

# Chapter 29

## ZHU Xi and Daoism: Investigation of Inner-Meditative Alchemy in ZHU Xi's Theory and Method for the Attainment of Sagehood



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### 1 Introduction

In a sense ZHU Xi's philosophy would not be possible without Daoist cosmology and self-cultivation practices. Daoism provides the beginning and end of ZHU Xi's philosophy in that his philosophy begins with the Diagram of the Great Polarity or *Taijitu* 太極圖, and it ends with his later life interest in Daoist self-cultivation and breathing techniques. This is a bold claim. This chapter will explicate why Daoism plays such an important role in his philosophy.

In this chapter, I present a critical interpretation of the Diagram of the Great Polarity or the *Taijitu* 太極圖, *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* or the *Zhouyi Cantongqi* 周易參同契, and *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of the Secret Talisman* or the *Huangdi Yinfujing* 黃帝陰符經 to show that ZHU Xi was influenced by Daoist inner-meditative alchemy (*neidan dao* 內丹道). In particular, I argue that ZHU Xi's approach toward the cultivation of sagehood requires an investigation and application of inner-meditative alchemical (*neidan*) practices. Although Julia Ching has presented a comprehensive study of ZHU Xi's spiritual interests in Daoism (Ching 2000: 152–70), Judith Berling showed the intricate relations of Daoism and Neo-Confucianism (Berling 1979: 123–47), and CHAN Wing-tsit exposed ZHU Xi's indirect influence from Daoism (Chan 1975: 131–44), someone might want to dismiss ZHU Xi's interaction and influence from the (so-called religious) Daoist practices of *neidan* inner-meditative alchemy. However, the skeptic should not dismiss ZHU Xi's investigation of *neidan* too quickly, because *neidan* thought plays an important part in his philosophy of self-cultivation and the attainment of sagehood. I suggest that we deploy a phenomeno-

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logical *epoché*, bracket out our biases against alchemy and follow what Qian Mu 錢穆 suggests was ZHU Xi's own attitude:

Zhuzi (literally “Master Zhu”) never attempted to cover-up this fact (i.e., the Daoist origin of the Diagram of the Great Polarity and the Diagram of the Prior Heaven or the *Xiantiantu* 先天圖). Zhuzi also befriended Daoist priests (Daoshi 道士)... Indeed, we can see that Zhuzi's interest in what he studied was multifarious, and that his attitude was open-minded. (Qian 1986: 345)

In discussing the religio-philosophical traditions of China, and other cross-cultural studies for that matter, the methods of phenomenology and hermeneutics should be employed. However, in the previous study of Chinese religio-philosophical traditions, there was a long-standing neglect of applying the phenomenological *epoché* to suspend cultural and personal biases; for instance, the discipline has degenerated when religious practices are labeled “superstitions” (Doré 1914–1938) or when the religious interpretations of the *Daodejing* 道德經 are scoffed at (Welch 1966). I apply a critical textual hermeneutic that must be judged on its strengths and weaknesses as they appear in the following study.

## 2 What is Daoism? Daoism (Daojia 道家) and Daoist Teachings (Daojiao 道教)

Before defining these key terms, I should briefly discuss the controversy concerning their definition, and how this difference of opinion arises from the variety of methods used to study the religio-philosophical traditions of China. It is only with the relatively recent developments in the “science of religion” (Religionswissenschaft) that a fitting historical-phenomenological approach is being applied to Chinese religio-philosophy. I use the term “religio-philosophy” to refer to the historical intellectual traditions of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism in an attempt to “bracket” the Western, especially Euro-American and Christian, distinction between religion versus philosophy, and reason versus faith. Although the traditional teachings of China did not make a distinction between religion and philosophy or reason and faith, at least not before contact with those Middle Eastern ideas, some modern scholars insist on imposing such a distinction on Daoism, in particular.

Before Matteo Ricci (a.k.a. Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610), Chinese literature did not clearly distinguish between philosophical and religious Daoism, the way modern scholars do; nevertheless, Chinese literature did use the terms Daojia (Dao school or Daoist) and Daojiao (Dao teachings). The term Daojiao was primarily used in contrast to Fojiao 佛教 (Buddhism) and Rujiao 儒教 (Confucianism). It is interesting to note that little is made of the distinction between philosophy and religion in the study of Buddhism and Confucianism. Given the Buddhist or Confucian interests of many sinologists, Fojiao and Rujiao are defined as philosophical systems of ethics. Since the term Daojia 道家 was and still is used to refer to both the

early, so-called philosophical, Daoists, and later, so-called religious, Daoists, I believe that this dual usage of the term and other evidence shows that from a social historical perspective the dichotomy between religion and philosophy in Chinese culture is unwarranted (Sivin 1978: 303–30; Stein 1979).<sup>1</sup>

It is important to point out that from within the traditions of Daoist teachings or Daojiao, especially the esoteric sects, e.g. the Sect of the Covenant with the Powers of the Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi Mengweipai 正一盟威派, also called the Celestial Master Sect, Tianshipai 天師派), or the Sect of Mount Wudang (Wudangshanpai 武當山派), there is no perceived “break,” or separation, between religion and philosophy, to demarcate the early Daoists (e.g., Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 莊子) from themselves, that is, later Daojiao teachings. Daoists practitioners utilize both the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* texts, and the person of Laozi is venerated as Lord Lao, Laojun 老君, an avatar of the Dao 道, who allegedly revealed scriptures such as the *Way and Its Power* (*Daodejing* 道德經), the *Yellow Court Classic* (*Huangtingjing* 黃庭經), or the *Treatise on Response and Retribution* (*Ganyingpian* 感應篇), not to mention the various other titles, pseudonyms or esoteric names, such as WEI Boyang 魏伯陽, that Daoists use to honor Laozi. Therefore, I do not make the common, religion versus philosophy, distinction in discussing “Daoism.” However, in the midst of this Daojiao view of continuity with their later day teachings and the ancient masters, which I might add, such a view of continuity is held by many esoteric-mystical traditions. For instance, the Cabala traces itself back to Moses, Chan/Zen to the Buddha, Sufis to Mohammed, and so on. There are numerous “sects” or variant perspectives on the teachings of the Dao (a diversity of interpretations naturally occurs in every religio-philosophical tradition, that is, divergent views and practices generate various sects). For example, in the Zhou dynasty, during the Warring States Period (480–221 BCE.), there appear to have been at least two different, yet inter-related, Daoist perspectives: one was chiefly governmental, that is the *Laozi*, and the other was basically antinomian and concerned with positive transformation (*hua* 化) and self-actualizing True Persons (*zhenren* 真人) of the *Zhuangzi*. The two texts however share some common expressions for meditation and self-cultivation practices (Roth 1999). Those meditation and self-cultivation practices constitute part of the unifying continuity of Daoism across the ages. The two interpretations were synthesized as Lao–Zhuang 老莊 thought, for instance in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and the *Wenzi* 文子. Sayings attributed to the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) are found in the *Liezi* 列子 (Graham 1990: 47; Tu 1979: 103–6). There are what are believed to be the *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經), from the Mawangdui 馬王堆 tomb, that were in circulation at that time (Yates 1997: 47–178). Thomas Michael has noted the importance of nurturing life *yangsheng* 養生 self-cultivation practices in early Daoism (Michael 2015: 93–138). To understand

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<sup>1</sup> See my master’s thesis, “Dao Shih: Religion, Philosophy, and Self-actualization,” University of Hawaii at Manoa 1981, p. 40. I show that H. G. Creel’s distinction of “contemplative and purposive” Daoism is not textually tenable.

the Daoist interest in alchemy, it is important to point out that the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), a Daoist mythical figure, is attributed with practicing alchemy. The *Zhuangzi* Chap. 6, entitled “The Great Venerable Teacher (*Dazongshi* 大宗師)”, recounts the Yellow Emperor’s ascension into the heavens, and the myth developed that the Yellow Emperor achieved immortality by concocting the elixir (*dan* 丹) in a sacrificial *ding* 鼎 vessel. The Yellow Emperor’s political philosophy was syncretized with the *Laozi* and was called Huang–Lao 黃老. However, the interactions between Huang–Lao and Lao–Zhuang are vague. HSIAO Kung-chuan contends that the Lao–Zhuang teaching became known as the Huang–Lao teachings during the Early Han (206 BCE.–8 CE.), and then during the Later Han (25–220 CE.), they regained the name Lao–Zhuang (Hsiao 1979: 549–601). To compound the matter, there were a few different Huang–Lao schools, for example: (1) a political school; (2) an alchemy school; (3) and a “messianic” school (Hsiao 1979: 602–67; Needham 1976, vol. 5: 50; Seidel 1969: 22). Within the divergent schools or sects, there was an attempt to reconcile the two primary Daoist views of government (the *Laozi*) and self-actualization (the *Zhuangzi*), and this, in part, leads to the confusion of the term “the arts of the Dao (*daoshu* 道術)” —that can be understood in three primary ways: (1) the Dao of government; (2) the Dao of mystical union; and (3) the Dao of immortality. Furthermore, these different perspectives overlap in two important ways: first, the tradition of mystical union with the Dao (some *Laozi* chapters, the “Inner Training [*Nei-ye* 內業]” chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Liezi* and their meditative practices continued in *neidan* [inner-meditative alchemy]) appears to refer to immortality as a metaphor for union with the Dao, that is, in the sense that when a person unites with the Dao—the long lasting—she attains mystical or spiritual immortality, yet this is not an ego-centric, personal, or physical immortality. Rather it is a highly sophisticated religio-philosophical conception, and this impersonal mystical “immortality” will be important to keep in mind when we come to ZHU Xi’s view of immortality and his view of sagehood. Second, since the time of Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 and the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE.), it became an imperial pastime to seek out not only the arts of good government, but also the arts of physical immortality, because the two projects were of great importance to some emperors: with the governing skills a ruler could keep the empire in order, and with physical immortality he could rule forever becoming a true August Emperor (*huangdi* 皇帝). Thus, the quest for the elixir that would impart physical immortality became more popular than the pursuit of self-actualization via union with the Dao; such that by the early fourth century CE., the Daoist alchemist, GE Hong 葛洪 (ca. 283–343 or 363) was criticizing the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* for their “pessimistic” views of death (Graham 1960: 5). Clearly GE Hong stood outside of the esoteric-mystical tradition (maybe therefore he did not receive *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*). After the time of GE Hong, Daoism continues to grow along both esoteric and popular paths with much interaction and intermixing of views and practices both internally among Daoists teachings and sects, and externally with Buddhism and the *Yijing* 易經 (*The Book of Changes*).

To some extent ZHU Xi is responsible for what has become a commonplace distinction between early classical Daoism (called Daoist Philosophy) and later forms of ritual, meditation, alchemy, immortality, and other practices (called Daoist religion). Although ZHU Xi did not use the term Daoism (Daojia 道家 or Daojiao 道教), he distinguished the classical Lao–Zhuang texts from the later cult of immortality. ZHU Xi preferred the classical texts (Ching 2000: 153). His preference influenced later scholars to highlight an apparent difference between the early texts, and the alleged later practices and beliefs in immortality. As a political realist Zhu preferred the *Laozi* over the *Zhuangzi*, which he took to be less socially responsible than the *Laozi*'s more apparent political concerns (Ching 2000: 155).

Although ZHU Xi's relationship with Daoism has been described as contradictory or inconsistent (Ching 2000: 152), the Daoist influence on his thinking is foundational and pervasive. Why do I make such a claim? The foundational and pervasive character of Daoist ideas are contained not only in the Diagram of the Great Polarity or *Taijitu* and the other diagrams, such as, the (Yellow) River Chart or the *Hetu* 河圖, the Writ of the Lou (River) or the *Luoshu* 洛書, the Diagram of the Posterior Heaven or the *Houtiantu* 後天圖, the Diagram of the Prior Heaven or the *Xiantiantu* 先天圖 which are well known to be of Daoist origin, but also Daoist forms of self-cultivation play a role in ZHU Xi's aspirations for sagehood. On the one hand, Zhu is critical of Daoist thinkers for not being adequately engaged with the socio-political-moral activities and practices needed to advance social and political harmony or for promoting the "pottery-shards" of Buddhism or legendary Daoist fictions of physical immortality. On the other hand, he acknowledges that the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* are elegantly written classical works worth reading for their insights, and that Daoist breathing exercises and medicine have practical psychological and physical health benefits. Because ZHU was promoting a worldview based on the ancient traditions of what he understood to be the sages of the Confucian teachings, he could not or would not openly advocate the Daoist perspective. Being under the court's scrutiny for his own alleged heresy, he would not and could not openly advocate the "heresy" of Daoism; at least not until the ideas of Daoism were washed clean and transposed into something he could work with (Ching 2000). As a public teacher ZHU had to maintain his public advocacy of the Confucian teachings; as an open-minded scholar he was willing to inquire into any and all resources, including Daoist cosmological ideas, diagrams, and self-cultivation practices. This is how ZHU Xi balanced inquiry and advocacy. ZHU was very concerned to distinguish and to separate the cosmological ideas in the early classical works from the ever-popular claims of personal immortality made by the later Daoist sects. In his old age, like many, he became more attracted to the Daoist practices and medicine for health and longer life.

ZHU Xi recognized that the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* were classical texts. As classical texts he held them in high regard. ZHU preferred the *Laozi* because it was more politically engaged than the *Zhuangzi*. He took the *Laozi*'s practical and important lessons of humility, especially for officials in high office, and effortless action to be good advice, but he criticized the *Laozi*'s teaching for being overly selfish and dis-

connected from the social and political world (Ching 2000: 154). He felt that the *Laozi* paved the way for the development of Legalism and the military strategy used in the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of the Secret Talisman* or *Huangdi Yinfujing*. ZHU felt that the *Liezi* was an older text that influenced the *Zhuangzi*. He was more critical of the *Zhuangzi*, proposing that it was even less concerned with moral norms and more focused on personal security than the *Laozi* (Ching 2000: 156). As Ching points out, ZHU does find some redeeming value in the *Zhuangzi*. For example, he sees in the *Zhuangzi's* metaphor about Butcher Ding carving up an ox, his stages of development and his nineteen years of practice to be an example of the importance of gradual self-cultivation over the sudden approach, which was popular at that time (Ching 2000: 156).

### 3 Inner-Meditative Alchemy (*Neidan dao* 內丹道)

ZHU Xi's philosophy, especially his approach to the cultivation of sagehood, was influenced by Daoist inner-meditative alchemy practices or *neidan dao*.

Although it is inappropriate to distinguish Daojia as philosophical and Daojiao as religious, there is a need to attempt to clearly demarcate the range and complexity of the various historical schools and sects in the history of Daoism. Two important schools which must be recognized as distinct, yet very often interrelated and connected, are the two alchemy schools of Daoism, namely, inner-meditative alchemy (*neidan* 內丹), and external-chemical alchemy (*waidan* 外丹). The latter is "... commonly what the Daoists (Daojia) refer to as *jindan* 金丹 (i.e., the metallic-cinnabar, Gold or Golden Elixir), concerned with cinnabar (*dansha* 丹砂), and other things which deal with the heating (*shaolian* 燒煉, commonly translated as "alchemy") and compounding (*cheng* 成) the elixir (*dan* 丹) used to make the dosage of the external elixir (*waidan*) to be eaten; it forms a symmetrical whole with *neidan*" (Li 1977: 205). Whereas *waidan* is primarily concerned with compounding a chemical elixir; *neidan*, as we see in the following, is predominately directed toward self-cultivation by means of harmonizing the vital forces of life within the body with meditative breathing, visualization and other techniques to culminate in mystical union with the cosmos. *Neidan* is commonly defined as:

The Daoist (Daojia) methods (*shu* 術) of meditative-cultivation and transmutation (*xiulian* 修煉) such as Dragon-Tiger Cultivation (Longhu 龍虎), Lead-Mercury Cultivation (Qiankong 鉛汞), embryonic breathing (Taixi 胎息), and controlled-slow-respiration (Tuna 吐納) are used for the inner-meditative elixir (*neidan* 內丹). Other meditative practices (*gongfu* 工夫) associated with the cinnabar vessel (*danding* 丹鼎 that is the lower section of the ventral abdomen in the lower cinnabar field, or *dantian* 丹田) are: 1. cleansing the body and heart-mind, i.e., to empty the heart-mind, *mu-yu* 沐浴, 2. Gentle nourishment, *wen-yang* 溫養, 3. binding the embryo, i.e., focusing the lower cinnabar field on union with Dao, *jietai* 結胎, and 4. casting off the body, *tuoti* 脫體; all of this entails the meditative-cultivation of the vital-essence and energy-breath, *jingqi* 精氣 in the cinnabar field or *dantian*. It (*neidan*) uses the three forces of the human body, i.e., vital-essence (*jing* 精), energy-breath (*qi* 氣), and consciousness-spirit (*shen* 神). The three forces of the body are

used to mutually penetrate into the primordial life-force (*yuan-qi* 元氣) of the cosmos; this generates the law (*fa* 法) of mystical union of humans and nature (*tianren heyi zhifa* 天人合一之法). By compounding *jing* 精, the *qi* 氣 is transformed; compounding *qi* 氣, the *shen* 神 is transformed, and compounding the *shen* 神 you return to the void (*xu* 虛). This is the practice of disengaging from worldly affairs. (Li 1977: 96. Similar descriptions can be found in Chen 1963, vol. 2: 447; Saso 1979: 33; Chang 1963: 163)

The distinction between, and yet the symmetry and interrelationship of, *waidan* and *neidan* is not unique to Chinese alchemy. In this respect the *waidan/neidan* distinction appears to be comparable with the exoteric/esoteric dichotomy in European alchemy. E. J. Holmyard portrays this distinction in the following:

Alchemy is of a twofold nature, an outward or exoteric and a hidden or esoteric. Exoteric alchemy is concerned with attempts to prepare a substance, the philosophers' stone, or simply the Stone, endowed with the power of transmuting the base metals ... into the precious metals' gold and silver. The Stone ... sometimes known as the Elixir or Tincture and was credited ... with prolonging human life indefinitely. The belief that it could be obtained only by divine grace and favor led to the development of esoteric or mystical alchemy and this developed into a devotional system where the mundane transmutations of metals became merely symbolic of the transmutation of sinful man into a perfect being ... [recall that this describes European post-Christian alchemy]. The two kinds of alchemy were often inextricably mixed.... (Holmyard 1968: 15–16)<sup>2</sup>

Given the mystical concern of the inner-meditative alchemy practices, and the need for a teacher-scholar of the Dao (Daoshi 道士 or later priest) to guide the student in the use of the various *daoshu* 道術 (meditative methods for union with the Dao discussed above), that is, an esoteric oral transmission (*koujue* 口訣) is required, thus, *neidan* can be translated as esoteric alchemy, but the long standing Christian connotations of that term warrant an alternative translation. I tentatively offer the translation “inner-meditative alchemy” for *neidan*. It can be identified by its threefold concern for: (1) the panenhenic—all in one—mystical union with the ultimate reality or *dao* of nature; (2) personal transformation or self-realization derived from the mystical experience of union with the ultimate *dao* of nature; and (3) meditative practices and breathing exercises to assist the realization of the experience. Given the complexity of the esoteric inner-meditative alchemy and its preeminent Daoist transmission, a person might wonder how or why ZHU Xi was interested in the study of *neidan* inner-meditative alchemy. Recall the numerous passages and chapters in the classical literature concerned with self-actualization, the realization of sagehood, and the overtly humanistic concerns for the growth and development of human potential. ZHU Xi as the great synthesizer and innovator of Chinese religious-philosophical thinking, naturally had his views on the topic of self-cultivation and sagehood. *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Jinsilu* 近思錄) presents ZHU Xi's program for attaining sagehood and note that *juan* 卷 13 is concerned with “sifting out” the non-Confucian traditions in regard to their (heretical) teaching of sagehood (Zhu and Lu 1977, vol. 5/13; Chan 1967: Ch. 13). Not only was there an over-

<sup>2</sup>The paths of convergence are so intertwined that Li (1977: 96) uses “conservation” (*hanyang* 涵養) to define “nurturing inner-nature” (*yangxing* 養性).

whelming body of literature on self-cultivation and sagehood which stood before the editorial skills of ZHU Xi, but there was also a long development of various perspectives and schools that studied health, hygiene, and the promotion or prolonging of the life-span, for example the school of Medicine (Yixue 醫學), the school of pharmacology and herbs (meteria medica, *bencao* 本草), the schools of sexual hygiene, cults and practices of physical immortality (*xiandao* 仙道), a variety of good life and long-life (*shou* 壽) practices and beliefs, and also the esoteric mystical-immortality practices (Yu 1964–1965: 80–122; Welch 1966). Naturally, as a Song dynasty administrator, ZHU Xi had to know and understand many things to adequately serve his government. He was also the administrator of at least six Daoist temples (Ching 2000: 152). Thus, his philosophical emphasis on the thorough investigation of things, *gewu* 格物, and the exhaustive-comprehension of pattern/principle, *qiongli* 窮理, had great effect on the depth and breadth of his studies (for a similar discussion, see Tomoeda 1971: 59–60). His open mindedness and access to Daoist materials led to his study of the major Daoist texts and diagrams made available to him from his Daoist friends and the libraries of the Song dynasty Daoist temples he administered (Qian 1986: 324–26).

Above I argued that from the Daoist “perspective” there is no serious difference perceived between their later teachings and those of Huangdi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. Most of the post-Qin dynasty (after 206 BCE.) schools or sects of Daojiao maintained the early Masters in their pantheons into and beyond the Song dynasty. As we will see in the following, it is primarily the inner-meditative alchemy practices and the numerologist Daoists of the Song who influence ZHU Xi’s cosmogony, his interpretation of *The Book of Changes*, his theory and method of personal transformation to cultivate and attain sagehood. I discussed the interrelationships of alchemy and “Daoism” and why I translate *neidan* as “inner-meditative alchemy” rather than “esoteric alchemy.” In his studies ZHU Xi’s approach was comprehensive, thorough, and open minded. Because he was primarily concerned, like every other major religio-philosophical thinker of China, with self-cultivation and the attainment of sagehood, it was only natural that he investigated the Buddhist and Daoist approaches also.

Next, I argue that ZHU Xi’s use of the Diagram of the Great Polarity, *Taijitu*, was not only intended by him as a diagram of cosmogony, but that he also understood it as a diagram for the meditative process of returning to the source—the Dao as non-polarity *wuji* 無極. I show that his conception of sagehood was influenced by two important *neidan* texts, namely *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi Cantongqi* 周易參同契 or simply the *Cantongqi* 參同契) and *The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of the Secret Talisman* (*Huangdi Yinfujing* 黃帝陰符經, abbreviated as the *Yinfujing* 陰符經).



## 4 The Diagrams and the Texts

In the study of ancient manuscripts, it is important to utilize an historical and hermeneutical approach. Historians approach a document with two primary questions in mind: what type of information is offered, and how reliable is the information? A critical textual hermeneutic must begin from these two historical questions before it can adequately work out an understanding and interpretation of the text studied. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to generate a complete methodology, I offer the following eleven questions as a foundation for developing such a methodology and to provide an idea of the complexity of a textual hermeneutic. The questions are:

- (1) What is the date of the text; and what is the socio-historical context of the text?
- (2) Who is the author (if it is a pseudonym, what is its meaning and origin)?
- (3) What is the text's title; its meaning and possible translation?
- (4) What audience is it directed toward, and what is the worldview presupposed by the text?
- (5) What is the literary style and linguistic content of the text?
- (6) What is the content of the text (a more detailed exposition of the first historical question)?
- (7) What are the known outside references to the text or its main ideas/concepts or quoted passages?
- (8) Who are its commentators, and what are their commentaries?
- (9) Who are the commentators' audiences and their presupposed worldviews?
- (10) What are the commentators' understandings of the text?
- (11) What is the present status of the text?

Of course, to answer these questions would require a book in itself—creating a hermeneutic circle from the old text(s) to the new text(s). I do not attempt to answer all these questions in any detail concerning the *Diagram of the Great Polarity*, *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, or *The Classic of the Secret Talisman*. I mention these questions because they are an important part of this, or any, hermeneutical textual study.

### 4.1 *The Diagram of the Great Polarity (Taijitu)*

There are at least five diagrams which had an impact on ZHU Xi's philosophy. They are: (1) the (Yellow) River Chart or the *Hetu* 河圖, (2) the Writ of the Luo (River) or the *Luoshu* 洛書, (3) the Diagram of the Prior Heaven or the *Xiantiantu* 先天圖, (4) the Diagram of the Posterior Heaven or the *Houtiantu* 後天圖, and (5) the Diagram

of the Great Polarity or the *Taijitu* 太極圖 (see charts A-F). The *Xiantiantu* and *Houtiantu* offer two arrangements of the eight trigrams from *The Book of Changes*.

The *Hetu* and *Luoshu* had a long-standing tradition, in both Confucianism and Daoism, prior to the time of ZHU Xi (Saso 1978). According to HSÜ Pao-chien, ZHU Xi and his befriended disciple CAI Yuanding 蔡元定 (a.k.a. CAI Jitong 蔡季通, 1135–1198) “... believed that the ‘River Map’ (*Hetu* or [Yellow] River Chart) and the ‘Lo-shu’ (*Luoshu* or Writ of the Luo [River]), which had been lost for thousands of years, were then for the first time restored!” (Hsü 1933: 44). This implies that ZHU Xi accepted the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命) theory which proposes that the charts appear only when a propitious emperor is on the throne. The personal value that ZHU Xi placed on the *Hetu* and *Luoshu* must be left for a later study. It is interesting to note that the Qing dynasty scholar HU Wei 胡渭 (1633–1714) “... points out that the diagrams prefixed to ZHU Xi’s books [that is, *The Original Meaning of The Zhou Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義) and *A Beginner’s Guide to the Book of Changes* (*Yixue qimeng* 易學啟蒙)] were due to the insistence of CAI Yuanding, somewhat against the wishes of ZHU Xi himself” (Hsü 1933: 47n68). However, according to Hsü, although the charts were transmitted to ZHU Xi via SHAO Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077) and LIU Mu 劉牧 (1011–1064), ZHU Xi apparently reversed (or corrected) the titles of the *Hetu* and *Luoshu* as given by LIU Mu (Hsü 1933: 44n63). I turn now to discuss the Diagram of the Great Polarity.

Although some scholars disagree with the Daoist, or even the Chinese, origin of the Diagram of the Great Polarity (Wilhelm 1967: lx; Ching 2000: 235–41), as QIAN Mu has pointed out, “... the Song dynasty Neo-Confucians (Lijia 理家) ... commonly accepted that the source of ZHOU Lianxi’s 周濂溪 (i.e., ZHOU Dunyi 周敦頤, 1017–1073) *Taiji* chart and Kangjie’s 康節 (i.e., SHAO Yong) *Xiantian* chart could be traced back to CHEN Xiyi 陳希夷 (i.e., CHEN Tuan 陳搏, ca. 906–989), and Zhuizi did not attempt to cover-up the Daoist origin of the charts” (Qian 1986: 345; Fung 1952: 438; Hsü 1933: 39–40; Chan 1976: 280; Cady 1939: 63–64). Furthermore, setting aside Berling’s decisive argument which substantiates the Daoist origin of the chart, to claim that it is not of Chinese origin would mean that the intertwining-concentric circle symbol of the interlocking of *yin* and *yang* 陰陽, and the five-part mandala composed of the *wuxing* 五行, which are two uniquely Chinese concepts, are not Chinese at all—and this seems wrong and absurd. However, that the chart is uniquely Daoist has been argued for by FUNG Yu-lan and Berling. Although I agree with Fung that the chart pre-dates the Song dynasty (960–1278), the preface to the ... *Diagram of the Wonderful-Secret Classic Shangfang Datong Zhenyuan Miaojingtu* 上方大洞真元妙經圖 (hereafter *Diagram of the Wonderful-Secret Classic Miaojingtu* 妙經圖), which contains the Diagram of the Great Polarity (see Appendix I; Chart D), is prefixed to two texts, the *Miaojingtu* is the second text, and neither text is mentioned in the alleged Tang dynasty preface (Fung 1952: 438; Azuma 2017: 49–50). Angus Graham disputes the Tang origin of that text (Graham 1992: 172n18) and so does Kristofer Schipper

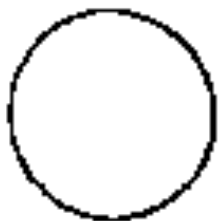
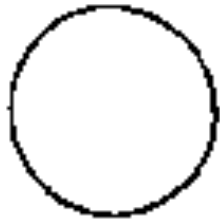
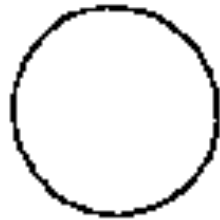
四子全書 卷一

二

而察。而五峯初氏作序。又以為先生非止為神農之學者。其物其學之一師爾。非其至者也。夫以先生之學之妙。不出此圖。以為得之於人。則決非神農所及。以為非其至者。則先生之學。又何以加於此。而哉。是以竊嘗疑之。及得誌文考之。然後知其果先生所自作。而非有受於人者。二公蓋未嘗見此誌。而云云爾。

陰靜

坤道成女



萬物化生

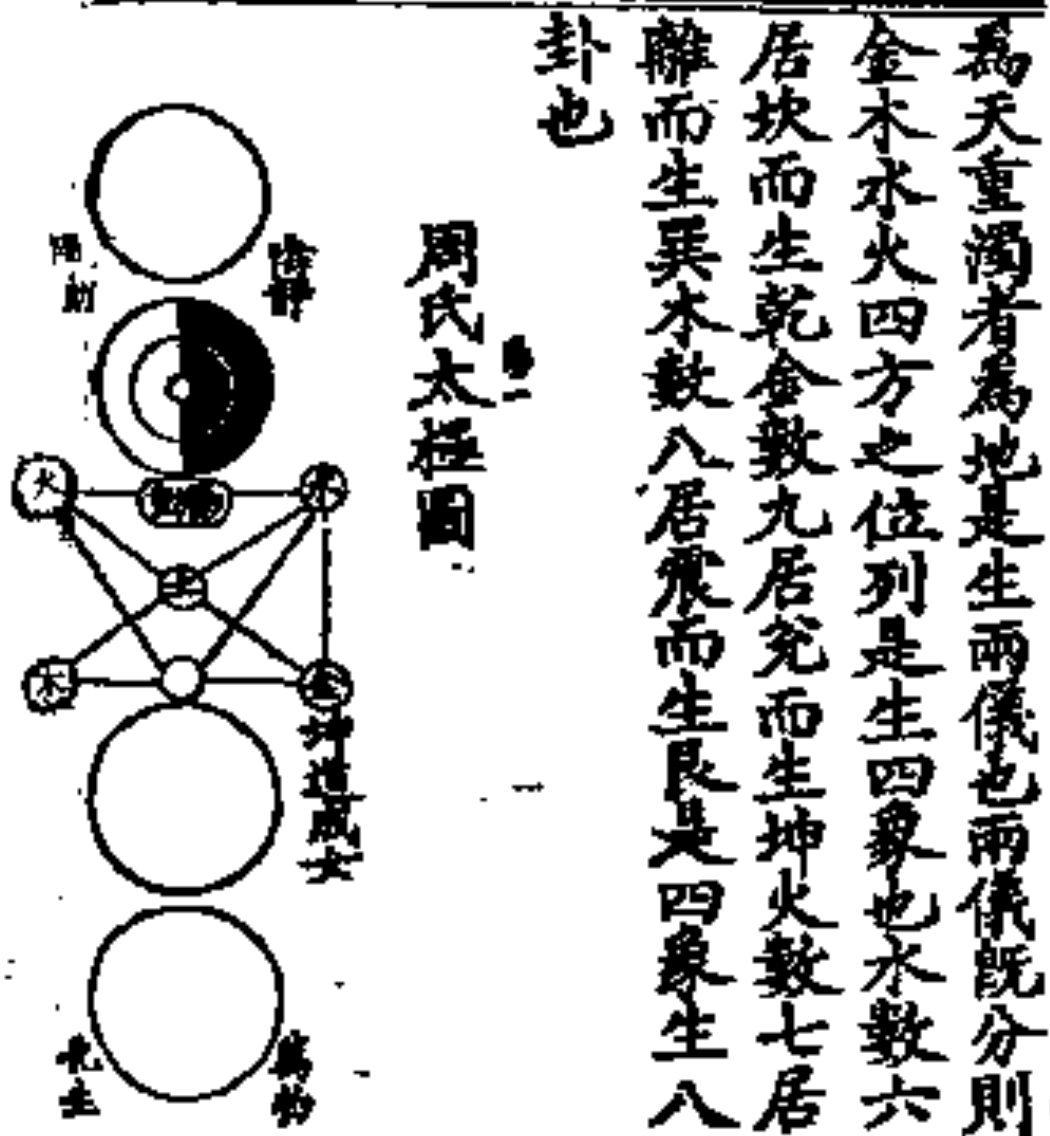
陽動

乾道成男

朱子曰。○此所謂無極而太極也。所以動而陽靜而陰之本體也。太極。理也。動靜。性也。以之。然非有以。離乎陰陽也。故不離。自然陰而指其本體。証中之。不離乎陰陽而為言耳。道是理。在是器。已上三句。○此

Chart A ZHOU Dunyi's chart in the *Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Polarity (Taijitu Shuo 太極圖說)*, also in *Daozang jiyao 道藏輯要*, vol. 216

一第上卷



**Chart B** ZHOU Dunyi, *The Diagram of the Zhou (Dynasty Book of) Changes (Zhou Yi Tu 周易圖)*, in *Daoist Canon (Daozang 道藏)*, vol. 69, p. 1b. With stylistic differences the Diagram is similar to Chart A

(Schipper and Verellen 2004: 1216–23). Thus, more work needs to be done concerning the dating of the texts which contain the *Taiji* diagram. For example, the *wuji* 無極 diagram (Appendix I; Chart E), which is missing the small “alchemical circle” and the lines connecting it to the phases fire and water, is also of unknown origin. Berling’s argument that the “... little circle beneath the five phases ... (reveals) ... the Daoist origin of the diagram,” is correct (Berling 1979: 130). Because that smaller, unmarked, sixth circle, which I refer to as the “alchemical circle,” is not mentioned in any Neo-Confucian explanation of the diagram (Berling 1979: 130), and because it apparently serves no function in a purely cosmogonic explanation of

## 一第上卷

## 圖極太有易

右太極圖周敦實茂叔傳二程先生茂叔  
 曰無極而太極太極動而生陽動極而靜  
 靜極復動一動一靜互為其根分陰分陽  
 兩儀立焉陽變陰合而生水火木金土五

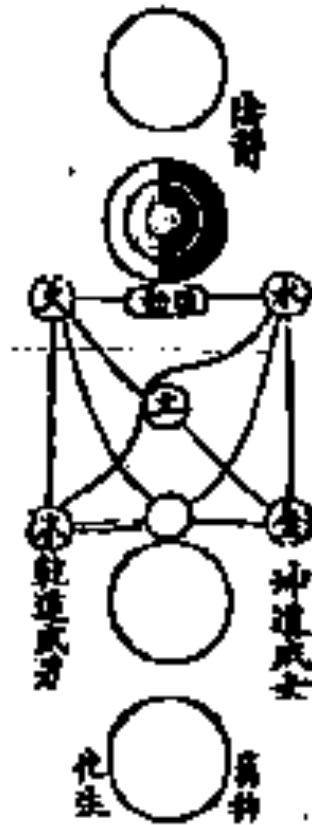


Chart C LIU Mu 劉牧. *Dayi Xiangshu Goushentu* 大易象數鉤深圖, in *Daozang* 道藏, vol. 70, p. 1b

the diagram, we must ask: why did ZHU Xi continue to draw that sixth, smaller, “alchemical circle” in transmitting the Diagram of the Great Polarity? Did he replicate the “alchemical circle” because he understood its esoteric use? (see Charts A–D).

I would like to present a case that the previous interpretations of the Daoist and Neo-Confucian applications of the diagram of the *Taiji* are only partially correct. I propose that both the Daoists and the Neo-Confucians, or at least ZHU Xi, used the diagram in a twofold manner, namely, to chart the evolution of the cosmos—a type of cosmogony—and secondly as an (esoteric) diagram symbolizing the mystic’s return to union with the supreme ultimate—Dao as *wuji* and *taiji*.



Note that the margin notes are moved up one section of the diagram as compared with Zhou Dunyi's diagram seen above in diagrams A and B.

Chart D Author unknown. The *Shangfang Datong Zhenyuan Miaojingtu* 上方大洞真元妙經圖, in *Daozang* 道藏, vol. 196, p. 3b. FUNG Yu-lan dates the text to the Tang dynasty. A. C. Graham disputes that date and so do Schipper and Verellen 2004: 1216–23

First, we must recall that ZHU Xi apparently made some editorial alterations or corrections with LIU Mu's 劉牧 (1011–1064) *Hetu* and *Luoshu* (Hsü 1933: 44n63). Why then did he not take the liberty to remove the “alchemical circle” especially since it plays no apparent cosmogonic role? Furthermore, the Diagram of the Great

修真十書金丹大成集

○者道也形而上者謂之道斯乃道之體也  
 无極而太極○合三為一中具五十五數中  
 ○者乃其本體也太極一判兩微生焉○之  
 動根乎陰也○之靜根乎陽也此陽變  
 陰合而生水火土金木也水生數一成數六







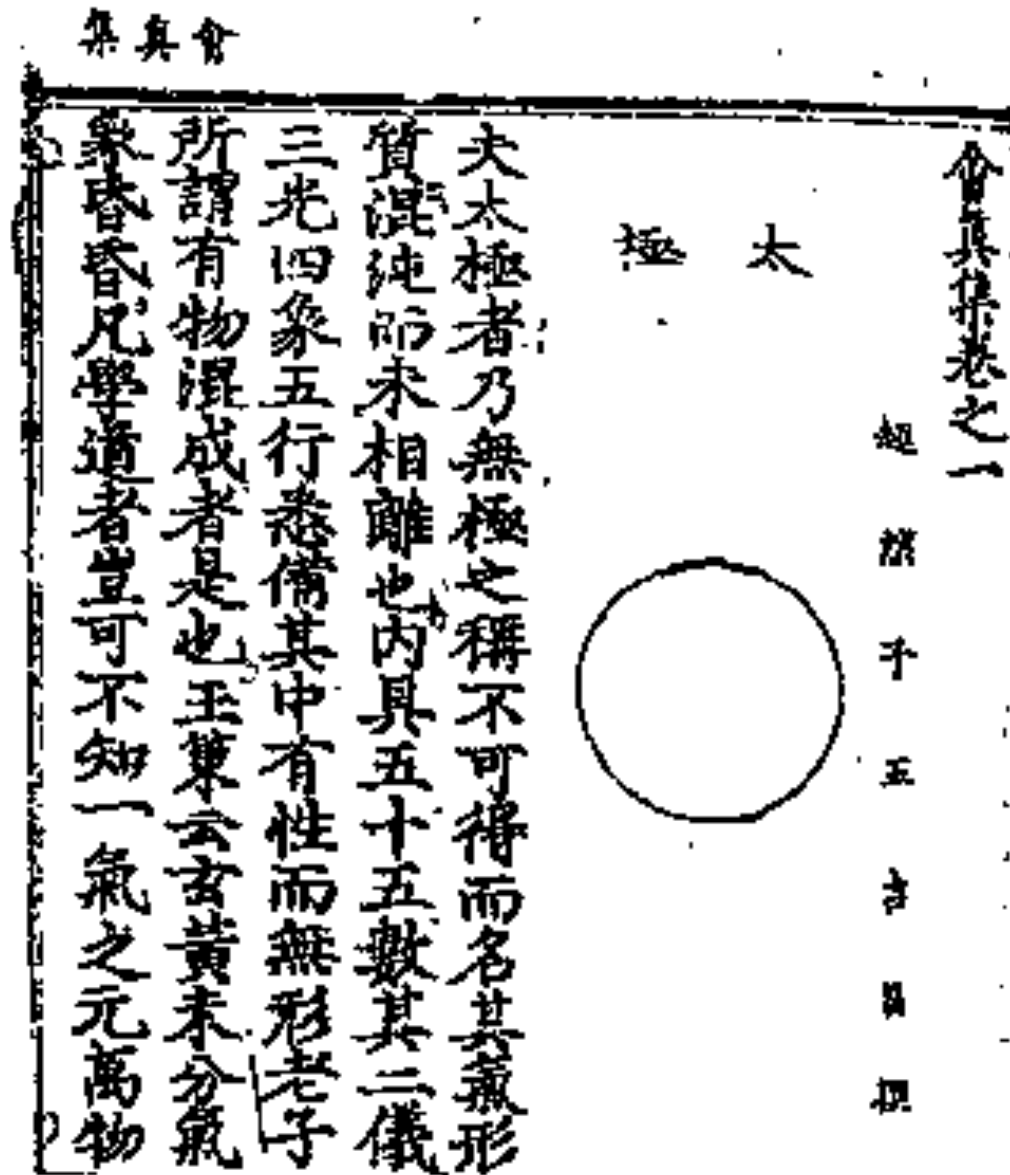
无極圖說

紫虛子真子蕭廷之述

Note that this diagram is called the "Non-Polarity Diagram Explained (Wujin shuo 無極圖說) and the margin notes at the top stating "yin passive" and "yang active" and the little alchemical circle between wood and metal are missing.

Chart E LIAO Zhenzi 了真子 and XIAO Tingzhi 蕭廷之 (Yuan dynasty). *Xiuzhen Shishu Jindan dachengji* 修真十書金丹大成集, in *Daozang* 道藏, vol. 123, p. 1a

Polarity serves as the foundation of ZHU Xi's metaphysics and his philosophical system. When LU Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1192/93) attacked the authenticity and value of the *Taiji* diagram, he struck the core of ZHU Xi's philosophy (Cady 1939: 282; Huang 1944: Ch. 4). Although the Qing scholars argued against a cosmological interpretation of the diagram, as Hsü has pointed out, "... it must have some cosmo-



**Note the simplicity of style.**

Chart F WANG Jichang 王吉昌 (Song dynasty), *Huizhenji* 會真集, in *Daozang*, vols. 116–17, p. 1a

logical significance... ” tied to divination as the Song thinkers were so artful in combining their cosmology with *The Book of Changes* (Hsu 1933: 41–42). Most contemporary scholars accept the findings of HUANG Zongyan (HUANG Tsung-yen 1616–1686) concerning the Daoist and Neo-Confucian applications of the diagram. Hsü and Fung discuss Huang’s interpretation:

The Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (i.e., *Taiji*) was invented by HO-SHANG Kung (HE-SHANG Gong 河上公, a late Han Daoist commentator on the *Laozi*) and handed down to CH’EN T’uan (CHEN Tuan). It was originally called the Diagram of the Infinite (i.e., *Wuji*)



and was used for obtaining the elixir.... CHOU Tun-i (ZHOU Dunyi) converted it to the diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, reversed its sequence, and surreptitiously attributed it to the *Yijing*. (Hsü 1933: 43)

And Fung proposes that:

(ZHOU Dunyi) maintained that it had been secretly transmitted by the Confucians.... the Daoist practitioners ... orientated (their use of the diagram) from below upward. But Master Chou (Zhou) ... orientated (his diagram) from above downward. (Fung 1952: 440, n1, n2)

Thus, it has been commonly accepted that the Daoists used the diagram to return to the cosmogonic source, that is reading the diagram from the bottom upward to the top as a meditation of return; whereas it is believed that the Neo-Confucians (only) applied the diagram in a cosmogonic manner, that is, reading the diagram from the top downward as a cosmogony. This view appears to me to be in error of both the Daoist and the Neo-Confucian, at least ZHU Xi's, application of the diagram.

The above view is a misinterpretation of Daoist metaphysics and cosmogony and ZHU Xi's Neo-Confucian conception of the cultivation of sagehood. Daoists are concerned with both the return of the Dao and their return to the Dao; they are concerned with the metaphysical aspects of cosmogony as they relate to self-cultivation and inner-meditative alchemy. Daoists use the chart in both directions—upward to return *to* the Dao and downward for the return *of* the Dao. (Note that in many religio-philosophical systems there is some form of a “comprehensive circle,” e.g., the Cartesian circle, the Samsara–Nirvana circle, the hermeneutical circle, and so on.) The *Laozi* is well known for its cycle of reversion and the interpretations of a mystical or panenhenic (all in one) experience that accompany it, and its poems of generation, especially poem forty-two. Naturally, the *Zhuangzi*, in its antinomian spirit, rejects any conventionally affirmable cosmogony, and yet in his artful jest and play with allusion, Zhuangzi may very well have coined the expression “*Taiji*” (*Zhuangzi* 1956: 16/6/32). The Daoist roots of the expression are covered up sometimes because some translators appear to believe that “*Taiji*” is a Confucian concept from the *Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳 appendix to *The Book of Changes (Yijing 易經)*. The *Zhuangzi* states: (Dao) *zai taiji zhi xian er bu wei gao* 在太極之先而不為高 (*Zhuangzi* 1956: 16/6/32). “The Dao is prior to the Great Polarity, *Taiji*, and yet it is not (called) grand.” Watson's translation washes out the expression *Taiji* as “[i]t exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it grand” (Watson 1968: 81). The parallel structure of the passage warrants an interpretation that uses “*taiji*” as an adjective in this passage.

After the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (first century BCE.), Zhuangzi's poetics served as the foundation for Daoist metaphysics and cosmogony which appears in such sources as the *Liezi*, Chap. 1, but note that the cosmogony of generation is not a simplex temporal development from “Primal Simplicity” through the four steps to “Primal Material.” Rather, the context gives the reader a feeling of a co-temporal process which is in-finite or ab-solute, not limited—in its imperceptible quality of unboundedness (Graham 1990: 18–20). I belabor the point concerning the sophistication of Daoist metaphysics, because it appears at some of its dialectical heights in the *Miaojingtu*, the text Fung dates to the Tang period, while Graham and Schipper

dispute that early date. The following passage follows the text's copy of the Diagram of the Prior Heaven Great Polarity *Taiji Xiantiantu* (see Appendix I; Chart D):

As for the consciousness-spirit (*shen* 神) of the Primal Simplicity, the energy-breath (*qi* 氣) of the Primal Commencement, the vital-essence (*jing* 精) of the Primal Beginning, and the form of the Primal Material which are the principle-way (Dao) of the Great Polarity (*Taiji*) which is without past and present, without beginning, without end. Since the Simplicity (*yi* 易, implying both "to change" and *the Book of Changes*) has the *Taiji*, it allows for the generation of the two principles (*liangyi* 兩儀) .... (*Miaojingtu* 1924–1926: 4a)

Regardless of the date of the *Miaojingtu*, the *Taiji* diagram was interpreted in a cosmological sense with connections and references to *The Book of Changes*. Therefore, despite the Qing dynasty scholars' rebuttals, even the Daoist use of the diagram apply it cosmologically and with *The Book of Changes*. Of course, the little "alchemical circle" is not discussed since it is esoteric and not open to public understanding. Therefore, Daoists use the *Taiji* diagram, exoterically, as a cosmogonic "map" and, esoterically, as an inner-meditative alchemy (mandala-like) chart for union with the Way of the Great Polarity (*Taiji zhi Dao* 太極之道).

Given the pre-Song dynasty exoteric use of the *Taiji* diagram, it is of little doubt that both ZHOU Dunyi and ZHU Xi would continue the exoteric transmission in writing. Of course, to prove that ZHU Xi understood the esoteric use of the diagram may well be an impossible task, especially given the oral tradition of the esoteric school (*kou jue* 口訣). However, as I will show in the next two sections, in discussing ZHU Xi's commentaries on two important *neidan* texts, his understanding must have been comprehensive and complete. Given the completeness of his other works and speculations, one would form the understanding that ZHU Xi must have a cosmogonic cycle of evolution and devolution, generation and return to the source, generally like the Daoist cosmogonic cycle, but specifically quite different because the Confucian diagram generates the five key social virtues (*wude* 五德), while the Daoist's diagram generates the cultivation of a person's vital-essence, *jing* 精, energy-breath, *qi* 氣, and consciousness-spirit *shen* 神. Although the pre-Song dynasty Confucians did not have a cosmogony, still they were concerned, though not in a mystical sense, with re-uniting with the Dao. The Confucian sage (*shengren* 聖人) functions in harmony with the Dao of civil and social order. ZHU Xi's conception of the role and function of the sage stresses a "... return to the simple truth" of the Dao (Chan 1967: 2)

I tentatively offer the following six points to show that ZHU Xi must have understood the Diagram of the Great Polarity, not only as a cosmogonic diagram, but also as a meditative process for developing the passivity and openness (*jing* 靜) of the *Taiji zhi Dao* 太極之道 (Dao of the *Taiji*). First, because ZHU Xi acknowledged the Daoist origin of the diagram, and because he does not mention in his writings or discussions about the *Taiji* diagram what the purpose of the "alchemical circle" is, and yet he did not delete its excess complexity; this and ZHU Xi's study of *neidan* Daoism implies that he must have had some understanding of the "alchemical circle" in the Diagram of the Great Polarity. However, currently we do not know what ZHU Xi's understanding of the "alchemical circle" was. That ZHU Xi might have understood the diagram as a

meditative process for re-union with the absolute is implied by his philosophy and temperament. Second, Tomoeda Ryūtarō has shown that ZHU Xi's personality was more attuned, in his early years after his father's death, to meditation without thinking (*Mozhao chan* 默照禪, i.e., Song dynasty Soto Zen meditation). This temperament for a quiet withdrawn perspective influenced ZHU Xi's later philosophical approach. Although ZHU Xi was corrected by his later Masters, for stressing "... unity with the Way amidst secluded quiet and apprehension of *wuweifa* 無為法 (the principle of effortless activity)" (Tomoeda 1971: 53); nevertheless, he did not completely reject it. In his mature thinking ZHU Xi attempted to balance passivity and action. Third, ZHU Xi's philosophical use of meditation to correct the intentions or will, his book *Breath Control*, *Tiaoxizhen* 調息箴, his ten year long struggle with the concepts "hitting the mark and achieving harmony *zhonghe* 中和," and his integration of movement and quiescence or the aroused and pre-aroused emotions *yifa weifa* 已發未發 as principles of the Great Polarity, as well as the expression "from non-polarity to great polarity" *wuji er taiji* 無極而太極—the alpha and omega of his metaphysics—all of his methodological and theoretical considerations attempt to harmonize a dialectical opposition which is rooted in the cosmogonic cycle of evolution and devolution—ontology and de-ontology (Tomoeda 1971: 60; Liu 1970: 312). Fourth, ZHU Xi's method of learning, and its goal, stress a personal transformation and return to one's original nature. As Hsü sums up ZHU Xi's goal of learning in the following:

The generally accepted objective of learning, resolution, and reflection is, of course, the elimination of selfish desires, the transformation of the material nature and the restoration of the original nature. According to CHU Hsi [ZHU Xi] human desire is acquired and is not innate. (Hsü 1933: 117n35)

By means of learning, ZHU Xi sought to restore the original nature, which is conveyed in his often-quoted passage from the *Mengzi*: "The sole concern of learning is to go after this strayed heart" (Hsü 1933: 126n52; Lau 1979: 167). Thus, ZHU Xi's concept of sagehood requires a recovery of the lost heart, that is, a return to the original nature, which is rooted in the Great Polarity. Fifth, to quiet the mind by making it passive and open by concentrating on the tranquil-passivity (*jing* 靜) of the *yin* 陰 aspect of the Great Polarity, so as to prepare oneself for activity is implied by an upward orientation of the Diagram of the Great Polarity by reading it from the bottom up, and here such a meditation on tranquil-passivity (*jing* 靜) parallels with ZHU Xi's teaching on mindful-sincerity (*jing* 敬), that is, "... to clear away wandering thoughts and stray ideas; from beginning to end, let there be a spirit of reverence (or mindful-sincerity)..." (Hsü 1933: 116). Finally, the complexity of the relationship between the two homophones *jing* 靜 and *jing* 敬 is deeply rooted in ZHU Xi's studies and interests in the *Book of Changes* and divination. It is clear, the Qing dynasty scholar's attack on the Diagram of the Great Polarity is mostly due to their lack of interest in the *Book of Changes* and the Song dynasty numerological interpretations of it (Hsü 1933: 40–41). Why ZHU Xi was interested in the *Book of Changes*; why he practiced divination; why he allowed CAI Yuanding to put the

River Chart, the Writ of the Luo (River), the Diagram of the Prior Heaven, and the Diagram of the Posterior Heaven in his works on the *Book of Changes*, and why he studied numerology are all important questions for understanding the interplay of tranquil-passivity (*jing* 靜) and mindful-sincerity (*jing* 敬) in his thought.

In its most complete form the Diagram of the Great Polarity was used, exoterically, as an explanation of the evolution of the cosmos, and it had an esoteric inner-meditative alchemy function for union with the Way of the Great Polarity *Taiji zhi Dao*. From the above six points, one can infer that ZHU Xi must have had an esoteric understanding of the diagram such that he continued to represent the “alchemical circle” to indicate to the knowledgeable that the diagram could be used meditatively for regaining one’s nature. Thus, the diagram requires more study to show that ZHU Xi intended his disciples to thoroughly investigate things and exhaustively-comprehend pattern/principle *gewu qiongli* 格物窮理 or in this case to completely study the parts and patterns of the diagram. However, the diagram must play an important role in the process of cultivating sagehood because ZHU Xi placed it first in ZHOU Lianxi’s 周濂溪 (ZHOU Dunyi’s) work, and first in his own handbook on sagehood—the *Jinsilu* 近思錄.

#### 4.2 *An Examination of Differences in the Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes (Zhouyi Cantongqi Kaoyi 周易參同契考異)*

The inner-meditative *neidan* influence on ZHU Xi’s concept of the cultivation of sagehood is even more clearly seen in his commentary on the *Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes (Zhouyi Cantongqi)*, commonly known as the *Zhouyi Cantongqi Kaoyi*) but it was published during the Song under the title *A Commentary on the Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes (Zhouyi Cantongqi Zhu 周易參同契註)* and is found in the *Daoist Canon (Daozang 道藏)* under that title (Zhu 1924–1926; Pregadio 2011; Liu 1978: 369–70; Wylie 1964: 218–19). Before I discuss ZHU Xi’s study of the text allow me to briefly digress to recapitulate some of the historical events which led to his study.

As QIAN Mu has pointed out,

The Li-school (Lijia 理家) of the Song dynasty enjoyed discussing the *Book of Changes*. They also enjoyed discussing the cosmos, *yin* and *yang*, cosmogony and evolution. They discussed all of this as connected with the Daoist followers of the Lao–Zhuang school. (Qian 1986: 345)

The Neo-Confucian concern with cosmology and their borrowing from Daoist mathematical interpretations of the *Book of Changes* (hereafter *The Changes*) are intimately linked with the social and spiritual crisis presented by the ever-growing, chiefly Buddhist, Northern kingdoms which had been encroaching on the mandarin-scholars since the mid-Tang dynasty (Hsü 1933: 59, 39–40). The political unrest of

the times forced many Confucians out of office and into early retirement, and thus with spare time on their hands, they turned to the study of *The Changes*, numerology, and inner-meditative alchemy (*neidan*) Daoism (Berling 1979: 126–27; Hsü 1933: 39–48; Fung 1952, vol. 2: 424–27). Furthermore, ZHU Xi was one of these scholars whose political career suffered because of the political crisis of the day. Since ZHU Xi had already developed a “proto-scientific” attitude from his studies of the classics and his bureaucratic experiences (Tomoeda 1971: 67–68, 59–60), he naturally carried this approach with him when he studied the *The Changes*, astronomy, numerology, and inner-meditative *neidan*. Although he was strictly a Neo-Confucian and even publicly denounced Daoism, ZHU Xi appears to have taken it quite seriously regarding meditative practices and self-cultivation. When we consider the xenophobic attitude of the Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty, and the long-standing Chinese approach of unity in opposition to foreigners, especially Buddhists, then LIU Ts’un-yan’s (LIU Cunren 柳存仁) hypothesis that ZHU Xi “... was thus more inclined towards Daoism, at least regarding mental cultivation ...” appears to be reasonably tenable (Liu 1970: 312). This claim does not deny the Buddhist influence on ZHU Xi; it merely points out that as a gentry scholar, he was personally more influenced by the native perspective of Daoism. Of course, Song dynasty Daoism was strongly influenced by Buddhism. Because *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* was accepted as a Daoist commentary to the *Book of Changes*, it is not surprising that ZHU Xi’s attention was drawn toward that book.

Furthermore, if the Qing dynasty scholars’, for examples, MAO Qiling 毛奇齡 and QIU Zhaoao 仇兆鰲, speculations concerning the possibility that *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* contained certain charts (from which either the *Taiji* diagram was constructed, Mao’s view, or the actual diagram itself was present, which is Qiu’s implication by including the diagram in his reconstruction of the text) (Fung 1952, vol. 2: 440–41; Qiu 1977) are valid, then it would appear that *neidan* Daoism must have had a deep influence on ZHU Xi’s philosophy. However, to substantiate this claim requires further research into the nature and origin of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* and the Diagram of the Great Polarity. Let us note what *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* has to say concerning the sage’s use of charts.

*The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* and ZHU Xi’s commentary make references to the River Chart and to the use of “maps” or diagrams (*tu* 圖) several times. In a later section of the text, which FUKUI Kojun dates as a later interpolation but accepts as part of the text by the end of the Tang dynasty (Fukui 1974: 21), there is an interesting discussion of the use of charts (*biao* 表):

The writings on the *I* (*The Changes*) by the three sages have a common goal, which is to propound according to the *Li* (patterned/principle) and to cause the spirit to shine forth.... A chart is drawn up for men of the future to follow, enabling them to carry out their processes in the proper order and in a simple manner. He who properly cultivates his inner nature ... will be able to return to his true root and origin. (Wu and Davis 1932: 261; Pregadio 2011: 114; Zhu 1924–1926: 6a)

This section to the “Epilogue” of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Zhou Book of Changes* reads as though there were charts appended to the text. This maybe the reason why Mao argues that there were charts in the text before ZHU Xi’s commentary was published, and if the charts were removed as Mao contends, then this would show that some of the later Neo-Confucians did attempt to conceal the Daoist origin of the charts (Fung 1952, vol. 2: 440).<sup>3</sup>

Fukui appears to be correct on dating the later sections as the above passage conflicts considerable with a passage from the inner text. In this passage, we are told that the sage cannot depend on making diagrams alone. Again, quoting Wu and Davis’s translation:

... The male and female are interdependent.... Its mysteriousness renders it difficult to surmise and impossible to picture (*buke huatu* 不可畫圖—impossible to make a diagram). The sage uses his own judgement to arrive at the essentials. (Wu and Davis 1932: 245; Pregadio 2011: 92; Zhu 1924–1926: 1a)

This passage has the flavor of Zhuangzi mysticism; where the sage is left to her own wits. Then, the text admits that its “... words are modelled on the sayings of the sages” (Wu and Davis 1932: 245; Pregadio 2011: 92; Zhu 1924–1926: 18b).

The above two passages typify the exoteric/esoteric nature of the text. The former passage is exoteric in that it is concerned with transmitting charts for “men of the future” to utilize; whereas the latter passage has a more mystical and esoteric connotation. ZHU Xi avoids commenting on these passages in his commentary. Thus, to gain a full understanding of ZHU Xi’s appreciation of the exoteric and esoteric interpretations of the text and to see what, if any, effect *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* had on his conception of sagehood, we need to turn to other sources to study ZHU Xi’s views concerning the text and *changsheng* 長生 (the indefinite extension of life—immortality).

There are two reasons why I must approach the study, of the influence of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* on ZHU Xi’s concept of the cultivation of sagehood, from outside sources. First, there is the problem of ZHU Xi’s understanding of the text. Second there is the problem of how to interpret the text on the question of immortality: does it espouse a physical immortality or a spiritual-mystical immortality? Of course, the second question is important because the concepts of self-cultivation and sagehood are deeply interrelated, in Chinese thought, with views on immortality (see above).

How did ZHU Xi understand and make use of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*? To answer this question, we must always keep in mind that ZHU Xi, being the great champion of classical Confucian learning, was in a precarious situation publishing a commentary on an esoteric Daoist alchemical treatise. Therefore, ZHU Xi created the elaborate pseudonym ZOU Xi (or Xin as in Tsou Hsin) 鄒訢 (*xin* is read as *xi*

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<sup>3</sup>I have compared Bodde’s translation with Fung’s *Zhonggou Zhexue shi*, although I have not cited it above.

熹) and the pen name KONGTONG Daoshi 空同道士 (the Daoist Master of Voided Identity), which could be an allusion to the Kongtong 崆峒 Mountain (Zhu 1924–1926: 1b, under “Huang Ruijie’s 黃瑞節 Preface”; Liu 1978: 369–70; Wylie 1964: 219). Zou 鄒 refers to the ancient state that the Zhu family allegedly originated from and Xin or Xi 訢 is a homophone for his name. Since ZHU Xi was willing to, at least, consider himself a Daoist (i.e., Daoshi 道士, Daoist priest or layman who has mastered the arts of Dao) in jest as a pseudonym, it appears that he did get along quite well with Daoists (see above). Thus, more study needs to be conducted concerning his relationship with CAI Yuanding (Ts’AI Yuan-ting) and others. Since ZHU Xi was in a precarious situation, it is only natural that he would not disclose his own views concerning sagehood in general; rather he would only interpret the text at hand as he does.

Therefore, when ZHU Xi refers to the sage or *shengren* 聖人, in his commentary, it is done so in a very Confucian vein as the sages who wrote the six classics, but then again Confucius plays an important role in *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*. A section of the text, to which ZHU Xi comments on the sage, reads as follows:

... And then Confucius wrote commentaries on the Great Beginning of Things.... The sages do not lead uneventful lives.... They follow the wax and wane of these signs and direct their efforts according to timeliness. (Wu and Davis 1932: 233–34; Pregadio 2011: 73; Zhu 1924–1926: 6a)

ZHU Xi’s commentary to the above quote mostly focuses on the unquoted material concerning the use of the trigrams for dividing the periods of a month, and then he says:

Therefore, increase your effort of meditative-cultivation (*xiulian* 修煉). Be like the sages who wrote the six (Confucian) classics. They all had their point of departure. (Zhu 1924–1926: 6b)

It seems clear from this passage that ZHU Xi was able to synthesize his study of both Confucian and Daoist approaches in the cultivation of sagehood.

However, most of what we know to be ZHU Xi’s view of the text comes from the *Collection of Literary Works by Master Zhu* (*Zhuwengong wenji* 朱文公文集; Zhu 1980: 23–24a). I counted more than ten editorial citations where HUANG Ruijie added ZHU Xi’s comments into his edition of the commentary. As QIAN Mu has pointed out, ZHU Xi encountered *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* when he was in his twenties, but he did not publish his commentary until some forty years later (Qian 1986: 345). It was some time in the year 1197 that ZHU Xi and CAI Yuanding, supposedly, “... passed a sleepless night to revise the edition of the *Cantongqi*” (Liu 1978: 397; Pian 1976: 1037–39). In a reply to YUAN Jizhong (1131–1205), ZHU Xi states:

The text *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* was not originally written to explain the *Book of Changes*. Rather it borrowed the principle of correlating the stems (*najia* 納甲) to establish the proper cycles of fanning (the furnace) and adding (reagents) and withdrawing (products). At times I desired to study the text, but I did not receive its transmission. So, I could not get a good grasp on it. (Qian 1986: 345; Zhu 1980: 716; and see Needham 1956: 330)

Although ZHU Xi admits that he did not have a full grasp on the text, Needham translates and relies upon ZHU Xi's commentary, especially his explanation of the alchemists' apparatus, as if ZHU Xi were a knowledgeable alchemist (Needham 1956: 330–31). Thus, two things become clear in understanding ZHU Xi's interpretation of the text, namely, that he used it to study: (1) immortality or extending life (*changsheng* 長生), and (2) the *najia* theory of correlating the hexagrams and the ten heavenly stems. QIAN Mu has quoted ZHU Xi's reminiscence of reading a poem which referred to the divine fungus (*zhi* 芝) of long-life, and ZHU Xi's jesting response which refers to the Golden Elixir *jindan* 金丹. QIAN Mu proposes that this led to Zhu's study of immortality (*changsheng*), which he augmented by investigating *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*. The question of how to interpret this text's understanding of immortality is the second important question noted above. After QIAN Mu cites Zhu's reply to Yuan (cited above), he continues saying:

The book (*The Seal of the Unity of the Three*) was then present before 1197, and with it Zhuzi sought to study immortality (*changsheng*). Furthermore, (by writing his commentary) he left the lasting impression in writing that *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* was the first book to contain the *najia* theory. Since he quotes this book in his writings, it shows that he did pay attention to it. (Qian 1986: 346)

It appears that ZHU Xi was predominately interested in the *najia* theory, and he argues for an hermeneutical understanding of the presence of the *najia* theory “contained” in the text, that is to say that, many people contended that the text did not originally employ the *najia* theory, but ZHU Xi argues that the theory can be applied to the text (Qian 1986: 346). ZHU Xi noted that a proper reading of the text uses the *najia* explanation (Zhu 1980: 610). Furthermore, the *najia* system would be used for keeping time which is important for both external (*waidan*) and internal (*neidan*) alchemical practices, that was noted above, the proper times for heating, adding, and withdrawing chemicals, or images in meditation, and the *najia* method of keeping time can be used in numerology and divination. ZHU Xi must have used this system of time keeping to “... support his theory of the seven inter-clay months in nineteen years” (Tomoeda 1971: 63–64). So, we can see that the text has numerological and mathematical applications for ZHU. We must turn to the second question of the text's understanding of immortality to see more precisely what relationship ZHU Xi's concept of sagehood might have had with *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* and inner-meditative *neidan* alchemy Daoism.

The second question concerning how we are to interpret *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*'s understanding of immortality becomes a twofold question, for we not only need to know how to interpret the text, but we also need to know how ZHU Xi understood the text on this question and his view of immortality.

Tentatively it seems best to accept LIU Ts'un-yan's view that the text is a dual-cultivation text, that is, both a *waidan* and *neidan* treatise (Liu 1968: 1). Given E. J. Holmyard's discussion of esoteric and exoteric alchemy and their interdependence (Holmyard 1968), it seems best to accept that the alleged king of all Chinese alchemical texts was likewise written with at least two perspectives or alternate



readings in the mind(s) of the author(s). The intentional concealment of meaning is a common trait among many systems of alchemy. Thus, we must tentatively accept that the text holds both a *neidan* perspective of mystical or spiritual immortality that is couched in *waidan* physical-chemical immortality terms and expressions.

The study of ZHU Xi's views on immortality would be a trying task if it were not for D. Bodde's essay on this very topic (Bodde 1942). Bodde's conclusion might have been surprising, when it was published in the 1940s. However, it is no longer surprising to hear that ZHU Xi's view of immortality is aligned with what Bodde's article primarily focuses on, namely, the contrast between his interpretation of an alleged Buddhist view of personal immortality and the Chinese denial of it for a metaphysical interpretation of a mystical-spiritual immortality of the Daoists' pan-ethnic, all is one experience. Then, he concludes:

Against this [what was then accepted to be the Chinese Buddhist view of personal immortality], CHU Hsi [ZHU Xi] counters with his concept of a wholly impersonal type of immortality; according to which Law or *li*, though itself universal, becomes temporarily manifested as the Nature in an infinitude of ever changing physical objects, departing again upon extinction of these objects, but continuing to exist ever unchanged within the metaphysical world of Law which transcends our sensory universe. *In formulating such a theory, it seems clear that CHU Hsi was simply following the attitude generally held by Chinese philosophy, especially Taoism, while adapting it to his own particular metaphysical framework.* (Bodde 1942: 380–81, emphasis added)

When we place Bodde's conclusion beside the above discussion of ZHU Xi's study of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three in the Book of Changes*, it becomes clear that ZHU Xi was influenced by Daoism, especially the more metaphysical or mystical-spiritual interpretation of "impersonal immortality."

In concluding this section, I would like to make the following six points. First, prior to ZHU Xi there was a developing Neo-Confucian interest in Daoist cosmology and mathematical interpretations of *The Book of Changes*, and ZHU Xi was part of a Neo-Confucian lineage with certain Daoist interests. Second, more research needs to be done to prove or refute MAO Qiling's theory that the Diagram of the Great Polarity was derived from diagrams in *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, for this question holds an important link in the development of Neo-Confucianism. Third, the text of *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* requires more study, and especially ZHU Xi's commentary with emphasis on key philosophical terms. Fourth, ZHU Xi's outside references to the text require further study. Fifth, it seems clear that ZHU Xi did study the text for information concerning impersonal metaphysical immortality. He was interested in the health benefits of living longer (*changsheng* 長生), and he used the text to generate the *najia* theory. Sixth, if in fact the text, which is debated, is not a Confucian apocryphal text to begin with, given its praise of Confucius, but is a Daoist alchemy treatise, then it seems clear that ZHU Xi's study of it and the *Zhuangzi* led to his metaphysical view of metaphysical, mystical-spiritual, or impersonal immortality. The influence of inner-meditative alchemy Daoism on ZHU Xi's concept of the cultivation of sagehood is even more clearly seen in his commentary on the *Huangdi Yinfujing*.

### 4.3 *A Commentary on The Yellow Emperor's Classic of the Secret Talisman (Huangdi Yinfujing Zhujie 黃帝陰符經註解)*

*The Classic of the Secret Talisman, Yinfujing*, is a beautifully written religio-philosophical meditative treatise that has been somewhat neglected by scholars. The fact that ZHU Xi took the time to write a commentary on this insightful little masterpiece shows what value he placed on it. A. Wylie remarks that ZHU Xi wanted the text to be placed in “the national literature” (Wylie 1964: 216; see Qian 1986: 347). Ching notes that there is some controversy regarding whether ZHU Xi or CAI Yuanding or someone else wrote this commentary (Ching 2000: 164, 167). I propose that Zhu or that he and Cai wrote the commentary for the following reasons.

It is interesting to note that like *The Explanation of the Diagram of Great Polarity*, and *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*, ZHU Xi's commentary to *The Classic of the Secret Talisman* is also found in the *Daoist Canon (Daozang 道藏)* published by Imperial command during the Ming dynasty in 1445. However, the commentary to *The Classic of the Secret Talisman* is attributed to ZOU Xi (TSOU Hsi) the Daoist Master of Voided Identity (KONGTONG Daoshi 空同道士), i.e., ZHU Xi's pseudonym. However, the text uses Kongtong 崆峒 with the mountain radical either to allude to those mountains or to further obfuscate the pseudonym. Thus, the text slipped past the imperial editors not being identified as ZHU Xi's commentary, but the text has been edited and various additional statements of ZHU Xi's have been added, beginning with the expression “Master Zhu said” (*Zhuzi yue 朱子曰*) and these inserted comments are followed by the unknown editor's statements, beginning with “editor's note” (*an 按*). The final entry by the editor is of interest:

... Moreover (they use these texts) to fathom *The Changes*.

... (they) use the *Yinfu (jing—The Classic of the Secret Talisman)* and the *Cantong (qi—The Seal of the Unity of the Three)* with extensive examination and care, not being inattentive. This being the case, then the ones who are aware of the method/way (*dao*) assuredly join these two books with *The Changes* and apply them for the same purpose. (Zou 1924–1926a: vol. 58, 10a, lines 3–5)

Thus, we can understand the Neo-Confucian interest in these Daoist texts concerned with self-cultivation and the cosmos that explicate an interpretation of *The Book of Changes*.

The text itself is primarily concerned with self-cultivation for the actualization of sagehood, and its primary method involves the “productive” and the “destructive” arrangements of the five phases (*wuxing 五行*) such that by harmonizing the five phases in their “productive” sequence a person cultivates sagehood. Therefore, the text was of interest to ZHU Xi such that he wrote a commentary on it. However, if QIAN Mu is correct in saying that ZHU Xi was sixty-one years old when LÜ Qiu 閻丘 showed him *The Classic of the Secret Talisman*, then apparently it could not have had much effect or influence on the development of ZHU Xi's thought. ZHU Xi's commentary to *The Classic of the Secret Talisman* deserves more study, especially

to grasp his mature thought on Daoist philosophy. Regarding the thesis at hand, it is important that we note that even in his closing years ZHU Xi maintained a life-long interest in the study of Daoist self-cultivation texts.

Although the text is quite short, less than five hundred characters, there is a considerable amount of philosophical terminology and discussion. More research needs to be done on the development of a hermeneutic of *li* 理 (pattern/principle) and *qi* 氣 (energy-breath) in *The Classic of the Secret Talisman*. CHAN Wing-tsit has explicated the use of patten/principle (*li*) in the Confucian tradition (Chan 1969b). However, there is not yet an adequate study of the various classical theories concerning energy-breath (*qi*) that ZHU Xi was drawing upon. As D. C. Lau has pointed out, Mengzi had his own unique theory of energy-breath (*qi*) (Lau 1979: 25). ZHU Xi also studied Xunzi's theory of pattern/principle (*li*) and energy-breath (*qi*). Of course, Xunzi was at the Jixia Academy (ca. 264 BCE.) during its final years (Watson 1964: 2). The Daoist "Arts of the Heart-mind Part I" (*xinshu shang* 心術上) chapter of *Master Guan* (*Guanzi* 管子), an eclectic work of the Jixia Academy with Daoist influences, is noted for its statement that "Rightness (*yi* 義) accommodates to what is fitting (*yi* 宜). Rightness is the base of pattern/principle (*li* 理); and pattern/principle is the base of ritual-action (*li* 禮)" (Guo 1962–1963: 644). As TU Weiming has pointed out, the theories of the Huang–Lao school require further study to assist in our perspective and understanding of the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and the *Huainanzi* (Tu 1979: 107). Thus, nothing short of a comprehensive critical hermeneutic study of pattern/principle (*li*) and energy-breath (*qi*), in the various schools of the Zhou and early Han, up to the time of ZHU Xi, will sufficiently show to what extent and detail ZHU Xi was influenced in the cultivation of sagehood by the Daoist arts (*daoshu* 道術) of purifying the energy-breath (*qi* 氣), because as both Qian and Ching point out Zhu studied Daoist meditation and other practices (Qian 1986: 347; Ching 2000: 166).

## 5 Conclusion

ZHU Xi had a life-long interest in the study of Daoism. Through ZHOU Dunyi, the Daoist Diagram of the Great Polarity came to serve as the bases for Neo-Confucian cosmogony. ZHU Xi, who is responsible for the diagram's transmission, must have had an esoteric understanding of it. He understood the Diagram of the Great Polarity, like the Daoists, as a cosmogonic circle—as the ontological generation and the deontological, panenhenic, mystical return to the source. The Diagram of the Great Polarity, along with the River Chart (*Hetu* 河圖), Writ of the Luo (River) (*Luoshu* 洛書), Prior Heaven (*Xiantian* 先天), and Posterior Heaven (*Houtian* 後天) Diagrams, played an important role in ZHU Xi's study of *The Book of Changes* and its interpenetration with the cosmos via divination.

There was a long historical precedence of borrowing Daoist interpretations of *The Book of Changes*. ZHU Xi was a member of a lineage of Neo-Confucians who were influenced by Daoism, e.g., ZHOU Dunyi, SHAO Yong, ZHANG Zai, CHENG

Hao, CHENG Yi, and others. It should be noted that some of them, especially CHENG Yi, were more critical of the beliefs of Song dynasty Daoism, especially the legends of the gods and immortals or *shenxian* 神仙 (Chan 1967: 285), while ZHU Xi was more open minded. Furthermore, after the arrival of Buddhism, the Confucians commonly sided with the Daoist teaching to oppose foreign influence.

ZHU Xi's intense love of learning and study of ancient texts led him to master even the Daoist meditative treatises. His constant-desire to thoroughly investigate things and exhaustively-comprehend pattern/principle (*gewu qiongli* 格物窮理) allowed him to approach a variety of subjects with an open and serious attitude of mindful-sincerity (*jing* 敬). Furthermore, his practical humanistic approach cannot be forgotten, in that he sought to synthesize the arts of Daoism, Buddhism, medicine, and divination for the betterment and benefit of mankind (Qian 1986: 347). Thus, it is not surprising that his theory of sagehood is influenced by inner-meditative *neidan* Daoism.

The subtlety of influence of Daoism on ZHU Xi's thought, as seen in the *jing* 靜 (tranquil) and *jing* 敬 (mindful-sincerity) relationship needs further investigation. Additional study is required of ZHU Xi's commentaries on *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* and *The Classic of the Secret Talisman*, and the relationship of the Diagram of the Great Polarity with *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*. Further study is required of the Daoist influence on ZHU Xi's religio-philosophical thought, especially his understanding of the practice of the purification of energy-breath (*qi* 氣) for the attainment of sagehood. The religio-philosophical atmosphere of the Song dynasty needs to be reappraised with a phenomenological-historical critical-hermeneutical method to better elucidate the cultural and philosophical environment. There is a need to explicate the Song dynasty interactions of Daoism and Confucianism to better understand the Ming and Qing interactions whose foundations were established in the Song period. Because ZHU Xi's philosophical preferences influenced subsequent generations, his commentaries on the *Diagram of the Great Polarity* and *The Seal of the Unity of the Three* made those books popular topics of study in the Ming and Qing periods and on to this day.

Let me close with Zhu's poem to the Dao, cited by Ching, to illustrate his panenhenic experience of unity.

Hearing the Dao, I have nothing else to do.  
 The hundred anxieties are all gone.  
 What is it that separates me and thee?  
 No place prevents the penetration of [all things].  
 Of yore [I was] a lad in green.  
 The morrow sees me old and white-haired.  
 The heavenly mystery is what it is:  
 No intended rush [marks our lives]. (Ching 2000: 170)

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