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Dong Zhongshu's Transformation of "Yin-Yang" Theory and Contesting of Gender Identity

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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, 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. Others, however, assert that the denigration of women in ancient China is a direct result of the idea of yin-yang.

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
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,” there has been very little work done on him in the West. Scholars have agreed that Dong’s work clearly favors yang over yin. 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 合) of yin and yang to an imposed unity (he 合) 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) 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 合) 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 隠 and yang 阳 are found in the oracle-bone inscriptions, yet the terms they represented
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.” 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.”

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.” 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 (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 suggests two versions of yin-yang and the relationships between them, namely a qi (vital energy) interpretation and a xingzhi 性質 (substance) interpretation. First, yin and yang were observed as qi (vital energy), and thus there are yin qi and yang qi 阳氣 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 (vital energy) it reaches he (harmony).” Yin and yang here function as qi, and through their interaction everything comes into existence. Zhuangzi articulates also the “qi of yin and yang.” “When the qi of yin and yang are not in harmony, and cold and heat come in untimely ways, all things will be harmed.” “When the two have successful intercourse and achieved harmony, all things will be produced.” 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 穎辭 (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-
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 人.
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.”

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). 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. 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). 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.”

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 formal Confucian teachings. Confucian concepts such as li (ritual), yi (righteousness), and de (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); for Xunzi, li belongs to the human world, and it is the sage who produces them (Xunzi, chap. 18, “On Li”). 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).

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
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三綂)? 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 \textit{(he)} of yin and yang. Even the Sage cannot change it.”\textsuperscript{37}

Zhuangzi maintains: “Performed with the harmony \textit{(he)} of yin and yang, illuminated 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.”\textsuperscript{38}

The \textit{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 \textit{(he)}, there is life. Without it, there is no life.”\textsuperscript{39}

The Eclectics (Zajia \textit{雜家}) argue: “The harmony \textit{(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.”\textsuperscript{40}

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

Harmony \textit{(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.\textsuperscript{43}

Harmony \textit{(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 \textit{Guoyu} 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....\textsuperscript{44}

Recognizing yin and yang interaction as harmony \textit{(he 和)} is very different from accepting it as an imposed unity \textit{(he 合)}. The harmony \textit{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 \textit{(harmony)} not
sameness; petty persons, then, are the opposite.” 

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.” 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 (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.

By reinterpreting the meaning of the relationship between yin and yang, Dong replaces the word for the “harmony” (和) of yin and yang with the word for “an imposed unity” (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). However problematic his contribution to imperial ideology, here we limit our focus to the way Dong applied this same conception of order (序) 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. 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 (變) in, for example, the Book of Changes is replaced with Dong’s elucidation of a normative hierarchical ordering (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 of 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 (五伦) 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 (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 变) of mutuality or reciprocity has been forsaken. Using yin and yang to justify a hierarchical ordering (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 行 (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 行德 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 (tian de 天德) and yin is tian’s punishment (tian xing 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 (贱惡).59

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

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
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,” 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.

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 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 (Emotion) and Xing (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 (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) naturally...
endowed in human nature. Dong declares that “Human nature (xing) has a basic stuff (zhi).” 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).” This claim, to a certain extent, is consistent with Xunzi’s view: “Xing (human nature) is that which is given by Heaven [tian].” “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).” 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.” 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 内), 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.” 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:
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 (zhil) 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 (圣人之性) (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 Yu 韩愈 (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 食) or benevolent (ren 仁). Just as heaven (tian) has prohibitions restricting the excesses of either yin or yang, the human body has prescriptions against covetous feelings and is consistent with the way of heaven (tian).72
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 (rén xìng) and Xunzi’s badness of human nature (xing xìng) 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.”

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.

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 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...
qing: "Qing is the human being's yin qi, having desires. Xing is the human being's yang qi, having goodness." 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). 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); yin qi is greed (tan); therefore, qing has desires and xing has benevolence (ren). 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.

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." "The standard of the relationship between man and woman is the model of yin and yang." 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.” 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...
as an imposed unity (he 会) 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
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
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 (𤦨), 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.


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.”


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.


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

15 – *Zhuangzi*, Inner Chapters (Neipian 内篇), 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.

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.


24 – Ibid., p. 432.

25 – Ibid., p. 436.

26 – Ibid., p. 438.


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.


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.


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


37 – Mozi 墨子, “Ciguo” 辭過; my translation.


40 - *Lūshì chūnqiú* 呂氏春秋, *Zhuizi lei* 諸子類 (Section on the Hundred Schools); my translation.


46 - *Zhuangzi*, Inner Chapters, 14, “Heavenly Revolutions” (“Tianyu” 天運); my translation.


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] (Lūshì chūnqiú 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).


59 – Ibid., p. 327.


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).


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


68 – Ibid., p. 300.


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.


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


80 – Ibid., p. 446.

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

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

83 – Ibid., p. 167.


85 – Terry Woo, “Confucianism and Feminism,” p. 130.