.16)

Here, Kongzi and his favorite student, Yan Hui, are depicted as both being able to remain joyful despite poverty.

Relying just on these terse descriptions, it is hard to decipher for what reason Kongzi and Yan Hui were joyful. However, by relying on other related texts, we can be certain that although the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui arises despite poverty, it is not *because of* poverty. In other words, it is not an ascetic type of joy which denies normal human needs for economic security and the appropriate human pursuit for wealth. To the contrary, Kongzi’s attitude towards wealth, if considered from a communal perspective, is realistic and practical; applied to individuals, his attitude is moderate. For instance, in *Analects* 13.9, when asked about how to govern the state of Wei with a large population, Kongzi provided a two-step proposal: firstly, to make people rich; and secondly, to have them educated. According to this view, a government is obliged to execute policies to secure economic prosperity for its people in order that the people can have a foundation to pursue their education and moral self-cultivation. When thinking about his own wealth, Kongzi said: “if a business is pursuable for the sake of wealth, then I would do it even if this means serving as a junior officer holding a whip at the entrance to a marketplace. If not, however, I will turn to do what I love” (*Analects* 7:12). Here, Kongzi’s point is that the creation of personal wealth is vulnerable to uncontrollable external conditions. Rather than craving for wealth regardless, it would be wiser for people to focus upon doing what they intrinsically love.

Again, this does not mean that wealth, or other similar outputs of human activities, is inherently despicable. From Kongzi's biography, we know that he experienced extreme poverty and hardship, particularly when he wandered from state to state in order to promote (to no avail) his political philosophy. However, before that expedition, Kongzi once briefly occupied the highest office in his home state of Lu, and after he returned to Lu, his focus on teaching and scholarship also spoke to the fact that his life had enjoyed a certain degree of settlement and peace.⁸ During these more stable periods of his life, Kongzi is described as loving food, relishing music, being a connoisseur of clothing, and remaining sociable and amicable while interacting with people.⁹ Kongzi in these portraits can be seen as having a refined and sophisticated taste for life, and he would not mind living as a moderate *bon vivant* when conditions allow it.

Based on the analysis above, it is evident that Kongzi and Yan Hui were able to experience joy even amid poverty, while still being attuned to different forms of happiness. This highlights the profound nature of joy within the Ru tradition. By nurturing this feeling in a proper manner, it can remain a constant aspect of human life even in the face of changing circumstances. However, it is important to note that joy cannot be entirely disassociated from the specific circumstances of an individual's life. If we use the language of whole versus part, joy can be seen as a holistic feeling toward the whole world, one that is concerned with, while not being limited to, the concrete life situations that make up the world's changing parts. If we use the trope of transcendence versus immanence, we can say that this deeper dimension of human life transcends while simultaneously remaining immanent in its other dimensions. The traditional Ruist vocabulary to describe this contrast between the transcendent whole and its immanent parts is "what lies beyond shape" (形而上) versus "what lies within shape" (形而下). The former is furthermore described as referring to Dao (道, the Way), and the latter as *qi* (器, utensil-like things).¹⁰

"I AM WITH ZENG DIAN" (吾與點也)

While frequently inquiring into the "joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui" using a dyadic framework of "what lies beyond shape" and "what lies within shape," Ru thinkers in the Song through Ming period also emphasized an additional

passage in the *Analects*. In this passage, Kongzi expresses his attitude towards the feeling of joy and views about the desirability of the vision of the good life of another of his students, Zeng Dian. Compared to the above quotes on the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui, Zeng Dian's words are embedded in a more specific context, and the drama of the passage also creates a richer space for Ru thinkers' varying interpretations. Since this passage is so central to later Ruists' discussion on joy and the good life, we quote it in its entirety and use it as another anchoring text for our discussion:

Zi Lu, Zeng Dian, Ran You, and Gong Xihua were seated in attendance. Kongzi said to them, "Although I am older than any of you, please do not feel uneasy in responding to me. You, while living at home, often complain, 'No one appreciates me.' Well, if someone were to appreciate you, what would you do?" Zi Lu spoke up immediately. "If I were given charge of a state of a thousand chariots—even one hemmed in between powerful states, suffering from armed invasions and afflicted by famine—before three years were up I could infuse its people with courage and a sense of what is right." The Master smiled at him. He then turned to Ran You. "Ran You, what would you do?" Ran You answered, "If I were given charge of a state sixty or seventy—or even fifty or sixty—square *li* in area, before three years were up I could see that the people would have become wealthy. As for instructing its people in ritual practice and music, this is a task that would have to await the arrival of an exemplary person." Kongzi then turned to Gong Xihua. "Gong Xihua, what would you do?" Gong Xihua answered, "I am not saying that I would actually be able to do it, but my wish, at least, would be to learn how to do the following. I would like to serve as a minor functionary—properly clad in ceremonial cap and gown—in ceremonies at the ancestral temple, or at diplomatic gatherings."

Kongzi then turned to Zeng Dian. "You, Zeng Dian! What would you do?" Zeng Dian stopped strumming his zither, and as the last sonorous notes faded away he set the instrument aside and rose to his feet. "I would love to do something quite different from any of the other three." "What harm is there in that?" Kongzi said, "We are all just talking about our aspirations." Zeng Dian then said, "In the last month of spring, once the spring garments have been completed, I should like to assemble a company of five or six young people and six or seven kids to go bathe in the Yi River and enjoy the breeze upon

the Rain Dance Altar, and then return singing to our residence.” Kongzi sighed deeply, saying, “I am with Zeng Dian!”

The other three pupils left, but Zeng Dian stayed behind. He asked Kongzi, “What did you think of what the other pupils said?” “Each of them was simply talking about their aspirations.” “Then why, Master, did you smile at Zi Lu?” “One cannot govern a state without ritual-propriety. His words failed to express the proper sense of deference, and that is why I smiled at him.” “Was Ran You’s aspiration, then, not concerned with statecraft?” “Why did something sixty or seventy—even fifty or sixty—square *li* in area not constitute a state?” “Was Gong Xihua’s aspiration, then, not concerned with statecraft?” “If ancestral temples and diplomatic gatherings are not the business of the feudal lords, what then are they? If Gong Xihua’s aspiration is a minor one, then what would be considered a major one?”¹¹

Several details about the context of the conversation need to be clarified before we can offer our philosophical analysis.

First, since Kongzi described himself as “old” and the general mood sounds relaxed, the conversation must have taken place when Kongzi had finished his wandering and returned to his home state. The order of speaking among the first three students followed seniority. However, even if Zi Lu was indeed the eldest among all the four, the fact that he did not look at, and hence show his due respect toward, the others before speaking was seen as violating a “proper sense of deference,” leading to Kongzi’s disapproving smile. And oddly, Zeng Dian was the last one to respond, even though he was the second oldest.¹²

Second, the oddity of Zeng Dian’s response is also manifested at other points. First, the bearing of Zeng Dian’s response was rather different. Beginning from the fact that he was playing music, Zeng Dian dared to deliver a very contrasting answer. Using a term from elsewhere in the *Analects*, Zeng Dian can therefore be called a “wild one” (狂者), one who harbors lofty aspirations without taking concrete and careful steps to realize them.¹³ What is more, the content of Zeng Dian’s response was no less off-beat. The original question of Kongzi’s was about students’ aspirations concerning statecraft if they had a chance to be appointed in government. In contrast, what Zeng Dian aspired to was a purely quotidian and mundane,

albeit very joyful, activity that sounds like anything but statecraft. According to Zhu Xi's (1130–1200 CE) commentary, what Zeng Dian intended was to largely follow an ancient custom called "Fu Chu" (祓除) at a special season of the year and then enjoy a community field trip without much planning in advance. According to Zhu Xi, the fact that Zeng Dian can "enjoy the ordinariness of his everyday life" (樂其日用之常) in an "unhurried and restful" (從容) way is particularly commendable.¹⁴

Third, it is not difficult to connect the nature of ordinariness that accompanies Zeng Dian's joy to the constant feeling of joy that Kongzi and Yan Hui were described as being able to entertain despite external conditions. However, as indicated by the oddities of Zeng Dian's response, his answer must also have hinted at something extraordinary so as to win Kongzi's concurrence. If we employ the original referent of "ecstasy" to something that "stands out," we can even characterize Zeng Dian's joy as having an ecstatic characteristic that transcends, while not being segregated from, ordinary moments of life. This intricate interplay between the ordinary and extraordinary dimensions of Zeng Dian's experience of joy hearkens back to the above analysis about the relationship between a transcendent whole and its immanent parts as it is implied by the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui.

According to this analysis, the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui refers to a deeper, extraordinary dimension of human life, one which "lies beyond shape." However, the joy deriving from this dimension transcends, while being simultaneously immanent in, those more ordinary dimensions that "lie within shape." Once again, Kongzi's attitude towards Zeng Dian's joy confirmed this intricate relationship between transcendence and immanence. In the second half of the conversation, when others left Zeng Dian to face Kongzi alone, Kongzi made clear his approval towards all the other aspirations of which he had seemingly disapproved. If Zeng Dian's joy "stands out" in contrast to those more normal aspirations for good life in the first half of the conversation, it has to be "leveled off" later.

Therefore, what is extraordinary in Zeng Dian's joy? Why does the extraordinary have to be eventually renormalized? For what reasons does Kongzi both approve and disapprove of Zeng Dian's joy? Furthermore, how can we correctly understand the relationship between "what lies

beyond shape” and “what lies within shape,” so as to constantly embody a desirable, joyful, good life?

The Ru tradition in its Song through Ming period tries to unravel these puzzles. In our view, we can utilize the tripartite hypothesis to parse out the answers provided by those Ru thinkers.

THE CONCRETE CIRCUMSTANCE:
HOW THE WORLD WITHIN SHAPE IS FOR US

The joy of Zeng Dian and his related conversation with Kongzi can be read simply as an affective response to a certain set of circumstances. That is, if those four responses were indeed all about statecraft, the quotidian joy described by Zeng Dian can be seen as the result of commendable statecraft.

The other three aspirations all refer to varying aspects of civil life, and more importantly, there is an order of priority among them. In other words, in order to create a civil order within a state, first, as Zi Lu aspires, we must have a strong defensive army to secure peace among states; second, as Ran You says, people in the state must be economically well-off so that they can get access to culture and education; lastly, as Gong Xihua wills, there must be a system of social etiquette and cultural conventions so that people can interact each other in a ritually proper way. If all these preconditions are satisfied, the circumstance in a normal neighborhood can be created so that Zeng Dian and his younger human fellows can freely enjoy their quotidian life in an unhurried and restful way.¹⁵

Despite the fact that this purely circumstantial locus of Zeng Dian's joy has nothing to do with the transcendent dimension of life that “lies beyond shape,” its underlying idea of political philosophy remains a matter of almost unchallengeable common sense among Ruist scholars. In general, to live a good, joyful private life in society, we need to have a peaceful, sufficiently wealthy, and orderly public life beforehand. This idea is clearly espoused by Kongzi when he proposes his two-step statecraft idea quoted above. We can also see this in the status of the civil examination as a major institutional engine of Ruism. The aspiration of contributing to such a civil foundation for people's daily happiness is universally shared by Ru learners.

Nevertheless, what stands out in later Ruists' discussions of *Analects* 11.25 is *not* this priority of circumstantial well-being. This is because for Ru to be dedicated to creating those civil preconditions for people's desirable, mundane lives, they must have already perceived that same sort of constant joy as that of Kongzi and Yan Hui, so that the state of their inner lives would not be affected by the unforeseeable fortunes or misfortunes which inevitably accompany their social and political endeavors. In other words, if not grounded in a deeper feeling of joy towards their ordinary lives, their pursuit of social activism would rather be driven by power, fame, or other external, selfish interests and, hence, would undermine the very foundation of Ruist statecraft. A classical Ruist text phrases this priority of a statesperson's self-cultivation over statecraft as "from the Son of Heaven (the emperor) to common people, we all should take the cultivation of self as the root."¹⁶

Because of this emphasis upon moral self-cultivation, the fact that Zeng Dian enjoys the ordinariness of everyday life can be interpreted in a very different way. Instead, the joy is seen as representing a way of human living whose quality surpasses the other three respondents', so that it can be taken as a foundation, rather than an expected result, of those social and political activities contributing to desirable civil life.

Therefore, the crucial question for us to understand the significance of Zeng Dian's joy for the Ru tradition is as follows: How is joy the foundation of good statecraft? Or, using the same terms once employed by Zhou Dunyi, whence does Zeng Dian derive his joy? As indicated by our above discussion, Ru thinkers' pondering over these questions is organized by the conceptual interplay between the extraordinary Dao (the Way) aspect of human living, termed as "what lies beyond shape," and the ordinary *qi* (utensil-like things) aspect, termed as "what lies within shape." If the purely circumstantial understanding of Zeng Dian's joy as an expected result of proper statecraft can be thought of as answering "how the world is for Zeng Dian's joy" when the world is understood in a "within shape" way, the next level of contemplation on the same question will have to view it from a "beyond shape" perspective.

THE ORIGINAL CIRCUMSTANCE:
HOW THE WORLD BEYOND SHAPE IS FOR US

According to those quoted Ru thinkers in the Song through Ming period, the reason that Zeng Dian, Kongzi, and Yan Hui were able to enjoy mundane moments of everyday life regardless of their personal fortunes is that they experienced the existential bond between their selves and the broadest circumstance that humans can ever conceive of: the eternally self-generating and evolving cosmos itself, which is termed Tian (天, cosmos).¹⁷ As a result of this experience, while living and striving for the normal goals of life, these Ru succeed in finding their due position in the broadest realm of being, and thus, a constant feeling of joy—with its comprising affective nuances such as settlement (定), tranquility (靜), contentedness (安), and vivacity (生意)—can arise to accompany all mundane moments of life.

A couple of verses from classical Ruism will suffice for us to empathize with this Ruist cosmic experience:

Kongzi said, “What does Tian ever say? Yet the four seasons are put in motion by it, and the myriad creatures receive their life from it. What does Tian ever say?” (*Analects* 17.19)

It is said in the *Book of Poetry*, “The hawks fly up to heaven; the fish leap in the deep.” This expresses how this Dao is seen above and below. The Dao of an exemplary person may be found, in its simple elements, in the interaction of husband and wife; but in its utmost reaches, it shines brightly through heaven and earth.¹⁸

Tian is depicted here as an all-encompassing, constantly creative cosmic field from which all creatures are generated, each with a unique nature, while all are changing and evolving together. The essential feature of this cosmic field is characterized as “birth birth” (生生, *shengsheng*), or “creating creativity,”¹⁹ and the all-encompassing togetherness of creatures is also frequently portrayed as the most sublime form of “dynamic harmony” (和, *he*).

Since Tian is where concrete, shaped things derive from, contemplation over the most generic features of this cosmic field will be, using the terms that we have introduced, to understand the Dao aspect of the world which is “beyond shape.” Since Tian’s creativity is always manifested in

cosmic beings that have a shape, we can see that the cosmic power of Tian transcends, while simultaneously being immanent in all the world that is “within shape.” In other words, it is an ontological commitment to the relationship between the original, root state (本體) of the world and its derived states that makes Ruists particularly favor the discourse on joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian. It is also only when one experiences the unbroken bond between one’s mundane life and the root state of the world that one can entertain the same transcendent feeling of joy while delving deeply into vivid moments of everyday life, just as Zhu Xi explained whence Zeng Dian derived his joy:

The leisurely joy felt in Zeng Dian’s heart vibrates together with all the myriad of things above and below, between heaven and earth. He perceives subtly the wonderous reality that each of these myriad things has its due position (in the cosmos), which is indescribable by human words.²⁰

Despite the fact that devising a metaphysical ethics or ethical metaphysics by pondering the position of the human species within the entire realm of being is not unique to Ruism among the major spiritual traditions in East Asia, what is salient about the Ru tradition is that it admits both the unique nature of human beings vis-à-vis nonhuman beings, regarding our capacity of building an inclusive, co-thriving civilization, and the continuity between this human nature and the essential feature of the evolving cosmos.

Understood in this way, the Ruist ethical teaching that centers upon the cultivation of the virtue of “humaneness” (仁, *ren*) in varying human relationships, and the aforementioned Ruist political teaching that aims to create a sustainable civil order, both refer to the uniquely human activities that can manifest the harmonizing power of Tian in the human realm. This implies that the social activism entailed by the three aspirations of Zeng Dian’s fellow students, if conducted properly, helps to realize the normative human nature whose ultimate origin is the process of “birth birth” of Tian’s cosmic evolution. Because of this continuity of human nature with the broadest root state of the evolving cosmos,

while commending Zeng Dian's joy as referring to an extremely high spiritual state of a Ru's self-cultivation,²¹ Ruists would never downplay those human endeavors that are necessary to realizing this state in social activities conducive to a harmonious civilization. In other words, the joy of Zeng Dian, since it derives from a normative human nature which is endowed by the constantly creative power of Tian, strives for broadening its impact in the human realm and, thus, urges us to be dedicated to varying social endeavors to build a sustainable, humane civilization. We can find the connection between the spiritual joy of Zeng Dian and varying types of social activism through Zhu Xi's comment about the aforementioned broad and great cosmic Dao that makes "the hawks fly up to heaven; the fish leap in the deep":

Many of those sages' sayings sound broad and great, but they all regathered themselves to pursue real and solid things. . . . Although they taught the original state of the world as such, they are solidly committed to the perfection of each thing whenever they are doing something, such as ritual and music, law and governance, culture and institution. All conceivable human affairs are about the original state of the world. Because the original state of the world reaches and completes everything, as long as some human affair has not been perfected, a piece of the original state will get lost.²²

Quite obviously, a humanistic commitment to realizing what is transcendent in the immanent human world through human efforts can be taken as the major reason why, while facing Zeng Dian alone, Kongzi reemphasizes that those aspirations other than Zeng Dian's are all commendable.

Regarding the question of how the world is, such that an individual can feel a constant joy about his or her everyday life, Ruists will answer in two interrelated ways: if we are talking about the worldly preconditions that enable humans to enjoy their mundane life, we should be dedicated to creating a good civil order. If we are talking about a spiritual condition that designates a deeper dimension of life, we should realize the unbroken bond of human existence with the original state of the world and, furthermore, follow our uniquely human nature to manifest the ever-harmonizing and generating power of the cosmos in the human world.

JOY AS A PRIMER FOR ALL PROPER AFFECTIONS: HOW WE FEEL

Since the joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian derives from the ontologically original state of the world as an ever-generative cosmic field and, hence, refers to the broadest circumstance of human life, Wang Yangming (1472–1529 CE) holds that “joy is the original state of the human heartmind” (樂是心之本體).²³ The feeling of joy is different from emotions (情, *qing*). Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian were joyful about the all-compassing, infinite, cosmic whole that accommodates human individuals in each of their due positions, while emotions arise from human reactions to concrete, finite life situations and may or may not be appropriate.

Nevertheless, as entailed by the relationship between the transcendent Dao and the immanent Qi discussed above, an ontological and spiritual commitment to the cultivation of constant joy does not make Ruists disfavor emotions. Quite the opposite: as long as emotions react appropriately, with appropriateness understood here as being able to create harmonies in evolving situations so as to realize the cosmic Dao in the human world, they are thought of as desirable objectives for one’s self-cultivation and, thus, can be enjoyed as integral ingredients to the good life.

Two examples can illustrate Ruists’ reflection on the relationship between the constant spiritual joy and its derived mundane emotions: worry (憂, *you*) and grief (哀, *ai*). We would not normally think that a worried or grieving person can be simultaneously deeply joyful. However, Ruists think that we can, so long as we are worried or grief-filled about the right things.

As indicated by the previous discussion on the original circumstance of human life, whether the constantly harmonizing and generating power of Tian can be realized in the human world in a uniquely humane way depends upon human efforts. Kongzi once taught that “it is humans who advance the Dao; it is not the Dao which advances humans.”²⁴ In the same way, when considering that the constant interaction of yin and yang vital energies in the cosmos comprises the Dao that endows life and energy to all creatures, the *Appended Texts* of the *Classic of Change* states that “Without human beings, Dao would not proceed automatically (in the human world).”²⁵ These classical texts speak to the human responsibility of civilizing the human species so as to perpetuate the cosmic Dao.

This responsibility entails that a morally committed human would have to learn, deliberate, plan, experiment, and act on a daily basis so as to continually build and organize a functional society from its micro units of family and local community all the way up to the macro domain of states and all under the heavens. During this process, we would be regularly worrying about issues such as whether we have become learned enough, whether our plans were viable, or whether our human partners' interests were all treated with justice and balance. And this would mean that we should always be prepared for obstacles, failures, and even regrets, notwithstanding that we also try our best to overcome them. In a word, it is unavoidable for a morally motivated human to be worried. The aspirations expressed by Zeng Dian's fellow students offer perfect examples, all of them referring to career planning and the necessary social and political preconditions of enjoyable mundane life.

Nevertheless, as Kongzi's affirmation of the value of these aspirations indicates, these worries are thought of as being just fine as long as they are directed to the right purpose and in an appropriate way. If we realize that the finitude of human beings entails that the emotion of worry cannot be eliminated from our life, then, when we try our best to fulfill the ultimate concern of human life, understood as "enlarging the cosmic Dao in the human realm," we can remain deeply joyful even when we have to be worried and concerned about mundane affairs. Crucially, Ru philosophers consistently distinguish between these appropriate worries and a different class of concerns of which we can and should rid ourselves. As Mengzi puts it, "An exemplary person has lifelong worries but not daily anxieties. The worries are like this: 'Shun was a person, and I am a person. Shun was a model for the whole world that could be passed down to future generations, yet I am still nothing more than an ordinary person.'"²⁶ Viewed in today's terms, if pursuits such as performing well in a job interview, acing a test, or making a good impression on a date lack moral motivation, the daily anxieties that accompany them are as nothing to an exemplary person. Instead, if these ordinary tasks contribute to the development of a moral and ultimately meaningful life, an exemplary person would joyfully worry over them.

This mood of humane and joyful worry, so to speak, is captured remarkably well by Zhang Zai (1022–1077 CE) when he comments about why even a sage, the perfect ideal of Ruist moral self-cultivation, still experiences the emotion of worry. Zhang Zai says:

What Tian is capable of is [to impart] nature, while the deliberation and planning by human beings are what humans are capable of. A great person completes his or her human nature in a way that he or she would not take Tian's capability as human capacity. Instead, he or she would take deliberation and planning as what humans are genuinely capable of. In this sense, the *Classic of Change* teaches us "it is heaven and earth that sets up a position, while it is sages who complete the human capabilities."²⁷

In other words, although the potential for planning and deliberation is imparted to the human species by Tian's cosmic evolution, it is still humans who determine whether to activate these potentials or not for serving a humane cause. Because of this, Zhang goes on to argue that

the worry of a sage derives from her or his virtue of humaneness, whereas Tian cannot be said to have any emotion of worry whatsoever. Because it is sages who complete human capabilities, humans are different from heaven and earth [itself].²⁸

Understood in this way, it would be the virtue of humaneness, which aims to enlarge the cosmic Dao in the human world, that enables a sage to be deeply joyful while simultaneously being rightfully worried.

Another emotion, grief, helps us to further understand why the spiritual joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian can be taken as an existential primer of all proper human affections. Grief is normally understood as keen mental distress or suffering due to afflictions or loss, such as what one feels facing the loss of an immediate family member. Again, a grieving person would not normally be thought of as capable of being simultaneously joyful. However, according to Wang Yangming, this might indeed be the case. The following conversation between Wang Yangming and his student speaks to Wang's delicate view on this point:

"[You taught us that] joy is the original state of human heartmind. However, when people's parents die, we will cry and grieve. Can we

still find joy here?" Master Wang answers: "[In this situation,] only after we have a loud cry, can we feel joyful. Without crying, we will not feel joy. [This also means that] while crying, our heartmind feels settled and peaceful. This is whence our joy derives. Therefore, the original state [of joy] has never been perturbed."²⁹

In other words, as long as we grieve for the right cause and in an appropriate way, it manifests constant spiritual joy, rather than undermining it.

Actually, the relationship between the constant joy and appropriate worry and grief can extend to all emotions. According to the *Zhong Yong* (中庸, *Centrality and Commonality*), the state of human living to which the constant joy refers is named as being "centered," while the state in which varying emotions obtain their due measure is called "harmony": "When the emotions of happiness, anger, sorrow, and delight have not been aroused, this is called 'centered'; when these emotions are aroused and abide by their due measure, this is called 'harmony.' The state of being centered is the great root of all under the heavens, while the state of harmony is the extensive path for all under the heavens."³⁰ Since all emotions are essentially enjoyable once they are rooted in the constant spiritual joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian, a *junzi* (君子, exemplary person)'s state of life is also depicted as: "a *junzi* is content wherever he or she goes."³¹

AGENCY AND CULTIVATING EFFORT 工夫: WHAT WE DO

According to our above discussion, the Ru tradition espouses the value of humanism and emphasizes the unique human responsibility of advancing the cosmic Dao in the human world. Therefore, apart from an ontological discourse about the original state of the changing world and how to theorize the world-human connection, the Ru tradition is dedicated to another practical discourse about what humans should do regarding the aforementioned responsibility. This practical discourse, which is termed the discourse on *gongfu* (工夫, cultivating effort), can be thought of as aiming for people's spiritual formation to achieve and maintain the joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian in everyday life.

The Ru masters in the Song through Ming period developed detailed, interlocking theories and practices of *gongfu*, with some thinkers putting more emphasis on outward-focused practice while others stress inward-

focused practice.³² Virtually all Ruists of this era term the way that cosmic and human realities dynamically and harmoniously fit together as “Pattern” (理, Li). Some teachers, like Cheng Yi, argue that to realize the cosmically human joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian, humans need to accumulatively learn Pattern as it is distinctively manifested in varying domains of human life, until eventually reaching the moment when one can envision the interconnection of all aspects of Pattern in the cosmos as an organic whole. At this moment one realizes how human nature is rooted in the Pattern of Tian, and by preserving this one entertains a constant feeling of joy in whatever concrete activities one needs to pursue.

According to Cheng Yi, there are three major kinds of cultivating efforts one can undertake in order to get a handle on Pattern:

Underlying each thing or affair, there is a Pattern; in each case we need to completely investigate its Pattern. The ways of investigating Pattern are varying: we discuss and understand the meaning of texts when we read books; we dispute about famous persons in ancient and recent times, and hence, distinguish right and wrong; we react appropriately when we deal with varying human affairs. All of these are ways of investigating Pattern.³³

Since on this account the process of rediscovering the ontological bond between the cosmos and humans, whence constant joy arises, is accumulative, we can view the approach to *gongfu* recommended by Cheng Yi as in some ways “externalist,” requiring human agents to continually learn and abide by Pattern. In contrast, since the connection between humans and the cosmos is ontologically original, an alternative approach insists that the realization of it does not depend upon accumulative, externalist endeavors of knowing. Instead, according to thinkers like Wang Yang-ming, we should focus upon reaching our “good knowing” (致良知), an ability innate to the human heartmind that keeps human thoughts and deeds from straying away from the Pattern that is entailed by the original existential bond between humans and the cosmic Dao. In this sense, all those endeavors described by Cheng Yi are considered not as preconditions, but as stimuli of the realization of “good knowing” upon which the constant spiritual joy rests.

According to Wang Longxi (1498–1583 CE), an eminent student of Wang Yangming, there are three major ways to reach “good knowing” and, thus, to becoming aware of the ontological bond between humans and the cosmic Dao:

An exemplary person’s learning becomes praiseworthy only once they have achieved awareness (悟, wu). If the gate to awareness is not open, we have no way to confirm what has been learned. There are three ways someone might achieve awareness: some achieve it through words, some achieve it through quiet-sitting, and some achieve it through effort and practice amidst the changing circumstances of daily living.³⁴

This path of cultivating efforts towards the realization of the constant spiritual joy is often understood to be more internalist and intuitive, though it is striking that here, too, reflection on words (i.e., texts) and attention to acting correctly in daily life both play roles, as they did for Cheng Yi. Indeed, although there were heated debates among the Song through Ming Ru masters, the disputants also shared a largely common set of ontological, spiritual, and moral commitments. Furthermore, many of the practical ways of spiritual and moral cultivation that they articulated were also common property (with various underlying understandings), such as devoted reading, quiet-sitting meditation, ritual performance, contemplating artworks such as painting and calligraphy, and so on.³⁵

If we were to furnish our own reflection about these two paths of cultivating efforts, it would be as follows: Because the finite situations of human life are not ontologically severed from the infinite whole of the cosmos, a nonaccumulative, intuitive grasp of the original ontological bond should be the only viable account that we can give about how we can be aware of the bond upon which the good life, a life of constant joy, relies. However, as we discussed above, the ever-generative power of the cosmic Dao transcends, while simultaneously being immanent to, details of the mundane world. This implies that the vision of the good life of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian, and the centrality of constant spiritual joy therein, requires us to return to mundane moments of everyday life and, thus, try our best to perpetuate the cosmic harmony of Tian in the human world. Further, this

will unquestionably demand our grasp of the ways that Pattern pertains to varying life situations and, thus, urge us to continue to learn and act in order to pervade and enrich our deeply inspired spiritual joy within evolving life situations. In short, the Ruist path to the good life demands a subtle combination of both approaches, internal and external, to cultivating efforts towards the realization and maintaining of the constant spiritual joy of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Zeng Dian.

AGENCY, JOY, AND THE STATE OF BEING 境界: WHERE WE LIVE

Another Ruist discourse that is closely related to “cultivating effort” focuses on *jingjie* (境界, state of being). The literal meaning of *jingjie* is a territory (境) with a boundary (界). However, for understanding Ruism, especially in its Song through Ming period, we need to realize that the term *jingjie* primarily refers to how the wholeness of the world appears to humans because of their varying spiritual inner statuses.³⁶ For example, facing the same bamboo tree, a scientist will perceive a plant which grows according to biological laws, while to a poetic eye, the tree may appear to be full of cosmic vital energies interconnected with humans so that the tree’s aesthetic quality can be earnestly appreciated. In this way, despite living in the same physical world, the world, with its objective and nonmanipulable qualities, appears differently to the scientist and the poet. Thus, using the Ruist term *jingjie*, we can characterize these two perceivers as living in different *jingjie*. In English-language scholarship, *jingjie* is comparable to the “level” of human needs discussed by Abraham Maslow or the “dimensions” of human life theorized by Paul Tillich. Because *jingjie* designates the holistic awareness, feeling, or sense of a person towards his or her world, we prefer to translate *jingjie* as “state of being.”

If the Ruist discourse on the original state of the world investigates the most generic, ontological traits of the evolving cosmos and the position of human beings within it, and the discourse on cultivating effort points out the practical paths of self-cultivation made possible by those ontological traits, then the significance of the discourse on the state of being consists in its illuminating the goal of self-cultivation. The world relates differently to us because of the varying efforts that we have made to better our life. In this sense, the discourse on the state of being is highly relevant to the

central topic of the volume, since it concerns the degrees of desirability of varying types of the good life: the higher the *jingjie* in which one's life resides, the more desirable the goodness of his or her life is.

Inspired by terms used by the modern Ru philosopher, Feng Youlan (1895–1990 CE), in his work of “A Rediscovery of Humanity” (新原人), we would like to characterize the Ruist conceptions of the good life as referring to four different kinds of *jingjie* according to the above-quoted conversation between Kongzi, Zeng Dian, and the other students.

The *jingjie* that Zi Lu and Ran You's aspirations represent is a utilitarian state of being (功利境界). This is because these aspirations attend to the basic biological needs of the human species, such as physical security and economic prosperity. People living in this state of being will perceive the world as an exploitable resource for human flourishing, and therefore, the feeling of joy that they may consequentially entertain depends upon whether they secure maximal utilities from the worldly resource.

The *jingjie* which Gong Xihua's career path represents is a moral state of being (道德境界). This is because Gong Xihua's primal concern is to have humans interact with each other in a ritually proper way according to conventional moral standards. People dwelling in a moral state of being will be dedicated to coordinating people's biological needs for the sake of a functional society, and in this sense, the joy they may feel about their moral accomplishments depends less upon the limitedness of earthly resources and the resulting changeability of human fortunes. However, just as Gong Xihua's moral sense derives from his meticulous obedience to social conventions, people in a moral state of being have not yet found the ultimate origin of morality and thus cannot liberate their feeling of joy from preoccupation with social conventions.

The *jingjie* that Zeng Dian lives out during his late spring field trip along the river of Yi is a heaven-and-earth state of being (天地境界). People dwelling in this state of being will perceive the original existential bond of human beings with the constantly creating cosmos and, hence, obtain the ultimate power and meaning of life while living through its everyday mundane moments. Since these people connect to a source of human agency which is more original than moral conventions, their morality would not be realized in the form of a meticulous obedience to rules and customs. Instead, it will

be out of one's freedom—with freedom understood here in the sense of “fulfilling one's human nature endowed by the cosmic Dao”—that they interact morally with their fellow humans and with all in the cosmos. Because of the realization of genuine freedom in the heaven-and-earth state of being, people's spiritual bearing in this state is typically depicted by Ru literature as “悠然” (restful and delightful), “灑脫” (easygoing), “從心所欲” (following the flow of one's desire), “無累” (not being restrained), and so on. As a consequence, the joy felt by people in this state of being can transcend fortunes and vicissitudes and, thus, show its resilience and sustainability in comparison to those depending on joys in the two aforementioned states.

Nevertheless, the heaven-and-earth state of being is still not the most desirable type of good life. This is because if people indulge themselves in the joy of Zeng Dian too much, they may risk slacking off on cultivating themselves diligently so as to fulfill their responsibility of realizing the cosmic Dao in the human world. As discussed before, the relationship between Tian and humans is intricate in Ruist metaphysics: on the one hand, the cosmic creativity of Tian transcends while remaining immanent in evolving cosmic occasions; on the other hand, whether Tian's creativity can be manifested in the human world in a uniquely humane way totally depends upon human endeavors. Therefore, despite the fact that the realization of the initial ontological bond between Tian and humans gives rise to the genuine freedom of human agents, the implementation of this freedom entails that we should be continually dedicated to learning, planning, deliberating, and acting so as to create more appropriate patterns of human sociality for establishing a sustainable and harmonious civilization. In this sense, the joy of Zeng Dian and its corresponding goodness of life may be said as “extremely high and bright,” since it dwells in the heaven-and-earth state of being. However, the joy would not genuinely benefit the human world if it is not redirected to the normal paths of human agency, which, as represented by the other three aspirations, all aim to create preconditions for enjoyable everyday life.

Therefore, we would characterize the highest state of being for the good life as one of “centrality and normality” (中庸境界), which aims to bring the ultimate power and meaning of human life perceived in the heaven-and-earth state of being into all concrete and evolving mundane situations of everyday life. In this sense, a genuinely joyful person would not only

appear to be “restful,” “easygoing,” and “not restrained.” She or he should also be “cautious and reverent” (謹敬) and enjoy a lifestyle which appears to be “normal and ordinary” (平常). Using the words of the *Zhong Yong*, the highest state of being for humans’ good life can be termed as “Standing Extremely High and Bright, yet on a Central and Normal Path,”³⁷ which could well serve as an alternative title of this chapter.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we focus on the conversation between Kongzi, Zeng Dian, and his other students, as well as related texts on the joy of Kongzi and Yan Hui in the *Analects*, to parse out the Ruist understanding of joy and the good life. While responding to the tripartite hypothesis of the good life, we incorporate three Ruist categories of discourse into our discussion. In order to clarify the broadest circumstance of human life, that is, how the world is for us, we need to introduce the Ruist metaphysics on the “original state” (本體) of the world. While explaining what we should do as human agents to achieve and maintain constant joy and a desirable good life, we need to adopt the Ruist discourse on “cultivating effort” (工夫). Furthermore, the goal of self-cultivation is thought of by the Ru tradition in a discourse of “state of being” (境界). Correspondingly, the relationship between the constant spiritual joy and other proper affections should also be reconsidered as being ontological and depending practically upon our cultivating efforts. If we need to use one concise statement to generalize the Ruist understanding of joy and the good life, we would say: for a Ruist, to live a joyful good human life is to know the original state of the world (識本體), to make efforts to cultivate oneself (做工夫), and to reach one’s due state of being (達境界).

Recommended Primary Texts

- Chan Wing-Tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Hagen, Kurtis, and Steve Coutinho, trans. *Philosophers of the Warring States: A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2018.
- Hutton, Eric L., trans. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016.

- Ivanhoe, Philip J., and Bryan W. Van Norden. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005.
- Johnston, Ian, and Wang Ping, trans. *Daxue & Zhongyong (English and Taiwanese Chinese Edition)*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012.
- Slingerland, Edward. *Confucius Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003.
- Tiwald, Justin, and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds. *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy: Han to the 20th Century*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014.
- Van Norden, Bryan W., trans. *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008.
- Wang, Yangming. *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writing*. Translated by Wing-tsit Chan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.
- Zhu, Xi, and Lü Zuqian. *Reflections on Things at Hand: The Neo-Confucian Anthology*. Translated by Wing-tsit Chan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- Zhu, Xi. *Zhu Xi Selected Writings*. Translated and edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Notes

- 1 An explanation of the history on the nomenclature of “Confucianism” vis-à-vis the “Ru” tradition can be found in Tony Swain, *Confucianism in China: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 3–22, and Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 45–76. In this chapter, “Confucianism” will be written as “Ruism” or the “Ru tradition,” and “Confucian” or “Confucianist” will be written as “Ru” or “Ruist.” When used as a noun, the plural of “Ru” or “Ruist” is “Ru” or “Ruists.”
- 2 Examples are “The Achievements of Ru” (儒效) in the *Xunzi* and “The Deeds of Ru” (儒行) in the *Classic of Rites*.
- 3 Alternative translations could be “etiquettes” or “civilities.” This chapter employs the term “ritual” in its broad, Ruist sense.
- 4 We are summarizing many centuries of historical changes here; our description applies most accurately to the later dynasties of imperial China, beginning around 1000 CE.

- 5 The tripartite hypothesis concerns the circumstances, the affective dimension, and the practical or agential aspect of the good life; for more details, see this volume's introduction.
- 6 Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Works of Cheng Brothers* 二程集 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1981), 16. If not specified, translations of Ruist texts in this chapter will be our own.
- 7 The *Analects* 6.3. Passage numbering of the *Analects* follows Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003). All translations are our own.
- 8 A classical account of Kongzi's biography is available from the chapter of the "The Great Family of Kongzi" in Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*. For an English translation, see Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).
- 9 See *Analects* 10.8, 7:14, 10.6, 10.13, and other related verses.
- 10 All these vocabulary originally derive from the *Appended Texts of the Classic of Change* 易經 繫辭, such as "what lies beyond shape is called Dao, and what lies within shape is called a utensil-like thing" (Wang Bi 王弼, Han Kangbo 韓康伯, and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Commentaries on Thirteen Classics: the Rectified Meaning of Zhou Yi* 十三經注疏 周易 正義, [Beijing: Beijing Da Xue Chu Ban She, 1999], 292). We will have a more detailed analysis of this text below.
- 11 *Analects* 11.26.
- 12 About the order of seniority among these four students, please see Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Collected Commentaries on the Analects* 論語集釋 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1990), 797.
- 13 See *Analects* 13.21.
- 14 Zhu Xi 四書章句集注, in *Complete Works of Master Zhu* 朱子全書, vol. 6 (Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 2002), 165.
- 15 An example of this reading can be found at Zhang Lüxiang 張履祥 (1611–1674 CE), *A Memorandum* 備忘錄, which is quoted by Cheng, *Collected Commentaries*, 816.
- 16 Compare Wing-Tsit Chan, trans., "The Great Learning," in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 87.

- 17 See Stephen C. Angle, "Tian (天) as Cosmos in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2018): 169–85.
- 18 Compare Chan, trans., "Centrality and Commonality," in *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 100.
- 19 As the *Appended Texts* of the *Classic of Change* says, "Birth and Birth, this is called change," in Wang, Han, and Kong, *Commentaries on Thirteen Classics*, 271.
- 20 Zhu Xi, *Complete Works*, 6:165.
- 21 The use of "spiritual" in the context of Zeng Dian's joy is not premised upon any ontological conception about the existence of spirits or ghosts. Rather, it refers broadly and vaguely to the pervading cosmic context in which Zeng Dian's joy is ultimately rooted.
- 22 Zhu Xi, *Complete Works*, 16:2070.
- 23 A discussion of this statement will be detailed in the following.
- 24 *Analects* 15.29.
- 25 Wang, Han, and Kong, *Commentaries on Thirteen Classics*, 316.
- 26 Mengzi 4B:28. Shun 舜 was an ancient legendary sage-king before the time of Kongzi and Mengzi.
- 27 Zhang Zai, *Collected Works of Zhang Zai* 張載集 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 2008), 21.
- 28 Zhang, *Collected Works*, 189. "Heaven and earth" here refer to the nature of the nonhuman world.
- 29 Wang Yangming, *Complete Works of Wang Shouren* 王守仁全集 (Shanghai: Shang Hai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 2006), 112.
- 30 Chan, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 97.
- 31 Chan, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 101.
- 32 Historians sometimes use categories like "Cheng-Zhu school of Pattern (理學)" and the "Lu-Wang school of heartmind (心學)" to refer to these different approaches, but such reductionist categories are historically and conceptually misleading; see Stephen C. Angle and Justin Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity, 2017), ch. 1.
- 33 Cheng and Cheng, *Works of Cheng Brothers*, 188.

- 34 Wang Longxi, *A Complete Work of Master Wang Longxi* 王龍溪先生全集, Kuai Ji Mo Shi 會稽莫氏: 道光2年 (1822), vol. 17, 卷十七, available online at <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&res=88271>. For Wang Longxi, what one needs to be aware of in *wu* and in one's good knowing are the same. Therefore, we translate *wu* as "awareness" in this context. Alternative translations of *wu* include "awakening" or "enlightenment."
- 35 See Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, ch. 7 for more details and references.
- 36 About the use of *jingjie* in the intellectual history of Chinese thought, as well as its cases in Song through Ming Ruism, please see Fu Changzhen 付长珍, *The Discourse of Jingjie in Song Ruism* 宋儒境界论 (Shanghai: Shanghai San Lian Shu Dian, 2008), 24–32.
- 37 Chan, "Centrality and Commonality," 110.