New Old Foundations for Confucian Ethical Philosophy:

Itō Jinsai 伊藤 仁斎 (1627 –1705), Dai Zhen (戴震) (1722-1776),

and Jeong Yakyong (丁若鏞) (1762–1836)

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I. Introduction[1]

One of the most prominent features of neo-Confucian philosophy during the Song-Ming Period is its complex metaphysical foundation. While there is variation among the different "schools" of neo-Confucianism, to a large extent they share a metaphysical view of the world in which "principles" (*li* 理) combine with an inherently lively but material element called *qi* 氣 to produce and sustain the actual world in which we live. In regard to ethics, the interplay between *li* and *qi* gives shape and direction to neo-Confucian accounts of the nature of morality, explanations of virtue and human character, and theories concerning how to cultivate the self; indeed, such theories about *li* and *qi* play a crucial role in conceptions of *what a self is*. In the 18th century a trio of thinkers[2] in Japan, China, and Korea quite independently offered trenchant criticisms of this general account, especially in the form it took within the orthodox Cheng-Zhu

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[2] Readers unfamiliar with the thinkers whose work we shall explore will find footnotes providing full references to the best scholarship available in English that can serve as introductions to their philosophy.

School.[3] As an alternative to the metaphysically based ethics of the Cheng-Zhu School, these thinkers offered radically different, more humanistically based ethical theories in which human feelings, desires, needs, and welfare, broadly construed, took center stage. This essay presents and compares core elements of the ethical theories of these three thinkers, arguing that their criticisms of the Cheng-Zhu School represent a distinctive type of Confucian view, for the most part are valid, and should have a much greater influence on contemporary understandings of the Confucian tradition, in all its richness, diversity, and potential. Moreover, this essay seeks to describe and establish an initial case for the contemporary relevance of philosophical views advanced by this trio of thinkers, in particular their claims concerning "sympathetic consideration" (C: *shu; J*: *jo*; K: *seo* 恕). Before turning to explore in outline the views of these three challengers to neo-Confucian orthodoxy, it is important to get a sense of just how radical their views were and how profound a change they sought to effect. At the same time, it is important to see and appreciate how their attempts to fundamentally reset the foundations of the Confucian tradition can itself be understood as a deeply traditional activity.

In order to understand the radical nature of their project, we must keep in mind the degree to which neo-Confucianism expresses a particular metaphysically based ethical form of life and how broad and demanding this life was. One of the most widely appreciated but least understood features of neo-Confucianism is what we might call its *comprehensive imperative to care for the universe as oneself*.[4] Largely as a consequence of having absorbed ideas, values, and styles of

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[3] The school of thought associated with the writings of Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). For introductions to the philosophy of the Cheng-Zhu School, see A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers: The Metaphysics of the Brothers Cheng*, Revised Second Edition, (La Salle, IL: Open Court Press, 1992), Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu His: Life and Thought*, (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1987), Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), and chapters 4, 5, 8, and 9 in John Makeham, Ed., *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2010).

[4] For a splendid study of how this philosophical ideal was pursued through a range of actual practices in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, see Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

reasoning from Daoism and Buddhism, later Confucians expressed forms of this ideal that went far beyond anything found in the classical period. Early Confucians surely did extol the virtue of "benevolence" or "care" (*ren* 仁), but the primary recipients of care were family members and other human beings within a larger shared, harmonious society. It is true that the good Confucian was to care for non-human animals (*aiwu* 愛物), but such care was primarily an imperative to avoid cruelty; it was not thought in any way inconsistent with eating meat or sacrificing animals. In contrast, neo-Confucians, such as Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-77), give voice to the new perspective I seek to highlight in works such as his "Western Inscription" (*Ximing* 西銘).

> *Qian* is my father, *Kun* my mother and even an insignificant creature such as I have a place within their midst.[5] And so, what fills the universe is my body; what directs the universe is my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters; all things my companions. The emperor is the eldest son of my father and mother; the great ministers are his stewards.
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> Respect the aged, as this is the way *to treat the elderly as elders should be treated*; love those who are orphaned and weak, as this is the way *to treat the young as youths should be treated*.[6] The sage is the harmonious power of heaven and earth; the worthy its refined expression. Those who are weary, infirm, crippled or sick, those who are without brothers, children, wives, or husbands—all these are my brothers, who are suffering distress and misfortune and have nowhere to turn.[7]

Expressions of such all-embracing compassion are the norm among Song-Ming neo-Confucians. For example, thinkers like Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73) refused to cut the grass in front of his house because he felt one with it; Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) insisted that we are "one body with heaven, earth, and the myriad creatures" (*tian di wan wu wei yi ti* 天地萬物為一

[5] *Qian* 乾 is the first hexagram in the *Yijing*; it represents heaven and the *yang* force. *Kun* 坤 is the second hexagram; it represents earth and the *yin* force.
[6] The italicized phrases are from *Mengzi* 1A7.
[7] *The Complete Works of Master Zhang* (*Zhangzi quan shu* 張子全書) in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, Volume 697, (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1987): 79-82 (1.1b-7a).

體) and so our care should extend not only to all people and creatures, but to plants and even to inanimate objects.[8]

Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan[9] explicitly rejected the metaphysical foundations of orthodox neo-Confucianism, regarding it as a manifestation of invasive and debilitating influences that had insinuated themselves into the Confucian tradition from without and fundamentally corrupted its essence, meaning, and purpose. Rooting out these foreign elements and restoring what they saw as the true and original foundations of the tradition was one of their key objectives. The elimination of this metaphysical foundation left them without a basis for the corresponding ethical imperative to care for the world as oneself. This left them with the challenge of explaining the nature, shape, practice and foundation of Confucian ethics. As we shall see, Jinsai retained a good deal of neo-Confucianism's comprehensive imperative to care for the universe as in some sense connected with the self,[10] but he offered a very different, alternative metaphysical foundation on which to ground this dramatic and impressive call for compassion. Dai and Dasan, in different ways, held on to much but less of the neo-Confucian ethical ideal. Both argued for strong obligations to care not only for other people but all other living things as well; however, for Dai but not Dasan this moral obligation was analogous to our obligation to care for one another and grounded in our ability to imaginatively identify with the welfare of other living things. Neither Dai nor Dasan argued that we must or should extend our concern to inanimate things and in this we see the strong and central role sympathetic consideration played in shaping

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[8] For a discussion of Wang's views, see my *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, Second Edition, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000): 59-73. For Zhou Dunyi not cutting his grass, see Wing-tsit Chan, tr., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969): 462.

[9] I will usually refer to Jeong Yakyong by his pen-name Dasan 茶山.

[10] It will be important to keep in mind the differences between the orthodox view, which assumed a deep metaphysical identity between human beings and the rest of the *universe* (i.e. including things like the sun, moon, planets, and stars) and the views of thinkers like Jinsai and Dai, who saw human beings as in one or another way connected to the people, creatures, and things of the everyday world.

their respective ethical philosophies; they believed we have no general moral obligation to care for things we cannot empathetically understand. In any case, exploring the different ways each of these thinkers tried to fill in the moral gap left by the elimination of orthodox neo-Confucian metaphysics is one of the aims of this essay.

While all three of our thinkers saw themselves as engaged in the radical philosophical project I have described above, we must recognize that they saw this work in terms of *defending and restoring* not *revolutionizing* the tradition.[11] They understood their criticisms of Daoism and Buddhism and advocacy of Confucianism as reenacting, in a new age and form, the same kind of defense that Mengzi had been "forced" to undertake in response to the challenges of Mozi and Yang Zhu.[12] While these similarities with Mengzi are critical for understanding the nature and motivations of these three 18th century reformers, it is also important to appreciate one respect in which their project differed from this early exemplar: Mengzi had defended the tradition from external challenges, but Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan saw themselves as defending Confucianism not only from external challengers, such as Daoists and Buddhists, but also from enemies within: degenerate forms of Confuciansim. In this respect their criticisms are more like what one finds in Xunzi, who criticized not only other philosophical schools but fellow Confucians as well, most notably, Mengzi. This comparison highlights yet another nuance of difference, for unlike our three 18th century thinkers, Xunzi never accused Mengzi of uncritically absorbing and incorporating ideas and arguments from *opposing* schools of thought and thereby corrupting the

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[11] In this respect, their self-understanding was very much like that of early Protestant reformers like Luther and Calvin. As we shall see below, they also shared a commitment to a philologically-based approach to philosophy. Early Protestant reformers not only advocated a return to the authority of scripture but also based their theology on careful philological study, with the aim of retrieving an "original" and "uncorrupted" version of Christianity. Thanks to Michael R. Slater for pointing out these similarities.

[12] Dai Zhen explicitly notes this connection in his preface to *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi* (*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證), and Jinsai saw himself in precisely the same way. See Chapter 2, Section 65 of his *Questions from Youths* (C: *Tongziwen*; J: *Dōjimon* 童子問). Shimizu Shigeru 清水茂, ed., (Tokyo: Iwamani shoten, 1970): 157. Both insist that, like Mengzi, they entered into these debates only because *they had no choice* (and not because they were fond of disputation).

Confucian tradition. This was precisely the tenor of many of the criticisms leveled by Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan.

Largely as a result of the new set of challenges these three thinkers faced, they and other Confucians of their age, developed a distinctive and fascinating approach to philosophy that set them apart from earlier practitioners. Because they sought to ferret out and expel foreign elements that had crept into and corrupted the Confucian tradition, overturn mistaken interpretations of the classics, and return to what they saw as the original message of the ancients, they developed and deployed a philologically-based approach to philosophy.[13] This method focused on the task of tracing back and uncovering the original meanings of central terms of art used by classical Confucian thinkers. The thought was that through systematic philological investigation, one could reconstruct the philosophy of the original sages.[14] Such a method also addressed another shared worry these thinkers had with ungrounded speculative philosophy. Echoing Kongzi's warning that "reflection without learning is dangerous,"[15] Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan were deeply concerned with and cautious to avoid relying upon mere *personal opinion* as the basis of their philosophical efforts. The philologically based approach they embraced had the advantage of grounding reflection in learning: they set out to find the Way by retracing the steps and following the teachings of the ancients. Describing and explaining this philosophical turn and its related quest for a clear, objective foundation for Confucian ethics is another aim of this essay.

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[13] Benjamin A. Elman describes this general trend as a movement from philosophy to philology; perhaps better would be to describe it as a view of *philology as philosophy*. For Elman's brilliant account of this phenomenon in Qing dynasty China, see his *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[14] This latter concern with rediscovering the original form of the Way distinguished their interest in and use of philology from other scholars of their age, who did not share their reconstructive philosophical aim.

[15] For Kongzi's remark, see *Analects* 2.15.

II. Itō Jinsai

Itō Jinsai argued against the orthodox neo-Confucian conception of principle and its relationship to *qi* in his own creative, distinctive, and fascinating way. He rejected the standard ontological conception of principle, i.e. the idea that principles are distinct metaphysical entities that in some sense stand behind the phenomenal world and provide the normative structures and standards for all things. Characteristic of the group of thinkers whose thought we shall explore, he argued that such ideas were never part of Confucianism and had insidiously crept into the tradition from Daoist and Buddhist sources.[16] In order to unmask and root out these foreign elements and return to the original intent of the sages as revealed in the true meaning of the classics, Jinsai advocated what he called the "study of ancient meanings" (C: *guyixue*; J: *kogigaku* 古義學).[17] By strictly adhering to the method of analyzing each term of art within the classics, he sought to base his views purely on their "ancient meaning" (C: *guyi*; J: *kogi* 古義). This would enable him to avoid relying upon mere "personal opinion" (C: *sijian*; J: *shiken* 私見), an approach he believed inevitably leads to "wild ideas" (C: *wangyi*; J: *mōi* 妄意). As noted earlier, all three of our thinkers believed that ungrounded, overly subjective speculation was one of the most common sources of error among neo-Confucian thinkers.

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[16] Jinsai offers detailed philological and philosophical arguments in defense of these claims including a sustained attack on certain central texts of neo-Confucianism. For example, he wrote an entire essay, which appears as an appendix to his *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms in the* Analects *and* Mengzi, (*Gomō jigi* 語孟字義), arguing that the *Great learning* (C: *Daxue*; J: *Daigaku* 大學) is not a legitimate Confucian text. He also insisted that the "Record of Music" chapter of the *Book of Rites* (C: *Liji*; J: *Raiki* 禮記) was inspired by Daoist philosophy.

[17] Like other Tokugawa Confucians, such as Hayashi Razan 林 羅山 (1583-1657), Jinsai read and was deeply influence by Chen Beixi's 陳北溪 (1159-1223) "The Meaning of neo-Confucian Terms" (*Xingliziyi* 性理字義), which served as both an inspiration and model for his *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms in the* Analects *and* Mengzi. For a discussion of this influence, see John Allen Tucker, tr., *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi and the Philosopical Definition of Early Modern Japan*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998): 19 etc. For a translation of Chen Beixi's work, see Wing-tsit Chan, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

While Jinsai adamantly and unrelentingly criticized his neo-Confucian predecessors for failing to guard against Daoist and Buddhist influences and indulging in undisciplined speculation, he did not abandon their characteristic imperative to care for the world as oneself. He offered a novel justification for such an ethical stance in his view about the "unified original *qi*" (C: *yiyuanqi*; J: *ichigenki* 一元氣), which gives rise to all the phenomena of the world, shaped by an ever-creative and sustaining "Way of Heaven" (C: *tiandao*; J: *tendō* 天道). Within this picture "principles" (C: *li*; J: *ri* 理) simply refers to the good order that can be found in various configurations of *qi*.

> All that there is within heaven and earth is nothing but a single original *qi*…[18]
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> The word "principle" (*li*) is closely related to the word "way" (*dao*). *Dao* refers to the movements [of things]; *li* refers to the order [of things]. This is why Kongzi talked about "the way of Heaven"[19] and "the way of human beings" but never used the word "principle" for naming these things…[20]

In contrast to Daoist and Buddhist conceptions of an underlying universal unity grounded in undifferentiated states of "nothing" (C: *wu*; J: *mu,* 無) or "emptiness" (C: *kong*; J: *kū* 空) respectively, Jinsai's appeal to an active, life-creating, and sustaining *qi* emphasized the physical and vital qualities of the world we know and experience. Such a view provided a new and stable metaphysical basis for the importance of human feelings, desires, and needs; in some sense it removed them from center stage in self-cultivation but placed them at the very heart of a conception of the good life. In contrast to neo-Confucian thinkers, Jinsai insisted that the classics make clear that the moral way is not found by stilling the feelings and denying or suppressing

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[18] Part 1 of the chapter on "principle" (*li* 理) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms in the* Analects *and* Mengzi, (*Gomōjigi* 語孟字義) in *Itō Jinsai and Itō Tōgai* 伊藤東涯 part of *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系, 33, Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 and Shimizu Shigeru 清水茂 eds., (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1971): 115. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's* Gomōjigi, p. 124

[19] I translate the character 天 as "Heaven" when it refers to the conscious moral agent governing the universe and "heaven" when it refers to the heavens or sky.

[20] Part 1 of the chapter on "The Way of Heaven" (*tiandao* 天道) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 124. Cf. John Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 71.

desires and needs in order to reveal and make contact with hidden, underlying "principles" but in ordering one's feelings, desires, and needs and shaping one's nature in proper ways.

Further supporting his view of an underlying, organic unity to the world, which served as the basis for his ethical vision, is his characteristic and distinctive claim that, "Sages regard the universe as a living thing (C: *huowu*; J: *katsubutsu* 活物)."[21] Jinsai insisted that the "unified original *qi*" is to be thought of and treated as a single, grand *living organism*. While original in form and statement, this is not wholly unlike what we find in neo-Confucian writings such as the story of Zhou Dunyi refusing to cut his grass, Zhang Zai's famous "Western Inscription" or Wang Yangming's idea that we are "one body with heaven, earth, and the myriad creatures," noted above. The most dramatic and important difference is that Jinsai's view is grounded in the nature of a special kind of *qi* rather than principle. Jinsai's call to see the world as a single, grand living organism bears important similarities to contemporary environmental theories such as the Gaia Hypothesis,[22] and like various versions of this view, his metaphysical claim carried with it rather bold ethical imperatives: if the universe is a single living thing, as a part of it I should regard the rest of it as parts of *myself*. Here we can see how he was led to retain a version of the neo-Confucian grand imperative to care for the universe as oneself.

While Heaven is the source of the unified original *qi*, Jinsai's view of Heaven and its role in his moral philosophy is relatively less central than what we find in Dasan. As we shall see, Dasan conceived of Heaven, or the Lord on High, as an active and concerned supreme deity with clear intentions and aims, which Heaven communicates directly to each person. Jinsai does say

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[21] Part 1 of the chapter on "principle" (*li* 理) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 124. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 101.
[22] See for example the work of Joanna Macy, quoted in Lawrence E. Joseph, *Gaia: The Growth of an Idea*, (New York:St. Martin's Press, 1990): 243. The Gaia hypothesis takes many forms; its original formulation, by James Lovelock, focused on the ways in which the earth is a self-regulating system and in this respect can be understood as a single living organism.

that "Heaven is like a ruler; the mandate is like the commands of a ruler"[23] and makes clear that "Heaven carefully watches over people's good and bad deeds, their virtues and vices and [accordingly] sends down fortune, misfortune, calamities, or blessings."[24] As well as presenting his beliefs about Heaven, these comments explicitly were aimed at refuting the general view of neo-Confucians, which held that Heaven wholly lacks awareness or agency in the moral sphere. Jinsai believed Heaven was the ultimate source of morality, an unseen force that played a role in maintaining a moral economy throughout the world. Nevertheless, he did not regard Heaven as an all-powerful, creator deity or a warm and personal God, who is concerned and present within each person. He expressed similar views about "ghosts" (C: *gui*; J: *oni,* 鬼) and "spirits" (C: *shen*; J: *kami,* 神). In this case too, he explicitly opposed the neo-Confucian tendency to reduce such entities to epiphenomenal manifestations of *yin* and *yang*. Jinsai insisted ghosts and spirits were aware, active, and worthy of respect, but, like his view of the universe as a single living organism, his beliefs about spiritual entities often comes close to expressing a kind of pan-psychism, the idea that the universe in all its various aspects is charged with a sentient, moral, and spiritual force.

According to Jinsai, the good order described in terms of principles had no prior, fixed, or static form; it was more like a set of generalizations, more like summary than practice or constitutive rules.[25] Principles arose out of rather than set the standard for the good order of the phenomena in the world; principles themselves were too static, too inanimate to capture the

[23] Part 1 of the chapter on "Heaven's Mandate" (*tianming* 天命) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 118. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 83.
[24] Part 5 of the chapter on "Heaven's Mandate" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 119. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 87.
[25] For the distinction between these types of rules, see John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules", *Philosophical Review*, 64.1 (1955): 3–32.

lively, creative nature of the world or our ethical lives. They offered snapshots of life, not the dynamic process of life itself.

> [A young person] asked, "Why is the word "principle" inadequate to explain the origin of generation and transformation [in the world]?"
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> [Jinsai answered,] "Principle is fundamentally an inanimate term; principles lie within things but cannot govern them. Within living things there are the principles of living things. Within dead things there are the principles of dead things. Within human beings there are the principles of human beings. Within other creatures there are the principles of other creatures. Nevertheless, they all arise from a single original *qi*, and these principles only exist posterior to this *qi*. And so principles cannot be the pivot of the myriad transformations.[26]

The standard neo-Confucian view presented principles as if they described a kind of static grid which we are to lay over our feelings, desires, and needs and apply to the various objects, situations, and events in the world, working to make the latter conform to the former. Jinsai objected that this is not true to the nature of morality or to the experience of moral life. The Way is a protean and creative capacity generating the infinitely variable conditions and contexts of human life.

Jinsai maintained that these misconceptions about the Way arose largely as a result of neo-Confucian misunderstandings of the original meaning of the term "principle" as found in the Confucian classics. Not only had they been bewitched by the terminology of Daoism and Buddhism, thereby ossifying the original lively and warm-blooded view of the classics into the inflexible, dead, and cold "nothingness" or "emptiness" he saw as characteristic of Daoism and Buddhism respectively, they also had succumbed to the speculative metaphysical *style* of philosophy characteristic of these competing traditions. In doing so, they had forsaken the most essential feature of the Confucian tradition: its basis in the *actual everyday practice* of morality.

> [Someone asked,] "Kongzi always talked about the Way and only rarely talked about principle.[27] As for later Confucians (i.e. neo-Confucians), were they to set aside the

[26] Chapter 2, Section 68 of *Questions from Youths*, p. 161.
[27] The word principle never occurs in early Confucian texts with the sense it has in neo-Confucianism and it never occurs at all in the *Analects*. In the *Analects* we find Kongzi's disciples were known for four things: "virtuous

> word "principle," they would have nothing at all to say! Why is it that they were so at odds with the sage's teachings?"
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> [Jinsai answered,] "Later Confucians single-mindedly believed philosophical speculation was the most important thing and did not regard the practice of virtue as the basis [of the Way]. Under such circumstances, they could not avoid doing as they did. If one takes principles as what is most important, one cannot avoid turning to Daoism and Buddhism. The term "Way" is used to talk about what is carried out; it is an animate term. The term "principle" is used to talk about what exists; it is an inanimate term.[28]

If we go back to the original meaning of the term "principle" in the Confucian classics, we find it is used to describe the proper order of things that results from concerted study and practice. Like Dasan, Jinsai cites with approval and recommends the explanation of *li* 理 found in the early second century dictionary, "Explaining Writings and Analyzing Characters," *Shuowenjiezi* 說文解字）: "the patterns (*wenli* 文理) [of veins] within jade."[29] The ultimate source of this order is the Way of Heaven, which simply "refers to *yin* 陰 alternating with *yang* 陽."[30] The interplay between these two fundamental forces describes a process of "unending generation" (C: *shengsheng bu yi*; J: *seisei shite yamazaru* 生生不已), and this ceaseless production of life is "the great virtue of heaven and earth" (C: *tiandi zhi dade*; J: *tenchi no daitoku* 天地之大德).[31]

Human beings experience and thereby come to understand the grand normative pattern generated by Heaven not by withdrawing from the world, cultivating tranquility, and searching

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conduct" (*de xing* 德行), "eloquent speech," government administration," and "cultural learning." See *Analects* 11.3. All of these clearly are activities and Jinsai here focuses on the first.

[28] Part 1 of the chapter on "principle" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 124. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 103.

[29] Dai does not reference this particular explanation but does appeal to the post-face to this work, which says that Cang Jie, the mythical inventor of writing, was inspired by the "distinctive patterns" (*fenli* 分理) he noticed in the tracks left behind by birds and beasts.

[30] Part 1 of the chapter on "The Way of Heaven" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 115. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 71. This echoes the definition of the Way found in chapter five of the upper section of the *Great Appendix* (*Xizi shang* 繫辭上) to the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經).

[31] Part 4 of the chapter on "The Way of Heaven" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 116. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, pp. 75.

within their own minds for principles but rather by exploring, discovering, and working to support the proper order to be found in the affairs of actual life. Such active, practical endeavors develop and refine their mind (C: *xin*; J: *kokoro* 心), their nature (C: *xing*; J: *sei* 性), and their intention (C: *zhi*; J: *shi* 志) to follow the Way. Those who succeed in this effort find that their feelings, desires, and needs are not thereby eliminated or lessened but properly ordered and that they harmoniously cohere with the natural world. According to Jinsai, Confucian self-cultivation does not focus on feelings or natural capabilities at all, as neo-Confucians mistakenly claimed.

> When it comes to terms like the mind, nature, feeling (C: *qing*; J: *jō* 情), talent (C: *cai*; J: *sai* 才), and intention, for some, there are spiritual practices that must be followed; for others, there are no spiritual practices that must be followed…When it comes to feelings and talent, for neither is there a spiritual practice that must be followed. Why? Because if one nurtures one's nature, one's feelings naturally will be correct; if one preserves one's mind, one's talents naturally will grow. Earlier Confucians (i.e. neo-Confucians) talked about "restraining feelings"; they did so only because they failed to understand this point.[32]

In stark contrast to the allegedly abstract, arcane, and wholly impractical teachings of Daoism and Buddhism, the Confucian Way directly and simply corresponds to and helps us order and harmonize with the everyday world around us.

> And so, the way of the sages not only does not violate or conflict with anything affirmed among the common people, attested by the three kings,[33] established between heaven and earth, or witnessed by ghosts and spirits, it also accords with every feature of grasses, trees, insects, fish, sand, grounds, and dregs![34]

While there is a happy correspondence between the ethical life and human nature, people still need to engage in a protracted and dedicated program of learning in order to understand what is proper and reshape themselves to accord fully with moral norms. With language that is

[32] Part 3 of the chapter on "Feelings" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 139. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 150-1.
[33] The sage kings: Yu, Tang, and Wen.
[34] Part 5 of the chapter on "The Way" (*dao* 道) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 124. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 99.

quite similar to what one finds in the *Xunzi*, Jinsai proclaims the necessity for and value of learning.

> Human nature is limited, but the virtue of heaven and earth is inexhaustible. If, with such a limited nature, one seeks to use up the inexhaustible virtue [of heaven and earth] then unless one avails oneself of learning one will fail, even if one has all the intelligence in the world. And so, nothing is nobler than achievement in learning and nothing greater than the benefits it brings. It not only enables one to fully develop one's own nature, it enables one to fully develop the nature of other people and creatures as well; it enables one to assist the processes of transformation and development throughout heaven and earth and stand together as a triad with heaven and earth.[35]

An important part of Confucian learning, which involves both conventional, text-based study as well as physical forms of training, is the regular and consistent practice of "sympathetic consideration" (C: *shu; J*: *jo* 恕).[36] Jinsai strenuously objected to orthodox neo-Confucian interpretations of *shu*, which described it in terms of measuring and evaluating others by reflecting on one's own feelings, desires, and needs. In general, this kind of projective estimation of others in terms of oneself, what Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi referred to as "extending oneself" (C: *tuiji; J*: *onore o osu* 推己),[37] brings obvious perils. In the particular case of neo-Confucians, who believed that all people have within themselves a fully formed and perfect moral sense, the perils can easily produce disaster in the form of licensing and endorsing a complete indulgence

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[35] Part 2 of the chapter on "Learning" (*xue* 學) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 147. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 185.

[36] *Shu* has been translated as "empathy" and "sympathetic concern" and there is something to such renderings but what Jinsai has in mind is slightly different from either of these. Empathy connotes feeling as another feels and that is part of what Jinsai intends; sympathetic concern connotes feeling for another with an active interest in the other person's welfare, and that too is part of what Jinsai has in mind. Nevertheless, neither of these translations carries the sense of engaging in such empathetic concern as a critical stance for evaluating and modifying one's own feelings so that they better accord with some objective standard: i.e. the Way. This is what I intend to convey with the notion of "sympathetic consideration."

[37] In the context of Zhu Xi's philosophy, this term, which was an abbreviated way to write "extending the self to reach others" (*tui ji ji ren* 推己及人), could be translated as "inferring from oneself." As Justin Tiwald has shown, Zhu thought that there was an important contrast between this and simply "reaching others by way of the self" (*yi ji ji ren* 以己及人) in that the former involves a kind of inference akin to the activity of drawing analogies, where the controlling factor in the analogy is the self. For Tiwald's account, see his "Sympathy and Perspective-Taking in Confucian Ethics," *Philosophy Compass,* 6.10, October 2011.

of personal opinion and preference. Jinsai objected that the orthodox conception of *shu* got things precisely backward: rather than a teaching about using *oneself* as a standard to measure and judge others, it offers us a way to understand *others* empathetically and thereby adjust our treatment of them and our understanding of morality in light of such enhanced understanding. Dasan and Dai raised similar criticisms and like Jinsai saw this errant neo-Confucian tendency to elevate personal preference or opinion to the status of universal moral truth as one of the bad consequences that result from believing that each of us is endowed with a complete and perfect moral mind. Here we see a practical and profound implication of their anti-metaphysical interpretation of the Confucian tradition and a clear expression of their appreciation of the central role that feelings, desires, and needs play in the practice of self-cultivation and conception of the good life. As Jinsai said,

> To fully apply one's mind is conscientious (C: *zhong; J*: *chū* 忠); to take stock of the minds of others is sympathetic consideration (C: *shu; J*: *jo* 恕). In his *Collected Commentaries on the Analects*, Zhu Xi cites Cheng Yi's explanation that "to fully apply one's mind is conscientious," and that is correct, but I feel his commentary on "sympathetic consideration" is not quite correct. A sub-commentary suggests the principle of *taking stock of others by taking stock of oneself.*[38] This is not as good as simply explaining the meaning of sympathetic consideration by reference to the term "to take stock of" (C: *cun; J*: *hakaru* 忖), by saying that in our treatment of others, we must be sure to *take stock and measure of* their attitudes, thoughts, sufferings, and joys. To take stock of oneself is not a reliable way to proceed and so we should emend this explanation to read "take stock of the minds of others"… People are extremely clear when it comes to understanding their own likes and dislikes but are insensitive to those of others and do not know enough to inquire about these…If in our treatment of others we take stock and measure of their likes and dislikes, where they live, and what they do then their minds will seem like our minds and we will regard their selves as ourselves.[39]

> The reason learning in later ages has diverged so greatly from the original intention of the sages is purely owing to the fact that it advocates maintaining reverence and extending knowledge as what is most essential and shows no understanding of the need to work at practicing conscientiousness and sympathetic consideration. The Way fundamentally has never separated the self from others and so learning too has never

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[38] This is a close paraphrase of the view expressed in a sub-commentary by Xing Bing 邢昺（932-1010）on *Analects* 4.15. See *Sub-commentary on the Analects Explaining the Classic* （*Lunyuzhushu* 論語注疏). Xing Bing's commentary has 忖己度物 while Jinsai presents this as 忖己度人.

[39] Part 1 of the chapter on "Conscientiousness and Empathy" (*zhong shu* 忠恕) in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 142. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 167.

> separated the self from others. If one didn't practice conscientiousness to fully develop oneself and sympathetic consideration to measure the hearts of others, then already one would be unable to bring together and unify the self and others. This is why for those who wish to carry out the Way and perfect virtue nothing is more effective than the practice of conscientiousness and sympathetic consideration and nothing more important than conscientiousness and sympathetic consideration. As soon as one sets one's mind upon conscientiousness and sympathetic consideration, then in every practice in which one engages one will have the intention of working together with all things and one will never stop at simply improving oneself...[40]

Jinsai offers us the first of three dramatic alternatives to the metaphysically based ethics of the Cheng-Zhu School. He criticized the orthodox view for being corrupted by Daoism and Buddhism and tainted by wildly speculative theories, which led neo-Confucians to stray far from the original meaning of the sages. Focusing primarily on the *Analects* and *Mengzi*, the two texts he thought most clearly and concisely epitomized the tradition's practical ethical philosophy, Jinsai sought to show, through a combination of philological analysis and philosophical argument, that neo-Confucian theories about principle as the underlying foundation for ethics were grossly mistaken. Like most traditional Confucians, he followed Kongzi in claiming to be a "transmitter and not a creator" of doctrines.[41] He turned away from the heteronymous and more overtly speculative style of neo-Confucianism and championed the "study of ancient meanings." The path he chose led him to develop a more robust conception of the good life as grounded in and defined by orderly feelings, desires, and needs. Human feelings were not to be extirpated or constrained but directed and shaped; they were an essential, constitutive component of the good. And yet the source of the good was not human nature itself but the Way. The Way was the ceaselessly flowing font of life, energy, and creativity that poured forth "unified original *qi*" and gave normative shape, direction, meaning, and tempo to the world. Jinsai viewed the entire universe as a "living thing," and as parts of this grand organism human beings were to embrace their destiny and care for heaven, earth, and the myriad things as one body. And so, while

[40] Part 5 of the chapter on "Conscientiousness and Empathy" in *The Meanings of Philosophical Terms*; *Nihon shisō taikei*, p. 144. Cf. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomōjigi*, p. 170-1.
[41] For this quote, see *Analects* 7.1.

rejecting many of the core doctrines, texts, and style of neo-Confucian philosophy, Jinsai retained much of their characteristic moral imperative to care for the universe as oneself, more so than either of our remaining two thinkers.

III. Dai Zhen

Undeniably, Dai Zhen was a genius, gifted and highly accomplished in almost every type of intellectual endeavor.[42] In his age, he quickly rose to become one of the preeminent practitioners of "evidential learning" (*kaozhengxue* 考證學), a movement dedicated to the use of textual analysis and philological exegesis aimed at reconstructing the meanings of classical texts and the primary method of philosophical reflection practiced by all three of our thinkers.[43] Evidential learning, which had a distinctively modern, scientific tenor cohered well with Dai's many interests in mathematics, astronomy, geography, phonology etc. and fit perfectly his general intellectual temperament.

Like Jinsai and Dasan, whose writings he never saw, Dai sought to apply textual analysis and philological exegesis to discover not just "the facts" but the Dao. For him, such academic endeavor, properly aimed, was the best method to cultivate the self; the historical reconstructive methods of evidential learning were the only sure path to understanding and reviving the Confucian Way. This is precisely what he set out to achieve in his two major philosophical

[42] For general introductions to Dai Zhen's philosophy, see Justin Tiwald, "Dai Zhen" *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* http://www.iep.utm.edu/dai-zhen/ and "Dai Zhen on Human Nature and Moral Cultivation," in *The Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (Springer, August 2010); Kwongloi Shun, "Mencius, Xunzi and Dai Zhen: A Study of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*," in Alan K.L. Chan, ed., *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002): 216-241; and Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Dai Zhen" in *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000): 88-99.
[43] For an excellent introduction to the evidential learning movement, which contains revealing discussion and analysis of Dai Zhen's contributions, see Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology.*

works, *On the Good* (*Yuan Shan* 原善) and *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi* (*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏証). Again, like Jinsai and Dasan, both of Dai's masterpieces manifest his unrelenting faith in the truth of the classics and the methods of evidential learning. One can see this even in the form of these works, which present passages from the classics with accompanying explanation and analysis.

Dai's choice to walk the path of evidential learning in order to arrive at the truth of the classics, was largely misunderstood in his own age and remains largely so in our own time as well, but seen in their proper light, his two philosophical works reveal a brilliant mind engaged in a serious and impressive project of philosophical reconstruction. The first thing Dai believed he proved by applying the techniques of evidential learning was that the truth of the classics had become obscured by the intrusion of Daoist and Buddhist ideas and approaches and buried under almost two thousand years of misguided metaphysical speculation. Even the most orthodox of Confucians, the founders of the Cheng-Zhu school, were not immune to these pernicious influences. The most fundamental error that Song dynasty and Confucians of later ages had fallen into, and one that serves as a common thread running through the critical thought of all three of our thinkers, concerns the nature and role of "principles" in Confucian ethics.

> In the Six Classics, the *Analects*, *Mengzi*, and even in the various biographies and other records [from ancient times] one does not often see the word "principle" (*li* 理). But nowadays even the most ignorant people, no matter how perverse or dissolute, will quickly invoke the notion of principle whenever they decide an affair or upbraid another.[44]

As noted earlier, almost all neo-Confucians believed in the view Dai Zhen criticizes here: that principles (*li*) describe the fundamental normative order of the universe, that they in some sense are inscribed upon the human mind, and that these principles are available to those who

[44] Section five of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi* (*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證).

engage in a proper course of self-cultivation. According to the Cheng-Zhu school, the mind contains all the principles in the universe, and this explains how human beings, when properly cultivated through learning, meditation, and reflection, can understand the myriad phenomena of the world. The principles in our minds can join or meet the principles in things or events and constitute understanding (*lihui* 理會). According to this view, it is only because of the pernicious influence of unrefined *qi* that the principles available to us are obscured and we tend to remain either wholly ignorant or lost in misunderstanding. In order to cultivate the self, one must rid oneself of the self-centered desires that generate and sustain unrefined *qi* and allow the principles within the mind to gradually come into play and guide understanding and action.

Dai rejected both the orthodox view of principle and its accompanying conception of self-cultivation. Like Jinsai and Dasan, he insisted on returning to what he took to be the original meaning of the word "principle" (*li*), which is roughly the good order that can be found in proper feelings, desires, and action. For Dai, principles were normative but not metaphysical.

> When the ancients talked about principle, they sought for it in human feelings and desires; they took principle to be a matter of causing feelings and desires to be without flaw. When people today talk about principle, they seek for it apart from human feelings and desires; they take principle to be a matter of causing oneself to endure yet be indifferent to feelings and desires. This opposition between principle and desire is just the thing that will turn the people of the world into deceivers and hypocrites.[45]

The orthodox view harbored a deep and dangerous practical implication. Since it held that every person possessed complete and perfect moral knowledge within their own minds, it had the effect of encouraging people to present their "opinions" (*yijian* 意見) —what Jinsai had referred to as "personal opinions" (C: *sijian*; J: *shiken* 私見) —as moral truths. Dai insisted that we must avoid relying so heavily upon personal introspection; we should study the classics, reflect upon our experiences of the world around us, and adjust our personal desires in light of

[45] Section forty-three of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi.*

what we discover to be the *shared* feelings of all people: those common desires that lead people to flourishing and fulfilling lives.

> Among those who regard principle as if it were a thing that exists on its own, is received from Heaven and lodged in the mind there is none who does not take his own opinion to be principle. Now if people simply rely upon their own opinions, they will be wrong. If people seek for their [true] feelings, they will be right. Zigong asked, "Is there one teaching that one can follow throughout one's life?" The master replied, "Is it not [the practice of]'sympathetic consideration' (*shu* 恕)? What you do not want, do not impose on others"…Only when one adjusts ones feelings in light of the feelings of others can one handle affairs without relying upon a mere opinion.[46]

Here we see that Dai too regarded sympathetic consideration as the proper method for adjusting, directing, and shaping one's ethical emotional responses to particular events or cases; more important, as a regular practice, it served as the primary means for developing one's general moral sensibilities. Like all three of our thinkers, for Dai, sympathetic consideration was the fundamental and indispensable foundation for self-cultivation.

We can see a grand, overarching pattern repeating itself throughout Dai's thought and work. If, like Dai, we reject the widely held neo-Confucian belief that human beings inherently possess complete and perfect moral knowledge in the form of "principles" (*li*) inscribed upon or manifesting their "original minds" (*benxin* 本心) or "original nature" (*benxing* 本性) and yet we continue to believe in both an objective moral order or "invariant norms" (*bu yi zhi ze* 不易之則) and in the original goodness of human nature, then the various parts of Dai's philosophy fall into a coherent and systematic pattern. According to Dai, we cannot accept the orthodox neo-Confucian view that self-cultivation is largely a process of excavation through which "self-centered desires" (*siyu* 私欲) are identified, carved away, and cast out, revealing the shining moral "principles" within. At best, such an approach would leave one with only one's personal "opinions," not invariant norms; at worst and more likely it would lead one to deprive oneself of

[46] Section five of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi.*

the very resources (i.e. shared human feelings, needs, and desires) that serve as the basis for understanding what a good human life can and should be. As the quote above makes clear, we need to avoid mere opinion on the one hand and look for our true, shared feelings on the other. We need to begin with our own feelings, needs, and desires but moralize them through the exercise of "sympathetic consideration" (*shu* 恕).[47] The process of sympathetic consideration does not simply echo or mirror the feelings of others, nor does it merely project our own desires onto others, it shapes and extends our personal feelings by engaging in the imaginative experience of other people's feeling, needs, and desires and using these as a critical perspective for sculpting or molding how we ourselves feel. We take in their feelings as we take in food and by "digesting" such experiences our own moral sensibilities are nourished and grow.

> People's physical and mental endowments are determined by Heaven and often are unequal. These inequalities can become greatly different depending on whether or not these initial endowments receive proper nourishment. If we just understand that learning is like food and drink, we will esteem learning that is digested and not that which is not digested. Learning that consists of memorization enters into people but is not digested. When "one gets it for oneself, he rests easy in it, draws deeply upon it, and wherever he turns, he finds its source."[48] If the understanding of our minds attains the height of achievement, it can reach the divine enlightenment of the sages.[49]

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[47] For Dai's notion of sympathetic consideration, see Justin Tiwald, "Is Sympathy Naïve? Dai Zhen on the Use of *Shu* to Track Well-Being," in Kam-por Yu, Julia Tao, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Taking Confucian Ethics Seriously: Contemporary Theories and Applications,* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010): 145-62 and "Dai Zhen on Sympathetic Concern," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 37.1 (2010): 76-89.

[48] Selectively quoting *Mengzi* 4B13.

[49] Section nine of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi*. In this quote, among other things, Dai is drawing an analogy between *recovered* knowledge as the neo-Confucian envision it (i.e. already fully formed, perfect, etc.) and knowledge acquired by mere memorization or rote. In both cases, he suggests, we would not have the sort of relationship to our knowledge that would allow us to feel at home in and find sustenance in it, nor to see how it applies in many different cases and contexts "wherever we turn." Both the recovery and rote memorization models of knowledge acquisition are alike in treating the acquired knowledge as something stored away rather than something internalized, transformed, and integrated into the rest of our cognitive faculties. Thanks to Justin Tiwald for raising this issue and making the point clear to me.

The process of learning, which has at its center the practice of sympathetic consideration, leads us to grasp and appreciate the invariant norms of moral principles. We don't *reveal* or *recover* preexisting moral principles hidden within our own minds but discover them by coming to see what in fact regularly works to promote the "fulfillment of life" (*sui sheng* 遂生). In other words, moral principles do exist, but we come to them at the end of a long process of extending, shaping, and filling out nascent moral feelings and capacities. Seen from such a perspective, neo-Confucians like Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi profoundly misunderstood the nature of moral order and the process that leads to its attainment; under the influence of Daoism, Buddhism and their own idiosyncratic speculations, they came to misconstrue and deform the original teachings of early Confucianism and especially the teachings of Mengzi.

This same overarching pattern is repeated in Dai's adherence to "evidential learning" and can be seen in the very form of both his major philosophical works. The earlier work, *On the Good*, began as a three-part, speculative essay on central terms of art in the Confucian tradition. Dai, though, realized that such a work would at best simply place his own personal opinions above the truths of the Confucian tradition; at worst, it could lead to the former completely crowding out the latter. This would never do, and so he rewrote *On the Good*, taking the three parts of the original essay, and placing them as introductions to carefully selected examples from the classics, along with accompanying commentaries. His *Evidential Learning* is a much more extensive exercise of the same sort, beginning with crucial passages from the *Mengzi* and explaining the meanings of key terms through careful argument based upon the entire range of the classics.

The sages understood the "invariant norms" that promote the "fulfillment of life" and in order for us to understand this timeless moral wisdom we should not turn away from our own

feelings, needs, and desires,[50] nor can we simply look inward and uncritically accept and follow the personal feelings, needs, and desires we happen to have; instead we should look to the sages and the world. We must exercise "sympathetic consideration" and pursue a sustained, careful, and comprehensive study of the classics as well as the world around us in the course of which we extend, shape, and fulfill our nascent moral sensibilities until we see and feel what truly is good, what contributes to and constitutes the fulfillment of human life. At the end of this long and careful process of study, we will discover the moral "principles" that all hearts share and that the sages were first to discover.

Dai Zhen offers us another example of an 18th century East Asian thinker who criticized and rejected the standard Cheng-Zhu metaphysical view of the world, in which "principles" that can be found within the human mind provide an understanding of a pre-existing moral order or normative standards to which the physical world of *qi*, including the full range of human feelings, needs, and desires, must be made to conform. He not only thought the orthodox view was wrong, he saw it as the source of many serious practical moral problems. For example, if one mistakenly believes that the foundation for morality can be found hidden within each human mind, then people will easily be led to mistake their own opinions for universal truths. When such opinions are found to conflict, the views of those with power and influence will almost always prevail. In other words, orthodox neo-Confucianism had the practical effect of valorizing

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[50] The importance of having a vibrant personal sense of what is good and bad is a key feature of Dai's philosophy. For a revealing exploration of this theme, see Justin Tiwald, "Dai Zhen's Defense of Self-Interest," in *Confucian Philosophy,* supplement to the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 38s (2011): 29-45.

and legitimating the status quo and supporting those with the most power, influence, and eloquence.[51]

> Ever since the Song dynasty, it has become the common practice and established custom to regard principles as if they were things received from Heaven and lodged in one's mind, and to take the opinions of one's mind as according with principles. Some who accept this, then go on, through a combination of posturing and powerful position and supported by their eloquence, to impose their "principles" upon others, while those who lack power, confidence, and eloquence are forced to yield and accept their views.[52]

For these and related reasons, Dai was decidedly against the orthodox tradition, but like Jinsai, he did not forsake the comprehensive neo-Confucian imperative to care for the world and saw as the basis for this care a deep, though different, metaphysical continuity between the self and the living things of the world.[53] Dai described a process of extending, shaping, and fulfilling our "natural" (*ziran* 自然) inclinations and feelings that leads us to an appreciation of the "necessary" (*biran* 必然) imperatives of morality. In the course of this process we come to realize our numerous connections with other people, creatures, and things and recognize that they all have proper roles and functions within the great Dao. Much like Jinsai, Dai saw the fulfillment of human life as but one part of the great Dao, one manifestation of the larger universal process of "the [unending] generation of life" (C: *shengsheng* 生生).

> The Way of human beings consists of their relationships, daily work, and various actions. In regard to heaven and earth, the transformation and flow of *qi* in the ceaseless generation of life is the Way. In regard to human beings and things, whatever concerns the generation of life is like the

[51] Political factionalism was in fact a perennial and severe problem and active concern not only for Dai, but for Jinsai and Dasan as well. Thanks to Sungmoon Kim for noting the importance of this point.
[52] Section five of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi*.
[53] As noted earlier, Dai does not argue that our care extends to inanimate things and this offers a dramatic contrast with almost all neo-Confucian thinkers. This more limited range makes sense in light of his reliance on human feelings and the process of sympathetic consideration. Non-living things have nothing with which we might sympathize and thereby adjust our own feelings (while we can't empathize with plants or maybe even most animals we can and almost inevitably do imagine them as concerned about their own lives). In this respect, Dai differs from Jinsai, who embraced a more robust metaphysical scheme that enabled him to retain a vestige of the comprehensive concern characteristic of neo-Confucianism. As we shall see below, elements of Dasan's philosophy and particularly his strong belief in the Lord on High provide him with the resources to retain an imperative for more comprehensive concern.

> unending transformation of *qi*—this is the Way.[54]

Without a personal appreciation of human feelings, needs, and desires, beginning with our own, we have no basis upon which to develop a proper understanding of our connections with the rest of the living world and what *must be*. Dai was certain that earnest and sincere application of his recommended method would lead everyone who followed it to a common set of truths; our shared nature ensured consensus concerning what promotes the fulfillment of life and the perpetuation of the life-generating operation of heaven and earth. Dai also held that as we come to appreciate our shared moral life and act in harmony with it, we experience a special and critically important feeling of joy and fulfillment, which can be understood as arising from an expanded sense of ourselves as connected to and part of a shared and larger moral order.

> Whenever one's opinion is slightly biased or one's virtuous nature impure, this is the beginning of a separation and barrier between oneself and the world. If one is able to overcome the self and return to the perfectly proper invariant norm one will no longer be separated from the world.[55]

Dai felt joy where Kant felt awe. One way of understanding this difference is that for the former, the experience and appreciation of morality (i.e. "principle") grows out of, shapes, fulfills, and enlarges one's sense of self. The more one finds and fulfills the Dao, the more expansive one's sense of self, the more extensive one's feelings of connection and security, and the greater one's sense of joy. For Kant, the moral law stands above us, as does God, commanding our allegiance and inspiring feelings of awe and the sublime.[56]

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[54] Section thirty-two of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi*.

[55] Section forty-two of *An Evidential Study of the Meaning and Terms of the Mengzi*.

[56] For Kant, part of the feeling of awe comes from our recognizing that we are self-legislators of the moral law and that our rational nature *sets us apart from* the phenomenal world and its workings, while also allowing us to transcend our non-rational inclinations. Dai's view does not entail and would not tolerate this kind of fundamental separation from the world. For studies that explore the sense of oneness and special joy that Confucians such as Dai maintain are parts of the moral life, see David W. Tien, "Oneness and Self-Centeredness in the Moral Psychology of Wang Yangming," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 40.1 (2012): 52-71, as well as my "Senses and Values of Oneness," in Brian Bruya, ed., *The Philosophical Challenge from China*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Forthcoming, 2013)

Dai offered a sophisticated and systematic ethical theory in which human feelings, needs, and desires combined with the inclination and practice of "sympathetic consideration" to replace neo-Confucian metaphysics with a robust view about human nature and our place in the world. He provided a more fully naturalized alternative to neo-Confucian metaphysics, one that is most impressive and remains worthy of consideration today. Nevertheless, like Jinsai he sought to maintain much of the more robust ethical aspirations of neo-Confucianism, insisting that we all work to recognize and appreciate our inextricable connections with and broad responsibilities to care for all living things in the world.

IV. Jeong Yakyong (Dasan)

Like Jinsai and Dai, Jeong Yakyong rejected the orthodox neo-Confucian view of principle and its related theory of self-cultivation. He argued that the only plausible foundation for the ethical ideal of Confucianism was the will of the Lord on High (C: *Shangdi*; K: *sangje* 上帝), and the only way to develop the self morally was through the active cultivation of proper feelings and desires. While some argue, quite plausibly, that he was inspired by the writings of Catholic missionaries and perhaps the views of his brother, who was a convert to the Catholic faith, he may also have come to this view, at least partly, by his appreciative reading of Tokugawa Confucians, such as Jinsai and especially Ogyū Sorai, who developed and defended similar views.[57] Whatever inspired him, no one can deny that Dasan presented his case in terms

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and "Happiness in Early Chinese Thought," in Ilona Boniwell andSusan David, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Happiness*, (Oxford University Press, 2013): 263-78.

[57] For a discussion of some of the possible influences on Jeong Yakyong's philosophy, see Mark Setton, *Chong Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997): 128-38. For a study which explores his personal and philosophical relationship with Catholicism in great depth, see Shin-ja Kim, *The Philosophical Thought of Tasan Chŏng*, Tobias J. Körtner and Jordan Nyenyembe, tr., (New York: Peter Lang,

of a carefully crafted historical reconstruction of early Confucian texts, supported by both philological and philosophical arguments.

Like his Japanese and Chinese counterparts, Dasan saw standard neo-Confucian views about principles as reflections of Daoist and Buddhist influences, unattested in the classical texts of Confucianism and highly implausible.[58]

> Neo-Confucians regard principles as the origin of all the myriad things in the universe, whether they be with or without shape, sentient or insentient. They make no distinction between what is great or trivial, what is primary or secondary. This is their so-called theory of how all things originate from one principle, separate into a myriad of manifestations, and in the end return to unite into one principle. Such a view is no different at all from the Buddhist Zhaozhou's[59] theory that the myriad dharma all originate from one dharma [of Emptiness]. This is because in their youth, many scholars of the Song dynasty immersed themselves in Chan Buddhism. When they later returned to Confucianism, this influence remained in their theories about human nature and principle…. What is their view of principle? When it comes to principle, there is no love or hate, no joy or anger. Principle is empty and infinite, without name or body. And yet they say that principles are the endowment which determines the character of my nature. It is hard to see how we can call this the Way![60]

As can be seen in the above quote, one of Dasan's primary philosophical objections to the orthodox view is that it takes principles to be abstract metaphysical entities. On such a view, principles are intangible and inert; they play no causal role in the physical world and are insentient yet somehow neo-Confucians maintain they are the origin of all that there is as well as the standard for all that is good. In contrast to this view, like Jinsai and Dai, Dasan insisted that *qi* must precede principles and that the latter are simply the good order that the former can take on in the world. Principles have no fundamental role in metaphysics, morality, or self-cultivation.

2010) and Don Baker, "Thomas Aquinas and *Chŏng* Yagyŏng: Rebels Within Tradition," *Tasan Hak* ("Journal of Tasan Studies"), 3:2 (2002): 32-69.

[58] For an insightful and concise introduction to Dasan's philosophy that helpfully locates it within its historical context, see Michael C. Kalton, "Chong Tasan's Philosophy of Man: A Radical Critique of the Neo-Confucian World View," *Journal of Korean Studies*, 3 (1981): 3-37.

[59] This refers to Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗, a great Tang Chan Buddhist teacher. See Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History,Volume I: India and China*, (New York: MacMillan, 1988): 167-8

[60] Yi Jihyoung 李篪衡 ed., *Dasan Maengjayoui* 茶山孟子要義 (Seoul: *Hyundaeshilhaksa* 現代實學社, 1994): 569. Commentary on *Mengzi* 7A1.

Dasan offered related criticisms of other features of orthodox neo-Confucian metaphysics as well. For example, unlike Jinsai and Dai, he denied that the universe arose out of the mutual interplay of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. In a view that parallels his position on principles as simply the order of the physical world, he held that *yin* and *yang* were not material entities or metaphysical principles at all; basing his argument on philological study as well as philosophical analysis, he argued that they too were simply *qualities* that can be found in the physical world.

> Zhu Xi claims that Heaven employs *yin*, *yang*, and the five phases to generate the myriad things, using *qi* to give them shape and distributing principles among. them. But if we consider the terms *yin* and *yang*, they originally referred to shadow and light. What is obscured from the sun is *yin*; what is illuminated by the sun is *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* originally possessed no physical form; they simply were shadow or light. And so, they cannot be regarded as mother and father of the myriad things.[61]

Another of Dasan's many disagreements with neo-Confucian metaphysics is found in his conception of human nature (C: *xing*; K: *song* 性). He rejected the idea that human nature was principle, a view that served as a cornerstone of neo-Confucian metaphysics and ethics. As noted in the introduction, the orthodox view held that all human beings were endowed with a pure and perfect moral nature that consisted of principles. This nature not only was found within human beings; it was the nature of all other things as well; what distinguished human beings was their ability to completely access and bring into play all the principles of this commonly shared nature through self-cultivation.[62] Dasan leveled several, related criticisms of this view. First, as noted earlier, he objected that it describes human nature in terms of insentient and causally inert

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[61] Commentary on Chapter 1 of the *Doctrine of the Mean* from *Supplementary Explanations of the Meaning of the Doctrine of the Mean* (*Jungyongkanguibo Jiangyibu* 中庸講義補) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan* (與猶堂全書), Kim Seongjin 金誠鎭 ed.; Revised by Jeong Inbo 鄭寅普 and An Jaehong 安在鴻 (Seoul: Sinchoseonsa, 1938): II-4,1.

[62] Zhu Xi's view on this issue is difficult to grasp. Chen Lai 陳來 argues persuasively that Zhu's mature theory holds that only human beings possess complete endowments of moral principles. This may be true, though the interpretation is debatable. In any event, this would be only a slight modification of the orthodox view and Jeong did not read Zhu in this way. See Chen's "A Study of Views on *Li* and *Qi* in Master Zhu's Philosophy" *Zhuzi zhexue de liqiguan yanjiu* 朱子哲學的理氣觀研究 in "Self-Selected Essays" *Zi xuan ji* 自選集 (Guilin shi: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 桂林市：廣西師範大學出版社, 1997): 77-138.

principles; it is not clear how such principles could provide the understanding and motivation needed for moral action. Second, he argued that such a view fails to distinguish human nature from the nature of other animals.

> Now, to the contrary, Zhu Xi says that human beings and all things share the same original nature (C: *benranzhixing*; K: *bonyeonjiseong* 本然之性), but that when it comes to the physical nature (C: *qizhixhixing* K: *gijiljiseong* 氣質之性) then human beings and [things like] dogs are different. If we just think about this, it is clear that he is confused. The theory that there is an original nature is derived from Buddhist texts.[63]

Dasan insisted that benevolence, the highest Confucian virtue, is an achievement, not an endowment. We develop into moral beings, if we do, by consistently choosing to follow the moral conscience implanted in us by Heaven, a point we shall return to below; morally good choices are only morally good *because* they are a result of such choice.

As we shall show in a later section of this essay, the Lord on High endows human beings with the beginnings of morality, not the fully moral, abstract nature claimed by neo-Confucians, and further provides them with the freedom to choose how to live. We begin life not with a pure moral nature but with certain appetites or proclivities (C: *shihao*; K: *kiho* 嗜好), some of which are for the good and others of which are for sensual pleasure.

> Now as for human nature it is simply the appetites and inclinations of the human mind. Just as vegetables have an appetite for fertilizer and lotus flowers an appetite for water, the nature of human beings has an appetite for what is good. If human beings practice what is good and accumulate righteousness, they will blossom and flourish. If they practice what is bad and cruel, they will be cut off and wither.[64] What earlier Confucians (i.e. neo-Confucians) called human nature does not accord with Mengzi's original intent.[65]

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[63] Commentary on Chapter 17.2 of the *Analects* from *Ancient and Modern Commentaries on the* Analects (*Noneogogeomju* 論語古今注) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan*, II-15.

[64] The expression "accumulating righteousness," the talk of "withering" (or starving), and the general reliance on agricultural metaphors draws upon the *Mengzi*. See, for example, 2A2.

[65] *Explaining the Meaning of the* Great Learning (*Taehakkangui* 大學講義) (commentary on Chapter 7 of the *Great Learning*) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan*, II-2.

Here we see ideas that are quite close to what we saw in both Jinsai and Dai and that find clear, even earlier precedents in the philosophy of Mengzi. Human beings have a shared nature that contains, among other appetites or inclinations, a preference and enjoyment of morality, things very much parts of the realm of *qi*. If people follow these inclinations, what Mengzi called the "greater" part of their nature,[66] they will become healthy and flourish. Dai talked about what promotes life and Dasan is relying upon the same idea when he talks about what leads to a "healthy" life. If we take him, as we should, to be saying that the moral life promotes the health and flourishing not only of individuals but also of the families and societies in which they live, i.e. that it leads to healthy individuals, families, and communities, this offers good reasons for choosing morality. Is it, though, *possible* for us to choose morality? Here Dasan adds something that is at best only implied in the *Mengzi*: an explicit recognition of freedom of the will.

> Heaven has endowed human beings with autonomy, so that if they desire good they will do good, if they desire bad they will do bad. They are free and their choices not predetermined, unlike birds and beasts whose minds are fixed. As a result, if human beings do what is good, it is really their achievement; if they do what is bad, it is really their fault. The difference between these lies in the human mind, not in human nature.[67]

If we grant that we *can* make the right choices, we still will want to know how to bring ourselves reliably to do so. Since we don't have a complete and perfect moral mind but only weak and imperfect moral inclinations that must constantly battle against the more sensual, pleasure-seeking parts of our nature, how can we know when we are getting it right? One mark of correct moral decision, which is part of every Mencian-inspired view of moral cultivation, is the special, deeply satisfying sense of enjoyment that comes from reflecting on good moral action, but Dasan also brought in and developed a novel view about the role of "sympathetic consideration" (C: *shu*; K: *seo* 恕). He believed there were two basic forms of *shu*; the first of

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[66] For the *locus classicus* of the notion of greater and lesser parts of the self, see *Mengzi* 6A15.

[67] *Dasan Maengjayoui*, p. 498.

these, “inferential sympathetic consideration” (C: *tuishu*; K: *chuseo* 推恕), was by far the more important, and Dasan regarded it as the primary method of Confucian self-cultivation. The second form of *shu,* “accommodating sympathetic consideration” (C: *rongshu*; K: *yongseo* 容恕), was characteristic of neo-Confucianism;[68] while of some value, it was not an essential part of moral self-cultivation and, as we shall see, brought with it formidable moral hazard.

> There are two types of *shu*: one is called “inferential sympathetic consideration” and the other “accommodating sympathetic consideration.” Only the former is found in ancient sources, never the latter. For the most part, what Zhu Xi talked about was accommodating sympathetic consideration…While inferential sympathetic consideration and accommodating sympathetic consideration *seem* similar they actually are miles apart. Inferential sympathetic consideration primarily concerns cultivating the self, it is the means by which one carries out good actions oneself. Accommodating sympathetic consideration primarily concerns dealing with others, it pertains to tolerating and forgiving the bad behavior of other people. How can these two be regarded as the same?[69]

As is made clear in the quote above, “inferential sympathetic consideration” is the only kind of *shu* that was discussed in classical sources and is the most basic and important practice of moral self-cultivation. Dasan recognized a distinction between cases in which my treatment at the hands of others leads me to see that something is inappropriate and cases in which my standing desires lead me to see what I should not do to others, but in either case he insisted that the exercise of inferential sympathetic consideration is a guide for *carrying out* good actions;[70] this concern for actual practice runs throughout his ethical philosophy.

> The *Doctrine of the Mean* says, “When others do something to you that you do not wish to have done to you, do not impose such things on others.”[71] This is inferential sympathetic consideration. Zigong said, “What I do not want others to do to me, I do not want to impose on them.”[72] This is inferential sympathetic consideration. This

[68] The characters 容恕 mean “forgiveness” in both modern Korean and Chinese, and this is an artifact of the influence of Zhu Xi’s understanding of 恕.

[69] *The Shared Meaning of the* Great Learning (*Taehakkangui* 大學公義) (commentary on Chapter 13 of the *Great Learning*) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan*, II-1.

[70] The thought is that what is revealed by inferential sympathetic consideration guides and motivate one to act to help and benefit others while accommodating sympathetic consideration tends to lead one *not* to act; consider the difference between recognizing that I should volunteer in a soup kitchen to help others in need as I would like to be helped and refraining from exacting even justified revenge in light of understanding the weakness that motivated the offending person to mistreat me.

[71] *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 13.

> is what this classic means by "What you dislike in those above you, do no use when employing those below. What you do not like in those below, do not use when serving those above."[73] This is inferential sympathetic consideration. Kongzi said, "What you do not want, do not impose on others."[74] This is inferential sympathetic consideration. Inferential sympathetic consideration is how to cultivate the self. This is why Mengzi said, "To endeavor to practice sympathetic consideration: there is nothing closer to benevolence than this!"[75] What he meant is that in the interactions between human beings the only imperative is [to follow] the model of inferential sympathetic consideration.[76]

"Accommodating sympathetic consideration" was how most neo-Confucians understood *shu* and while not without value, Dasan did not see this form as essential to self-cultivation; he also saw in it considerable potential risk. Accommodating sympathetic consideration is what enables me to understand and forebear untoward treatment at the hands of others. For example, if someone unexpectedly responds to me in an aggressive manner, accommodating sympathetic consideration enables me to take up their cognitive and emotional point of view in ways that might reveal to me the source of such behavior. I might, for example, come to see in ways I had not earlier appreciated that my recent success is viewed as a threat to this person or perhaps has generated jealousy or envy. I had expected the offending party to be happy for me, but from the perspective afforded by accommodating sympathetic consideration I now understand and appreciate why he might feel and act otherwise. Such understanding can lead me to forbear or forgive such treatment; as Pascal wrote "to understand is to forgive." Accommodating sympathetic consideration will dissuade me from responding in unproductive ways that escalate the tension between us and lead me away from the ongoing challenge of my own moral self-improvement. The worry, though, is that such an accommodating attitude toward one another might lead us to cover up and perhaps even enable or promote each other's worst tendencies.

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[72] *Analects* 5.12.
[73] *Great Learning*, Chapter 10.
[74] *Analects* 12.2 and 15.24.
[75] *Mengzi* 7A4.
[76] *The Shared Meaning of the* Great Learning (commentary on Chapter 9 of the *Great Learning*) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan*, II-1.

We can see in Dasan's conception of *shu* a view that is quite similar to what we found in Jinsai and Dai's philosophy, though at the same time it is originally and distinctively conceived and offers novel contributions to our understanding of the nature and function of empathetic identification with others. Like Jinsai and Dai, Dasan saw *shu* as offering a method for sympathizing with and understanding others in ways that help to extend, curb, and shape my own standing beliefs and feelings so that these are more in accord with the Dao. It provides a kind of ethical cognitive and emotional therapy for expanding the sense of connection and common cause between ourselves and the rest of humanity. Despite this important similarity, unlike Jinsai and Dai, Dasan did not extend the application of *shu* beyond relationships between human beings. In part, perhaps, this is because he was passionately concerned with refuting neo-Confucian views about an inherent, morally perfect nature shared by all the things of the world and its corresponding ethics.[77] *Mengzi* 7A45 famously distinguishes a range of different moral obligations.

> The cultivated individual, in regard to things, cares for them but does not treat them with benevolence. In regard to the people, he treats them with benevolence but does not love them as family. He expresses familial love to his family, benevolence to the people, and care for things.

Dasan offers the following comment.

> Benevolence occurs between two people. It is only appropriate to use the term "benevolence" in regard to interactions between two [or more] people. It is not appropriate to use the term in regard to things. The Buddhist prohibition against killing is to express benevolence toward things. The Mohist teaching of impartial caring is to express familial love toward people in general.[78]

Dasan insisted that the term "benevolence" (C: *ren*; K: *in* 仁) is an attitude only appropriate for interactions between human beings. His references to Buddhism and Mohism make clear that he

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[77] As noted earlier, Dasan addresses this issue throughout his writings and decisively rejects the neo-Confucian view. This topic served as one of the primary controversies within what is known as the Horak Debate, which began in the 18th century, the second most famous philosophical dispute in Korean history. See the special issue, "The Horak Debate in Eighteenth-Century Joseon," in the *Korea Journal*, 51.1 (2011).

[78] *Dasan Maengjayoui*, p. 579.

is out to contrast his view with these competing schools of thought, but his readers immediately would know that this criticism was also aimed at Song-Ming neo-Confucians, who argued that all things in the world, animate and inanimate alike, share the same nature and who described a lack of feeling for the welfare of people, creatures, and things as being "numb" (*buren* 不仁) to the world. They made this latter point by relying on the ambiguity of the term *buren* which, in their age, had the ethical sense of "lacking benevolence" *and* the medical sense of "paralysis." One who was "unfeeling" toward the things of the world was like a person with a paralyzed limb. In both cases, they failed to see and appreciate an underlying connection between themselves and something else.[79] Zhou Dunyi's refusal to cut the grass in front of his house is but one example of this kind of widely-shared view. Of course Dasan would have none of this, but neither did Jinsai or Dai, and yet the latter two, unlike Dasan, retained a more general sense of benevolence or care toward the world at large, grounded it in alternative schemes linking the self and the world, and advocated *shu* as the proper method for thinking and feeling one's way to an understanding and appreciation of the needs and welfare of other living things. In contrast, in this and other passages, it simply is not clear whether Dasan believes we have direct moral obligations beyond those we owe to people.[80]

It would make perfect sense for someone with Dasan's views about the Lord on High to insist that we care for creatures and things *qua* creations of God; this is surely what the Roman Catholic philosophy he knew well taught and still teaches today, but I have yet to find any

[79] For a more thorough discussion of this idea, see my *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mengzi and Wang Yangming*, Second Edition, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002): 27-9.
[80] If this indeed is Dasan's view, then at least in this respect, he is quite close to Kant.

evidence that he held such a view.[81] In some passages, he makes clear that the world was created and exists for the use of human beings.

> If one gazes up toward the heavens, the sun, moon, stars, and planets are arrayed there. If one looks down upon the earth, grass, trees, birds, and beasts are arranged here. All of these exist to provide, light, warmth, nourishment, and service to human beings. If the master of this world is not human beings then who is it? Heaven provided this world as a home for human beings and leads them to do what is good. The sun, moon, stars, planets, grass, trees, birds, and beasts all are provided for [the occupants of] this home. Now, how could it be in accord with good order to want to make grass, trees, birds, and beasts the masters [of this world, instead of human beings]?[82]

We can easily see his comments here directed at the orthodox neo-Confucian view, which claims all the things in the universe equally possess the same principles and fundamental nature as human beings. In other passages, though, Dasan makes clear that cultivated people are to be shepherds or caretakers as well as users of the things that Heaven provides and that this is part of the ongoing work of improving oneself morally.

> To fully develop one's nature is to fully develop the original endowment one received from Heaven. To cultivate the self so that one attains the highest good is to fully develop one's original endowment. If one governs others so they attain the highest good, then each of them will fully develop their original endowment, but the merit for this will rest in oneself. If one applies oneself to the regulations governing mountains, forests, rivers, and marshes, which ensure grasses, trees, birds, and beasts are born in their proper season and none fails to come to term or suffers an early death, and ensuring stablemen raise their horses, herdsmen tend their flocks, farmers plant the five grains, and orchard-keepers care for their orchards, so that all animals and plants, which cherish life, fully develop the nature with which they were born, then each thing will fully develop its original endowment, but the merit for this will rest in oneself. If the regulations governing mountains, forests, rivers, and marshes, farmers, orchard-keepers, and herdsmen are neglected then the lives of the ten thousand things will be cut short, obstructed, perverted, and thrown into chaos and none will be able to flourish abundantly, but if sages apply themselves to and uphold these regulations, then the lives of the ten thousand things will luxuriantly flourish and radiate abundance; thereby, they will alter the appearance of heaven and earth; this is called "assisting in the transforming and nurturing powers of heaven and earth." Is this not altogether fitting and proper![83]

[81] In the second passage I cite below, Dasan's claim that helping other living things fulfill their Heavenly endowed nature and how this contributes to one's own moral merit can be taken as implying something like the kind of view I here suggest.

[82] Dasan's comment on *Analects* 17.2 in his *Ancient and Modern Commentaries on the* Analects (*Noneogogeomju* 論語古今注) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan*, II-15.

This passage makes clear that cultivated people have rather extensive obligations to care for other living things and that this effort contributes to their own moral improvement. What remains unclear is precisely why we should recognize such obligations and take them to heart. We do not here see the kind of argument that Dai Zhen made: an appeal to our ability to sympathize with other living creatures. We might speculate that Dasan did not make such an argument because he thought it opened the door to the kinds of claims neo-Confucians characteristically made about our having a shared nature with other creatures and things. In any event, this marks a significant difference between his thought and that of Jinsai and Dai.

Another important feature of Dasan's view is that like Jinsai and Dai, he explicitly denies that full knowledge of the Dao is ready and available inside of me; I need to study the classics and experience and reflect upon the various phenomena of the world extensively and carefully in order to orient and shape my initial understanding and feelings to fit an objectively existing moral order. He makes this explicit in his commentary on a passage from the *Mengzi* that was a favorite of neo-Confucians. In 7A4, Mengzi famously says,

> The myriad things are all within me. To turn inward and discover one possesses integrity: there is no greater joy than this! To endeavor to practice sympathetic consideration: there is nothing closer to benevolence than this!

Neo-Confucians took the first part of this passage as clear confirmation of the very metaphysical beliefs that Dasan sought to overturn, and so he needed to and did provide a different explanation of what Mengzi had in mind in this passage.

> This passage is really about the one thread of Kongzi's Dao: doing one's best to practice sympathetic consideration. I enjoy what is beautiful and this tells me that others also enjoy beauty. I enjoy having useful goods and this tells me that others also enjoy having useful goods. I enjoy security and leisure and this tells me others also enjoy security and leisure. I dislike lowliness and insult and this

[83] Commentary on Chapter Twenty-two of the *Doctrine of the Mean* from *A Personal Exploration in the Doctrine of the Mean* (*Jungyungjajam* 中庸自箴) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan,* II-3.The final quote is from the chapter being commented upon. Thanks to Youngsun Back for providing me with this and other related quotes and for stimulating discussions on this set of issues.

> tells me that others also dislike lowliness and insult. I like being in the lead as I walk down the road, being first to go through the door, being first to mount the stairs, being first to sit on my mat. In winter I want to be the first to be warmed, in summer the first to be cooled, when hungry the first to eat, and when thirsty the first to drink. The desires arising from the feelings we have in regard to everyday things and affairs *are all within me*. There is no need for me to ask about the feelings or observe the countenance of others in order to discover that people are the same as me in these respects…What Kongzi called the *one* thread [running through his way] referred to how he could account for the confusion and disorder of the myriad things with the *one thread* of sympathetic consideration. The learning of Kongzi and Mengzi is genuine, practical, humble, and accessible like this, but earlier Confucians talked about Kongzi's one thread and Mengzi's teaching about the myriad things in an excessively expansive manner and interpreted them in much too high-flown ways, saying that each and every one of the principles of all the things in the universe could be found here within the small ambit of my mind. Their explanations are overwhelmingly extravagant, spinning off with no shore in sight. This has caused students in later times to be totally confused and unable to know where to start or what to lay hold of. Is this not deplorable![84]

The most distinctive and characteristic feature of Dasan's philosophy is his belief in the Lord on High (C: *shangdi*; K: *sangje* 上帝) or Heaven (C: *tian*; K: *cheon* 天). While there is no doubt that he had read, believed, and was influenced by Catholicism, this should not obscure the extent to which his defense and conception of God was grounded in classical Confucian texts; in a number of important respects, some of which we will explore below, his view clearly conflicted with and was incommensurable with Catholic teachings he knew well.

As we have seen, one of Dasan's core objections to neo-Confucian views about principles turned on his argument that principles are insentient and lack causal efficacy in the world and so could not serve as the origin of the physical world or provide moral insight or motivation. Dasan extended the moral part of this argument to the physical world in general: since it lacked sentience, it could not be aware of, reflect upon, choose and follow moral norms. This line of thought is what led him to posit the Lord on High as both the creator of the world and the source and sustainer of moral norms; an objective moral order requires and presupposes such a creator.

> What is "the Lord on High"? It is that which lies beyond heaven, earth, spirits, and human beings, creates heaven, earth, spirits, and human beings, and rules, controls, protects, and nurtures heaven, earth, spirits, and human beings. The

[84] *Dasan Maengjayoui*, p. 571.

> Lord is to heaven as the ruler is to his state. You cannot point to the substantial, azure sky above and take that as the Lord on High.[85]

The Lord on High does not speak or act overtly in the world in the sense that His voice can be heard or His actions or form seen; He is beyond the physical world and above the senses. Nevertheless, the Lord on High has endowed human beings with a variety of gifts and among these is a moral mind through which Heaven reveals its plans and desires.

> The voice of Heaven resides within the mind of the Way,[86] and so warnings issued by the mind of the Way are prohibitions commanded by high Heaven. These warnings are not things people can hear [like ordinary speech], but if one introspectively listens attentively, nothing is more precise and clear; it is as if Heaven is issuing proclamations and offering instruction.[87]

Heaven not only favors human beings with a capacity to hear its voice but also has endowed them with the freedom to choose whether or not to heed the warnings and advice of Heaven.

> Heaven has endowed human beings with their natures, providing them with an inclination to like virtue and a capacity to choose the good. Though this nature lies within human beings, its source is Heaven's Mandate (C: *tianming*; K: *chonmyong* 天命).[88]

Dasan believed it necessary to posit the Lord on High in order to explain both the origin of the physical universe and its moral order. There had to be an original cause that brought the universe into being and an intelligent mind that built into it a moral order. In Dasan's view, neo-Confucian principles could not provide adequate explanations for either of these phenomena; no

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[85] *An Evidential Inquiry into the* Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chunchukojing* 春秋考徵) in *The Complete Works of Jeong Dasan,* II-36. In this passage, Dasan relies upon the non-theological use of heaven as the sky or firmament. In other passages he notes this sense and distinguishes it from its theological and moral use. In this latter sense, the term "Heaven" is used to refer to the Lord on High in the way that "the ruler" is used to refer to the state. See *Dasan Maengjayoui*, p. 569. Commentary on *Mengzi* 7A1.

[86] Dasan relies on the widely invoked distinction between the "mind of the Way" (C: *daoxin*; K: *dosim* 道心) and the "human mind" (C: *renxin*; K: *insim* 人心) but conceives of them differently than what was common in neo-Confucianism. For Dasan, the mind of the Way was our Heavenly endowed nascent moral conscience, a kind of conduit to or representative of the Lord on High; the human mind was the corporeal mind with all its thoughts and desires.

[87] Commentary on Chapter One of the *Doctrine of the Mean* from *A Personal Exploration in the Doctrine of the Mean*.

[88] Commentary on Chapter One of the *Doctrine of the Mean* from *A Personal Exploration in the Doctrine of the Mean*, II-3.

purely physical explanation ever could. The Lord on High is beyond the reach of normal human sensibilities but can be understood by introspectively listening to the "mind of the Way." Dasan's view about this innate moral mind is both similar to and yet different from the view of thinkers like Wang Yangming, who believed we all are endowed with a pure and perfect moral mind, a kind of "god within." For Dasan, the mind of the Way affords us initial, limited access to Heaven's will; it is not a pure and perfect moral guide. We have to choose to follow Heaven's Mandate and then actively work to develop our moral sensibilities into full moral virtues; fortunately, Heaven has given us both the freedom and will necessary to make and follow this choice.

Many of Dasan's views about the Lord on High clearly are similar to Roman Catholic beliefs which he knew well, but as noted earlier it is important to recognize some of the ways in which his view is incompatible with Roman Catholicism and is instead inspired by early Confucianism. One dramatic example of such difference is his complete lack of interest in eschatology: we find no discussion of Heaven or Hell in Dasan's writings. Moreover, he did not conceive of the Lord on High in terms of a warm and personal God who created and sustains the world. While the Lord on High was clearly an agent with certain broad intentions, was present in each and every person in the form of something akin to moral conscience, and could see into each person's soul, His personality remained quite vague; he had distinct roles to play but no clear personality. The Lord on High did not take an active and specific interest in me as the person I am. Equally important, while our moral conscience and free will are gifts from Heaven, the grace of the Lord on High was not necessary for the equivalent of salvation: the attainment of moral perfection. Moreover, as we saw above, while Dasan insisted that Heaven provided the creatures and things of the earth for human beings, established human beings as the masters of

this world, and held that we are to care for the creatures and plants of the world, he did not hold that we should care for these living things because they are God's creations. Dasan grounded his beliefs about the Lord on High in the clearly theological passages that can be found throughout the early classics, and this is one important legacy of his philosophy. Because he sought for his vision of God in the Confucian classics, his views about the Lord on High and His role in our lives reflects the distinctive perspective, assumptions, and aims of the early Confucian tradition.

V. Conclusion

There is much of interest to be learned in comparing the thought of Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan; by way of conclusion, I will highlight only three different kinds of insights this all-too-brief comparative project provides. The first concerns the nature of the Confucian tradition, the second the ongoing challenge for Confucianism and all ethical systems to come to grips with moral metaphysics, and the third concerns a contribution all three make to our understanding of the role emotional identification with other people can play in our ethical lives.

Our study of these towering Confucian thinkers, representing three of the greatest and most interesting cultures on earth, teaches us an important lesson about the richness and diversity to be found within the tradition. At the same time, this lesson is taught in a way that helps to counteract the still too common claims one finds about how homogenous and harmonious the Confucian tradition has been (and continues to be). All three of our thinkers offer scathing criticisms of the majority of Song-Ming Confucians and call for a more historically sensitive appreciation of the classical tradition. At the same time, all three contribute to a new method and style of philosophizing, what we might call *philological philosophy*. This is a new and interesting

genre of Confucian philosophical writing, different from classical approaches, but also from the long tradition of commentary, as well as the more dialogic and speculative styles seen in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. Modern scholars who write on Confucian themes today often are significantly influenced by the philological method represented by these 18th century Confucians; much of their energy and attention is spent arguing about the true and original meaning of key terms of art and criticizing the purportedly mistaken interpretations offered by others. In our time, the purportedly insidious influence of "Western philosophy" often stands in the place of Daoism and Buddhism, but the form and style of contemporary scholars owes much to the Confucian philosophers that serve as the focus of this study.

The writings of Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan also serve to remind us of the ongoing challenge Confucianism and all ethical traditions face in regard to providing sound foundations for their theories. As noted in the introduction to this essay and seen throughout, all three of our thinkers argue against and definitively reject orthodox neo-Confucian metaphysics, specifically their theories about how the universe is composed of a combination of principles and *qi*, with the former serving as the normative standard providing structure, tempo, and meaning to the latter, phenomenal world. In the opening section of this essay, we sketched how this metaphysical scheme served as the foundation for neo-Confucian ethics and in particular the role it played in justifying their characteristic call to care for the universe as oneself. While rejecting orthodox metaphysics, all three of our thinkers, to varying degrees and in different ways, retained much of the general ethical perspective of neo-Confucians by developing alternative foundations for a comprehensive imperative to care for the world.

Itō Jinsai appealed to an alternative metaphysical scheme in which a lively and dynamic Way continuously generates and sustains life through the production of "unified original *qi*." For

the most part, Jinsai's account is best understood as a Confucian correlate to Daoist and Buddhist claims about the original and underlying unity of the universe in "nothing" or "emptiness" respectively. Like these alternatives, he argued that this shared element offered a basis for universal care, for every aspect of the universe was but a part or manifestation of a common underlying substance. Moreover, the living, warm, and creative nature of unified original *qi* with an aware, concerned, and active though vague and impersonal Heaven as its source stood in stark contrast to the purportedly dead, cold, and static alternatives found in Daoism and Buddhism. Jinsai's alternative explicitly claimed that the universe itself was a single, living, organic whole, and he offered this as justification for a comprehensive call to care for the universe as oneself. Moreover, because we share unified original *qi* with all things in the world, we can and should employ sympathetic consideration as the method for feeling and thinking our way into an appreciation of their various needs and welfare.

Dai Zhen offered a more naturalized Confucian ethics that in certain respects is reminiscent of Xunzi's philosophy;[89] nevertheless, unlike Xunzi, he linked his appeal to the "fulfillment of [human] life" to a universal characteristic of the Dao itself: "the [unending] generation of life." The former was but part and only one manifestation of the latter. It was this larger metaphysical scheme that enabled him to retain the more ambitious ethical aim of caring for the living things of the world as in some deep sense related to oneself and accessible through the exercise of sympathetic consideration. His moral ideal required one to understand and appreciate the proper places, functions, and relationships not only of human beings and their various needs and desires but also of all the creatures and other living things in the world, as manifestations of the creative, life-generating power of heaven and earth. This led him to insist

[89] For a discussion of how Xunzi appeals to a larger sense of the Dao as a normative standard, see my "A Happy - Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought" in Justin Tiwald and T. C. Kline, III, eds., *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, Forthcoming 2013): Chapter 2 XXX.

on the need to attend to and appropriately care for not only human beings but all creatures and plants well.

Jeong Yakyong argued that the true basis for moral concern was theological in nature; the foundation of Confucian ethics, ultimately, is a form of divine command theory: the will of the Lord on High. Dasan offered both philosophical and philological reasons for this claim, and in doing so shows great fidelity to the shared approach advocated by all three of our thinkers. While Jinsai did recognize a more metaphysically robust role for Heaven, he tended to underemphasize the more explicitly theological aspects of classical texts, including his two favorite sources: the *Analects* and *Mengzi.* Dai's interpretation of Confucianism appealed to the full range of Confucian classics, but, as noted earlier, his effort owes its greatest debt to the writings of the iconoclast Xunzi, who explicitly and uncharacteristically defended a fully naturalized conception of Heaven. While also profoundly influenced by Xunzi's philosophy, Dasan made a very strong case for his claim that the classics unambiguously appeal to a clear conception of deity as the origin, foundation, and sustainer of both the world and morality. In doing so, he not only offered a distinctive expression of Confucianism but challenges modern scholars of the tradition, who tend to ignore or attempt to explain away the theological passages found throughout the classics.[90] While Dasan relied on the exercise of sympathetic consideration as the way to orient, guide, and shape our feelings and subsequent behavior toward other human beings, unlike Jinsai or Dai, he did not extend the application of *shu* to other living things. However, he did insist that

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[90] Herrlee G. Creel offered a thorough defense of the theological nature of the Confucian tradition. See his "Was Confucius Agnostic?" in *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 29, No. 1/3 (1932): 55-99. More recently, a similar case has been made by Kelley James Clark and Justin T. Winslett. See their "The Evolutionary Psychology of Chinese Religion: Pre-Qin High Gods and Punishers and Rewarders" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 79.4 (2011): 928-960. The most thorough treatment of this topic in regard to the *Analects* is Erin M. Cline, "Religious Thought and Practice in the *Analects*," in Amy Olberding, ed., *The Dao Companion to the Analects*, (Springer, forthcoming). Some of the more influential modern advocates for the revival of Confucianism in China today, such as Jiang Qing 蒋庆 or Fan Ruiping 范瑞平, make theological appeals the center of their interpretations.

we have quite demanding obligations to care for other living things and to work to develop their Heavenly endowed natures.

Finally, in regard to moral psychology, the philosophy of our three thinkers offers us new and powerful conceptions of how emotional identification with others can contribute to moral understanding and improvement. In recent years, an interest in the related phenomena of empathy and altruism has blossomed among contemporary ethicists, empirical psychologists, cognitive scientists, primatologists, and evolutionary biologists. This has generated a wide range of views and influential among them is the idea that *empathy*, conceived of as the ability to feel as another feels, helps us understand, develop concern for, and act on behalf of the feelings, desires, and needs of others. Roughly, this is what the empathy-altruism hypothesis maintains.[91] Others hold that an attitude of *sympathetic concern* takes us a step farther by having us view the feelings, desires, and needs of others from the perspective of an active interest in their welfare for their sake. This is something we can do successfully without having to simulate how we think *they* actually feel.[92]

Jinsai, Dai, and Dasan carefully explored the role that emotional identification with the feelings, desires, and needs of others can play in moral self-cultivation, but their conception of sympathetic consideration (*shu* 恕) offers something more than either of the two influential views described above. Sympathetic consideration requires us to feel as others feel (as does empathy) and to take an active interest in their welfare (as does sympathetic concern), but it insists that the act of sympathetic consideration be aimed at honing our own understanding and

[91] The most sophisticated and articulate philosophical advocate of this kind of view is Michael Slote. For example, see his, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*, (London: Routledge, 2007) and *Moral Sentimentalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Slote draws extensively and explicitly upon the work of the psychologist Martin L. Hoffman. For Hoffman's ideas, see his, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*, Reprint, (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[92] Stephen Darwall presents a careful and revealing discussion of this and related views about emotional identification in his seminal article, "Empathy, Sympathy, Care," *Philosophical Studies*, 89 (1998): 261-82.

emotional responses to the events and situations we encounter. The goal of feeling our way into other people's points of view is to take them as sources of alternative emotional perspectives that are to be used to shape and direct our own understanding and response not only to this particular event or situation but also to events or situations of this type. In other words, sympathetic consideration is a kind of emotional and cognitive therapy aimed at enhancing our understanding and perception of morality and cultivating a properly attuned moral sense.

These insights about the nature and future potential of the Confucian tradition and how it is understood today, about the challenges it faces in regard to the foundations of its ethical claims, and its contributions to our understanding of moral psychology, particularly in regard to the role that emotional identification with others can play in the development of moral understanding and sensitivity all testify to the value of these individual thinkers and the comparative study of their views. It is hoped that this essay not only makes a small contribution to such efforts, but also encourages others to pursue such research in the years ahead.