

# The Diversity of Confucianism in the Southern Song Dynasty: A Comparative Study of Zhu Xi's and Zhang Shi's Views on *Taiji* and Human Nature

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**Abstract:** Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–80), a Confucian scholar of the Southern Song dynasty, has been considered as yielding to Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) ideas in most cases, his own thought exhibiting no specific features. This essay is an attempt to examine the differences between Zhu Xi's and Zhang Shi's supreme pivot (*taiji* 太極) and nature (*xing* 性) theories. The features of Zhang Shi's thought and his influence on the neo-Confucianism of the Southern Song dynasty should be reexamined. Some contemporary scholars, including Zhang Shi, have been ignored to a certain degree since Zhu Xi was praised as the representative scholar of neo-Confucianism. This study shows the diversity of neo-Confucianism in the Southern Song dynasty.

**Keywords:** Zhu Xi 朱熹, Zhang Shi 張栻, *taiji*, human nature, neo-Confucianism.

## Introduction

Both Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–80) were prominent Confucian scholars during the Southern Song dynasty. They were close friends and had discussions while annotating Confucian classics. Some studies state that Zhang Shi gave up his master Hu Hong's 胡宏 (1102–61) theory and agreed with Zhu Xi's opinions in most cases, especially the theory of mind-heart and nature (*xin xing lun* 心性論). These studies argue that Zhang's thought exhibited no specific features. In *Mind as Substance and Nature as Substance* (Xinti yu xingti 心體與性體), the author, Mou Zongsan (1999: 271), states that Zhang always echoes Zhu's opinions and does not preserve Hu Hong's thought, which resulted in the decline of the School of Huxiang (Huxiang Xuepai 湖湘學派). However, Hoyt Tillman has a different view. He thinks that Mou Zongsan and his followers may have been too critical of Zhang for the decline of what they regard as their true orthodox philosophical lineage. Actually, Zhang did not simply yield to Zhu's findings; he also continued to uphold his own perspectives, which had been influenced by Hu Hong. Tillman argues that Zhang maintained more of Hu Hong's Hunan tradition than conventionally recognized (Tillman and Soffel 2010: 148), and this idea is worth pursuing. There is now an increasing number of studies focusing on Zhang Shi's theory of mind-heart nature and cultivation. This paper is inspired

by Tillman's argument about the distinctiveness of Zhang Shi's theory and aims to discuss Zhang Shi's and Zhu Xi's differences while explaining the concept of the supreme pivot (*taiji* 太極) on the basis of new material found in the recently rediscovered full version of Zhang's *Commentary on Taijitu Shuo* (Taijitu Shuo Jieyi 太極圖說解義). In 2015, the full version of Zhang Shi's *Commentary on Taijitu Shuo* was rediscovered and edited into the *Collected Works of Zhang Shi* (Zhangshi Ji 張栻集).<sup>1</sup> There are, moreover, additional sources to consult for comparative research on Zhu Xi's and Zhang Shi's thought on the supreme pivot (*taiji* 太極). Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi had different interpretations of Zhou Dunyi's *Discussion of the Taiji Diagram* (Taijitu Shuo 太極圖說). In 1170, Zhu Xi finished his annotated draft of Zhou's *Taijitu Shuo* and then sent it to Zhang Shi for feedback. Zhang Shi gave his comments and wrote his own interpretation of *Taijitu Shuo* in 1172. Each of them wrote their own *Commentary on Taijitu Shuo* to give their differing opinions. Analysis of their discussions shows that Zhu and Zhang held different interpretations of the concept of *taiji*. The explanation of *taiji* is an important part of the whole theory. This discussion of Zhu's and Zhang's *taiji* theory may deepen our understanding of their other theories, including their theories of human nature and their methods of cultivation.

This paper aims to start from Zhu's and Zhang's different ideas about *taiji* and then rethink their other discussions. It will illuminate their differences and demonstrate the varieties of neo-Confucianism in the Southern Song dynasty. Here the meaning of the term *neo-Confucianism* must be clarified first. Tillman explicitly distinguished *neo-Confucianism* and *Daoxue* 道學. Different from Wing-tsit Chan's narrow identification of neo-Confucianism with Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy and William Theodore de Bary's broad usage of the term to encompass essentially all Confucians from the mid-Tang into the Qing period, Tillman prefers the term *Daoxue* to show the philosophical diversity of the Song dynasty (Tillman 1992: 456). The aim of this paper is to make clear Zhang's and Zhu's different understanding of *taiji* and then show the diversity of neo-Confucianism. Here, *neo-Confucianism* points to Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy. It means the diversity existing even between Zhang Shi and Zhu Xi, whom traditional scholars saw as quite assimilated into Zhu's school.

### **Taiji as Metaphysical Foundation**

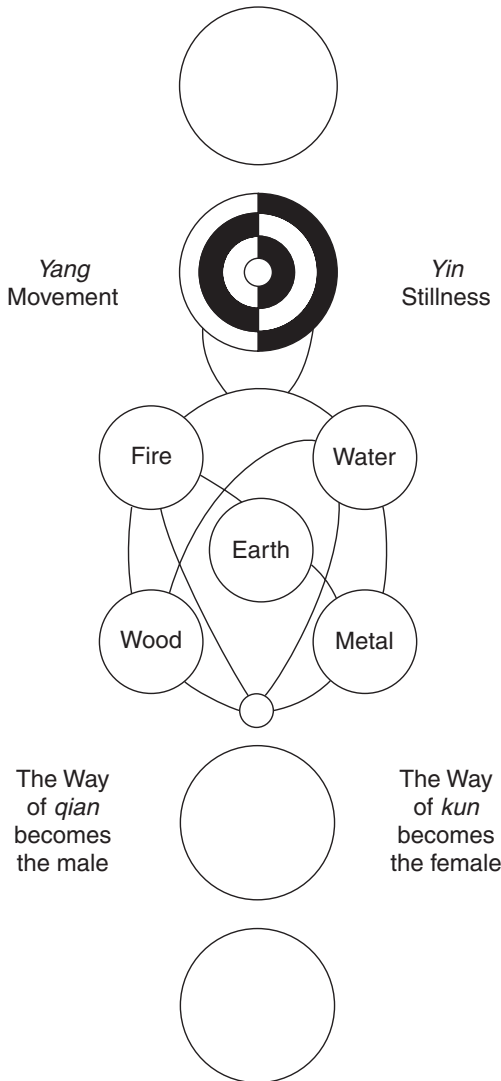
Zhou Dunyi's *Taijitu Shuo* describes the creation process of the entire universe. Starting from *taiji*, everything in the universe, including *yin-yang* 陰陽 and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行), were produced step by step. *Taiji* was the central concept and the creator of the cosmos. Unlike Zhou's physical production explanation, Zhu and Zhang took a metaphysical perspective and focused on *taiji*'s ontological meaning, as shown in their interpretation of the relationship between, on the one hand, nonduality (*wuji* 無極) and *taiji* and, on the other, *taiji*, *yin-yang*, the five phases, and everything.

As to the relationship between *wuji* and *taiji*, Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi shared a consensus that *wuji* and *taiji* were one reality rather than two disparate things. They were the supreme source of everything. The first sentence of *Taijitu Shuo*—"Nonduality

and supreme pivot” (*Wuji er taiji* 無極而太極)—indicated the relationship between *wuji* and *taiji*. Zhu Xi wrote that “*wuji* referred to something fundamentally ‘unbodied’ and *taiji* referred to ‘the principle’ (*li* 理)” (無極者無形，太極者有理也) (Zhu 2003, 17:3116). Zhang Shi had a similar explanation whereby *taiji* was the ultimate origin without a concrete body: “The basis for saying ‘*Wuji er taiji*’ is to clarify the reason for activity and stillness and the foundation of heaven and earth. It covers being and nothing, obviousness and tininess, substance and function. After that, we could know that *taiji* has no concrete body” (而必曰‘無極而太極’者，所以明動靜之本，著天地之根，兼有無、貫顯微、該體用者也。必有以見乎此，而後知太極之妙不可以方所求也) (Zhang 2015: 1605). However, some contemporary scholars, such as Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–93), stated that “*Wuji er taiji*” meant nothing generating being, which originated from Daoism, while *wuji* was independent substance.<sup>2</sup> Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi insisted that *Taijitu Shuo* belonged to the Confucian classics and that *wuji* should never be considered one separate being.

The second issue was about the relationship between *taiji*, *yin-yang*, the five phases, and everything. Zhang Shi argued that all of *yin-yang*, the five phases, and everything were manifestations of *taiji*. All of them existed simultaneously within *taiji*, and there was no chronological sequence for their creation. “*Yin-yang* and the five phases are functions of creating, which has no chronological order. All of them are covered by *taiji* and show endless ‘endowment’ (*ming*)” (二氣五行，乃變化之功用，亦非先有此而後有彼。蓋無不具在於太極之中，而命之不已者然也) (Zhang 2015: 1606). Zhu Xi had a similar idea to Zhang Shi and rejected the idea that the production of everything had a chronological order. All things contained *taiji*, or principle, and existed at the same time. In a nutshell, Zhu and Zhang preferred metaphysics to cosmogony. Ontology was the part lacking sufficient discussion in pre-Qin Confucianism. Zhu and Zhang both took an ontological perspective with the aim of improving the theory of Confucianism; however, they held different interpretations of the concrete connotation of *taiji*. Zhu Xi explained *taiji* from the perspective of ontology and claimed that *taiji* was the principle (*li* 理) and ultimate foundation of the whole world. Zhang Shi preferred the perspective of human nature theory and argued that *taiji* was nature (*xing* 性).

While annotating Zhou Dunyi’s *Taijitu Shuo*, Zhu repeatedly stated that *taiji* was ultimate substance (*benti* 本體) and principle. While annotating the first circle of the *Taiji Diagram* (see fig. 1), Zhu Xi said: “This stands for ‘Nonduality and the supreme pivot,’ which is the fundamental substance (*benti*) by which *yang* [arises] from activity and *yin* from stillness” (此所謂無極而太極也，所以動而陽、靜而陰之本體也) (Zhu 2003, 13:70). *Wuji* and *taiji* were one reality, which was the fundamental substance of activity-stillness and *yin-yang*. Specifically, Zhu Xi thought that this substance was principle: “*Taiji* is the principle of *yin-yang* and the five phases” (所謂太極者，只二氣五行之理) (Zhu 2003, 17:3116). *Taiji* had no concrete body and was inherent in all things in the world: “*Taiji* is not one particular thing. It is inherent in *yin-yang*, the five phases and everything. It is the principle” (太極非是別為一物，即陰陽而在陰陽，即五行而在五行，即萬物而在萬物，只是一個理而已) (Zhu 2003, 17:3122). From Zhu’s point of view, *taiji* was the substance and principle of everything.



Transforming and generating the myriad things

**Figure 1.** *Taiji* diagram. From Angle and Tiwald 2017: 45.

Moreover, sometimes Zhu Xi connected *taiji* with *xing*, or nature. In *Taijitu Shuo*, Zhou Dunyi stated: “In the generation of the five phases, each has its nature” (五行之生也, 各一其性) (Adler 2014: 181). Zhu Xi directly explained the phrase “each has its nature” as “each has its *taiji*.” His friends, such as Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–81), did not agree with this kind of interpretation that created many *taiji*. After some discussion, Zhu revised his explanation and said, “As each has its nature, the complete substance of the entire *taiji* is contained within each and

every thing, and we can see that there is nowhere that this nature does not exist” (各一其性，則渾然太極之全體，無不各具於一物之中，而性之無所不在，又可見矣) (Adler 2014: 181–82). In fact, Zhu still interpreted “each has its nature” as “each has its *taiji*,” but he gave a weaker formulation. Beyond that, Zhou also states in *Taijitu Shuo*: “The reality of *wuji* and the essence of the two modes and five phases mysteriously combine and coalesce” (無極之真，二五之精，妙合而凝) (Adler 2014: 183). In order to explain this process of combination, Zhu Xi claimed that there was nothing outside nature: “Under heaven there are no things outside the nature (*xing*), and there is nowhere that the nature does not exist. That by which the *wuji*, the two [yin-yang], and the five [phases] pervade everywhere is what is meant by ‘mysteriously combine.’ . . . Thus, the nature is master [of a thing] and yin-yang and the five phases are its orderly variations” (夫天下無性外之物，而性無不在，此無極·二五所以混融而無間者也，所謂妙合者也 . . . . . 蓋性為之主，而陰陽五行為之經緯錯綜) (Adler 2014: 183–84). Zhu Xi used the idea that there was nothing outside nature to explain how *wuji* pervades everything. In Zhu’s opinion, *wuji* was *taiji*. As a result, Zhu Xi here connected *taiji* with nature (*xing*).

This sounds confusing given the usual understanding of *taiji*. Zhu Xi understood *taiji* as principle while sometimes he connected *taiji* and nature as well. Actually, *taiji* and *xing* were interrelated but not identical notions. First, Zhu made a distinction between *li* and *xing*. “From the perspective of cosmology, *li* is good without evil. When living things are created and *li* is inherent in them, it is named nature (*xing*). This principle is called ‘endowment’ (*ming*) for heaven and is called ‘*xing*’ for human beings” (這個理在天地間時，只是善，無有不善者。生物得來，方始名曰性。只是這理，在天則曰命，在人則曰性) (Zhu 2003, 14:216). As the core concept of Zhu’s theory, principle was metaphysical substance without form. *Xing* was one face of *li* that pointed to living things. When Zhu Xi said “nature is principle (性即理),” he did not mean *xing* was identical to *li*. *Xing* was one facet emphasizing the human nature aspect of *li*. Second, Zhu distinguished *taiji* and *xing*: “*Xing* points to what is received from heaven. *Taiji* is just *li*, which is doubtless. The *Book of Changes* says ‘the alternation of yin and yang is called the way; what continues it is good, what completes it is human nature (*xing*).’ *Xing* means what is endowed upon living things by heaven and what is received from heaven” (此性字為稟於天者言。若太極，只當說理，自是移易不得。《易》言一陰一陽之謂道，繼之者則謂之善，至於成之者方謂之性。此謂天所賦於人物，人物所受於天者也) (Zhu 2003, 17:3123). *Xing* was what was endowed by heaven and completed in living things, which was the central notion of mind-nature theory. However, *taiji* was a concept of ontology, used primarily when one discussed the creation process of the universe from a metaphysical perspective. *Taiji* and *xing* were notions belonging to different levels. Meanwhile they were interrelated because both were different facets of principle. From Zhu’s theory of regarding *li* as substance (*li ben lun* 理本論), *taiji*, as metaphysical substance, was principle.

Compared with Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi persisted in stating that *taiji* was *xing*. While commenting that “the reality of *wuji* and the essence of the two modes and five phases mysteriously combine and coalesce” (無極之真，二五之精，妙合而凝) (Adler 2014: 183), Zhang at first thought that “the reality of nonduality” should belong to the

last paragraph. It was inappropriate to say *wuji* combined with *yin-yang* and the five phases. “*Taiji* cannot be said to combine with anything. *Taiji* is inborn nature” (太極不可言合, 太極, 性也) (Zhou 2007: 44). There was no combining process because *taiji* was the inherent and inborn nature of everything. He then changed the division of the paragraph but still maintained that *wuji* was not external being. The phrase “mysteriously combine” pointed to the idea that *wuji* existed in everything and there was nothing outside of nature. With regard to the sentence “In the generation of the five phases, each has its nature” (五行之生也, 各一其性) in the *Taijitu Shuo*, Zhang explained that *taiji* existed everywhere. “The stuff of the five phases is different, but *taiji* is inherent in all of them. This stands for ‘each has its nature’” (五行生質雖不同, 然太極未嘗不存也, 故曰‘各一其性’) (Zhang 2015: 1606). The above analysis shows that Zhang Shi thought *taiji* was nature. Zhang was a Confucian scholar of the School of Huxiang (Huxiang Xuepai 湖湘學派), which was founded by Hu Hong and focused on the ontology of nature. Zhang Shi was affected by the ontology of nature and focused on explicating *taiji* as nature, which was different from Zhu Xi’s ontology of principle.

All in all, in Zhu’s opinion, *taiji* was the ultimate reality without concrete body. *Taiji* was metaphysical principle, and *yin-yang* and activity-stillness were functions. Zhang Shi explicated *taiji* from the point of view of ontology as well. Contrary to Zhu Xi, he claimed that *taiji* was *xing*, or nature, and focused on the theory of human nature.

### ***Taiji* and Activity-Stillness**

Zhang Shi interpreted the activity and stillness of *taiji* from the perspective of ontology. *Taiji* contained the principle of activity and stillness. *Taiji* was the substance (*ti* 體), and activity-stillness were functions (*yong* 用) (Zhang 2015: 1605). Substance (*ti*) and function (*yong*) are two concepts frequently spoken of by neo-Confucians. When they discuss a thing’s substance and function together, the aim is to show the way that the thing behaves perceptibly. Functions often change, while substance remains the same. Similarly to Zhang Shi, Zhu Xi explained the relationship between *taiji* and activity-stillness as that of substance and function. In order to annotate the second circle of the *Taiji Diagram*, Zhu Xi said, “The central (inner) ○ is the fundamental substance. ☰ is the activity of *yang*; the functioning of ○ is how it operates. ☷ is the stillness of *yin*; the substance of ○ is how it is established” (中○者, 其本體也。☰者, 陽之動也, ○之用所以行也; ☷者, 陰之靜也, ○之體所以立也) (Adler 2014: 160). *Taiji* was the substance, and *yin-yang* and activity-stillness were *taiji*’s functions. *Taiji*, as the fundamental substance, ruled over activity-stillness. Zhu’s annotation described the activity-stillness of *taiji* in this way.

Both Zhu and Zhang comprehended *taiji* as the principle of activity and stillness from the perspective of ontology. Nevertheless, they had different interpretations of the relationship between *taiji* as substance and activity-stillness as function. Zhou Dunyi described the process of *taiji* acting to produce *yin-yang* in his *Taijitu Shuo*. Zhu Xi understood *taiji* as a principle and metaphysical pattern. *Yin-yang* and activity-stillness were concrete functions. “*Taiji* neither leaves *yin-*

*yang* alone nor mixes with *yin-yang*” (所謂太極者，不離乎陰陽而為言，亦不雜乎陰陽而為言) (Zhu 2003, 14:196). In Zhu’s opinion, *taiji* was inherent in *yin-yang*, but at the same time, they needed to be distinguished as metaphysical principle and concrete function, respectively. For Zhu, this distinction should never be ignored. Consequently, Zhu stated that *taiji* neither acted nor quieted down by itself. “*Taiji* is just the principle (*li*), which should not be confused with activity-stillness” (太極只是理，理不可以動靜言) (Zhu 2003, 17:3121). *Taiji* and activity-stillness belong to different domains—substance and function; therefore, *taiji* is not equivalent to activity-stillness and *taiji* does not act by itself.

On the basis of maintaining this distinction, Zhu interpreted the process of *taiji* acting to produce *yin-yang* from two perspectives. “From the perspective of ontology, *taiji* contains the principle of activity and stillness. From the perspective of pervading, *taiji* has activity and stillness” (蓋謂太極含動靜則可，以本體而言也。謂太極有動靜則可，以流行而言也) (Zhu 2003, 22:2027). From the perspective of ontology, *taiji* is the principle of everything, including activity-stillness. As a result, it is reasonable to state that *taiji* contains activity-stillness. Second, the operation process of the universe involves principle and functions. At this stage, we could say, when we discuss their relationship, that *taiji* acted. To sum up, Zhu Xi emphasized the distinction between metaphysical principle and particular function. He did not believe that *taiji* itself should ever be considered as activity and stillness. His interpretation of *taiji* and activity-stillness is a kind of flexural.

Zhang Shi, on the other hand, did not strictly divide *taiji* and activity-stillness. He claimed that *taiji* was a comprehensive reality including substance and function. *Taiji* had no specific figure and covered both expressed (*yifa* 已發) and unexpressed (*weifa* 未發) terms. There was no difficulty for Zhang to explain Zhou Dunyi’s procedure of *taiji* acting to produce *yin-yang*. *Taiji* acted to create the universe. There was no need to distinguish *taiji*, *yin-yang*, and activity-stillness, so it was reasonable to state directly that *taiji* generated *yang* and *yin* in activity and stillness. Zhang wrote, “*Taiji*, as substance, is still. . . . This ‘stillness’ stands for the substance running through expressed (*yifa*) and unexpressed (*weifa*), and there is no space between them. *Taiji* cannot stop activity; at the limit of activity it is still and at the limit of stillness it is also active” (太極之體至靜也. . . . 某所謂至靜，蓋本體貫乎已發與未發而無間者也。然太極不能不動，動極而靜，靜極復動) (Zhou 2007: 45). Zhu and Zhang thus had different interpretations of the relationship between *taiji* and activity-stillness.

### Distinguishing Benevolence, Rightness, Centrality and Correctness

In addition to their interpretations of *taiji*, Zhu and Zhang had different understandings of the concepts “benevolence” (*ren* 仁), “rightness” (*yi* 義), “centrality” (*zhong* 中), and “correctness” (*zheng* 正) in *Taijitu Shuo*. In his *Taijitu Shuo*, Zhou Dunyi wrote: “The sage settles these affairs with centrality and correctness, and benevolence and rightness, and emphasizes stillness” (聖人定之以中正仁義而主靜) (Adler 2014: 168). Zhu and Zhang had different interpretations of this sentence.

Zhu Xi also discussed this question with Lü Zuqian. In a letter sent to Lü, Zhu commented: “Stillness is the reality of nature, the reason for each of the myriad

things correcting its nature and endowment, and for the building of heaven's substance. It is centrality and benevolence" (靜者, 性之貞也, 萬物之所以各正性命, 而天下之大本所以立也, 中與仁之謂也) (Zhu 2003, 26:665). Lü opposed such an explanation that simply regarded centrality and benevolence as stillness. Based on Zhou Dunyi's text, stillness was the substance of benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness. It was impossible to separate stillness from them, as they always existed together. As a result, there was no one specific thing called stillness. Like Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi also had some questions about Zhu's annotation. In Zhang's opinion, benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness could all be active and still, and stillness was their substance. Zhu Xi's argument that viewing just two of benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness as stillness was not in accordance with Zhou's original thought (Zhang 2015: 675). Zhu Xi responded that, if benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness had no difference and could all be active and still, Zhou would not have needed to list all four. Of course, he said, all of them could be active and still. However, that did not mean there was no difference between them (Zhu 2003, 21:1337). In his discussion with Lü, Zhu said: "By calling it centrality, one refers to [a person's] unexpressed state. By calling it benevolence, one refers to [a person's] complete intrinsic reality. In both cases we are describing them strictly in terms of stillness. Treating things appropriately is rightness and handling things in accordance with people's status is correctness. In both cases we are describing them in their phase of acting in response to things" (今指其未發而謂之中, 指其全體而謂之仁, 則皆未離乎靜者而言之。至於處物之宜謂之義, 處得其位謂之正, 則皆以感物而動之際為言矣) (Zhu 2003, 21:1432). As a result, Zhu admitted that it was reasonable to distinguish stillness and activity. What was more, the way of *taiji* was ubiquitous and inherent in both active and still phases, which avoided the problem of separation.

In the final version of *Taijitu Shuo Jie*, there was no annotation stating that stillness was centrality and benevolence. This did not mean that Zhu had given up on the distinction between stillness and activity in benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness. In fact, Zhu always insisted on this division. In the argument appended to *Taijitu Shuo Jie*, Zhu replied to doubts about such a division in the following manner: "Why do you simply talk about the whole but ignore the distinction of *yin* and *yang*, activity and stillness?" (安得遽以夫統體者言之, 而昧夫陰陽動靜之別哉) (Zhu 2003, 13:78). This showed that Zhu still insisted on this division while finishing the final version of his *Taijitu Shuo Jie*. In a letter to Lü, Zhang Shi mentioned that Zhu persisted in stating the distinction (Zhang 2015: 719). Nevertheless, there was a small difference in Zhu's explanation. In discussion with Lü, Zhu clearly stated that centrality and benevolence were stillness. When talking with Zhang, Zhu still insisted on the distinction between stillness and activity, but he had some difficulty identifying which two were stillness and which two were activity. Sometimes, Zhu stated that correctness and rightness were stillness. Finally, Zhu gave up on saying that centrality and benevolence were stillness and regarded correctness and rightness as stillness.

In conclusion, Zhu Xi considered correctness and rightness stillness. On the basis of this difference, Zhu considered that benevolence, rightness, centrality,



and correctness could all be active and still. Zhu stuck to the idea of one principle with different manifestations (*li yi fen shu* 理一分殊). The explanation of different manifestations—dividing stillness and activity among benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness—had no problem of separation because of the penetrating power of this principle. Conversely, Zhang Shi stated that benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness had no difference and could all be both active and still.

### The Goodness and Badness of Human Nature

The meaning of *taiji* was a key issue in cosmology. For the theory of human nature, the fundamental goodness or badness of human nature was the core question. Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi had discussions about Hu Hong's theory of human nature. Hu insisted that human nature was a metaphysical substance (*ti* 體) that transcends goodness or badness. Zhu Xi had a different opinion and wrote letters to Zhang Shi regarding this issue.

In the first part of this paper, we saw that Zhu Xi explained *taiji* as metaphysical substance. *Taiji* was not neutral but a principle of goodness. It was the foundation of everything, including human beings. *Taiji*, as a principle of goodness, caused people to be born with a fundamentally good nature. Thus, Zhu Xi disagreed with Hu Hong's theory of human nature. Hu had said, "Principle and human desire are the same in terms of their substance (*ti*) but differ as concrete functions" (天理人欲同體而異用) (Zhu 2003, 24:3556). Zhu Xi considered that Hu had misunderstood the meaning of substance (*ti*). In Zhu's opinion, "the substance is principle (*li*) but not human desire. The sage said people should restrain themselves and abide by rituals. People are supposed to engage in self-cultivation and remove human desires; this is pure principle. People never recognize principle in human desires" (本體實然只一天理, 更無人欲。故聖人只說克己復禮, 教人實下功夫, 去卻人欲, 便是天理, 未嘗教人求識天理於人欲汨沒之中也) (Zhu 2003, 24:3557). Zhu strictly distinguished principle and human desires, and there were no human desires within substance. This was the key point that people should insist on. By contrast, Hu regarded principle and desires as one substance.

Hu Hong said, "Human nature has likes and dislikes. The petty man likes and dislikes something according to his own opinion. The gentleman likes and dislikes something according to the way, or principle" (好惡, 性也。小人好惡以己, 君子好惡以道) (Zhu 2003, 24:3557). Zhu Xi believed that Hu meant human nature transcended goodness or badness. Human nature and the way, or principle, became two separate things. Hu's argument meant that there was one way, or principle, outside human nature. Unlike Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi agreed with Hu that human nature embraced likes and dislikes. Zhang thought that a gentleman's (*junzi* 君子) activities coincided with human nature, while a petty man's desires confused nature. Zhu Xi opposed Zhang's idea and emphasized that likes and dislikes belonged within a physical scope, while nature belonged within a metaphysical scope.

In Zhu Xi's opinion, *taiji* was a principle of goodness and the pattern for the entire world. Consequently, *taiji* endowed people with a fundamentally good nature. Human nature was good, and both likes and dislikes and human desires

were physical things, which was the most important rule. As a result, Zhu Xi opposed Hu Hong's theory that human nature had no goodness or badness. As for Zhang Shi, he agreed that human beings were born with a fundamentally good nature. Zhang used water as a metaphor. Innate human nature was clear water, whereas nature as it actually occurs in reality with both goodness and badness was dirty water. Zhang's dirty water was the same as Zhu Xi's physical nature (*qi zhi zhi xing* 氣質之性). Zhu and Zhang agreed that human beings were born good. However, Zhu strictly separated metaphysical nature and physical likes and dislikes. Unlike Zhu Xi, Zhang agreed with Hu Hong's idea that human nature possessed likes and dislikes.

### **Benevolence (*Ren* 仁) and Love**

*Ren* 仁 (benevolence, humaneness) was a core concept of Confucian thought. Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi paid some attention to the meaning of *ren*, the key issue of heart and nature theory. In addition to some letters, Zhu and Zhang separately wrote their own *Discussions on Ren* (*Ren Shuo* 仁說). The first question that they needed to clarify was the relationship between *ren* and love (*ai* 愛), a question that had been debated since the Han dynasty.

There were two points to Zhu Xi's discussion of *ren* and love. First, Zhu insisted on using love to explain *ren*. Some scholars had regarded *ren* as love since the Han dynasty, though this was not without some controversy. Zhu thought that the disadvantage of the above explanation was confusing nature and emotion and considering emotion nature. To correct this drawback of regarding *ren* as love, some scholars abandoned love when discussing *ren*. Zhu believed this was an overcorrection because it made *ren* and love into two unrelated concepts. While considering *ren* as love might confuse nature and emotion, discussing *ren* without love made the content of *ren* too vacuous, ignoring concrete cultivation methods. In Zhu's opinion, *ren* and love should be explained together.

Neither equating *ren* and love nor giving up love were appropriate solutions. Zhu Xi argued, then, that *ren* was the principle of love. Nature and emotion were independent but also related. Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107 CE), a pioneer of Song and Ming neo-Confucianism, said, "Love is emotion. *Ren* is nature. Do not regard love as *ren*" (愛, 情; 仁, 性; 不可以愛為仁) (Zhu 2003, 23:3280). Some scholars cited these words of Cheng to refute Zhu Xi's viewpoint that *ren* was the principle of love. Zhu responded, "What Cheng is criticizing is taking *ren* to be a term that describes manifestations of love. My argument takes *ren* to be a term that refers to the principle of love. Emotion and nature belong to different domains but are related. Some scholars misunderstand Cheng Yi's thought and discuss *ren* without love. I would like to clarify Cheng's opinion" (程子之所訶, 以愛之發而名仁者也。吾之所論, 以愛之理而名仁者也。蓋所謂情性者, 雖其分域之不同, 然其脈絡之通, 各有攸屬者, 則曷嘗判然離絕而不相管哉! 吾方病夫學者誦程子之言而不求其意, 遂至於判然離愛而言仁, 故特論此以發明其遺意) (Zhu 2003, 23:3280). In Zhu Xi's view, Cheng Yi's opinion did not contradict his own. From the perspective of distinguishing nature and emotion, Cheng emphasized that love was not *ren*. Cheng objected to equating love's manifestation with *ren*, which Zhu objected to as well. On the one hand, Zhu stressed that nature and emotion were separate and

*ren* was not equivalent to mere manifestations of love. On the other hand, nature and emotion were still related to one another, and *ren* was the principle of love. In a word, “*Ren* is the reason for love, and yet the reason for love cannot exhaust the content of *ren*” (仁之所以愛, 而愛之所以不能盡仁) (Ren and Gu 2018: 219). Thus, Zhu thought that his idea was consistent with Cheng Yi’s.

Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi shared discussions about *ren* and love. At the beginning, Zhang stated there had been some defects caused by explaining *ren* with love since the Han dynasty. He was afraid that Zhu’s opinion had some drawbacks as well. After discussing with Zhu, Zhang agreed with Zhu’s viewpoint. In *Ren Shuo*, Zhang said: “The principle of love is *ren*” (愛之理則仁也) (Zhang 2015: 1032). At that time, some scholars were tired of complicated theory and wanted to take the simple and fast way. They simply focused on abstract *ren* and ignored specific manifestations. Consequently, specific cultivation methods were ignored. Zhu Xi stated that discussing *ren* with love showed the importance of taking the proper, concrete steps in self-cultivation, which was the correct path of realizing *ren*.

Besides the relationship between *ren* and love, there were some discussions about the content of *ren*, particularly regarding the unity or oneness with everything (*wanwu yiti* 萬物一體) or consciousness (*zhijue* 知覺) as *ren*. As discussed above, Cheng Yi stated that he did not regard love as *ren*. Cheng was an influential scholar, and some of his juniors followed his idea, abandoning love while discussing *ren*. Some of them considered unity with everything as *ren*, while others considered consciousness as *ren*. Zhu Xi opposed both explanations.

First, Zhu Xi disagreed with equating unity with everything to *ren*. He explained that considering everything and the human being as one whole meant that *ren*’s love covered the whole world. This whole was not *ren* but the manifestation of *ren*. Simply regarding oneself as one or as unified with all other things was an abstract achievement that does not give meaningful criteria or guidelines as to how it is achieved as a concrete ethical outcome. Zhang Shi approved of Zhu’s idea that *ren* was the principle of love. At first, basing his thought on the principle of love, Zhang argued that the entirety of everything was *ren*. Heaven and earth created everything in the world, including human beings, which was the basis of the oneness of things and people. This showed that love was ubiquitous and that this was the principle of love. Therefore, it was reasonable to assert that unity with everything was *ren* (Ren and Gu 2018: 268). Zhu objected to Zhang’s argument. Zhu stated that the principle of love was an innate and original principle. This principle was not created after things and people became one entity (Ren and Gu 2018: 269). Zhu opposed considering unity with everything as *ren* because it confused substance and manifestation. Unity with everything is better understood as a manifestation of *ren* rather than as intrinsic reality or substance.

After concluding that the entirety of everything was *ren*, the next question was to explain *ren* through selfless public spiritedness (*gong* 公). Zhang Shi realized that love was a mere emotion and thus recognized that it was somewhat unconvincing to regard love alone as *ren*. He praised in the highest terms the ideal of forming one community with everything, which showed a selfless and public spirit of the whole world being shared by all (*gong tianxia* 公天下). Zhang Shi regarded selfless public spiritedness (*gong*) as *ren* (Ren and Gu 2018: 265). But Zhu

Xi offered a different viewpoint. First, he believed equating a love for all things with *ren* mixed up emotion and nature. Second, he opposed regarding selflessness as *ren* because it was easy for selflessness to become vacuous and heartless. *Ren* should not include selflessness without love. From Zhu Xi's point of view, *ren* as substance was inborn nature and the heart of heaven and earth. It was not created after everything became selfless and joined together as one community (Ren and Gu 2018: 266-267). In conclusion, Zhu Xi objected to Zhang Shi's belief that mere selflessness was *ren*.

As for considering consciousness as *ren*, Zhu Xi argued that there were some drawbacks here as well. Mind's consciousness was the function of wisdom (zhi 智), one of the four virtues (benevolence [*ren* 仁], rightness [*yi* 義], propriety [*li* 禮], and wisdom [*zhi* 智]). Benevolence contained the other three virtues; therefore, the mind of the people with benevolence had consciousness. However, consciousness was not *ren*. Equating consciousness with *ren* was the same as equating desire with principle, which made people fickle and ignored the basis or grounds for ethical cultivation. Consciousness was function (Zhu 2003, 23:3281). Similarly to Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi disagreed with regarding consciousness as *ren*. The mind's consciousness belonged to manifestation, which was different from *ren* (Zhang 2015: 1225). Nonetheless, Zhu and Zhang had differing opinions regarding some details. For example, Zhang believed that *ren* was an object of consciousness, whereas Zhu stated that *ren* was the inborn virtue of mind. If *ren* was an object of consciousness, nothing could be subject. Zhu insisted *ren* was substance and the inborn virtue of mind.

Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi had discussions about considering the entirety of everything or consciousness as *ren*. Zhu Xi was against confusing nature-principle and emotion-desire. He thought that achieving unity with all things without manifesting love was heartless and thus also opposed the view that *ren* is simply achieving unity with all things. As for Zhang Shi, initially he explained the entirety of everything and selflessness as *ren* but disagreed with equating consciousness to *ren*. After discussion with Zhu, Zhang changed his idea and gave up considering selflessness as *ren*. However, Zhang and Zhu always had different inclinations. Zhu was vigilant about not confusing nature-principle and emotion-desire. Conversely, Zhang paid more attention to manifestation, such as the entirety of everything, rather than setting boundaries.

### Reasons for the Diversity

Through the above discussion, it has become clear that Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi held different views on some questions. As to cosmology, they had their own ideas on *taiji*. Zhu Xi preferred to understand *taiji* as principle and thought that *taiji* itself did not act. *Yin-yang* and activity-stillness were concrete functions that should be distinguished from *taiji* as substance. We should divide stillness and activity among benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness. However, Zhang Shi stated that *taiji* was *xing* (nature) and *taiji* acted and calmed to produce *yin-yang*. He thought, moreover, that benevolence, rightness, centrality, and correctness could all exist in activity and stillness. In a word, Zhu emphasized the distinction between *taiji* as substance and activity-stillness as function, while Zhang did not follow this kind of division.

With the theory of human nature, we see the same tendency. Zhu Xi stuck to inborn good nature and objected to Hu Hong's theory that human nature transcends goodness and badness. He distinguished metaphysical nature from the specific likes and dislikes belonging to emotion. Unlike Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi agreed with Hu that human nature contained likes and dislikes. Regarding the meaning of *ren*, Zhu stated that *ren* was the principle of love. On the one hand, love was emotion and belonged to concrete function. Love itself was certainly not *ren*. On the other hand, he never abandoned love when explaining *ren*. *Ren* without love was vacuous. *Ren* and love were separate but mutually dependent for a proper account or explanation of each other. Zhang agreed that *ren* was the principle of love and *ren* was substance. He paid more attention to the manifestation of *ren* rather than the distinction between substance and function. Whether cosmology or the theory of nature was at issue, Zhu and Zhang had different concerns. Zhu focused on the distinction between substance and function, whereas Zhang emphasized diverse manifestations.

There are several reasons why Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi followed different intellectual trends. First, they had different styles when annotating the classics. Taking *Taijitu Shuo* as an example, Zhang Shi believed that while annotating Zhou's *Taijitu Shuo*, one should outline the primary ideas. He thought that Zhu's annotations, which explained every word and every sentence, constituted overinterpretation; they were farfetched and did not conform to Zhou's original thought. However, Zhu stressed Zhou's role as the successor to the Confucian way and thought that systematic commentary on Zhou's works was necessary. As a result, a mere outline was not enough for Zhu Xi. Because of their different approaches to annotation, there were necessarily conflicts between Zhu's and Zhang's commentaries on the *Taijitu Shuo*.

Second, Zhu and Zhang were each influenced by different senior scholars. Zhu was influenced by Li Tong 李侗 (1093–1163) and taken in by the theory of one principle with different manifestations. The penetration of *li* became a key concept in Zhu's thought while annotating Zhou Dunyi's *Taijitu Shuo*. Zhu Xi applied the concepts of the expressed and the unexpressed in *Centrality and Commonality* (Zhongyong 中庸) to explain the second sentence of *Taijitu Shuo*: "The supreme pivot in activity generates *yang*" (太極動而生陽) (Zhu 2003, 13:72). *Yang* and all things that arose after *yang* belonged to the category of the expressed. The substance of *li* was unexpressed reality. Li Tong responded to Zhu that discussion of *li* should combine unexpressed and expressed sections. Whether it was unexpressed or expressed, the penetration of *li* should be the key point. When it was unexpressed, there was only *li*. Once it was expressed, *li* penetrated everything. After this discussion, Zhu focused no longer on the unexpressed and the expressed but on the penetration of *taiji* as *li*. *Yin-yang* and everything were all covered by *taiji* as *li*. Analysis of the correspondence between Li and Zhu collected in *Questions and Answers between Li Tong and His Pupils* (Yanping Dawen 延平答問) suggests that "one principle with different manifestations" was an important concept to both of them (Zhu 2003, 13:354). Zhu read the Cheng brothers' works, so the concept of principle was definitely not foreign to him. However, Li Tong explained in particular the idea of different manifestations to Zhu. Li said that the difficult thing was not knowing one principle but knowing one principle with

different manifestations. Zhu understood the concept of the unexpressed principle, but Li further explained that it was still one principle while manifesting all things. Li's suggestion made Zhu realize the shortcomings of speaking broadly and vaguely of the mysterious way. Therefore, Zhu absolutely insisted on the division of metaphysical principle and concrete function, and the law of one principle with different manifestations.

Zhang Shi, by contrast, was influenced by Hu Hong and understood the theory of nature as substance. Hu Hong focused on the theory of nature because he thought that heretical views—especially Buddhism—made people lose their inborn nature and heart. With the aim of cognizing *ren*, or benevolence, and realizing nature, Hu Hong placed emphasis on clarifying the theory of nature. In his opinion, nature came from heaven and should be regarded as substance. If nature was confirmed, then heart and everything would be confirmed. The School of Huxiang had a tradition of nature theory. Zhang Shi, influenced by Hu Hong, his teacher, also emphasized the theory of nature. While annotating Zhou's *Taijitu Shuo*, he applied the nature concept to *taiji* and stated that *taiji* was *xing*, or nature. Zhang Shi paid more attention to nature than to principle, so he and Zhu Xi had different interpretations of *taiji*.

Through this analysis of the differences between Zhu and Zhang, first we can understand anew the features of Zhang Shi's thought and his influence on the Confucianism of the Southern Song dynasty. Zhang Shi was not the same as Zhu Xi all the time. He emphasized the theory of nature and preferred a comprehensive interpretation. Second, our analysis demonstrates the diversity of the neo-Confucianism of the Southern Song dynasty. Zhu Xi was the representative figure of neo-Confucianism, to be sure, but there were other distinctive scholars and ideas that deserve more attention. Zhou Dunyi has been praised as the founder of Song and Ming neo-Confucianism because of his cosmology in *Taijitu Shuo*, and Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi developed different interpretations of that cosmology. Zhu was concerned with metaphysics, while Zhang focused on human nature, each of which were different developments of the Cheng brothers' neo-Confucianism. The Confucianism of the Southern Song dynasty was varied and rich. Hoyt Tillman states that some Southern Song scholars, such as Zhang Shi and Lü Zuqian, influenced Zhu Xi's thought and made some contributions to the development of *Daoxue*, a point that deserves more attention (Tillman 2002: 9). This essay has been an attempt to study the differences of Zhang Shi's and Zhu Xi's theories of *taiji* and nature and show the specific features of Zhang's thought and his influence on the development of Confucianism.

## NOTES

1. Before this full version, there was the incomplete *Commentary on Taijitu Shuo* that was found by Chen Lai in the Song dynasty version of the *Collected Works of Zhou Dunyi* (Yuangong zhouxiansheng lianxi ji 元公周先生濂溪集). It is clear that this version is a draft because

it contains some of his discussions with Zhu Xi, showing that Zhang Shi was still revising his commentary based on these discussions at this stage.

2. In a letter to Zhu Xi, Lu said: “Laozi says ‘the nameless is the origin of heaven and earth. The named is the mother of all things. Therefore, let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety. And let there always be being so we may see their outcome.’ [Zhou Dunyi] puts *wuji* in front of *taiji*, which is similar to Laozi’s theory. This should not be evaded” (老氏以無為天地之始，以有為萬物之母，以常無觀妙，以常有觀覈。直將無字搭在上面，正是老氏之學，豈可諱也) (Lu 1980: 28).

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