

Zhu Xi's World-Picture and the Mythistory of "Imperial Confucianism"

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The setting could not be more appropriate for convening an international scholarly conference dedicated to consideration of the question, "Confucianism for the 21st Century?" As well, the timing of our convocation is particularly condign – the centenary of the founding of one of Germany's first chairs in Sinology.¹ The university chair in East Asian Languages and Cultures at Hamburg's Institute of Colonial Affairs ("Kolonialinstitut"), was first held by the distinguished diplomat and scholar Otto Franke (1863–1946), renowned for his multi-volume history of the Chinese state, *Geschichte des Chinesischen Reiches*.²

There were several Sinological works completed in the early years at the Kolonialinstitut that are suitable to the work we undertake here in our reflections on ancient, imperial, and modern Confucianism. For example, if we consider Otto Franke's "Studies in the History of Confucian Dogma and the Chinese State Religion: The Problem of the *Chunqiu* and Dong Zhongshu's *Chunqiu fanlu*,"³ now almost 90 years old, our current work on the subject of Confucianisms falls directly in line.⁴ Franke's title for his study of the *Chunqiu* and his curious assessment of the provenance of the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 certified the singular status of Confucianism and

1 I am grateful for this opportunity to join a host of talented scholars to mark the beginning of the University of Hamburg's second century of distinguished achievement in Chinese studies. In the preparation of this essay I have benefited from the comments and criticism of Roger Ames, Susan Blum, Hans van Ess, Thomas Fröhlich, Sophia Katz, Michael Lackner, Hoyt Tillman, Song Xiaokun, Tu Wei-ming, and Kai Vogelsang. I wish also to thank Professor Vogelsang, as well as the graduate students and staff of the University of Hamburg's Asien-Afrika Institut for the vision and labor essential to the convening of a most successful international conference.

2 For a candid, perceptive and poignant intellectual profile of Professor Franke, see Brooks 2010. The Hamburg chair was the third academic chair in Sinology founded in Europe, coming less than a century after the founding of the very first university chairs in history (1810 at the University of Berlin and 1812 at the Sorbonne). On the institutional emergence of the discipline of history and university chairs, see White 1973, 135–142.

3 Franke 1920.

4 In this account of modern German Sinology I have benefited from several sources: Brooks 2010, Honey 2000, as well as the history of modern European Sinology I learned at the hands of my first graduate instructor, George C. Hatch, Jr., who studied under Wolfgang Franke and Karl Wittfogel at the University of Washington in the 1960s.

statecraft, a Confucianism that in 1920 was objectively speaking a mere subject of history, rather than a way of life (as it may once have been). Today, the Chinese *Staatsreligion* is still an historical subject, but it has also become a contemporary force of intellectual seriousness and cultural renewal, encouraged in certain clever ways by the government and inspirationally advanced by academics, businesspeople, and citizens. Confucianism is not dead.⁵ Now, as in Franke's day, there are *ru* 儒, *rujia* 儒家, *rujiao* 儒教, *ruxue* 儒學, but, as it is said in the United States, this is not your father's "Confucianism." This nominal similarity, however, cannot represent the rivalrous pluralism of the advocates of today's *ru* revival, many of whom have little in common beyond the term *ru*.⁶ To invert the familiar phrasing of Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr (1808–1890): *plus c'est la même chose, plus ça change*.

5 In a contemporary campaign to rouse its citizens to reconcile the goals of Chinese socialism with capitalist modernization, the Communist Party at times has called on the figure of Kongzi 孔子 (and *ruxue*, 儒學) to inspire a new Chinese cultural nationalism as of the kind conveyed in Hu Jintao's (胡锦涛) promulgation of a 和谐社会, *hexie shehui* "harmonious society." On January 12, 2011, the government officially installed a thirty-one foot bronze statue of Kongzi on the east side of Tiananmen Square at the northern entrance to the National Museum offering monumental evidence of its identification of the sage with the CCP's public diplomacy brand. Since its publication in 2006 one of the country's most popular books (now available in an English translation) is Yu Dan's 于丹 *Lunyu xinde* 论语心得, a rereading of the *Analects* and a compendium of the virtues and moral aphorisms, in the style of William Bennett's *Book of Virtues*. Kongzi/ Confucius is all the rage with a prominently promoted government-sanctioned biopic on Kongzi (starring the international celebrity Chow Yun-fat 周潤發) rushed into wider domestic release in January of 2010 so that it might compete successfully with the US blockbuster "Avatar," which opened to immense crowds in Shanghai and Beijing. In the eyes of some scholars at research institutes and universities, and to a media-savvy public, Confucianism represents the continuity of a grand civilization and the foundation for a future, post-modern China. On this reiteration of *ruxue* as the essential civilizing force of China, see Chen 1988. The cultural nationalism of the Confucian revival, at least in the hands of Chen Lai *et al.*, resembles the *Kongjiao* 孔教 ("Confucianity") enthusiasms of a century ago, when Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) recommended an international plan of indoctrination based on a new, "refunctioned" educational program centered on Kongzi and the protection of the emperor. The surface similarity is deceptive, for today's *xinruxue* is not, like *Kongjiao*, a self-conscious adaptation of the missionary ethos of Christianity, nor is it so politically compromised. Instead, it is made of several different intellectual movements, all of which are nicely laid out in Makeham 2008. Yet, in both cases a politics of cultural nationalism inspired a problematic re-imagining of the past that disestablished the very authority of claims made by the early 20th and early 21st century advocates of Confucian revival. See Jensen 2005.

6 Billioud 2007. See also Billioud's article in this volume.

The interrogative nature of the conference title, "Confucianism for the 21st Century?", seems to convey doubt about the prospects for a New Confucianism and yet as we all know Confucianism, or rather *ruxue* 儒學 (and *xinruxue* 新儒學), is very much alive in the 21st century among an array of scholars in China and Taiwan, not to mention the United States and Europe. Moreover, with the recent publication of John Makeham's allusive *Lost Soul: "Confucianism" in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse*, it is obvious that in the first decade of this century *ruxue* is the research locus of multiple energetic investigations. So, I again wonder about the interrogative character of theme. Yet, I realize in asking the question that it undoubtedly reflects a longer, and cautious, perspective on the intellectual history and the institutional place of *ruxue* along with Kongzi, in twentieth-century history, a history stretching from 1895 to 1919, to 1949, to 1966, to 1973 up to the present where *ruxue* has given way to multiple manifestations of *xinruxue*.

Arguably, a Confucianism put forward with good faith at any time after China's twentieth-century revolutions must be "new" and I should add that the "Confucian" revival (*ruxue fuxing* 儒學復興) of the last twenty years and especially this conference's theme convey a sense of hope that Confucianism will continue to flourish.⁷ We return to the question of our theme: will this *ruxue* endure? That may depend less on politics than one might think, as it is unlikely that the government will subsequently inaugurate a national campaign to criticize Kongzi and Lin Biao 林彪 (1907–1971) or initiate a crackdown on scholars working at the Zhonghua Kongzi Yanjiusuo 中華孔子研究所 (China Confucius Research Institute) for their ideological transgression. Instead, the threat to the flourishing of a 21st century Confucianism may have more to do with the presumption of a special relationship of near identity between *ruxue* and Chinese culture itself. One can get a glimpse of this singular identity of politics and culture from a comment by Tu Wei-ming 杜維明 on the responsibility of public intellectuals in the contemporary moment of Confucianism's spectacular reinvention:

The revitalization of the Chinese people is not only contained within the political and economic planes, or strictly confined to cultural news. Even more concretely speaking, the revitalization of the people should at root be the revitalization of the people's culture. The mainstream, core element in the revitalization of the people's

7 Makeham 2008, 139–148. While providing an encyclopedic accounting of the variety of *ruxue* studies today, Makeham indicates that these works lack creativity as philosophy largely because of a dearth of cross-tradition openness to other philosophic traditions. This weakness would appear to be fatal to any long-range intention to sustain the vitality of the current *ruxue* debates. However, as Billioud and Thoraval have shown in their fieldwork, the popularity of the non-academic dimensions of contemporary *ru* studies – informal study groups, *Lunyu* 論語 reading seminars, ritualist sects – ensures such flourishing. See Billioud and Thoraval 2007.

culture is the revitalization of Confucian thought and the revitalization of Confucian culture. If Confucian thought does not have a new future, if it is not creatively transformed, then the Chinese people and their culture will also have no future, no new development. In other words, the fate of Confucian thought is also the future destiny of the people, whether flourishing or failing, ephemeral or eternal, they are the same.⁸

One might cavil with the presumptions behind this bold assertion, yet Tu conveys here what many contemporary *ruxue* scholars believe. Indeed, it is just such a declaration of culture/nation heteronomy in *ru* that offers evidence of the defining mythistory narrative of imperial Confucianism. This is true insofar as it reflects a practiced habit of mind that compresses all of China's historic intellectual pluralism into a single, key symbol, *ruxue*. Confucianism in this narrative is a synecdoche figuratively containing Chinese values and cultural identity while also serving as its dominant philosophical tradition.⁹

Certainly, such metaphorical equivalence could not be easily made in the twelfth century when the figure credited with the “completion (*ji dacheng* 集大成) of Neo-Confucianism,”¹⁰ Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), advanced a singular conception of the “legacy of the *dao*” (*daotong* 道統) that would become the ideological skeleton

8 Tu Wei-ming 2002, esp. 28, lines 1 through 4: 中华民族的复兴，不只囿于政治，经济层面，还应包含文化信息。更具本地说，民族复兴本质上应该是民族文化的复兴。民族文化的复兴，其主要的潮流，根本的成分是儒家思想的复兴，儒家文化的复兴，假如儒家思想没有新的前途没有创造性的转化，则中华民族计其民族文化也就不会有新的前途，新的发展。换言之，儒家思想的命运是与民族的前途命运以及盛衰消长统一的。For a different translation of this passage with an emphasis on the nation, see Makeham 2008, 15. Tu's use of *Zhonghua minzu* (“Chinese people”) is instructive here, conveying a vision of a broad cultural horizon extending beyond China proper to include all *huaqiao* 華僑 or *huayi* 華裔 “overseas Chinese.” In choosing this phrasing, he avoids a strict nationalist definition of Chineseness and reinvents the mythistory of the singular relation of *ru* and the Chinese imperium.

9 The persistence of the unitary cultural metaphor of Confucianism is something that Sinologists have presumed for more than a century, and this following more than three centuries of such presumption that began with the publication of the *Confucius sinarum philosophus* (Confucius, Philosopher of the Chinese) in 1687. Moreover, this interval of concern or rather engagement with this entity was from the beginning implicated in specific relations of power marked by the extraterritorial presence of Europeans on Chinese soil. Jensen 1997, 137–147.

10 Chan 1973. This term “Neo-Confucianism,” once popular among scholars of intellectual history as a meaningful descriptive term, no longer enjoys such prominence. Instead, reflecting awareness of the plurality of the *ru* tradition and the non-representational quality of “Neo-Confucianism,” scholars have employed Romanized terms such as *daoxue* 道學, *lixue* 理學, *xinxue* 心學 and of course, *ruxue* in place of the generic misapprehension.

of the imperial ritual body of Confucianism. It is this unique complex of culture, nation, and *ruxue* unintentionally begun by Zhu and cleverly reinterpreted by Tu that provides a point of embarkation for the intellectual adventure I propose to undertake. The central arguments of the essay will develop in several aspects:

- 1) an explanation of the term mythistory and its suitability in describing the conventional accounts of Confucianism;
- 2) a consideration of the concept "imperial Confucianism";
- 3) the world and "world-picture" of Zhu Xi;
- 4) the conjunction of philosophy and folkways in Zhu Xi's legacy of the *dao*;
- 5) *Qi* and the cosmogony of legacy of the *dao*; and
- 6) a concluding reflection that attempts to account for the consequences for Chinese intellectual history of its misapprehension of the mythistory of imperial Confucianism.

Each of these episodes of the presentation are intended as objects of montage, their juxtaposition organized visually, without the guidance of chronology so much as by the interest in disclosing the difficulties of our inherited representations of the Confucian tradition alongside a reappraisal of the mythistory of contemporary *ruxue* juxtaposed with that of the founders of *daoxue*.

1 Mythistory: An Explanation

A myth is a story that is sacred to and shared by a group of people who find their most important meanings in it; it is a story believed to have been composed in the past about an event in the past, or more rarely, in the future, an event that continues to have meaning in the present because it is remembered.

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The preceding overture was scored on a theme of Confucianism's symbolic summary of Chineseness – arguably the most common reductive nomination in reference to China, because all things traditional and all things imperial are usually identified by the broader public as "Confucian." This is strictly a category mistake, for these entities are not so reducible and/or equivalent. As Edward Davis has argued, the story of a dominant state ideology of imperial Confucianism is the result of "an abiding essentialist, and largely nonrational conviction that Chinese civilization and culture are synonymous with something called 'Confucianism'."¹¹ Yet, for the purposes of this essay I propose that this synecdochal reduction stand as an example of a myth that has passed into history – so, mythistory.¹² My use of mythistory is nei-

¹¹ Davis 2001, 5.

¹² An example of mythistory to which we might immediately relate is the concept of "imagined community" employed by Benedict Anderson (2006) in accounting for the

ther flippant nor pejorative. Moreover, it does not mean that I do not believe in the possibility of historical fact. What it *does* mean is that a great deal of what we have taken as history, especially with Confucianism as foundational to the imperial state or uniquely symbolic of Chinese culture, is more akin to myth or story. Admitting this does not make “imperial Confucianism” meaningless, only meaningful in a manner very different than has been customary.

And, as I will assert below, the indecipherability of myth and history evident in the synonymy of imperial Confucianism may be observed in a twelfth-century Chinese mythistorical narrative from which was drawn the charter of the *daoxue* fellowship.¹³ It would serve us well as interpreters of mythistory to be mindful of this similarity for, according to David Carr: “historical narrative is an extension by other means, and to some extent with different attitudes, of historical existence itself. To tell the story of a community is simply to continue, at a somewhat more reflective and usually more retrospective level the story-telling process through which the community constitutes itself and its actions.”¹⁴

From the perspective of storytelling the idea of a covalent relation of myth and history is not new, having been a special concern of Herodotus (ca. 484–425 BCE) and Thucydides (ca. 460–395), not to mention Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86), but my use of mythistory here owes much to William McNeil, who in writing in response to the question “what is truth” became prominently associated with this hybrid term:

Still, what seems wise and true to me seems irrelevant obfuscation to others. Only time can settle the issue, presumably by outmoding my ideas and my critics’ as well. Unalterable and eternal Truth remains like the Kingdom of Heaven, an eschatological hope. Mythistory is what we actually have – a useful instrument for piloting human groups in their encounters with one another and with the natural environment. To be a truth-seeking mythographer is therefore a high and serious calling, for what a group of people knows and believes about the past channels expectations and

ideological power of nationalism. In the Chinese case, an esteemed mythistorical exemplar is Qinshi huangdi’s persecution of *ru* as told in the fabulist tales of the “burning of the books and the burial of the scholars” in the “Qinshihuang benji” 秦始皇本紀 of the *Shiji* 史記.

13 The charter is meant as a foundational narrative like a charter myth such as the Zhou 周 *tianming* 天命 (“command of the ascendant”) narrative. Here the charter refers specifically to the “Counsels of Yu,” which Zhu Xi took as the core message contained within the mysteries of the *Zhongyong* 中庸. Furthermore he claimed (see below) this was the definitive inheritance of the lineage of such antique heroes as the *shengwang* 聖王 Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 that was saved from perdition by the *daoxue* fellowship. “Da Yu mo,” 大禹謨, in *Shangshu zhengyi*, 53.2.

14 Carr 1986, 177.

affects the decisions on which their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor all depend.¹⁵

The allusion in the final line to the Declaration of Independence makes explicit a belief, as Joseph Mali puts it, that "the explanation of human actions in history must always include...an attempt to recover and interpret the subjective meanings of these actions from the point of view of the agents performing them, even if, and especially when, these meanings are immemorial."¹⁶

In my efforts to get at the subjective impulses of mythistorical agency, I have found a common sentiment of loss. Indeed, reading selected texts of Kongzi, Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), Cheng Yichuan 程頤川 (1033–1107), Zhu Xi, and Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777) the sense of loss or regret is prominent.¹⁷ The interest in understanding that loss and the response of the afflicted has made me especially aware of the context beyond the texts through which we have conventionally narrated these lives. The loss of family members, loss of heritage, forced refuge, alienation from the heroes of antiquity, the failure of social norms and literary practice to transmit classical values, the loss of the *zhongyuan* 中原 at the hands of conquerors,¹⁸ even the visceral distaste for supersession of ancient prose (*guwen* 古文)¹⁹ by *pianwen* 駢文 were strongly held beliefs and commonly conveyed in the language of jeremiad or lamentation. Each of these figures generated responses to this sorrowful recession – their historical predicament – and sought redemption for themselves in a mythis-

15 McNeill 1986, 8–10.

16 Mali 2003, 23. Here immemorial means presumptive, not proven, and recalls that mythistory's cogency is more a product of repetition than authenticity or "truth" of a claim.

17 *Lunyu zhengyi*, 129. "A *gu* not used as a *gu*. Alas, the *gu*!" A tone of lamentation courses through a number of the tributaries of the river that is the *Lunyu*: Kongzi stands a prophet without honor in his own country, who no one, save Yan Hui 顏回, can understand. He is an itinerant persuader – liminal – on the outside looking in at the ministers and rulers who govern their kingdoms.

18 This was a theme common to scholarly concern in the Southern Song, the intensity of which made it a magnificent obsession with many *shidafu* 士大夫 who demanded *huifu* 恢復 "recovery of the territories." Their position was especially well articulated by Chen Liang (1143–1194), when he complained in an 1178 memorial to the throne: "Is it at all conceivable that such a country could be violated by the perverse *qi* 氣 of the barbarians? Unfortunately, it has now been so violated; violated to the degree that we have taken the Central Kingdom and civilization and lodged them in this remote peripheral place..." See Tillman 1982, 173.

19 The literary reform movement of the Northern Song, with its heroic elevation of the *guwen* prose essays of Han Yu was ideologically organized as just such a jeremiad against the popularity of *pianwen* or mutant style, uncondusive to the transmission of moral learning. Han Yu 韓愈, "Yuan dao" 原道, in Gu and Xu 1992. See also Hatch, 1972, 133–156.

tory of the past, “delivering their bodies unto ink and brush, and materializing their thoughts in tablets and collections.”²⁰ This corporeal quality of desire’s embeddedness in the text – an instance of mythistory – will be a principal concern when we turn to Zhu Xi, but this moment must follow from further consideration of imperial Confucianism and its legendary association with the voluminous classicism of Zhu.

2 Imperial Confucianism: A Mythistory

For a suitable frame of reference for the modern understanding of the mythistorical “imperial Confucianism,” one can call on James Legge’s lectures on this very topic in the spring of 1877. In the published text Legge placed special emphasis on the Qing dynasty promulgation of the Sacred Edict (*Shengyu* 聖諭): “Sixteen Maxims” (*shiliu yu* 十六語) by the Supreme Lord Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722) in 1670.²¹ Coming less than two decades after the government’s educational edict requiring exclusive reliance on the classical commentaries of Zhu Xi, the *Shengyu* was a political wager on the prospects of forging ideological uniformity among a diverse and embittered citizenry. At the same time, Kangxi confessed an abiding personal pleasure in reading Zhu Xi’s many works and in an edict of 1712 offered an account as good as any of the central place of Zhu in the mythistory of imperial Confucianism:

Only the Song *ru*, Master Zhu, in all the books he wrote or compiled which comment on the multitude of the Classics and expound the *dao* and pattern, is always clear and distinct. [...] In my opinion, of those who advanced culture after Kongzi and Mengzi, the merits of Master Zhu are the most far-reaching.²²

The *Shengyu* maxims were promoted with even greater force under the Yongzheng 雍正 Supreme Lord (r. 1723–1735), who in 1724 published a 10,000-graph amplification (*guangxun* 廣訊) of Kangxi’s Sacred Edict, in which he relied heavily, like his father, Kangxi, upon the authority of Zhu Xi in amplifying the significance of such original maxims as “6. Promote education to improve the habits of scholars” and

20 Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), *Dianlun. Lunwen* 典論—論文 (*Authoritative Discourses: On Writing*), quoted in Connery 1996, 169. Dramatic as the wording is here, it captures the real adversity for poets under duress of persecution while echoing the common refrain of lamentation.

21 Legge 1878.

22 *Da Qing lichao shilu*, Shengzu 249, 7v–8r. As further evidence of the critical role of the commentaries of Zhu Xi on the learning of imperial rulers, in this case that of Zhu Yijun 朱翊鈞 (Ming Shenzong 明神宗, r. 1572–1620, Wanli 萬曆 Supreme Lord) as taught by Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582), see Huang 1981, 75–102.

"7. Extirpate heresy to honor orthodoxy."²³ In his commentary on the latter, Yongzheng inveighs against Buddhism as heterodox and cites the expected authority in rendering dismissive judgment, "Therefore Master Zhu of the Song dynasty said, 'Buddhism does not concern itself with anything within the four quadrates of the cosmos, other than the heart.'"²⁴

By the time of the *guangxun* the Qing government had already constructed a grand architecture of ideological persuasion known as the *xiangyue* 鄉約 or village covenant.²⁵ Thus, the *Shengyu* and the *Shengyu guangxun* became the fundamental texts of an imperially sponsored program of public lectures and exhortation that was used with varying efficacy by imperial authorities to secure control over the rural populace. In a manner that complemented the periodicity of popular temple rites, meetings were held at the village *jiangyue suo* 講約所 (a public meeting site required by imperial fiat) on the first and fifteenth of every month at which the actions of local villagers – both meritorious and malevolent – were recognized. The Covenant Preceptor (*yuezheng* 約政) and his assistants (appointed by the government but recommended by locals) would read one of the Sixteen Maxims aloud and elaborate upon its significance for the assembled inculcating the moral precepts and economic principles of *ru* orthodoxy.²⁶ From the eighteenth-century vantage of the Forbidden City, Zhu Xi's clarity of doctrine was unsurpassed, his commentaries the moral mortar binding the stones of the imperium and the minds of its people. The convergence of popular exposition of imperial doctrine and a bureaucratic selection

23 Wang Youpu 王又樸 (1681–1760), ed., *Shengyu guangxun zhijie* 聖諭廣訊志節, in Baller 1924, 62, 72.

24 Baller 1924, 75. Here Yongzheng is not quoting any passage with which I am familiar; however, his caustic comment only slightly exaggerates Zhu Xi's actual criticism of Buddhist teaching as solipsistic and unengaged with the somatic resonance of self and world. For critical comments consonant with Yongzheng's paraphrase, see Zhu Xi, "Shishi lun" 釋氏論, in *Zhuzi wenji, bieji* 別集 8.1934.2–1936.1.

25 This term enjoyed several centuries of use before its specific refashioning by the Qing. *Xiangyue* was a local model for self-government, economic autarchy and moral education first conceived by Lu Dajun 呂大鈞 (1031–1082) and published in 1077 as *Lüshi xiangyue* 呂氏鄉約. Zhu Xi took a particular interest in this model and from it conceived of a more hierarchically structured alternative that he proposed in his "additions and deletions" on the original work, *Zengsun Lüshi xiangyue* 增損呂氏鄉約. See *Zhuzi wenji* 7.1376.1–1379.2.

26 Hsiao 1967, 184–194. The Qing imperial conception of the village covenant, including the mechanisms for appointment of its officials and the timing of lectures and discussion, was closely modeled on Zhu Xi's directives set out in *Zengsun Lüshi xiangyue*. However, in practice, the nineteenth-century *xiangyue* program resembled more the social control and ideological conformity enterprise of a colonial power, like the French in Indochina. On this internal colonialism of the Qing, see Lam 2011.

system based on mastery of Zhu's recensions and commentaries on the Five Classics and the Four Books makes clear why Legge took this moment as the symbol of an imperial Confucianism.

Another perspective on Confucianism, this from a century ago, draws us closer to the manifold complex of religion, society, and the imperial state (in effect, Franke's *Staatsreligion*) articulating, as it does, the conventional state civil religion named by the celebrated symbol:

Confucianism is a religion in a double sense. Confucius stood throughout on the platform of the ancient national religion of China and shared most of the beliefs of the countrymen of that age. His entire moral system has its roots in the most essential factor of this religion, ancestor worship; in the absolute faith in an almighty and supreme ruler, the Deity of Heaven; and in the unchangeable will of destiny. He sanctioned and adopted the whole system of ancient rites including the complicated ceremonial of burial and mourning. All this is religion. It is a religion, the fruit and final logical consequence of which is moral instruction, and which terminates in the exposition of the principles of good government and the sane laws of the family, not in the sense of an abstract civil law, but always imbued with a deep religious character.²⁷

With his version of the story Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) makes evident the very connections of nation, culture, and *ru* adumbrated above by Tu Wei-ming, stressing the special proportion of Confucianism's secular and religious aspects along with the moral enfranchisement of the citizenry. In Laufer's words one can discern an admiration for this balance of sacred and profane, appreciation reminiscent of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and the first Jesuit missionaries, who as well admired the moral power of the civil religion practiced in the name of "Confutio" or "Confutius," even as they overlooked the spectacle of plural cultures, faiths, and languages comprising the seventeenth-century empire. And, in this last respect I should note that Ricci's analysis of Chinese language in the *Storia* (the official history of the entrance of the mission into China) reinforced the conceptual resolution by later European lay scholars of the vectors of a singular state and its manifold cultures:

It happens in China that even in the same province there is one local language, and often more than one, which is not reciprocally understood; however, with a shared script and written texts there is a basis for communication. Among these various dialects there is one called *guanhua* [官話] that is to say the administrative vernacular, because it is normally used in courts and tribunals, and is very easily learned throughout the different provinces merely as a result of common use.²⁸

27 Laufer 1912, 6.

28 D'Elia 1942, 37–38: "E dentro della stessa Cina, che in ogni provincia vi è una lingua propria e molte volte più di una, non intesa dalle altre; e con tutto con lettera e libri tutto è

These varied testimonies are but different routes along the same symbolic water, water whose course narrows rather than expands as it flows, plural cultures and religions dissolving in the current. From this water, we must draw ourselves in order to approach the lived experience of the figure on whom we have, like Kangxi and so many numberless others under his dynasty's long tutelage, relied for transit to the works of hallowed antiquity: Zhu Xi. *Plus c'est la même chose, plus ça change.*

3 Getting at the World of Zhu Xi

Born in 1130, three years after the defeat of the Song armies by the Jurchens and the humiliating retreat of the ruling Zhao clan to Lin'an 臨安 (*xingzai* 行在, "the temporary resting place of the imperial carriage"), Zhu Xi grew into a lifeworld of tumult. We are familiar with the narrative of transformation that preceded and exacerbated it, for this, too, is part – in fact a very critical part – of our twentieth-century mythistory of the Song period. The economic, political, and social events of eleventh- and twelfth-century China accelerated a seismic shift in the landscape of its traditional society – rapid commercialization of the economy, greatly increased productivity of arable land, the decline of a millennially persistent northern aristocracy and its replacement by a burgeoning class of new bureaucrats from the south, a widespread and practicably rational system of civil service selection, significant population growth and urbanization, and a rise in literacy consonant with a technical, cultural revolution in the organization and dissemination of knowledge.²⁹ In this final respect, the turmoil of the twelfth century brought a marked expansion of the number of books, as handwritten manuscript works were challenged by the growth in printed texts of every sort, multiply reproduced through more efficient and productive xylography.³⁰

una medesima cosa. Con tutta questa varietà di lingue, ve ne è una che chiamano *cuonboa* [官話], che vuol dire lingua forense, di che si usa nelle audientie e tribunali, la quale si impara molto facilmente in ogni provincia con il solo uso; e così sino alli putti e le donne sanno tanto di questa che possono trattare con ogni persona di altra provincia."

29 Two prominent examples of this modernist interpretive default of cultural crisis and commercial revolution are found in Ebrey and Gregory 1993, 3–6, and Haeger 1975, 1–12. For the economic demographic portrait, see Ma 1971, 106–164. The best summary of the intellectual dynamics and challenges of the *daoxue* 道學 and *lixue* 理學 rise to national prominence amidst this convulsion, see Tillman 1992, 1–18.

30 To offer an impression of the dramatic character of the medieval changes in book production, Susan Cherniack notes that the "average size of major private libraries tripled and quadrupled." See Cherniack 1994, 56. However, it is important not to exaggerate the momentousness of the Southern Song in the expansion of xylographic imprints at the expense of manuscript copies, which still outnumbered printed versions. For a more

So the conventional portrait goes, but there are other details just as deserving of notice in the account. These have only recently acquired the prominence they deserve in the mythistory of the middle period. The Song was, as well, a period of rivalrously diverse doctrinal formulation more than doctrinal completion, one that witnessed efforts within each of the more prominent religious traditions to forge an orthodox discourse and practice; the most prominent of these by dint of modern scholarly production was “Neo-Confucianism.”³¹ Such efforts could only be under way in an era where cultural pluralism and social dislocation were explicit, so pronounced that social divisions were in many places indistinct. Richard von Glahn has provided a memorable depiction of the diverse, frenetic movements of this Song religious landscape:

The Song period witnessed momentous changes in religious culture...Yet the vernacularization of ritual and communication with the divine, in addition to the development of new liturgical practices for laity in both Buddhism and Daoism, gave ordinary people greater access to the gods. Elaborate hierarchies of gods and cults were constructed in response to changes in social life and religious needs, and these cults in turn transformed the religious landscape, redefining ritual time (festival) and space (temple). The diffusion of religious lore accelerated through the spread of the printed word and image, while the greater mobility of society was echoed by the expanded circulation of cults and worthies.³²

The widening dissemination of lore and literacy moved out along the riverine arteries of the southern empire from Fujian and Zhejiang, spread as well by scholars like Zhu Xi who created a novel network of cult and pilgrimage centered on inspired local officials, early exemplars of *daoxue*, and the ancient founders of the *ru* tradition.

conservative view of the timing of imperial China’s “revolution in print capitalism,” see McDermott 2005, esp. 56–67. See also Twitchett 1983, 30–79.

- 31 In his recent survey Peter Bol (2008, 78–79) illustrates the obvious significance of the Song era *lixue* and *daoxue* fellowships while assimilating their intellectual pluralism into doctrinal unity: “‘Neo-Confucian’ refers to people who identified themselves as participants in intellectual streams that emerged from the philosophical teachings of the eleventh-century brothers Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao; to the doctrines on human morality, human nature, and the cosmos developed from that foundation; and to the social activities that linked adherents of these views together and allowed them to put their ideas into practice. ‘Neo-Confucianism’ is a modern, foreign term. [...] The English term also recognizes that its proponents thought of themselves as *Ru*, a term commonly translated as ‘Confucians,’ and as possessing the true understanding of the teachings of Confucius, while allowing us to view them as ‘new’ and different in important ways.”

32 Glahn 2004, 179.

Song social mobility, especially marked among the expanding ranks of a professional, educated elite (*shidafu*) bent on government service, was ensured through examination success and status-strategic genealogies (*shixi* 世系). Insofar as Song elites sometimes fashioned descent claims from prominent figures to whom they may not have been related, time and space were also reconfigured by the creative use of the genealogical register of real and invented agnatic relations. Genealogies, whether invented or "real," were not confined to the inner chambers of the home, but were public documents of great import in securing a properly prestigious alliance with families of rank. The genealogical register functioned as an organizational technology, a tool of lineage formation common in this era, especially after the conquest of the north.³³ Because of the immediacy of their appeal and the manner in which their invocation marked inclusive space, the images of the family and clan exerted a compelling explanatory power. Lines of descent, names inscribed on tablets, offerings placed in the ancestral hall or temple, personating the dead³⁴ to hear their voices: these were the markers of identity, the immediate and sensuous texture of a community of visible and invisible bound in rite, intercession, prayer, and sacrifice: a memorial register of loss intimately joined to the aspiration for gain.

The signal developments of economy, politics, religion, and society are what made the Southern Song, particularly the region of the southeast, where so many fled following the downfall of the dynasty, very distinct. Because Zhu Xi did not enjoy a career at court but lived much of his life in rural Fujian serving out meager temple sinecures,³⁵ he made his home in this very different locale, and imbibed the complex social and religious character of its culture. The consequences of these diverse local influences for the particular development of his philosophical mind would prove significant as we will learn below.³⁶

33 The popularity of these documents complemented the steady growth of printed works. On the use of *shixi* as an organizational technology, see Fried 1970, 11–36. On Southern Song genealogical practice, see Hymes 1986, esp. 113–123, and also Bossler 1998, 176–213, esp. 204–211, who provides a critical corrective to Hymes's lineage orientation concept.

34 Carr 1985, esp. 15–30.

35 Zhu's career practice was in no way extraordinary in this regard. Some time ago Liu Ts'un-yan observed a pattern of sorts in this respect, noting how a number of prominent *lixue* and *daoxue* figures performed their official duties in Daoist as well as Buddhist temples. See Liu 1984a, esp. 21–39.

36 I am not alluding here to the conventional depiction of Zhu's intellectual development out of an early, youthful dalliance with Daoism and Buddhism as he came under the instruction of Li Tong 李侗 (Yanping 延平, 1093–1163). Instead, I am suggesting that we understand his philosophy as crafted out of his local, very real experience with mantic forces, forces that he believed in and which he would attempt to explain in his grand metaphysical complex of *li* and *qi*. This is a matter of immediate context rather than ideology or persuasion. The common inattention to this thicker physical and psychic com-

And, unlike his avowed master, Kongzi, who putatively stated a predilection to keep spirits at a remove,³⁷ Zhu Xi was keenly aware of their ubiquity – ancestors, inspired forebears, tutelary deities, mountain and water sprites as he discloses here in an exposition for his students: “monsters of the mountains are called *kui* and *wangliang*; the monsters of the water are called *long* and *wangxiang*; and monsters of the earth are called *fenyang*.”³⁸ The folklore surrounding these beasts can be found in texts of the Warring Kingdoms as well as the Han, so Zhu’s acknowledgment of them here is an assertion of fact for his inquiring audience. He held the worldview of his time and it was from its features that he developed the philosophical conception that latter-day interpreters know as “Neo-Confucianism.” Other passages, indeed quite a few others, bring us closer to the sensitivity of his understanding of the spiritual agency of the physical world. Here Zhu “responds” to a student’s inquiry about the activity of *gui* 鬼 and *shen* 神:

Rain, wind, dew, lightning, sun, moon, day and night: all of these are traces of demons and spirits. These are the fair, even, correct, and straight demons and spirits of the bright day. As when it is said if there are howls near a bridge, knocking in the chest, this is what is called the incorrect wicked and obscure; some exist, some do not, some go, some come; some concentrate and some disperse. There are also sayings that in praying to them, there is a response, and in addressing a wish to them, it is granted. All of these sayings about demons and spirits have the same principle (理). The countless events of this world all have this principle; what distinguishes them are the qualities of their being exquisite or coarse, small or large. [He] further said: “Because they have these effects they are called demons and spirits, and [they] are visible.”³⁹

The passage reflects a confident grasp of cause and effect and while one might regard it as quaint in its “superstition” it is best to recognize it as pertaining to a different kind of understanding. Language of this kind is not merely poetic, but fundamentally unlike our own. We are reminded in these instances of the bodily, gestural fact of language and its immediate presence in the physical world of sight, smell, sound

plex of twelfth-century rural life, a consequence of a presumption that “context” refers only to economic, intellectual, political, and social realities, hobbles understanding. See Jensen, “Lost and Found in Tradition: The Mythologies of Confucianism,” ms. ch. 4.

37 *Lunyu zhengyi*, 126. The key passage from Book 6, Chapter 22 reads: 敬鬼神而遠之，可謂知矣。“To respect ghosts and spirits and yet remain distant from them, this may be deemed wisdom.”

38 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.37: 孔子曰：“某聞山之怪曰夔魍魎，水之怪曰龍罔象，土之怪曰羆羊。”

39 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.34–35: 雨風露雷，日月晝夜，此鬼神跡也，此是白日公平正直之鬼神。若所謂有嘯於梁，觸於胸，此則所謂不正邪暗，或有或無，或去或來，或聚或散者。又有所謂禱之而應，祈之而獲，此亦所謂鬼神，同一理也。世間萬事皆此理，但精粗小大之不同爾。又曰：以功用謂之鬼神。即此以見。

even texture.⁴⁰ In light of the far greater volume of Zhu's classical commentary, philosophy, and literature with which we are so familiar, passages of this nature are salient because strange. Yet, similar language is found throughout Zhu Xi's corpus especially in the vernacular reconstructions of the *Zhuzi yulei*, where *juan 3* on *gui* and *shen* is one of the longer ones in the entire collection.

In this instance we can recognize the familiar marks of Zhu's rational dualism in his explanation of the universe's latent moral complex (*li* 理). Yet, at the same time the passage discloses a connectedness with the real world that we can only approximate by identifying it as a "religious" sense. In other instances of his commentary on natural phenomena we might employ the terms "primitive mentality," or "pre-logical thinking" to account for Zhu's sensuous embeddedness:

[His students] were discussing the affair in which the Purple Maiden spirit had been invited to recite some verse and [Zhu Xi] said: "When they invited her to appear in the flesh, a little girl from the household appeared – we don't know what this is. Just as in Quzhou 衢州 there was a man worshipping a certain spirit who simply recorded a list of inquiries on paper and sealed it in an envelope in front of the spirit's temple. After a little time passed, he opened up the sealed list and on the paper he found the answers to his inquiries."⁴¹

In the first instance the context is one of summoning the Purple Maiden to assume bodily form (*zhengshen chujian* 正身出見) and in response the spirit appears as a girl from the household who speaks for the summoned being. In a sentence this is spirit possession, and the standard call and response dynamic joining the visible and invisible worlds. The second event, like the first, is hearsay concerning an instance of spirit writing.

The seriousness with which he approached these matters is evident in the inclusion of a portion of his complete literary collection devoted to prayers and invocations accompanying sacrifice. One finds here prayers for rain, self-admonishment and confession and a number of intercessions in which Zhu summons the dead, usually revered ancient figures, like Kongzi and Mengzi. The language is highly scripted, in agreement with the rhetorical practice of prayer and petition, but what

40 On the animistic properties of the written text, see Abram 1996, 93–135.

41 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.54: 論及請紫姑神吟詩之事曰：亦有請得正身出見，其家小女子見—不知此是何物。且如衢州，有一箇人事一箇神只錄所問事目於紙而封之祠前。少間開封，而紙中自有答語。The disciples seek a philosophical explanation here for stories and legends pertaining to the phenomenon of automatic writing. This is clearly an instance of the inclusion of antecedent *zhiguai* 志怪 material into the "transcripts" of oral conversations, and is reminiscent of the popular *biji* 筆記 genre exemplified by Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1123–1202) *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 wherein the anecdotal, the observed, and the experienced were often wonderfully intermingled.

is intended in these lines is not for the eyes of the living but for the ears of the dead. Virtually all of these inscriptions are identified by Zhu as *gao* 告, a “report,” and in using this term he calls, quite self-consciously, on a divinatory and exorcistic language employed to speak directly to the dead that has been used by Chinese for thousands of years.⁴² One shouts or reports (*gao*) to spirits and ghosts in the delicate interlocution that sustains living and dead, as in this report of 1181 when Zhu Xi held a post as prefect in Nankang and in a period of self-doubt sought direct advice from Kongzi:

“Transcript of a Report to the First Sage on the Offense of Toileting a Student”

I, Xi, am not a worthy man. I have been recently appointed as an official overseeing this county, and thus became responsible for directing school affairs here. However my behavior and ability are so meager and my ministering and teaching cannot be trusted. Of the students under my tutelage there is one [who will remain] nameless who, because of his poor behavior, was deputed to clean the latrines. I (熹) believe that because I have been unable to put the *dao* into practice and have not been able to lead and shape others, matters have come to this. Furthermore, because I did not establish proper regulations from the start, I disciplined [this student] with subjugation. I am reporting to the First Sage and First Teacher to seek direction in rectifying school rules and in employing the punishment of public disgrace to shame the students. [As it is written] “a cane is used to instruct and to punish” and “two canes are effective in bestowing awe”: these are models that the First Sage and First Teacher left to later generations in order that they could administer schools. As we entreat the First Sage, First Teacher from above to draw near, I, Xi, dare place my palms on the ground and bow.⁴³

I suspect that many scholars, noting the scripted honorifics of such reports, chose to take these passages as merely formulaic and thus passed over them. However, there

42 On the appearance of *gao* or “telling ritual” in Dong Zuobin’s 董作賓 Period V inscriptions of the Shang, see Chang 1995, 70–71. On a number of excavated oracle bones from the Shang there is a notation *ergao* “a second report” that is linked to the verification of prognostication performed by the king. Considering that the divination was identified as a “telling ritual” it is reasonable to presume that the notation refers to a second report received from the ancestors to the charge of the living Shang king – an audible confirmation of the ancestors’ receipt of the message.

43 Zhu Xi, “Ping dizi fugao xiansheng wen” 屏弟子負告先聖文 (in: *Zhuzi wenji* 86.1543.1–2): 熹不肖。昨以布衣諸生推擇為此縣吏，而得參聽其學事。而行能寡溥治教不孚。所領弟子負有某某者乃為淫慝之行以瀾有司。熹竊自惟身不行道無以率勵其人使至於此。又不能蚤正刑辟以彈治之則是德刑兩弛而士之不率者終無禁也。是故告于先聖先師請正學則恥以明刑。夫扑作教刑而二物以收其威：固先聖先師學校之政所以遺後世法也。唯先聖先師臨之在上熹敢不拜手稽首。 See also Tillman 2004, 502. These disciplines to encourage proper deportment should be understood as figurative attributions to Kongzi.

is greater reason to look again at the rhetoric of the "termina technica" of the oracular embedded in the ritual everyday of spiritual encounter.⁴⁴

The cult of the dead was active in the homes of Fujianese peasants as well as that of its elites and, as Liao Hsien-huei 廖咸惠 has shown, the Southern Song was marked by heightened concern about ancestors and their influence on the fate of the living.⁴⁵ A modest portion of chapter 90 of the *Zhuzi yulei* contains several reconstructions of energetic conversations between Zhu and his students on matters of spirit possession or the personation of the dead (*shi* 尸), a brief sample of which illustrates its operation and the reasons for its efficacy according to Zhu:

The ancients used a personator (*shi*) when sacrificing to the dead. And, because the descendants carry on the life of their ancestors, the personator shares in the life of the dead person and the ancestor's soul necessarily descends into his descendent, remaining there to relish the sacrifice. Today among the Manyi (barbarians) there are those who still use personators.⁴⁶

The metaphor of genealogy was made from a language of immediacy in order to reconstruct the bloodlines of intellectual affinity in what Zhu termed the *daotong* 道統, the "legacy of the way." The terms *daotong* and *daoxue* 道學 (learning of the way) have brought him equally voluminous amounts of encomium and opprobrium from Chinese literati and from scholars of Chinese thought. In fact, although Zhu's conception of the authoritative handing down of Kongzi's teachings *may* have been appropriated from Buddhism (the affinitive transmission of mind [*chuanxin* 傳心] from patriarch to disciple in Chan),⁴⁷ his definitive statements concerning the transmission of the way were actually construed through the language and natural ecology of the ancestral cult, specifically invoking the force of *qi* as guarantor of the implicit agreement between living and the dead:

Someone asked: "With a person's death I do not know whether or not the ethereal and the terrestrial souls disperse. [Do they?]" [Zhu] said: "They do disperse." Someone asked: "How about the descendants' sacrifice, can this elicit summoning?" [He] said: "In the end the descendants are of the same *qi* 氣 (vital vapor) as the ancestors. So even though the ancestors' vital vapor may have dispersed, their roots exist right here; by fully exercising sincerity and reverence we are able to summon their vital

44 Strickmann 2005, 1–6, 87–97.

45 Liao 2001, 293: "Believing that the inhabitants of the unseen world possessed the power to interfere in the lives of both the living and the dead, and constantly engaging in intimate contact with supernatural beings, the Song elite, like the common people, played a significant role in the development of popular religion."

46 *Zhuzi yulei* 6.2292–2293: 古人用尸，本與死者是一氣，又以生人精神去交感他那精神，是會附著歆享。杜佑說古人質朴，立尸為非禮。今蠻夷中猶有用尸者。

47 This is the argument of Thomas Wilson (1995, 77–91).

vapor so that it coalesces right here. It's the same with water and waves: the later water is not the earlier water, the later waves are not the earlier waves; and yet all of it is just the same water and waves. The relationship between the vital vapor of descendants and that of ancestors is just like this. The ancestors' vital vapor may promptly disperse of itself, yet their root exists right here; the fact is that we are able to induce their vital vapor into coalescing right here.⁴⁸

By acting to “familiarize,” as it were, the legacy of the way, Zhu tried to overcome the texts themselves, thus allegorizing a living link with the dead heroes of antiquity, something further reinforced by his founding of the Cangzhou Lodge of Wondrous Remembrance (*Cangzhou jingshe* 滄州精舍) near the site of his mother's tomb.⁴⁹

In this context, some may consider Zhu's pronouncement of *daotong* as a strategic response to the dramatic insinuation of Buddhism into daily rites, a response that brilliantly forged an association between his fledgling fraternity of *daoxue* and that mythology of the *sandai* 三代 so prominently a part of received wisdom. While others might insist that the *daotong* conception provided a mechanism for adjudicating, once and for all, the disputes between different groups of *daoxue* partisans. This makes some sense but I suspect that the mythistorical invention was more likely a creative counter to the local networks of patronage organized around ecstatic rites of summoning for release of family dead from the maleficent grasp of demons of the underworld.⁵⁰ It may also have been the troubling conjunction of metropolitan intrigue and the popularity of “heterodox” doctrines that inspired Zhu to mark the founding of the Cangzhou jingshe on the thirteenth day of the lunar month in 1194 with a sacrifice to Kongzi in which he offered the *daotong* as a gift to the sage. But, the principal problem, as I see it, was not politics and sectarianism. Rather, it was the forgetfulness explicit in the obvious rupture of a transmission that Zhu presumed had once been continuous and which he knew he was piously inventing anew.

48 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.47: 問：人之死也，不知魂魄便散否？曰：固是散。又問：子孫祭祀，却有感格者，如何？曰：畢竟子孫是祖先之氣。他氣雖散，他根卻在這裡；盡其誠敬，則亦能呼召得他氣聚在此。如水波樣，後水非前水，後波非前波，然卻通只是一水波。子孫之氣於祖考之氣，亦是如此。他那箇當下自散了，然他根卻在這裡；根既在此，又卻能引聚得他那氣在此。

49 On the founding of the Cangzhou jingshe, which was also known as the Zhulin jingshe 竹林精舍, see the transcript of Zhu's report to Kongzi, “Cangzhou jingshe gao xiansheng wen,” 滄州精舍告先聖文, in *Zhuzi wenji* 86.1548.1. See also Tillman 2004, 503–504.

50 On Rites of Summoning for Investigation (*kaozhao fa* 考召法), see Davis 2001, 96–102, 198–199.

Stating his intention to retire from active service, Zhu summons his master, Kongzi, through sacrifice⁵¹ and reports (*gao*) his discovery of the *dao* legacy:

"Text of the Cangzhou Lodge of Wondrous Remembrance Report to the First Sage"

Latter day student, Zhu Xi, I dare to entreat the Former and Ultimate Sage, Monarch of the Promotion of Culture. Let us celebrate the *dao* legacy [extending] far back to Fu Xi and Huang Di! Its achievements were all assembled by the Original Sage [Kongzi], who transmitted the ancient [teachings] and gave instructions, setting the standards for 10,000 generations. His 3,000 disciples were transformed as if [his instructions] had been a timely rain. Only Yan Hui and Zeng Zi were able to obtain their lineage (*qizong* 其宗). It was not until Zisi and Yu that this legacy was made more lustrous and great. Since then, subsequent followers lost the true transmission in the process of teaching and receiving. The legacy remained in abeyance for more than 1,000 years. What Zhou [Dunyi] and the Cheng Brothers learned and taught was that the myriad patterns (*wanli* 萬理) have a single origin (*yiyuan* 一原). As for Shao [Yong], Zhang Zai, Sima [Guang], while their studies bore through disparate paths they all arrived at the same conclusions about the way (*dao* 道). They guided us later generations, as if we were moving from a dark night to the dawning of a new day. When I was a child, I received instruction because of my deficiencies [while] in my youth I received instruction from average teachers. [But] in my later years I met those who had the *dao*. Sometimes bowing down and at others looking above in reverential pose, and even though there is but silence, I believe that it is because of the miraculous efficacy of the sky (*tianzhiling* 天之靈) above, that we are fortunate that nothing [of this legacy] was lost. Now, I am old and retired and those of similar appreciations have gathered here with me to build this lodge. When we first estab-

51 Zhu was very practiced at sacrifice, of course, and devoted much to the particular ritual theatrics of the cult of the dead in the *Zhuzi jiali* 朱子家禮. The *jiali* has been translated by Patricia Ebrey (1991) and many have commented on its effect on popular practice. However, Ebrey's implicit reading of the rites as a kind of enforced constraint by elites is interpretively problematic in its two-tiered (high and low culture) segregation of popular religious practice. Furthermore, this reading of Song quotidian never gets at the relations that obtain between sacrifice and prayer, an area that requires considerable investigation in the "cult of the worthies," the founding of *jingshe* 精舍, and the practice of the ancestor cult. A good start on treating this problem may be found in Lieber and Harlow 2001, 1453: "Ritual sacrifices were offered in the sanctuary in the wilderness. Yet the Torah prescribes virtually no prayers, blessings, or verbal formulas for recitation during the sacrificial ritual... Individuals came to pray, and at various occasions prayer gatherings were held within its precincts. None of this, however, was linked to the sacrifices... Verbal forms of worship developed at the same time that sacrificial rituals were practiced. *Prayers became the sacrifices of our lips; sacrifices became non-verbal prayers.* (emphasis mine) Neither was considered acceptable if the individual was insincere [...]. Once the Temple was established in Jerusalem, silence was overcome."

lished residence, [I] explored the headwaters and sought the roots of [the lineage] because I did not dare obscure it. Commencing to offer libation in order to report to you [Kongzi] on this [lodge] and prize its illustrious summoning of the ascending and descending spirits to this place [I hope they] will bless [us] generously with illumination. Faithfully and indefatigably [we] will transmit [this legacy], without interruption, to those following in the future. As it is an auspicious day, I will lead the assembled students in celebration, performing the rite of offering food (*shicai* 釋菜) [to the spirits of the sages and teachers]: the First Teacher, Duke of Yan, the family of Yan [Hui] Lord of Cheng, the family of Zeng [zi], Lord of Jiangshui, Kong clan, Duke of Zou Kingdom, and the family of Meng [Ke] accompanied by Mr. Lianxi Zhou, Messers Mingdao Cheng, and Yichuan Cheng, Mr. Kangjie Shao, Mr. Hengqu Zhang, Wen Kingdom Sima Wen [and] Mr. Yanping Li. Please receive these food offerings!⁵²

The opening address of the report begins with the grandest of Kongzi's official titles, *Xiansheng zhi sheng wenxuan wang* 先聖至聖文宣王. In using this title Zhu was taking what had been officially conferred on the sage by the government, but he construed that relationship as private, being conducted through prayer and intercession of the sort that was a distinctive new trend of the educated elites of the Southern Song. The location of this prayer and sacrifice, at the site of his mother's tomb, reinforces the lineal connections Zhu channels here.⁵³ This is a report to the spirits of the dead, just as was the original telling ritual (*gao*) of the Shang, in which the ruling king would report to the dead kings of his agnatic line in the context of the pyromancy and sacrifice essential to efficacious intercession.

We may characterize Zhu's behavior as "religious" but it was quite common to the everyday among the inspired forces circulating in the ambient space of Fujian. Zhu is not talking here about study or any of the litany of scholarly concerns with which he was occupied. Instead, this report, like virtually all those recorded in the *Zhuzi wenji*, is a reassurance to his ancestor and master that conveys his trepidation about the near abandonment of the lines of family symmetry that bound him and his followers to the lineage of Kongzi and, in turn, to the essential mysteries of high-

52 Zhu Xi, "Cangzhou jingshe gao xiansheng wen" 滄州精舍告先聖文 (in: *Zhuzi wenji* 86.1548.1): 後學，朱熹，敢昭告於先聖至聖，文宣王。恭惟道統遠自羲軒，集厥大成允屬元聖，述古垂訓萬世作程。三千其徒化若時雨。維顏曾氏傳得其宗。逮思及興益以光大。自時厥後口耳失真千有餘年乃曰有繼。周程授受萬理一原。曰邵曰張爰及司馬，學雖殊轍道則同歸俾。我後人如夜復旦。熹以凡陋少蒙義方中靡常師。晚逢有道。載鑽載仰，雖未有聞賴，天之靈幸無失墜。茲退老同好鼎來落此一丘羣。居伊，始探原推本敢昧厥。初奠以告慶尚其昭格陟降庭止惠我光明。傳之方來永永無斁。今以吉日，謹率諸生恭修釋菜之禮以先師究國公顏氏鄒侯曾氏沂水侯孔氏鄒國公孟氏配濂溪周先生明道程先生伊川程先生康節邵先生橫渠張先生溫國司馬文正公延平李先生。從祀尚饗！

53 For the significance Zhu Xi attached to his mother's gravesite, see Tillman 2004, 496.

est antiquity. The dynamic should be familiar as that of the *gan/ying* 感應 reciprocity of cosmology while the script of the *shicai* 釋菜 sacrifice is drawn directly from the *Liji* 禮記.⁵⁴

For Zhu Xi, the endurance of the message of these reports is critical but the words are not enough of a hedge against forgetting, for so many in his own day remained, in his estimation, ignorant of the *dao*. Peculiar as it may seem, Zhu was reassuring Kongzi that he had discovered the lost thread of the Master's teaching, which he had received from highest antiquity. Text criticism gave way in this instance to metaphysics, or rather, cult, specifically the cult of the dead. Now Zhu was prepared to rededicate himself to its episodic transmission, but in taking it up as he did, he commemorated his *daotong* against a backdrop of forgetting, and against possible claimants from other traditions.

He was made clean by what Kongzi had asked of him and, through sacrifice, Zhu pledged his fellow *ru* like Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) to a broad culturally-purifying enterprise. These were concerns that animated Zhu, and that, I would wager, put flesh on the skeleton of his *li/qi* psychic cosmology; they may also provide one reason he grew increasingly intolerant of other contemporary traditions. Having invented a cult of supreme privilege, Zhu charged himself and his disciples with the preservation of cultural heritage against the rising tide of popular devotion to the *yiduan* 異端 or "heterodoxy" of popular Buddhist and Daoist cults. Sectarianism was the inevitable consequence of such a charge and once Zhu and the epigones of his *daoxue* teaching were officially installed in the imperial Kongmiao 孔廟 (as they were at various times beginning in 1241 through to 1911), the closely drawn circle of ancestors and worthies, real and imagined, would provide an effective mechanism for persecution by latter-day officials in defense of "orthodoxy."

4 Zhu Xi and the Conjunction of Folklife and Philosophy

The spirit of the shaman while possessed is the spirit, which has descended into the shaman's body. [...] In antiquity, shamans were used to bring down spirits. When the spirit descended, it was embodied in the shaman [who] assumed her beautiful form and fine raiment. [At this moment] the body was the shaman, but the mind was the spirit.⁵⁵

54 *Liji zhengyi*, vol. 1, 393.2. Morohashi (1977, vol. 11, 11952) offers that *shicai* referred to sacrificial rites conducted at schools in recognition of "the first sage and the first teacher" (Kongzi). The ceremony, usually preceded by a period of ritual purification and ablution, was conducted in the spring and consisted of a vegetable offering.

55 Zhu Xi, *Chuci jizhu*, 30: 謂神降於巫之身者也。[...] 古者巫以降神，神降而託於巫。則見其貌之美而服之好，蓋身則巫而心則神也。

In 1198, two years before his death and under withering attacks on his character and fellowship, Zhu Xi rewrote his prefaces to the *Zhongyong* 中庸 and the *Daxue* 大學. The most significant of these is the preface to his recension of Centrality and Commonality (*Zhongyong zhangju xu* 中庸章句序), in which he advanced an unambiguous and provocative vision of *daotong*. In this final version of the Preface he makes a bold claim for the legitimacy of his understanding, one conceived and written in the language of prayer, sacrifice, and reports to Kongzi. Drawing directly on the language of his sacrifice at Cangzhou, Zhu seeks to account for the manner in which he has come into possession of a precious, *textual* cum familial grasp of the *dao*:

How was it that the *Zhongyong* was made? Master Zisi 子思, anxious that the transmission of the learning of the way would be lost, composed it. Once the sages and spirits of high antiquity set up the heavenly ordained ultimate, then the transmission of the legacy of the way came automatically. It is manifest in the Classics in the phrase “sincerely grasp the mean” and constituted Yao’s 堯 succession to Shun 舜. The saying “the human mind is precarious; the *dao* mind is subtle; it is pure and singular; sincerely grasp the mean” constituted Shun’s succession to Yu 禹. Yao’s single phrase addition made the legacy complete and comprehensive... It is said that the mind’s vacuity (*xinzhixu* 心之虛) singularly [contains] spiritual presence (*ling* 靈) and consciousness (*zhijue* 知覺). Yet, I believe that there is a difference between the human mind and the *dao* mind: one is made from the selfishness of physical forms, while the other originates from the rectitude of the nature’s decree. This is why those who have consciousnesses are not alike. Thus one mind is precarious and unsettled, while the other is subtle, hard to see or hear. However, everyone has physical form so that even the wisest have the human mind; everyone has this nature, so that even the most dimwitted have the *dao* mind. The two are brought together within the space of a square inch, so if you do not know how to rule them, then the precarious becomes more precarious and the subtle more subtle, thus in the end the impartiality of heaven’s pattern will be unable to subdue the selfishness of human desire... Yao, Shun, and Yu were the greatest sages of the world, and their transmission of the ministry of the world was their greatest achievement. So if at this juncture of the greatest sages in the universe accomplished its greatest achievement with the use of merely the Heavenly principle of the [Da Yu mo] how could anything be added to it? From this time forward various sages have passed on the responsibility of [this achievement] such as Cheng Tang 成湯, Wen 文, and Wu 武 [who transmitted it] as *jun* 君; Gao 皋, Tao 陶, and Yi 伊 transmitted it to [Duke of] Zhou 周 and [Duke of] Zhao 召 as *chen* 臣. They all maintained that this succession was the *dao* legacy transmission. Like my master [Kongzi], although he did not get a position [as did the others] because he continued the teachings of the sages and opened the way for future study his accomplishment was as worthy as that of Yao and Shun. However, from that time those who understood the teaching were only the Yan 顏 [Hui]

family branch and the Zeng 曾 [Zi] family branch, [so] they received the transmission of their [Yao and Shun's] lineage (*qizong* 其宗). By the time the Zeng family further transmitted the legacy to [my] Master's grandson, Zisi, the Sages were remote and other different doctrines [other Zhanguo teachings] arose. Zisi feared that with time the tradition would lose purity, so he inferred the ideas of the original transmission from Yao and Shun on down, and gave them substance by adding as illustrations the words he heard daily from his father and teacher, composed this book [Centrality and Commonality] to instruct later students. [...] From Zisi [the legacy] was transmitted over two generations to Mengzi 孟子, who was able to understand this book and to be faithful to the legacy of the first sage maintaining the tradition. But, at his death, the transmission was lost. Thus, the endurance of our way depended solely on the phrases and graphs of this text. Still, other theories arose overnight and flourished as the disciples of Lao[zi] 老 and Buddha 佛 arrived. Because their doctrines resembled that of [the learning of] pattern (*lixue* 理學), truth was overcome by massive chaos. Therefore, we are fortunate that this book was not lost.⁵⁶

In short, Zhu's Preface is simply an elaborate confirmation in print of the efficacy of his earlier sacrifice of 1194. Yet, here he invents *de novo* a textual history that affords the possibility of episodic transmission, casting it back to the time of the sages and culture heroes. As he pointed out often, the sages had no texts; these began with Kongzi. The sages lived *in illo tempore*, in an arcadia where words were deeds and action was tacitly understood. In antiquity the immediacy of event and experience banished the prospect of writing and so the sages' agency was immediate and their language oral:

56 *Sishu jizhu*, 19–20: Zhu Xi, "Zhongyong zhangju xu" 中庸章句序: 中庸何為而作也? 子思子憂道學之失其傳而作也。自上古聖神繼天立極, 而道統之傳有自來矣。其見於經, 則“允執厥中”, “者堯之所以授舜也。人心惟危, 道心惟微, 惟精惟一, 允執厥中”者, 舜之所以授禹也。堯之一言, 至矣, 盡矣! 蓋嘗論之: 心之虛靈知覺, 一而已矣。而以為有人心, 道心之異者, 則以其或生於形氣之私, 或原於性命之正。而所以為知覺者不同。是以或危殆而不安, 或微妙而難見耳。然人莫不有是形故雖上智不能無人心; 亦莫不有是性, 故雖下愚不能無道心。二者雜於方寸之間, 而不知所以治之, 則危者愈危, 微者愈微, 而天理之公平無以勝夫人欲之私矣…夫堯、舜、禹, 天下之大聖也。以天下相傳, 天下之大事也。以天下之大聖, 行天下之大事, 而其授受之際丁寧告戒, 不過如此。則天下之理, 豈有以加於此哉? 自是以來, 聖聖相承: 若成湯, 文, 武之為君; 皋陶, 伊, 傅, 周, 召之為臣。既皆以此而接夫道統之傳。若吾夫子, 則雖不得其位, 而所以繼往聖開來學其功反有賢於堯順者。然當是時, 見而知之者, 惟顏氏, 曾氏之傳得其宗。及曾氏之再傳, 而復得夫子之孫子思, 則去聖遠而異端起矣。子思懼夫愈久而愈失其真也, 於是推本堯舜以來相傳之意, 質以平日所聞父師之言, 更互演繹, 作為此書, 以詔後之學者…自是而又再傳以得孟氏, 為能推明是書, 以承先聖之統, 及其沒而遂失其傳焉。則吾道之所寄不越乎言語文字之間, 而異端之說日新月盛, 以至於老佛之徒出。則彌近理而大亂真矣。然而尚幸此書之不泯。

When the Ancients began elementary learning, they already knew most things; when later they undertook the great learning they simply executed this moral effort. People today are not yet able to comprehend this.⁵⁷

Forgetfulness, a measure of the distance between heroes and men, myth and history, made sagely action precarious to transmission and so writing emerged. (Perhaps this is one reason Zhu Xi insisted on reading texts aloud.) Memory and forgetting are undecidably linked in Zhu's mind, so vulnerable is the mean to loss, however, that he entrusts it to a sequence of titles datable to high antiquity but current in his own day. Descent is the conceptual foundation here, repeatedly affirmed by Zhu's frequent use of *chuan* 傳, "handed down," "passed on," and especially the reference to *qizong* 其宗, "their lineage." Two aspects of this marvelous familial conception are worthy of note. First, the patriarchs of *daotong*, the sages of antiquity, are presented in descending order of chronology and official status. Yao, Shun, and Yu are all *dasheng* 大聖, "great sages," while Cheng Tang, and Kings Wen and Wu are *jun*, "lords." Following the *jun*, there are Zhou and Zhao both of whom are *chen*, "ministers."

Beginning with Kongzi, all subsequent "agnates" do not inherit appointment, although they do get *daotong* and serve as "teachers," *shi* 師 or, "masters," *fuzi* 夫子. Much like the popular deities who preside over the different strata of the Buddhist underworld, all of whom are officials, the hallowed *xiansheng* 先聖 and *xianwang* 先王 each possessed official title, their emolument being inclusion in this twelfth-century register of descent. What is even more intriguing about this reproduction of the larger official world in this highly sectarian sacred transmission, is that the rungs on the ladder of station bear labels of the nobiliary ranks – *chen*, *jun*, *shi*, *fuzi* – common not to the Song, but from the time of the Warring Kingdoms.

Secondly, the entire genealogy – like most all genealogies produced in the Song's *shixi* craze – is an elaborate conceit, a story. The original moment of the transmission is particularly suspect for it employs a patrimonial logic of ascription to describe transmission by merit. Marcel Granet (1884–1940) exploded this mythology long ago when he demonstrated that a strict, and therefore false, conception of primogeniture had perpetuated a myth of succession by merit.⁵⁸ But Granet matters not one wit in this instance, for this alternating transmission between heir and sage comprised the world-picture of Zhu's day – a mythistory.

To be sure, the Yao, Shun, and Yu transmission was not exemplary of *zongfa* 宗法, indeed, it was in flagrant contravention of what in Zhu Xi's time was known from the kinglists of the *Shiji* and the *Zhusbu jinian* 竹書紀年 about both Shang and

57 *Zhuzi quanshu* 1.1b–2a, *Zhuzi yulei* 7.124: 古人自入小學時，已自知許多事了。至入大學時，只要做此工夫。今人全未曾知此。

58 Granet 1953, 65–87.

Zhou succession. Thus, Zhu's *daotong* was subject to the same criticism as that leveled against Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009–1066) for composing genealogies that reached back only four or five generations: their intention was to glorify the present by genealogical citation, not genuinely to honor the ancient dead.

Zhu intended to glorify the dead while also legitimating, once and for all, his singular conception of the *ru* tradition.⁵⁹ Moreover, political events at court from 1188 to 1191, involving Zhu Xi and concerning his tenure as Prefect of Zhangzhou (1190–1191), put him in a besieged mentality. Beginning with his condemnation of Tang Zhongyou 唐仲友 (1131?–1183?) to the emperor in 1181, Zhu was dogged by political crises at the southern Song capital that intensified following the accession of Supreme Lord Guangzong 光宗 (r. 1189–1194) in 1189. In ill health and wishing to avoid the growing factionalism that had already consumed the Supreme Lord Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162–1189), someone who previously had sought his wise counsel, Zhu Xi declined imperial appointments with shameless frequency, convinced now, as he told one of his students, "that political life was totally corrupt."

His retreat to local life was in synch with the practices of many elites of his era; the culture of local shrine construction and dedication followed from this as well. Ellen Neskar notes that this localist strategy began in the mid-twelfth century, but that Zhu devoted himself increasingly to the creation of new, inspired patronage complexes via shrines to exemplary figures (shrines to worthies) as well as to the anointed members of the *daotong* (transmission shrines).⁶⁰ In this way he was marking the rural landscape by a pilgrimage of shrine construction and shrine restoration while also countering other networks of ecstatic influence.

The *Zhongyong* preface's compelling vision of a heroic medieval appropriation of the *dao* of Yao and Shun, might, in this context, be considered a powerful reagent to dissolve weighty sediment of an accumulating anti-*daoxue* criticism. More than this; however, the invocation of *zong* itself contained an enormous anti-institutional thrust especially in a time when, ideologically speaking, it was assumed that official appointment predicated upon the objective criteria of examination success was the norm. *Daotong* resembled a reaction-formation, in Freud's sense, against the expanding presence of devotional cults and worship of tutelary deities that were immensely popular and, from Zhu's perspective, sometimes illicit. As well, it was a defiant gesture against an increasingly authoritarian, encroaching state,

59 It seems to me that it was in Zhu Xi's *jingshe* dedications and his shrine inscriptions *siwen* 祠文 of the mid-1190s that he obtained the language needed to reconcile an episodic textual transmission of the sixteen-graph axiom from the "Counsels of Yu" with the family metaphor in which it was encased.

60 Neskar 1993, 157–206.

which took particular interest in the inauguration of cults, shrines, and temples, registering as approved those admitted into the Sacrificial Statutes (*sidian* 祀典). Given this, it makes one wonder how the cult of *daoxue* so construed could be recognized as legitimate in the eyes of the government's own *sidian*. It is this contentious world-picture of an agnatic transmission of doctrine over a breathtaking expanse of time and space that must concern us now as it calls for a reconsideration of Zhu Xi as classical philosopher and redactor of texts.

5 *Qi* and the “One Square Inch” Universe

The textual transmission of the *Zhongyong*, fortified through Zhu's private descent claim, removed antiquity (*gu* 古) from the realm of public appeal; it was personalized, transmitted only through the living links cited by Zhu, and which were rehearsed in the daily rites of *jingshe* life as well as the textually reconstructed conversations of the *Yulei*. One way of reading the tension between the sinographs and the lineage they create is to see Zhu Xi as reconfiguring the function of the text as to overcome the limitations of the printed word. A genealogical conception of this sort goes far in establishing a definitive claim against diverse intellectual traditions of one's era; however, this is in my reading a secondary consequence. In light of the reports he made to Kongzi and Mengzi in the last decade of his life, I would urge a more personal, possessive significance for this urgently rewritten preface of 1198. Clans are bound generation to generation by the blood, bone, and sinew of affines and agnates; Zhu's use of *zong* is more than figurative. The politics of the genealogy – whether or not it was intentional – ensures that no single tradition lying outside Zhu's claim could assert authentic recovery of the essential teaching of high antiquity. Moreover, the exclusive access to antiquity's legacy of *dao* was framed within a narrative of loss, the failure of norms to be transmitted in public practice and to be remembered by later generations. But, this legacy was redeemable, situated as it was in the space of one square inch – the heart.

Understanding this, modern intellectual historians of a religiously unmusical bent must wonder how Zhu construed the metaphysics of his inspired genealogy with its cultic sacrifices to Kongzi and the masters of the Northern Song. Or how it was that he reconciled a rational, dualistic metaphysics and his “superstitious” belief in the efficacy of spirits. The query's answer is immediately at hand because it is all around us – *qi*, “vital vapor.” In response to a student's question about the presence of *qi*, the teacher explains:

Vital vapor (*qi*) is everywhere between sky and earth; the vital vapor of people is constantly and uninterruptedly connected to the vital vapor of sky and earth. Although we don't see it, whenever the human heart moves, it always reaches vital va-

por and interacts with that which comes and goes. It resembles a form of divination.⁶¹

These relations were dynamic; there was no ontological divide between living and dead, rather a membrane the varying permeability of which was affected by the attitude, posture, reverence (*jing* 敬) of the living. Cosmology has it that the soul is dispersed after death and is combined with vital vapor, a condensed yet rarefied material constituting the stuff of the living universe. All living things are made from this generative substance and, thus, the spirits (*shen* 神) of the dead also partake in it. Consequently, the dead are never gone, and as a result the sense of loss that accompanies death is negated, yet preserved along the magic current of continuity joining living and dead.

It is my contention that the open architecture of the self, constituted out of universal energy and in dynamic interchange with a sensuous world, was generated from the ancient choreography and conception of the cult of the dead. Specifically, it was made from the practice of *xiao* 孝 or filiality, one of the primary virtues of the Chinese person, a virtue known, like a gravitational field, only by its effects, the most significant of which was caring for the dead. It was concrete, embodied, *not* vague. As Zhu comments in response to additional queries from his perplexed students:

When a man dies, although his vital vapor eventually returns to a dispersed state, there is also some part that is not dispersed. Therefore sacrifice has the capacity to reach and move the ancestor. Whether the vital vapor of the ancestor of a generation far removed still exists or not, it is not possible to know. However, as the person who offers the sacrifice is his descendant, their vital vapor must be the same, and therefore it is possible to stimulate and penetrate the ancestor.⁶²

When one reads Zhu's invocations alongside these exchanges with his students on the subject of ghosts and spirits (*gui*, *shen*), and has in mind the ontology of medieval China in which *qi* is the constitutive force of the universe, the prospects for communion with a spirit that is not one's ancestor come into focus. According to Zhu Xi, all one must do is stimulate 感 the spirit by reverence. Death generates elaborate responsibility for descendants. Most salient in these responsibilities is the

61 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.34: 天地間無非氣。人之氣與天地之氣常相接，無間斷，人自不見。人心才動，必達於氣，便與這屈伸往來者相感通。

62 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.43: 然人死雖終歸於散，然亦未便散盡，故祭祀有感格之理。先祖世次遠者，氣之有無不可知。然奉祭祀者既是他子孫，必竟只是一氣，所以有感通之理。The talk here about stimulating the answer is grounded in the ontic reciprocity conception of *gan/ying*. Earnest prayer and intercession from petitioning agnates may draw out the ancestor, the *gan* of the living's intercession inviting the *ying* of the spirits.

act of feeding the dead (*xiao* 孝),⁶³ that term which in the *Lunyu* means filial respect for one's living parents. If the dead are not offered food and nourishment in proper ritual deference, if they are ignored, then they may mutate into ghosts, hungry ghosts. The suffering caused by neglect will inevitably provoke maleficent intervention on the living by the afflicted ghost. This is the cosmogony of the Chinese moral universe: a ceaseless dialectic of suffering (that of the family who loses a loved one and that of the ancestors who are no longer embodied) and relief produced through the periodic attentive detail of sacrifice and prayer or if necessary spirit possession and exorcism.

In its proper attitude of reverence the mind instinctively responds to its master (*zhu* 主) and recovers the genuine transmission. The *dao* legacy was sustained at the level of reflection as a transmission imagined. Hearts and minds could be linked across millennia, for they were constituted out of a *qi* which might disperse but is not destroyed and the link, if not as personal, was at least as powerful as that of blood descent. The logic of transmission of *daotong* is more akin to the special lines of sympathy that join the living and the dead in the ancestral cult as can be seen in this exchange from the *Yulei*:

Although (their) ancestors' *qi* has dispersed, this pattern of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 provides for birth and reproduction without cessation. Although the ancestors' spirit and *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄 souls have dispersed, nevertheless, the spirit and the *hun* and *po* souls of the descendants naturally have some relation to their ancestors. Therefore, when they perform sacrifice with sincerity and reverence, they are able to communicate with their ancestors' *hun* and *po* souls. These [phenomena] are hard to explain. [Descendants] recognize that [their ancestors' souls] have already dispersed and that they have all vanished completely. [Still] they can exhaustively exert their integrity and reverence and thereby achieve contact [with their ancestors] because their principle is right here.⁶⁴

Zhu's reliance on agnatic imagery is not a mere metaphor by which he illuminates the difference between genuine (*zhen* 真) and false (*jia* 假). Rather, the family/clan is a figurative predication of the transmission of the ancients' words. More than a conceit, the *qi* of his cultural ancestors provides a mortal immortality. The root, metaphorically referring to the sincerity (*cheng* 誠) of the descendants' worship of their ancestor, is formed in the heart and grows out into the practices of the faithful. This is a language of sinographic immediacy, not merely of the clan, but of the very physicality of the body. Zhu's rhetoric hints at a deeply personal refuge where, hav-

63 Knapp 1995, esp. 196–200.

64 *Zhuzi yulei* 3.46: 然其氣雖已散，這箇天地陰陽之理生生而不窮。祖考之精神魂魄雖已散，而子孫之精神魂魄自有些小相屬。故祭祀之禮盡其誠敬，便可以致得祖考之魂魄。這箇自是難說。看既散後，一似都無了。能盡其誠敬，便有感格，亦緣是理常只在這裡也。

ing transcended the text, one could converse with the immortals hearing firsthand the words that were transcribed in the classics and later canonized.

The heart, "the space of one square inch," was made of *qi*, and so it could be construed as a place where living and the dead might be joined. This may not appear to us on the surface as a modern, philosophically defensible notion, but for Zhu, whose troubled conscience could be assuaged with the promise of personal inspiration, it certainly was a rational one. Though the interpretive reflex incited by this claim would emphasize sectarianism, I think the principal reason for Zhu's appeal to organic metaphors is his protective interest in a more immediate apprehension of the *dao*. Responding to a student's query about the location of *li* ("pattern"), the implicit moral architecture of the cosmos, Zhu poignantly conveys the presumptions of an imagination that closed the space between himself and the ancient sages in an allegory uncondusive to texts:

All things have a heart (*xin* 心) and within it must be empty. When preparing a pig or chicken for the table one cuts open its heart [and] one can see this. The human heart is identical. Only these empty places contain and preserve the infinite pattern of the *dao* that fills heaven and earth and embraces past and present. Extending them [out] and receiving [them back], [this pattern] covers heaven and covers earth. There is nothing that does not come from this. It is for this reason that the human heart is mysterious.⁶⁵

Such mystery as this could be fathomed only through regular intercourse and by the hard work of caring for the physical space of the dead and the living. Ecology grew from the surrounding matter and spirit and so it was that men like Zhu Xi took great pains to employ geomancy to determine proper orientation of buildings, shrines, schools, and for the careful translation of his parents' remains and, most notably, in determining the most favorable burial site for his eldest son.

The interval of time that has passed between this ritualized life and the present day is sufficiently great to encumber our understanding of the *mentalité* of medieval Chinese. Nevertheless, an enduring belief in *qi* enables us to cope with the encumbrance of time and our "modern" sentiment to bring near what seems far. Such belief may also help to explain such well-discussed dimensions of Zhu's epistemological discourse as *weifa* 未法/*yifa* 以法. More significantly it illuminates his insistence on self-cultivation with an inner master (*zhuzai* 主宰) who can be conjured via reverent submission in the state of "submerged nurturance" (*hanyang* 涵養) he believed critical to the efficacy of "summoning things" (*gewu* 格物).⁶⁶

65 *Zhuzi yulei* 98.2514: 凡物有心而其中必虛，如飲食中雞心豬心之屬，切開可見。人心亦然。只這虛處，便包藏許多道理，彌綸天地，該括古今，推廣得來，蓋天蓋地，莫不由此，此所以為人心之妙歟。

66 Mou Zongsan 1968, 292. This is a dimension of the argument that cannot be developed sufficiently in the space remaining. Nonetheless, an investigation of the correspondence

Coda

Putting aside the issue of Confucianism as a religion or as a unique bearer of the cultural life of the Chinese, I suggest we disassociate Zhu Xi from the very legacy from which he has been so closely identified for good and for ill. Rather, as I have attempted in this essay, it benefits our understanding to place him in a dimmer, less scrutable light – that of his own day and that of the world he actually shared with the students of his fellowship, his friends, and those communities that he served as a low-ranking official. What all these figures commonly held was what we as interpreters lack: sensitivity to the sensuous, to the vitality of their natural environment. It was this sensitivity, this awareness outside of cognition, that accounted for Zhu Xi's belief in the efficacy of local magic: spirit possession, the summoning of the dead through personation, the power of ghosts to demand service of the living, and the credulity that he leant to supernatural phenomena. Scant attention has been paid to the records of these beliefs even though they are prominent in the *Zhuzi yulei* and the *Zhuzi wenji*. Ignoring the sensitivity to the natural rhythms of the complementary lives of the visible and the invisible, because it is difficult to reconcile with our accepted mythistory of Zhu's completion of Neo-Confucianism, has hobbled all scholarly efforts to understand and explain his novel conception of *daotong* or to account for its compelling power. Without this understanding of the definitive links between the popular religious conception of his day, and a philosophical gambit to join latter-day followers to an extinguished tradition, *daotong* can be no more than an exclusivist play for legitimacy among an increasingly rivalrous coterie of reformist moral readings of the classical canon.

It is necessary to consider another way of narrating the story of Zhu's intellectual life and legacy and to recognize how in doing so we could obtain a clearer understanding of the mythistories by means of which modern scholars have constructed and reconstructed an imperial Confucianism. Looking at this record from an unaccustomed vantage may undermine the integrity of our presumed understanding of imperial Confucianism but it may, just as well, help us to understand why it is that the intellectual history of imperial China has been told in the voice of the Song and the timbre of Zhu Xi. As well, attention to this neglected context opens new doors to the study of Zhu's singularly imagined philosophical quest.

in 1170 between Zhu and Zhang Nanxian 張難先 (1133–1180) on the topic of *zhong* 中 (equilibrium) and *he* 和 (harmony) along with Zhu's disquisition on *jing* (reverence) reveals a careful philosophical reconfiguration of the mind by means of the metaphors of spirit possession. See Jensen, "Found and Lost in Tradition: Mythistories of Confucianism," book ms., ch. 5.

Imperial Confucianism, as has been considered in this essay, stands in productive alliance with our 20th (and 21st) century commitment to understand and represent the splendor of a grand intellectual tradition.⁶⁷ But this Confucianism is not Zhu Xi's *daoxue*: *plus c'est la même chose* (that there is something nominally called *ru*xue or Confucianism), *plus ça change* (take simply the few episodes retold in this essay) and it is time for scholars to make better sense of the real, lived experience of our subjects by relinquishing cherished myths in favor of a mythistory that may disclose the *history* of the conjunction of our world-pictures and those of figures in whose name we have devoted ourselves to understanding. Thus, we may give the pasts their due: China's and our own.

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67 Just as the alliance of Jesuits and lay European scholars with the "order of the literati" (*legge de letterati*) was formed from the apparent ideological coherence of an ethos of an agrarian bureaucratic empire to a single Confucian civil religion, the pain of vicious religious pluralism in Europe was assuaged by the counterexample of Ming China. In this way, the embrace of one doctrine, one language, above others, reproduced one mode of mythistory compatible with European desire but adversarial to the diverse narratives of popular Chinese religious practice. See Jensen 2006.

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