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DONG ZHONGSHU'S TRANSFORMATION OF *YIN-YANG* THEORY AND CONTESTING OF GENDER IDENTITY

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Yin-yang theory, usually understood as an example of Chinese correlative cosmology,[1] locates human flourishing within a rich and deep perspective highlighting the interrelatedness of the cosmos and human nature. This cosmological vision provides a metaphysical view of the world that presents an understanding of human nature and the moral life conducive to human flourishing. The metaphysical grounding of human nature in the *yin-yang* perspective offers a promising conceptual foundation for asserting the equal value of men and women. At the same time, it proposes a useful way of constructing gender differences. But before these promises can be fulfilled, we should address a practical puzzle encountered in Chinese history: on the one hand ancient Chinese thought shaped by the *yin-yang* perspective may in theory yield an intriguing and valuable conceptual resource for a balanced understanding of gender equality, while on the other hand it is undeniable that throughout Chinese history many forms of inhumane treatment were meted out to women in the name of this theory. These two conflicting empirical observations are also reflected in scholarly controversy. Some scholars defend the concept of *yin-yang* as a primary source for constructing Chinese gender identity that still has much to offer contemporary feminist thought.[2] Others, however, assert that the denigration of women in ancient China is a direct result of the idea of *yin-yang*.[3]

In order to unravel this puzzling discrepancy between theory and practice, this essay calls for a careful investigation of *yin-yang* theory in its textual and historical contexts. It argues that the discrepancy can be explained, to a certain extent, by Dong Zhongshu's transformation of *yin-yang* theory. The changes Dong Zhongshu made to the earlier *yin-yang* theory shed new light on how the Chinese comprehension of gender identities was created, revised, and contested.

As the founder of imperial Confucianism, Dong Zhongshu (Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (179–104 B.C.E.) was the first prominent Confucian to integrate *yin-yang* theory into Confucianism. As the result of Dong's work, *yin-yang* theory lost many of its earlier meanings, and the construction of the gender identities grounded in it were impoverished. *Yin-yang* concepts served to validate the subordination of women.

Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) claimed that the history of Chinese philosophy could be divided into two periods: the period before Dong Zhongshu, "the period of philosophers," and the period after Dong Zhongshu, "the period of Classical learning." Dong Zhongshu, "the great theorizer of the Han empire" (—Feng), who "made known the single path for later scholars to follow" (—Liu Xiang 劉向 [77–6 B.C.E.]), was largely instrumental in making Confucianism the orthodoxy of the state (136 B.C.E.) at the expense of other schools of thought and was prominent in the creation

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of the institutional basis for propagating this Confucian orthodoxy. Although Dong Zhongshu was, according to Wing-tsit Chan, "the greatest Confucian of his time, and for several hundred years afterward,"[4] there has been very little work done on him in the West. Scholars have agreed that Dong's work clearly favors *yang* over *yin*.[5] Yet, to date, no one has provided a textual and contextual explanation for this subordination of *yin* and elevation of *yang*.

This essay thus will focus on the analysis of Dong Zhongshu's transformation of *yin-yang* theory and highlight two important and interrelated areas where his cosmological construction shaped later Chinese notions of gender and the social roles proper to men and women.

First, Dong offers a new construal of the movement of *yin* and *yang* in the universe as well as the human world, which is a departure from what had been taught in the Classics. It changes the harmony (*he* 和) of *yin* and *yang* to an imposed unity (*he* 合)[6] of *yin* and *yang,* and thus requires an order (*xu* 序) of *yin* and *yang.* This interpretation yields a novel conceptual structure, the imposition of a hierarchical order, and this was to have philosophical and practical consequences for justifying the social position of women.

Secondly, Dong was the first thinker to interpret human nature in terms of *yin* and *yang.* He identifies *yang* with *xing* 性 (human nature)[7] and *ren* 仁 (benevolence/humaneness), and *yin* with *qing* 情 (emotion) and *tan* 貪 (greed). The earlier debate concerning the good and bad aspects of *xing* (善惡之爭) is reconciled through the division of *xing*/*yang* and *qing*/*yin*. This constructive work turned out to be the rationalization for disparaging women's character and distinctive virtues and the consequent need for male domination in the gender relationship.

I will show how *yin-yang* theory was not only renovated but also distorted by Dong Zhongshu's interpretive novelty. This analysis can help us to identify some problems in the construction of gender identity and to answer the challenges some feminists have posed, particularly those who believe that Chinese culture is incorrigibly sexist and hostile to women's moral dignity and aspirations. It also will attempt to outline some lessons we can still learn from a study of earlier Chinese thought. They may yet teach us to recognize woman and man as participants in social and cultural harmony, without strictly hypostatizing, as Dong later was to do, their individual and collective social identities. I hope, thus, to present a valuable conceptual resource for understanding gender identity and to further the study of Chinese philosophy in general.

The Natural Harmony (He 和) *of* Yin *and* Yang *versus an Imposed Unity* (He 合) *of* Yin *and* Yang

The origin of Dong Zhongshu's thought is traceable to the early works of many different schools—Confucianism, Huang-Lao (Daoism), the Yin-Yang School, and Legalism. These sources emerge as a conceptual foundation for Dong Zhongshu's transformation of *yin-yang* theory. The earliest Chinese characters for *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 are found in the oracle-bone inscriptions, yet the terms they represented

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existed independently and were not connected. The first written record of using these two characters together is in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經): "Viewing the scenery at the hill, looking for *yin-yang*."[8] This indicates that *yang* is the sunny side of the hill and *yin* is the shady side. During the Spring Autumn and Warring States periods (770–221 B.C.), the concepts *yin* and *yang* were associated with the Five Phases (*wu xing* 五行) theory and discussed mainly in connection with astronomy and the mantic arts, where they can be seen as "early Chinese attempts in the direction of working out a metaphysics and a cosmology."[9]

The *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語) elucidates the cause of an earthquake as follows: "*Yang* was stuck and could not get out, *yin* was suppressed and could not evaporate."[10] The concepts of *yin* and *yang* thus had been used in a variety of schools, but they are not to be found in Confucian texts such as the *Analects,* the *Mencius,* the *Great Learning,* or the *Zhongyong*. There is no text that deals with *yin-yang* as a single concept. Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 B.C.E.) was listed as a representative of the Yin-Yang School in the *Record of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記). According to this source, Zou Yan had a profound knowledge of the theory of *yin-yang* and wrote about a hundred thousand words on it. However, none of his works has survived.

To furnish some structure to these scattered materials, the contemporary Chinese philosopher Zhang Dainian 張岱年[11] suggests two versions of *yin-yang* and the relationships between them, namely a *qi* 氣 (vital energy) interpretation and a *xingzhi* 性質 (substance[12]) interpretation.[13] First, *yin* and *yang* were observed as *qi* (vital energy), and thus there are *yin qi* 陰氣 and *yang qi* 陽氣 operating in the universe. In the *Daodejing* 道德經, for example, Laozi says "Everything is embedded in *yin* and embraces *yang;* through *chong qi* 沖氣 (vital energy) it reaches *he* 和 (harmony)."[14] *Yin* and *yang* here function as *qi,* and through their interaction everything comes into existence. Zhuangzi articulates also the *"qi* of *yin* and *yang."*[15] "When the *qi* of *yin* and *yang* are not in harmony, and cold and heat come in untimedly ways, all things will be harmed."[16] "When the two have successful intercourse and achieved harmony, all things will be produced."[17] This can roughly be called the *qi* interpretation. *Yin* and *yang* are natural forces that confer life and cause things through a process and movement. This *qi* interpretation conceives *yin* and *yang* as dynamic and natural forms of flowing energy, a complementarity in the primordial potency of the universe. The *qi* interpretation thus resists any dualistic formulation of *yin* and *yang,* as if the one could be abstracted from the other, regarded as superior, or be deemed metaphysically separated and distinct. The *qi* interpretation ascertains *yin* and *yang* as things unseen and beyond our empirical understanding. They cannot easily be reduced to systematic formulation.

Second, *yin* and *yang* were also comprehended as *xingzhi* 性質 (substance). In this version, everything in the universe is identified as either *yin xing* or *yang xing.* In the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), *yin and yang* are portrayed as specific *xingzhi. Yang* is identified with the sun and *yin* with the moon. The *Xici* 系辭 (Great appendix) states: "Heaven and earth correlate with vast and profound; the four seasons correlate with change and continuity (變通); the significance of *yin* and *yang* correlate with the sun and the moon; the highest excellence (至德) correlates the good-

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ness of easy and simple."[18] The *Guanzi* 管子, an important work of the Huang-Lao School, reads along the same lines: "The sun is in charge of *yang,* the moon is in charge of *yin,* and the stars are in charge of harmony *(he).*" This way of understanding *yin* and *yang* can be called the *xingzhi* interpretation.[19] In contrast with the *qi* interpretation, it tends to objectify the ideas of *yin* and *yang. Yin* and *yang* are converted into things one can see and feel; they have substance to them. The *xingzhi* interpretation thus allows individual particulars to be recognized as either *yin* or *yang.* Things then turn out to be systematically classifiable according to their *yin* and *yang* identities and evaluated as such. Thus the *xingzhi* interpretation warrants an empirical perception of *yin* and *yang,* one that could foster a conceptual transition from dynamic to static and eventually dualistic and hierarchical categories.

Although *yin* and *yang* can be known as either *qi* or *xingzhi,* there is a constant theme underlying these two interpretations. Both accounts are meant to address one basic metaphysical inquiry, namely *bian* 變 (change, process). Both affirm that *yin* and *yang* interactions generate change and form the basis of everything in the universe. *Bian* advocates that the position and function of *yin-yang* are interchangeable. Sometimes *yang* leads; at other times or in other situations *yin* guides. Their relationship is situated in constant flux.

With these interpretations as background, Dong Zhongshu proffers a new version of the functions of *yin* and *yang.* On the one hand Dong endorses the *qi* interpretation to explicate all natural events. His most important work, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn),[20] contains six out of eighty-two chapters in which the terms *yin* and *yang* are explicit. These chapters attempt to describe the natural movement of *yin* and *yang.* In chapter 47, "A Discussion of the Positions of *Yin* and *Yang,*" for example, we read:

> *Yang qi* starts from the northeast and moves toward the south and gains a position there. Then it turns toward the west and comes to rest in the north. *Yin qi* starts from the southeast and moves toward the north, where it gains a position. Then it turns toward the west and finally rests in the south. That is why south is *yang's* position and north is its resting place, while north is *yin's* position and south is its resting place. When *yang* reaches its full position it will be the hottest summer, and when *yin* reaches its full position it will be the coldest winter.[21]

Here *yin* and *yang* are considered to be cosmological forces and natural phenomena whose dynamisms can be mapped and explained. But the natural forces of *yin qi* and *yang qi,* as we will see, also exist within the human world.

Many Chinese scholars have argued that Dong Zhongshu is the first thinker to set up a theory of the interaction of heaven and humanity (*tianren ganying* 天人感應).[22] The *tianren ganying* perspective, however, actually began in the pre-Qin period. At that time it was common knowledge that heaven delivers omens and punishments. Implicit in such intuitive speculation is a view of the causal relationship between heaven and humanity. Dong Zhongshu makes this relationship explicit and theoretical: heaven has *yin* and *yang,* and human beings also have *yin* and *yang.* Therefore, there is an intrinsic connection between *tian* 天 (heaven) and *ren*

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人 (human beings) through the movement of *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are essential vehicles for interactions between heaven and humanity. To quote Dong: "The *qi* of *yin* and *yang* moves heaven above as well as human beings. When it is among human beings it is displayed as likes and dislikes, happiness and anger; when it is in heaven it is seen as warm and chilly, cold and hot."[23]

In Dong's cosmological vision, the whole universe is a giant field of *yin qi* and *yang qi*. Everything contains *qi of yin* and *yang* while also interacting through them. One of many examples of this vision is Dong's proposal for controlling floods and drought through the proper interaction between men and women. In chapter 74 of his book, "Seeking the Rain" (求雨), Dong asserts that spring drought indicates too much *yang* and not enough *yin*. So one should "open *yin* and close *yang*" (開陰閉陽).[24] He advises the government to order the closing of the South Gate, which is the direction of *yang*. During the drought, men who embody *yang* should remain in seclusion. Women, embodying *yin*, should appear in public. He even requests all married couples to copulate (*ouchu* 偶處) in order to facilitate the intercourse of *yin* and *yang*. It is also important during this time to make women happy.[25] In chapter 75, "Stopping the Rain" (止雨), Dong alleges that floods prove that there is too much *yin qi*, so one should "open *yang* and close *yin*" (開陽閉陰).[26] The South Gate, the direction of *yang*, should remain wide open. Women should go into seclusion and men should go out and about. Also, the officers in the city should send their wives to their country homes to make sure that *yin* will not conquer *yang*. Derk Bodde defines this practice as "sexual sympathetic magic."[27]

Dong Zhongshu has not simply drawn on the *qi* interpretation of *yin* and *yang* to propagate his cosmological outlook; he has also integrated the *xingzhi* interpretation of *yin* and *yang* into it. Under the aspect of *xingzhi*, Dong for the very first time incorporates the concepts of *yin* and *yang* into formal Confucian teachings. Confucian concepts such as *li* 禮 (ritual), *yi* 義 (righteousness), and *de* 德 (virtue) are all connected and refined through the *yin* and *yang* lens. Heaven is the macrocosm of which the human world is a microcosm. In the latter, for example, human beings are socially governed by *li* (rituals). For Confucius, *li* is rooted in *ren* (*Analects* 3.3, 12.1);[28] for Xunzi, *li* belongs to the human world, and it is the sage who produces them (*Xunzi*, chap. 18, "On Li").[29] Taking a different path, Dong formulates a different basis for *li*:

> *Li* (ritual) is what sustains the heavens and the earth, embodies *yin* and *yang*, and forms the careful attitude between the self and others. It orders the respected and despised, noble and base, and high and low offices, and sorts out their respective degrees of exteriority and interiority, distance and proximity, age and youthfulness, and thus also signals the presence or absence of abundant virtue. *Li* follows heaven and earth (繼天地) and embodies *yin* and *yang* (體陰陽).[30]

Li then is validated through the cosmological *yin* and *yang* as well as *tian*. The specific content of *li* consists of the "three bonds" (*sangang* 三綱): the ruler is bonded with his minister, the father with his son, and the husband with his wife. But, in each case, Dong differentiates the respective roles within the bond by associating the

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former with *yang* and the latter with *yin*. The rationale that motivates Dong's identification is extended more clearly in the late text *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (*Baihu Tong* 白虎通):[31]

> Ruler and Minister, father and son, husband and wife are six people. Why call these six people the three bonds (*sangang* 三綱)? One *yin* and one *yang* is the Way *(Dao), yin* brings completion to *yang, yang* gives *yin* an order (*xu* 序) in which hard and soft are joined. That is why these six people are called three bonds.[32]

Dong Zhongshu manufactures the inherited account of social relationships that is more directly dependent on his own conception of *yin* and *yang*. Because all natural and human events must be construed as resulting from *yin* and *yang* interactions, Dong proposes that there is a tension involved in each complementarity. One will restrict the other (*xiangke* 相克). The desirable resolution is the imposition of the proper order (*xu* 序). The political exigencies of governing a newly unified empire may be sufficient to vindicate, as Terry Woo observes, Dong's "urge to organize all knowledge into a coherent whole, filling in with conjecture where necessary. Han thinkers were deeply convinced that order existed in all things, in the natural world as well as in society."[33] Indeed, Dong insists that achieving order between *yin* and *yang* is the highest righteousness: "Keeping the position of heaven and earth, rectifying the order *(xu)* of *yin* and *yang,* following the Way correctly and knowing its difficulties, all of these are the highest righteousness."[34] To justify the imposition of order *(xu)* within human relationships, Dong Zhongshu institutes a warrant in the metaphysical element of the *yin* and *yang* relationship. He declares: "Everything must have *he* 合 (unity).[35] Just as *yin* is the *he* of *yang,* wife is the *he* of husband, son is the *he* of father, minister is the *he* of ruler. There is nothing without *he,* yet wherever there is *he* there is *yin* and *yang*. . . . The righteousness of ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife all come from the way of *yin* and *yang*."[36]

He 合 in Chinese could stand for different things: unity, becoming one, mixing together, and joining in. Its usage in Dong's work, however, mainly illustrates a unity that is composed, constructed, and regulated. This meaning of *he* presents two potential problems, namely a tendency toward the suppression of otherness and the fixation of interactive relationships into uniform substances. First, *he* as an imposed unity may require the other party to disregard its own distinctive differences and force it into some uniform pattern of order. This could dissolve otherness within its own field, inasmuch as *yin,* for example, could not sustain its own active function unless it is steered by *yang.* Second, once such a unity has been imposed, there may no longer be any room for the myriad interchanges that actually take place. For example, within this kind of *he,* it is inconceivable that *yin* might ever guide *yang.* Instead, *yin* is fated always to follow and be subordinate to *yang.* This shift in emphasis tends to create a static and fixed order of social relationships rather than a dynamic process of *yin* and *yang* interaction.

To clarify these points let us look at a specific alteration made by Dong. Before Dong, many thinkers characterized the relationship between *yin* and *yang* as harmony (*he* 和). Consider the following examples.

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Mozi deems the law of the movement of *yin* and *yang* to be objective and unchangeable even by a sage: "Anything that roams between heaven and earth and that is contained within the four seas is the product of the combination of heaven and earth and contains the harmony *(he)* of *yin* and *yang*. Even the Sage cannot change it."[37]

Zhuangzi maintains: "Performed with the harmony *(he)* of *yin* and *yang*, illumined with the brightness of the sun and moon. The notes could be short or long, could be soft or hard; while all the modulations were evenly uniform, they were not dominated by stale regularity."[38]

The *Guanzi* reveals: "It is ever so that in man's life, heaven produces his vital essence, earth produces his form. These combine in order to produce man. When they are in harmony *(he)*, there is life. Without it, there is no life."[39]

The Eclectics (Zajia 雜家) argue: "The harmony *(he)* between *yin* and *yang* does not promote the growth of one kind of thing, and sweet dew and timely rain don't have partiality for any particular thing."[40]

All these philosophers hold that the way of *yin* and *yang* lies in harmony *(he)* and that harmony is a central goal of all personal, social, and political relationships. Confucius reflects that "achieving harmony *(he)* is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety *(li)*."[41] Roger Ames concludes from this that "at the core of the Classical Chinese worldview is the cultivation of harmony."[42] He also detects a deeper insight to be gathered from the associated meanings of harmony *(he)*.

> Harmony *(he)* is the art of combining and blending two or more foodstuffs so that they mutually enhance one another without losing their distinctive flavors.... Such harmony is an elegant order that emerges out of the collaboration of intrinsically related details to embellish the contribution of each other.[43]

Harmony *(he)* is built on cultivating difference or respecting otherness. The harmony that respects otherness or cultivates the maximum benefit from difference is the ideal state of all personal social and political interactions. The *Guoyu* 國語 gives eloquent testimony to this epitome of harmony:

> Where harmony is fecund, sameness is barren. Things accommodating each other on equal terms is called blending in harmony, and in so doing they are able to flourish and grow, and other things are drawn to them. But when same is added to same, once it is used up, there is no more. Hence the Former Kings blended earth with metal, wood, fire and water to make their products.... To be like this is to attain the utmost in harmony. In all of this, the Former Kings took their consorts from other clans, required as tribute those products which distinguished each region, and selected ministers and counselors who would express a variety of opinions on issues and made every efforts to bring things into harmony....[44]

Recognizing *yin* and *yang* interaction as harmony (*he* 和) is very different from accepting it as an imposed unity (*he* 合). The harmony 和 of *yin* and *yang* is a blending of two elements or more into a harmonious whole without sacrificing their particular identities. As Confucius claims, "Exemplary persons seek *he* (harmony) not

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sameness; petty persons, then, are the opposite."[45] Zhuangzi also states that "The musical note sometimes is clear and sometimes turbid; it is like *yin* and *yang* blending in harmony (調和). This sound will flow like spreading light."[46] But *he* 合 as an imposed unity is the bringing together of two elements in conformity to an ideal order. This *he* results in a sameness (*tong* 同) that tends to uniformity rather than harmony. It necessitates the submission of individual elements into one. Feng Youlan makes use of a story from the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 to expose a clear distinction:

> Harmony is the reconciling of difference into a harmonious unity. The *Tso Chuan* reports a speech by the statesman Yen Tzu (died 493 B.C.), in which he makes a distinction between harmony and uniformity or identity. Harmony, he says, may be illustrated by cooking. Water, vinegar, pickles, salt, and plums are used to cook fish. From these ingredients there results a new taste which is neither that of the vinegar nor of the pickles. Uniformity or identity, on the other hand, may be likened to the attempt to flavor water with water, or to confine a piece of music to one note. In both cases there is nothing new.[47]

By reinterpreting the meaning of the relationship between *yin* and *yang,* Dong replaces the word for the "harmony" (*he* 和) of *yin* and *yang* with the word for "an imposed unity" (*he* 合) of *yin* and *yang*. As such, he shifts the focal point of the relationship between *yin* and *yang* from harmony to unity. Dong's effort, of course, may be taken as reflecting a social need for a unity of ideology that would serve the authority of the emperor. China had just been united after centuries of war and division. The empire needed a unitary ideology for sustaining the unification. Dong fulfilled this need by formulating a cosmologically grounded principle of hierarchy that validates keeping everything in its proper place as determined and controlled by the imperial order. Dong's biography in the *History of the Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書) indicates that Dong had a strong ambition to embark on a system to unify all the schools. He eventually emerged as "the leader of the group of Confucians" (儒首). He is, indeed, a *junzi* 君子 (gentleman).[48] However problematic his contribution to imperial ideology, here we limit our focus to the way Dong applied this same conception of order *(xu)* to impose cosmologically grounded gender constructions that could carry a justification for the social oppression of Chinese women.

In most of the literature before Dong's time, "woman" is not perceived in static terms, but rather is a person playing different roles in family practice and in the aesthetic imagination.[49] But Dong's work places woman in an inherent gender dichotomy, and the concept of womanhood was thus transformed from a performative term, depicting woman as a social actor, to an entity depicting woman in fixed, static terms. The difference can be seen by recalling how the articulation of *yin* and *yang* as a reciprocal interchange (*bian* 變) in, for example, the *Book of Changes* is replaced with Dong's elucidation of a normative hierarchical ordering (*xu* 序) of *yin* and *yang*. *Xu* implies a sense of *yang* "regulating" or "instituting" *yin*. On this assumption, Dong theorized that *yang* is the dominant force in the universe. As the *yang* in the universe has leadership and authority over the *yin,* so the ruler, father, and husband have leadership and authority over minister, son, and wife in the three

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bonds. The husband's position is *yang,* and his authority embodies that of heaven (*tian* 天). "It is not surprising, therefore, that he cites the alleged cosmic inferiority of the *yin* to the *yang* as justification for the social inferiority of woman to man which in his own time and later actually characterized Chinese society."[50] Of course the roles allocated to women, now measured as ontologically justifiable, were (and still are) simply confining and overpowering. Dong's new paradigm has often been criticized, and rightly so. But it is wrongly identified with Confucianism as such.

A distinction has to be made between earlier Confucianism and Dong's version of Confucianism, if such criticism is to be fair. The doctrine of "three bonds" became the target for relentless attack by the intellectuals of the May Fourth movement (1919). They often treated the "three bonds" as representative of the stagnation and moral bankruptcy of Confucianism. However, a careful reading of the original texts of Confucius and Mencius will verify that the doctrine of three bonds was not part of early Confucian teaching. It was Dong Zhongshu who developed the Confucian rectification of names (正名) and Mencius' five relationships (五倫) into the simple formula of three-bonds theory.

Here is the path of Dong's reconstruction: in the *Analects,* we read "Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governing effectively. Confucius replied, 'The ruler must rule, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son.'"[51] Here the ruler (君), minister (臣), father (父), and son (子) each ought to do what their name suggests and play their social function according their name. Dong, however, inserts another relationship, namely that of husband and wife (夫婦), into this formula. Influenced by Han Feizi's teaching, Dong here integrates Han's distinctively Legalist perspective on loyalty and filial piety (忠孝) into Confucian teaching:

> The minister serves the ruler, the son serves the father, and the wife serves the husband. If these three are followed, the world will be in order (*zhi* 制); if these three are disobeyed, the world will be in chaos. This is the constant *dao* 道 of governing the world; even the wise king or capable ruler cannot change it.[52]

One important value within these relationships is the mutuality between the ruler and minister and father and son. It is a moral code that honors reciprocity in each relationship. For Confucius, the relationship of ruler and ministers is characterized by mutual obligations involving both ritual (*li* 禮) and loyalty (*zhong* 忠). "Confucius replied, 'rulers should employ their ministers by observing ritual propriety *(li),* and ministers should serve their lord by doing their utmost *(zhong).*'"[53] Father and son both are obligated to perform certain duties. The son should be filial (孝) to his father, yet his father should be kind and demonstrate love (*si* 慈) toward his son. Otherwise he will violate the name of "father." But Dong Zhongshu's three bonds underscore only one-way obligations by stressing the subordinate's duties of loyalty, filial piety, and subservience. Tu Wei-ming concludes: "Three bonds drastically altered the Mencian intention by relegating the spirit of mutuality to the background."[54] The three bonds turned into an integral part of a politicized mechanism for social control after the Han dynasty.

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> Thus, the doctrine of the Three Bonds became a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it was instrumental to maintaining the super stable order of the dynasties, and on the other hand, it was condemned as the backbone of the "man-eating" system of rites in modern days.[55]

Mencius introduced five interpersonal relationships and the virtues related to these relationships (3A4). But Mencius' five relationships, rooted in his vision of a harmonious society, were reduced to the three bonds of strict obedience to authority in Dong Zhongshu's writings. Dong's politicization of Confucian ethical teaching comes at a high price: original Confucianism loses its deep orientation to *ren* (仁) and originates an ideological mechanism of social control. This transformation was justified and conceptualized through Dong's interpretation of *yin and yang* theory. He asserts: "Even if the husband is bad, he is still *yang,* even if the wife is great, yet she is still *yin.*"[56] Clearly, with this assertion the dynamism (*bian* 變) of mutuality or reciprocity has been forsaken. Using *yin* and *yang* to justify a hierarchical ordering (*xu* 序) of social relationships, Dong contrasts *yin* and *yang* as entities ("she is still *yin*") that can be seized independently of the relationships in which they flow.

The relationship between *de* 德 (virtue) and *xing* 刑 (punishment) gave rise to another important debate among earlier thinkers. Confucius praises virtue and discourages punishment. The *Guanzi* first connected *yin* and *yang* with the *xingde* 刑德 discussion but still with a focus on harmony:

> The *yin* and *yang* are the primary organizational principles of Heaven and Earth, and the four seasons are the primary patterns of *yin* and *yang.* Punishment *(xing)* and virtue *(de)* should correspond to the four seasons. The sun controls *yang* and the moon controls *yin.* The *sui* (circle) controls the harmony. *Yang* is for virtue *(de), yin* is for punishment *(xing),* and the harmony is for conducting matters of state.[57]

Dong Zhongshu elaborates this brief statement into a full chapter. He takes the first part of the *Guanzi*'s idea yet leaves out the focus on harmony. In many places Dong gives a straightforward definition of *yin* and *yang* in terms of *xing* (punishment) and *de* (virtue). "Heaven and earth are constant and there is one *yin* and one *yang. Yang* is *tian*'s virtue (*tiande* 天德) and *yin* is *tian*'s punishment (*tianxing* 天刑)."[58] What Dong means by this definition is more implicit in his other formulation of *yin* and *yang*:

> *Yang qi* is warm and *yin qi* is cold; *yang qi* is to give, *yin qi* is to take; *yang qi* is benevolent *(ren), yin qi* is perverse; *yang qi* is deliberate, *yin qi* is hurried; *yang qi* is love, *yin qi* is hate; *yang qi* is to give life, *yin qi* is to give death. . . . Therefore, *tian* values *yang* (貴德) and disvalues *yin* (賤陰).[59]

Dong's correlation of punishment and virtue within *yin* and *yang* is illuminated by Roger Ames' explanation of the word *xing* 刑:

> The character used for 'punishment' *(xing)* is homophonous and often used interchangeably with the character meaning 'to shape', and carries with it a strong sense of drawing a line and configuring a defined order by excluding those who are antisocial, usually by amputating something or disfiguring them, thus, quite literally, reshaping them.[60]

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Political power is governed by the *yang* and is avoided by the *yin*. The state is empowered to codify standards of social and personal conduct that correspond to the ethical dimensions of *yin* and *yang*. This leads, not surprisingly, to a dualistic opposition of *yin* and *yang* into negative and positive values. Anything that is identified with *yin* is bad, problematic, or needing to be reshaped. Evil, then, belongs to *yin*, and good belongs to *yang*. This sets a rationalized basis for a new kind of political authority, namely an authority based no longer on good moral virtues but on the power to enforce through rewards and punishments the supposedly proper ordering of social relationships. This new kind of political authority lays down the tone for the "Confucian State" for generations to come.

Dong formed a novel cosmology, unknown before his time, by incorporating Daoist, Legalist, and Yin-Yang naturalist teachings into Confucianism. This synthetic work, described as an "architectonic Confucianized system of correlative cosmology,"[61] has had many unfavorable effects on the social position of women throughout Chinese history. Bret Hinsch states:

> The cosmological turn in elite thought had profound consequences for gender discourse. Most early Chinese discussed the relations of woman and man in terms of gendered social roles. Debates about gender relations tended to be arguments about which social roles are appropriate for each sex, and what sort of ideal behavior ought to append each role.... But cosmologists understood gender in an entirely different light. Instead of viewing gender as interlocking sets of dynamic roles, they believed that we should see gender as a static fact.... Gender became something increasingly simple, clear cut, and unequal.[62]

Hinsch here captures the practical implications of Dong Zhongshu's inventive interpretation.

One of the most significant consequences of Dong's innovation is the transformation in later dynasties of female capacities and virtues into limitations and role-based restrictions. In the Classical Confucian texts no female virtue was singled out as more important than the others. Yet in the Song and Ming dynasties female chastity (節) transpired as the most crucial of all womanly virtues, with harsh punishments to those judged unchaste. Even more horrific practices were justified in the name of Confucianism during the Qing dynasty. Neo-Confucianism thus was rendered as an ideology for defending the practices that encouraged female self-destructive behaviors as exemplary virtue.

Yin *and* Yang *as* Qing 情 *(Emotion) and* Xing 性 *(Nature)*

Understanding *xing* (nature) is one of the most important themes in the history of Chinese philosophy. Dong's own theory on this subject substantiated this issue and impinged on the later Confucianism. We now examine it within the context of what it may disclose about Dong's constructions of gender roles and identities.

As in the *Mencius* (6A3), Dong Zhongshu thinks that the word *xing* (nature) contains *sheng* 生 (what is inborn). But the conclusion that he draws from it is different. If what is inborn is human nature, then there must be a basic stuff (*zhi* 質) naturally

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endowed in human nature. Dong declares that "Human nature *(xing)* has a basic stuff *(zhi)*."[63] One's comprehension of the *xing* (human nature) cannot be achieved apart from one's grasp of this basic stuff *(zhi)*. "Without basic stuff *(zhi)* there will be no human nature *(xing)*."[64] This claim, to a certain extent, is consistent with Xunzi's view: "*Xing* (human nature) is that which is given by Heaven *[tian]*."[65] "That which is as it is from birth *(sheng)* is called *xing* (human nature), . . . [T]hat which is natural (*ziran* 自然) and not artificial is called *xing* (human nature)."[66] Here it is clear that Dong accepts Xunzi's naturalist perspective on human nature *(xing)*. Human nature *(xing)* is received from *tian* and is a primitive uncultivated natural stuff. This basic stuff *(zhi)* is very different from what is produced through education or environmental influences.

If this basic stuff *(zhi)* is from *tian,* which consists of *yin* and *yang* elements, it is logical for Dong Zhongshu to draw two conclusions: (1) The basic stuff *(zhi)* is plain/uncarved and is different from goodness (*shan* 善). There is a process by which the basic stuff *(zhi)* can become good *(shan)*. One has to make an effort to transform the state of nature into a cultivated being. (2) Since the basic stuff *(zhi)* emanates from *tian* (heaven) and *tian* is a combination of *yin* and *yang,* then *zhi* also has *yin* and *yang* elements. This confirms a further idea that there is a tension within the basic stuff *(zhi)* analogous to the tension between *yin* and *yang*.

After affirming that basic stuff *(zhi),* originating from *tian* and emergent in human nature *(xing),* is something natural, with *yin* and *yang* elements, Dong is well positioned to criticize Mencius' view that human nature is essentially good. According to Dong, Mencius confused the basic stuff *(zhi)* with the cultivated good *(shan)*. Dong draws on an analogy to make a distinction between human nature *(xing)* and good *(shan)*: "A rice kernel comes out of a plant, but the plant is not the rice. Similarly, good *(shan)* comes out of human nature *(xing),* yet one can't confuse human nature with the good. The plant produces the rice but is itself not rice."[67] This idea parallels Xunzi's view that goodness is the result of activity. However, one could ask why, if good comes from human nature, one still can't think that human nature is good. Dong responds to this by saying that good comes from human nature due to *tian*'s embodiment, but *tian*'s embodiment is limited by and channeled into a certain area, namely a natural field. This field must be cultivated through human effort, which requires an education in the teachings of the Classics and confirmation through the practice of rituals. What is given by *tian* is something within (*nei* 內), yet the outside (*wai* 外) manifestation is dependent on what people do.

There are several analogies and examples illustrated by Dong. "Human nature *(xing)* is just like a cocoon or an egg. An egg needs to hatch to yield chicks, and a cocoon needs to be worked on to become silk. This means that human nature *(xing)* needs to be educated to become good *(shan)*. This is what it means to follow *tian*."[68] Cocoon and egg are the same as human nature *(xing),* and they have all the natural potential and an inner stuff to bear chicks and produce silk. But they do not realize that potential by themselves, and they require a process or a movement from inside to outside. One cannot mistakenly treat the basic stuff of good (*shanzhi* 善質) as if it were good (*shan* 善) in itself. As Benjamin Schwartz remarks:

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> Tung Chung-shu's [Dong Zhongshu] conception of human nature *(xing)* stresses the primacy of the objective environment. There are, to be sure, resemblances to Mencius. The original substance *[zhi]* of the human nature may be called good just as the rice seed is good. Yet what is stressed above all is not the presence of the potentiality of internal growth but the essential passivity of the rice seed as such.[69]

With this perception of human nature, Dong proposes his own theory of the so-called three types of human nature (性三品). According to Dong's theory, there are three grades of human nature, namely high (上), middle (中), and low (下). High is the sage's nature. Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi all possessed this type of nature, and this is also the nature they assumed in their discussions concerning the highest quality of virtue *(de)*. It is the Son of Heaven's virtue. But not many people can ever reach that level. The third or lowest level is the *doushao* 斗筲 nature. *Doushao* is a very small utensil used to get water. Confucius (*Analects* 13.20) employs this term to portray a petty man. The *doushao* person has no virtue and has a bad nature. Between these two extremes lies the *zhong min* 中民 nature. *Zhong min* refers to the mass of common people. According to Dong, the word for people (民) is derived from a character that consists of two parts, *mu* 目 and *min* 民. *Mu* means sleep, which indicates that most people are in a state of sleep, and they need to be awakened through cultivation. Dong stresses that "the discussion of the human nature is not about the high nature (聖人之性) (the sage's nature), nor about the low nature (小人之性) (the petty man's nature). It is all about the middle, the common people (中民之性)."[70] Dong saw himself advocating the education and reform of the common people. This theory was further elaborated in the works of the most important Eastern Han philosopher, Wang Chong 王充 (27–97 C.E.), and the Tang philosopher Han Yü 韓愈 (768–824 C.E.). It turned into an important philosophical concern in later Chinese philosophy.[71]

Although Dong deconstructs Mencius' view of human nature as good, he does not conclude that human nature is bad, as Xunzi claims. He argues that the problem with Xunzi's view is that Xunzi did not make a distinction between emotion (*qing* 情) and human nature (*xing* 性), but used the emotions *(qing)* to discuss human nature *(xing)*. The debate over the relationship between *xing* and *qing* is not Dong Zhongshu's innovation. Mencius, Xunzi, and Zhuangzi had all conversed on this topic. What is distinctive about Dong's attempt is that he imparts a crucial correlation between *yin*/*yang* and *xing*/*qing*. He thus is the first philosopher in Chinese history to utilize *yin* and *yang* to analyze human nature.

From the discussion above we can discern that Dong Zhongshu assumes that human nature models *tian* and thus contains the two cosmological elements of *yin* and *yang*:

> The human body is embodied from *tian*. Since *tian* has the function of either *yin* or *yang*, so the human body is either greedy (*tan* 貪) or benevolent (*ren* 仁). Just as heaven *(tian)* has prohibitions restricting the excesses of either *yin* or *yang*, the human body has proscriptions against covetous feelings and is consistent with the way of heaven *(tian)*.[72]

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Human nature *(xing),* for Dong Zhongshu, has two basic elements or manifestations, *yin* and *yang*. Dong goes further to identify *yin* with feelings or emotions *(qing)* and *yang* with nature *(xing).* Human nature as a composite of *yin* and *yang* is capable of two outward expressions. *Yang,* being the beneficent force of *tian,* exhibits itself as benevolence *(ren),* while *yin,* the chastising force of the universe, expresses itself as covetous desire or greed *(tan).* Dong resolves the Classical dispute between Mencius' goodness of human nature (性善) and Xunzi's badness of human nature (性惡) by concluding that human nature contains "rudimentary goodness" (善端) because it has *yang* but also contains the seed of badness (惡) because it has *yin*: "The human body has *xing* and *qing* just as heaven has *yang* and *yin.* One can't confer the basic stuff *(zhi)* without bearing in mind the *qing;* this will be like talking about *yang* in heaven without considering *yin.*"[73] Wang Chong elucidates this view in his influential work *On Consistency* (論衡):

> Dong Zhongshu studied Xunzi's and Mencius' works and established the theory of human nature and emotion *(xing/qing).* According to this theory, the primary principle of heaven is one *yin* and one *yang;* the primary principle of human being is one emotion *(qing)* and one nature *(xing). Xing* is born from *yang,* and *qing* is born from *yin. Yinqi* is low and greedy, and *yangqi* is high and benevolent *(ren).* The view that human nature *(xing)* is good only catches sight of *yang;* the view that human nature is bad sets eyes only on *yin.* According to Zhongshu, Mencius only perceives *yang,* and Xunzi only notices *yin.* It is acceptable that these two schools each have their own merit, but also one has to recognize that human nature *(xing)* and emotion *(qing)* have both good and bad.[74]

Dong Zhongshu insists that his construction will steer clear of the inconsistency in Mencius' teaching. For Mencius, emotion *(qing)* is rooted in a good sprout of *xing* and can be a manifestation of *xing.* But not all of one's emotions have merit. How else could *xing* (nature as good) be manifested in a bad emotion *(qing)*? To solve this problem, Dong presupposes that *qing* is connected with *xing* and therefore takes this presupposition as evidence that *xing* is not yet good. More important, for our purposes, this view is verified through an ontological justification that is there is a *yin* element within *xing.* Although this may be a plausible way to settle Mencius' problem, it easily lends itself to downplaying the role of *yin* and devaluing woman's distinctive nature.

Because of Dong Zhongshu's pioneering elaboration of the relationship of *yin* and *yang* vis-à-vis emotion *(qing)* and human nature *(xing),* the ontological connotation of *yin* and *yang* in the Classical texts is colored by an ethical assessment of greed and benevolence. The relationship of *yin* and *yang* devolves into an ethical debate between right and wrong, good and bad. This standpoint was disseminated by many Han scholars and reformulated by the Neo-Confucians. Eventually it took root in Chinese literature, social practices, and the collective consciousness. The earliest comprehensive dictionary of Chinese characters, *Explaining Single-component Graphs and Analyzing Compound Characters* (說文解字), by Han scholar Xu Shen 許慎 (58–147 C.E.), gives the definition of the words *xing* and

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qing: "*Qing* is the human being's *yin qi,* having desires. *Xing* is the human being's *yang qi,* having goodness."[75] This description has been endorsed by many thinkers and literati since the Han dynasty. Here, for example, is an excerpt from the special section on *xing* and *qing* in the *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall:*

> What are *xing* 性 and *qing* 情? *Yang* makes what is *xing, yin* brings what is *qing.* Human life is endowed with *yin* and *yang qi,* therefore it contains within it five *xing* and six *qing* (*wuxing liuqing* 五性六情).[76] *Qing* is the product of *yin;* thus, there are the varying desires. *Xing* is the effect of *yang;* thus, there are the forming principles. *Yang qi* is benevolence *(ren); yinqi* is greed *(tan);* therefore, *qing* has desires and *xing* has benevolence *(ren).*[77]

This way of understanding of *xing* and *qing* was further enlarged in Zhuxi's *Lixue* 理學, a seminal work in the development of Neo-Confucianism.[78]

Dong's work thus not only generates a new perspective on *yin* and *yang,* it also involves implications beyond its explicit contents. To put it bluntly, it makes the social subordination of *yin* to *yang* natural and justifiable. Ascribing ethical connotations to the notions of *yin* and *yang* easily leads to a rationalizing of the social inferiority of woman *(yin)* to man *(yang).* Dong clearly alleges that "*Yin* and *yang* in *tian* (heaven) and *di* (earth) can be regarded as man and woman in the human world. *Yin* and *yang* can be called man and woman; man and woman can be called *yang* and *yin.*"[79] "The standard of the relationship between man and woman is the model of *yin* and *yang.*"[80] Woman, representing *yin,* is associated with *qing* and thus must be restricted. This trend of thinking has exerted a deep influence on the conceptual understanding of gender throughout Chinese history. While this history of gender/women is more complicated than a philosophical analysis alone can explain, the roles ascribed to women by the adherents of Dong's *yin-yang* perspective were piloted to a new set of normative demands. Woman should be limited within a fixed social structure. Any individual woman is doomed to be criticized if she is unable to fit a certain limited range of female stereotypes. These stereotypes form around a cluster of assumptions that appear with gender identity. Their philosophical and conceptual origin, I am arguing, may well lie in Dong's particular way of relegating *yin* and *yang* to human nature.

Conclusion

It has been argued that "the actual development of Confucianism took a twist in the Han dynasty.... It was not able to keep up the spirit of the moral metaphysics developed by Mencius; instead, it formulated a cosmology of two forces—*yin* and *yang* ... which presupposed a strict correlation between celestial phenomena and human events."[81] This essay supports this general claim yet offers a more detailed analysis of Dong Zhongshu's specific contribution. This investigation concentrates on two major issues as the context of Dong's construction of gender identity. The first of these, involving a reconstruction of Dong's interpretation of the *yin-yang* relationship

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as an imposed unity (*he* 合) departing from an original spontaneous harmony (*he* 和), suggests that Dong's thinking tended to treat *yin* and *yang* as discrete entities suitable for an abstract analysis. Such an analysis emphasizes their opposition and subsequently calls for the subordination of the one to the other. This originality at the level of ontological perception prepared the ground for the second issue, namely the moralization of the *yin-yang* ontology, such that in the social world *yang* became identified with human goodness and the virtues regarded as distinctive of men, while *yin* turned out to be identified with emotion, the various forms of greed, and the stereotypes regarded as distinctive of women. Taken together, these two novelties grant a philosophical basis for the theory and practice of gender inequality in their specifically Chinese manifestations.

What I have argued can be stated in other ways as well. In seeking to be aware of the range of *yin-yang* interpretations available in early China, Lisa Raphals makes an important distinction between cyclical polarity and oppositional polarity:

> There is a fundamental difference between cyclic polarity (such as the cycle of the seasons) and oppositional polarities (such as distinctions of gender and sex). Our experience of the seasons, or anything else that pulses, is one of repeated and cyclical change(s) of state. Oppositional polarities such as that of gender, by contrast, are based on an articulation of an essential difference.[82]

A cyclical model of the *yin-yang* polarity focuses on the alternation and changes of these two forces, yet the oppositional model of *yin* and *yang* tends to impose hierarchies on these two positions. Raphals concludes her analysis of the impact of the correlative cosmologies with the following comment:

> In surveying the uses of the *yin-yang* gender analogies during the period in which *yin* and *yang* crystallize as the defining polarity of Han correlative cosmology, it is striking to observe three distinct emphases in the construction of polarities: 1) complementary distinction, 2) oppositional distinction, and 3) hierarchical distinction.[83]

Indeed, this trajectory is confirmed in my analysis of Dong Zhongshu's work. What I have done in this essay is to document Dong's specific role in the transition from the first to the second and third distinctions, his rationale for making this move, and finally its consequences for the women of China.

What can Chinese feminists learn from Dong's work? Feminists in the West have devoted much time and energy over the last few decades to exposing the systematic bias against women evident in the Western social, cultural, and intellectual traditions. Most feminist scholarship seeks to contest and modify conventional and naturalized gender-based norms. Western feminists have shown how the difference between man and woman has been defined in terms of something lacking in women. Woman is perceived as less developed, less perfect, and falling short of the human ideal. Nancy Tuana, for example, articulates "five major beliefs about women's nature generally accepted by Western philosophers, theologians and scientists from the Classical time to the nineteenth century. Woman is less perfect than man, woman possesses inferior rational capacities, woman has a defective moral sense, man is

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the primary creative force, woman is in need of control."[84] However apt her diagnosis of the predicament faced by Western women, it is both naive and ethnocentric to suppose that Chinese women will be saved from their own oppression by Western solutions to these specific problems. There are ample philosophical resources for the proper appreciation and endorsement of women's social equality within the Chinese intellectual tradition.

However, Chinese feminists face a different challenge. In the *yin-yang* framework the gender difference is not rooted in lack: *yin*'s existence is just as necessary as *yang*'s. Because *yin-yang* theory does not necessarily and inevitably entail women's subordination to men, it can still be a template for constructing a balanced view of gender identities. Nevertheless, the mere complementarity of *yin* and *yang* does not guarantee gender equality. The *yin-yang* theory does permit a deep appreciation of *yin*'s "otherness," but this otherness, to be authentic, must be free of hierarchical ordering and imposed conformity. Men and women are different, but that difference does not necessitate superiority or inferiority, or warrant one group exercising control over the other group. Genuine respect for otherness, however, does rest upon a truthful recognition of distinctive differences.

What, then, can we ascertain from Dong Zhongshu? Dong depicts women as the concrete embodiment of an abstract femininity rather than as concrete persons performing particular social functions in a field of relationships. Since the 1960s and Simone de Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman," the sex/gender distinction has been the basic framework for feminist theory. Over the past ten years, some feminists have challenged the assumption that this distinction is fundamental. For them this distinction makes sex into an essence that, predictably, becomes immobile, stable, coherent, fixed, natural, and ahistorical. As Judith Butler, among others, has observed, sex is as much a concrete, historical, and social phenomenon as gender. Some feminists have made a case that the distinction between sex and gender is simply irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete historical understanding of what it means to be a woman in a given society (Toril Moi). In the same line of thinking, the concepts of *yin* and *yang* should be treated as a concrete and situational perspective, one that may supply balanced assessments and guidance for specific situations. Dong Zhongshu, by contrast, formulated the fixed categories of man-*yang* and woman-*yin* and "fixed the lower nature of women in a syncretic cosmological system."[85] This configuration led to a rigid gender hierarchy that may well contribute to a systematic oppression of Chinese women in practice.

The problem, as I see it, is not the concepts of *yin* and *yang per se* but the shifting connotations variously ascribed to these terms. The concepts of *yin* and *yang* are initially rooted in balanced change and harmony. Neither is superior or inferior; both are equal. *Yin-yang* theory needs to be reconsidered if we are to take sufficient account once more of its dynamic and flexible complexity. As my analysis of Dong's work suggests, the harmony rather than the hierarchical order must be emphasized. Woman should be able to sustain her own identity yet seek harmony within human relationships. She should not face the alternative of either conquering or being conquered in her quest for unity with others. In search of a way beyond this narrow

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alternative, metaphysical perspectives may still be helpful. Gender identities may yet be explicated with an appropriately metaphysical perspective on harmony. The problem with Dong is not that he includes *yang* and excludes *yin,* but rather that he seeks to subordinate one to the other instead of respecting the natural possibilities for their mutual harmony. *Yin* and *yang* are not fixed categories but together form a transformative dynamic process, as embodied in a complex and interactive relationship. There is a fluidity of *yin* and *yang* insofar as both are beneficiaries of and contributors to harmony. Any static interpretation will represent a departure from *yin-yang* theory itself. *Yin*'s equal role, as illustrated in the early texts, has been impoverished so that it could serve to validate a social structure. If there are initial differences between men and women (別), it seems clear that fixing these differences is anti-Confucian. The Confucian ideal state of affairs is *yin* and *yang* in a harmonious unity. With a proper appreciation of correlative cosmology, each person should strive to achieve this harmony within the context of his or her own life. Navigating a sound and dynamic interpretation of *yin-yang* theory is both possible and necessary. It is most likely to be found by returning to the Classical and original meanings.

Notes

I wish to thank the following colleagues and friends for their careful reading of this essay and their insightful suggestions: Kelly James Clark, Paul Goldin, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Dennis McCann, Peimin Ni, Thomas Sherman, and Qingjie Wang.

1 – See the following essays: Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Correlative Cosmology: The School of Yin and Yang," in his book *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 351–382; Alison Harley Black, "Gender and Cosmology in Chinese Correlative Thinking," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols,* ed. C. W. Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, "Sexism, with Chinese Characteristics," in *The Sage and the Second Sex,* ed. Chenyang Li (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), pp. 75–95.

2 – Henry Rosemont, Jr., "Confucian and Feminist Perspectives on the Shelf," in *Culture and Self,* ed. Douglas Allen (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

3 – Terry Woo offers different types of feminist critique on Confucianism in "Confucianism and Feminism," in *Feminism and World Religions,* ed. Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 110–147. See also Chenyang Li, "The Confucian Concept of Jen and the Feminist Ethics of Care: A Comparative Study," *Hypatia: A Feminist Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1) (1994): 70–89. Many female scholars in China today have criticized the *yin-yang* theory as a conceptual justification for the subordination of women.

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4 – Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 272.

5 – See Sarah Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the "Spring and Autumn," according to Tung Chung-shu* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Derk Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 311. One paragraph mentioned this.

6 – These two Chinese words have different characters but the same pronunciations.

7 – I recognize that the translation and meaning of *xing* is a highly debatable issue. *Xing* has been commonly translated as "human nature." Roger Ames has argued that *xing* in the *Mencius* is not fixed properties or essences but "a dynamic process" and "an achievement concept." To avoid the distraction of the focus, this essay will translate *xing* as "human nature."

8 – *Book of Odes,* "Daya" 大雅; my own translation. James Legge translated the word *yin-yang* as "the light and the shade"; see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics,* vol. 4 (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1994), p. 488.

9 – Chan, *Source Book,* p. 245.

10 – *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the states), vol. 1, *Zhouyu* Part One 周語上 (Shanghai: Guji Chubanshe, 1994), p. 21; my translation.

11 – Zhang Dainian is the oldest Chinese philosopher living in China today. At ninety-three he is an accomplished scholar. He is the brother-in-law of Feng Youlan.

12 – Using the term "substance" to translate the Chinese word *xingzhi* could be problematic due to the complexity of the English term. Here, substance refers to something as attribute or property.

13 – Zhang Dainian 張岱年, Zhongguo gudian zhexue gainian fanchou yaolun 中國古典哲學概念范疇要論 (On classical Chinese philosophical terms) (Beijing: Zhouguo Shehuikexue Chubanshe, 2000), pp. 84–85.

14 – *Daodejing* 道德經, bk. 42; my translation.

15 – *Zhuangzi* 莊子, Inner Chapters (*Neipian* 內篇), 6, "The Teacher Who Is the Ultimate Ancestor" ("Dazhongshi" 大宗師); my translation.

16 – *Zhuangzi,* Miscellaneous Chapters (*Zapian* 雜篇), 31, "An Old Fisherman" ("Yufu" 漁父); my translation.

17 – *Zhuangzi,* Outer Chapters (*Waipian* 外篇), 21, "Sir Square Field" ("Tianzifang" 田子方); my translation.

18 – *Zhouyi* 周易, 系辭上, in 四書五經 (Four Books and Five Classics) (Changsha, China: Yuling Shuche, 1990), p. 197; my translation.

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19 – For a detailed discussion on this distinction see Zhang Dainian, *On Classical Chinese Philosophical Terms,* pp. 84–85.

20 – There has been a debate about the authenticity of this work. The question is whether it is Dong's or whether some of it is by his disciples; see Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon.* However, the commonly held view is that the work is Dong's.

21 – Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Luxuriant gems of the spring and autumn), commentary by Su Xing 蘇興 (Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996), chap. 47, 陰陽位 (A discussion of the positions of *yin* and *yang*), pp. 337–338. All translations from Dong's work are my own.

22 – Zhou Guidian 周桂鈿, *Qinhan Sixiang Shi* 秦漢思想史 (The history of Qin and Han thought) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renming Chubanshe, 1999).

23 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 80, 如天之為, p. 463.

24 – Ibid., p. 432.

25 – Ibid., p. 436.

26 – Ibid., p. 438.

27 – Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilization,* pp. 373–374.

28 – See Kwong-loi Shun's "*Jen* and *Li* in the Analects," *Philosophy East and West* 43 (3) (July 1993): 457–479, for a further discussion on the relationship between *ren* and *li.*

29 – For the English translation see Burton Watson, trans., *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 89–111.

30 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 80, p. 463.

31 – The *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* is the official transcript of an imperial conference on the Confucian classics convened in A.D. 79.

32 – *Baihu Tong* 白虎通 (Comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall), vol. 8, 三綱六紀, commentary by Chen Li 陳立 (Qing dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1997), p. 373; my translation.

33 – Woo, "Confucianism and Feminism," p. 121.

34 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 5, 精華, p. 87.

35 – The term *he* 合 in Chinese has multiple meanings that include close, shut, join, combine, whole, total, corresponding, fitting, and not contrary to.

36 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 53, 基義, p. 350.

37 – *Mozi* 墨子, "Ciguo" 辭過; my translation.

38 – Victor Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), pp. 133–134.

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39 – *Guanzi,* trans. W. Allyn Rickett (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 52.

40 – *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, Zhuzi lei 諸子類 (Section on the Hundred Schools); my translation.

41 – Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 1.12, p. 74.

42 – Roger Ames, *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p. 62.

43 – Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 65.

44 – Roger Ames, *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare,* pp. 61–62.

45 – Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius,* 13.23, p. 169.

46 – *Zhuangzi,* Inner Chapters, 14, "Heavenly Revolutions" ("Tianyu" 天運); my translation.

47 – Fung Yu-lan [Feng Youlan], *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Free Press, 1948), p. 174.

48 – *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han), vol. 56 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996).

49 – For the primary texts, see the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the *Daodejing* 道德經, the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語), the *Spring and Autumn of Mr. Lü* [Lü Buwei] (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), and the *Nine Songs* (*Jiuge* 九歌). These materials especially related to women can be found in *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period to the Song Dynasty,* ed. Robin R. Wang (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003). For secondary materials, see Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtues in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), and Bret Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

50 – Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilization,* p. 311.

51 – Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius,* p. 156.

52 – *Han Feizi quanji* 韓非子全集 (Collected works of Han Feizi), chap. 20, "Loyalty and Filial Piety" ("Zhong xiao" 忠孝) (Guiyang, China: Guizhong Renming Chubanshe, 1990), p. 1088; my translation.

53 – Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius,* p. 86.

54 – Tu Wei-ming, "Probing the 'Three Bonds' and 'Five Relationships,'" in *Confucianism and the Family,* ed. Walter H. Slote and George A. DeVos (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 122.

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55 – Shu-hsien Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming* (Westpoint, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 109.

56 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 43, 陽尊陰卑, p. 325.

57 – Rickett, *Guanzi,* pp. 111–116.

58 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 49, 陰陽義, p. 341.

59 – Ibid., p. 327.

60 – Ames, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare,* p. 70.

61 – Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China,* p. 370.

62 – Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China,* pp. 12–13.

63 – According to Su Xing, commentator on Dong's work, this statement is the root of the Neo-Confucian view that the substance of *qi* (*qizhi* 氣質) is human nature *(xing).*

64 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 35, 深察名號, p. 292.

65 – Watson, *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings,* p. 158.

66 – *Xunzi* 荀子, "Zhenming" 正名 (Rectification of names); my translation.

67 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 36, 實性, p. 311.

68 – Ibid., p. 300.

69 – Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China,* p. 403.

70 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 36, p. 312.

71 – The theory of the three types of human nature has been a source of heated debate among contemporary Chinese academics. The topics in this debate include: Who started this theory? Was it Dong Zhongshu? What are the three types of human nature *(xing)*? See Zhou Guidian, *The History of Qing and Han Thought.*

72 – Dong Zhongshu, chap. 35, p. 296.

73 – Ibid., p. 298.

74 – Wang Chong 王充, *Lunheng* 論衡 (On consistency), chap. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990), p. 140; my translation.

75 – Xu Shen 許慎, Shuowen Jiezi 說文解字 (Explaining single-component graphs and analyzing compound characters) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1981); my translation.

76 – The five *xing* are benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and trust (*xin* 信). The six *qing* are pleasure (*xi* 喜), anger (*nu* 怒), sadness (*ai* 哀), joy (*le* 樂), love (*ai* 愛), and greed (*tan* 貪).

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77 – *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall,* vol. 8, on *Xingqing* 性情, p. 383; my translation.

78 – See *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988).

79 – Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu,* chap. 77, 循天之道, p. 445.

80 – Ibid., p. 446.

81 – Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy,* p. 99.

82 – Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light,* p. 143.

83 – Ibid., p. 167.

84 – Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. x.

85 – Terry Woo, "Confucianism and Feminism," p. 130.

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