

Dai Zhen's Ethical Philosophy of the Human Being

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Abstract

The moral philosophy of Dai Zhen can be summarised as “fulfil desires and express feelings”. Because he believed that life is the most cherished thing for all man and thing, he maintains that “whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture.” He also claimed that “caring for oneself, and extending this care to those close to oneself, are both aspects of humanity” He set up a strong monastic moral philosophy based on individual human desire and feeling.

As the title ‘Dai Zhen’s philosophy of the ethical human being’ demonstrate, human physical body and activities of life is ethical base of philosophy of Dai Zhen. He regards the cause of activities for life is desire and feeling and he claimed that it is the prime concern of his moral philosophy. He set up a strong monastic moral philosophy base on the individual human desire and feeling to establish man as the moral subjectivity.

Dai Zhen applied a systematic research agenda and built on palaeography and phonology to reconstruct the meaning of the Canons to become a sage by using the “meanings” of words as a method of reconstructing the “intentions” of the words of Canons, rather than by using metaphysics and intuitive meditation.

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes

Quan-ji

Dai Zhen戴震 *Dai Zhen quan-ji*戴震全集(The Complete works of Dai Zhen). v.1-7.
An-hui cong-shu 安徽叢書, *Huang-shan-shu-she*黃山書社. 1997.

Yuan shan

Dai Zhen戴震, *Yuan-shan* 原善. Commentary by An Zheng-hui 安正輝: *Dai Zhen zhu-zuo-xuan-ji* 戴震著作選集 (*Selected works of Dai Zhen, with commentaries*). Beijing: *Zhong-hua shu-ju*中華書局. 1978. *Quan-ji*. v.6.

Xu-yan

Dai Zhen戴震, *Xu-yan* 緒言(*The Prolegomena*) *Dai Zhen quan-ji* 戴震全集 V.6. *An-hui cong-shu* 安徽叢書, *Huang-shan-shu-she* 黃山書社. 1997.

Shu-zheng

Dai Zhen戴震, *Meng-zi zi-yi shu-zheng* 孟子字義疏證. Commentary by An Zheng-hui 安正輝: *Dai Zhen zhu-zuo-xuan-ji* 戴震著作選集 Beijing: *Zhong-hua shu-ju*中華書局. 1978. *Quan-ji*. v.6.

Xing-zhuang

Hung Pang洪榜, *Dai Dong-yuan xian-sheng xing-zhuang* 戴東原先生行狀 (*Biographical account of Master Dai Zhen*), *Quan-ji*, v.7.

Nian-pu

Duan Yu-cai段玉裁 'Dai Dong-yuan xian-sheng nian-pu' 戴東原先生年譜 (*Chronological biography of Dai Zhen*), *Quan-ji* V.6.

Ewell Trans.

This dissertation will follow the Ewell's translation (Ewell, John Woodruff. *Reinvention the Way: Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the meanings of Terms in Mencius* (1777). Berkeley, CA, Unpublished PhD Dissertation in history, 1990.), not only because it is an excellent translation but also because it has nowadays become the standard translation of Dai Zhen in English-speaking academia: Philip Ivanhoe and the Internet Chinese Philosophy Text Archive, for instance, use Ewell's translation.

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Introduction

Dai Zhen (1724-1777) was a philosopher and eminent evidential scholar of the mid-Qing era. As a direct result of Dai Zhen's influence, important Confucian concepts and ideas have undergone philological study that has proved fruitful in text critics, and has proved equally productive in the context of Chinese moral philosophy.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was broadly held amongst scholars of Chinese philosophy that Dai Zhen, regarded as a social philosopher and as one of the foremost evidential scholars of the mid-Qing era, was the strongest contender to Zhu Xi, the founder of Neo Confucianism and the author of orthodox commentaries on the Canons, in particular the *Four Books*.

However, in the mid-eighteenth century, when Dai Zhen was in Beijing, although his philological works were held in high regard, few found in favour of his philosophical works. On reading his philosophical treatise *Inquiry into Goodness (Yuanshan)* one of his contemporaries Zhu Yun expressed the view that "he had wasted his energy on something useless," and merely praised Dai Zhen's skill at glossing words and terms, and his knowledge of the Six Canons and the nine branches of mathematics.¹

¹Benjamin A. Elman. *From Philosophy To Philology: Social and Intellectual Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard Council of East Asian Studies, 1990.pp.106-107.

The intellectual climate of the following century was completely different. Confucian literati became increasingly receptive to philosophical issues, and once again stressed the moral aspects of Confucian discourse. The distinguished scholar and patron Ruan Yuan (1764-1849) composed essays on Confucian philosophy modelled on Dai's linguistic approach to philosophical terms.

Ruan's treatise made use of etymological and phonological procedures to reconstruct the meanings of key Confucian concepts. The antithesis of Dai Zhen and Zhu Xi inspired the thinkers who strongly demanded reform of the Qing Dynasty. Dai Zhen's philosophy found support among social reformers, essentially because it represented a possibility of social change. At the same time, Dai's criticism also provoked responses from the defenders of the Zhu Xi orthodoxy, such as Fang Dongshu (1772-1851), who was a staunch advocate of the Neo Confucian orthodoxy.²

In the twentieth century, even previous radicals such as Zhang Binglin and Liu Shipei agreed on the impact of Dai Zhen's philosophy, followed by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi. Also, Feng Yulan, Qian Mu and Yu Yingshih carried out research on Dai Zhen in the context of Chinese philosophy.³

However, whilst acknowledging the impact of Dai's philosophy, a great disparity can be seen in the academics' evaluations of his works. Zhang Binglin

² Ibid. p.21.

³ Ibid. pp.21-22. Feng Yulan's(1895-1990) wrote on Dai Zhen in the second volume of his *History of Chinese Philosophy* in 1934.

was the first important writer to focus on Dai's philosophy. His learning was inherited from the Wan School, and his interest in Qing intellectual history undoubtedly had an influence on the later scholars Liang Qichao and Qian Mu.⁴ Zhang was the first to distinguish between the Song Confucians' aims and Dai's. Liang Qichao and Hu Shi were eager to espouse anti-Song Neo Confucian philosophy, since they felt it was Song Neo Confucianism that bore chief responsibility for social injustice and material backwardness in China, traditionally the country's most glaring weaknesses. Feng Yulan, however, found Dai's philosophy neither profound nor especially creative as compared with that of the Song Neo Confucians whom Dai criticised. Qian Mu, on the other hand, was a Confucian scholar, whose interpretation of the history of ideas followed the orthodox tradition. Later, Yu Yingshi compared Dai Zhen with Dai's contemporary, the famous Qing historian Zhang Xuecheng.

Dai Zhen's philosophy certainly seems politically radical on the surface, and does contain some elements of modern thinking. However, it is suggested that Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng* and *Inquiry into Goodness* are not radical philosophical works but rather profound works on human nature and goodness, using Kaozheng methods to analyse key concepts in Confucian philosophy.

Time after time, Dai's works have come to be regarded as so radical. However, it is not Dai Zhen's work that has changed but the time and situations that have surrounded it. Trends of intellectual discourse have changed in

⁴ Elman 1990. p.22.

accordance with the political climate, and there has been a switch from the old version of the Canon to the new.

Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scholars have argued over Dai Zhen's philosophy and have examined the Canons and Classics following Dai Zhen's instructions. His research method is still highly praised in many Chinese disciplines and his philosophy is utilised in some modern methods of analysis; furthermore, Dai Zhen's work has always been central to discussions of the mid- and late Qing period in both philosophy and evidential research.⁵

The aim of this dissertation is draws a comprehensive understanding of the moral philosophy of Dai Zhen. Throughout the research, the central idea of Dai Zhen's philosophy is taken to be the elucidation of the view of the goodness of human nature and of the way to become an ideal man. It is clear that the aim of Dai's philosophy is to create a new conception of the human and the sage as compared to that of the Neo Confucians, and it is clear that the fundamental principle of Dai's works is clearly declared that the Preface of *Shuzheng*, to cite the philosophical arguments in the Canons in order then to challenge the wrongs resulting from the flawed philosophy of Neo-Confucianism. To do so, it is necessary to elucidate the whole structure of Dai's moral philosophy; this is the

⁵ Li Kai, *Dai Zhen Pingzhuan*, (*Life and Thought of Dai Zhen*), Nanjing University press. 1992. p.3.

first attempt at schematising the structure and at reaching a comprehensive understanding of Dai's moral philosophy by illuminating Dai's concept of the human and the sage in the light of Dai's moral philosophy. Therefore this dissertation titled 'Dai Zhen's philosophy of the ethical human being' to represent his philosophical assertion on man's body and activities for life itself is ethical and the sage is the man who fulfils the moral possibility of the ethical human.

As shown above, both positive and negative criticism to Dai Zhen's work has persisted over the centuries. Advocators of Neo Confucianism have used Dai Zhen to refine their own theology;⁶ whilst radical activists have used the potentially revolutionary aspects of Dai Zhen's philosophy to support their political activities.⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that Dai Zhen is still not a very well understood as a philosopher. To understand Dai Zhen more precisely, it is necessary to focus on the issues within Dai Zhen's philosophy itself in isolation from these other, extraneous factors.

Phenomenological method and hermeneutics are the appropriate methods for elucidating Dai Zhen's philosophical system. In phenomenological method, applying intuition and approaching Dai Zhen's philosophy empathically makes for a solid base from which to view the philosophy from Dai Zhen's own viewpoint. Placing oneself as far as possible within Dai Zhen's viewpoint will help prevent

⁶ See Fan Dongshu and Qian Mu's *Life and philosophy of Dai Zhen*. *Quanji*, Vol.7.

⁷ See Zhang Binglin, *Shi Dai (interpretation of Dai Zhen)*, *Quanji*, Vol.7.

misunderstandings and, ultimately, to draw an outline of the structure of the whole better than has been achieved previously. From the time of Confucius, hermeneutics has been used to interpret and understand culture and the Canons.⁸ Dai Zhen also tried to interpret the original Chinese Confucian tradition anew and to understand it properly. Therefore, to understand Dai Zhen, it must be necessary to apply hermeneutics as a methodology, but it is suggested that a strong phenomenological slant should be given to this particular application of hermeneutics.⁹

Before moving on, it would be helpful to say a brief word on translations. There is only one translation of Dai Zhen's *Inquiry into Goodness* (原善),¹⁰ but several of his work on Mencius. One of these, Annping Chin and Mansfield Freeman's translation, *Dai Zhen on Mencius: Explorations in Words and Meanings* (孟子字義疏證), is in general an unreliable work.¹¹ Another version is Torbjörn Lodèn's *Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words*

⁸ Confucius, Analects, 7:01

⁹ See David E. Cooper. *World philosophies*, Black well publishing, oxford, 2003. pp.170-2, 445-8. for phenomenology, see pp.437-444.

¹⁰ Chungying Cheng, *Tai Chen's Inquiry into Goodness*, East-West Center Press University of Hawaii. 1971.

¹¹ Annping Chin, Freeman M. *Tai Chen on Mencius: Exploration in words and meaning*, Yale University Press.1990.

of Mencius;¹² but the latest and best translation of the text is John Ewell's *Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in Mencius (1777)*.¹³

Sagehood was the predominant motive and goal of scholars before the beginning of the Qing; as such, the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasty Confucians stressed the cultivation of moral perfection as the ultimate concern. They developed complex metaphysics to support their philosophy of ethics. However, after the Qing dynasty everything changed. Those who inherited power became scholars, their legacy in turn being a scholarly community that encouraged and valued vivid, creative and accurate critical research on the Canons.¹⁴

Hamaguchi Fujio claimed that Qing evidential scholars such as Dai Zhen had in mind a systematic research agenda that built on palaeography and phonology to reconstruct the meaning of the Canons. Later Wang Niansun (王念孫) and his son Wang Yinzhi (王引之) extended Dai's approach and attempted to become sages by using the "meanings" of Chinese words as a method of reconstructing the "intentions" of the words of Canons, rather than by using metaphysics and intuitive meditation.¹⁵ However, in this dissertation it is claimed that Dai Zhen's original concept of "intention" and of seeking the "meaning" of the

¹²Torbjörn Lodèn. *Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius*, Bulletin of Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, no. 60, Stockholm:1988.165-313.

¹³Ewell, John Woodruff. *Reinvention the Way: Dai Zhen's Evidential Commentary on the meanings of Terms in Mencius (1777)*. Berkeley, CA, Unpublished PhD Dissertation in history, 1990. John Ewell kindly approved to use and quote of his translation in my thesis.

¹⁴ Elman. 1990. p3.

¹⁵Kuhn, Philip. *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864*. Cambridge, Havard University Press, 1970. p157.

Canons was in fact the same as the truth of sages and the way to be a sage. Dai demonstrates a concept of human nature in the context of the moral philosophy of the Canons.¹⁶ He is not only a Confucian who subjected Confucian moral philosophy to philological study, but also a very profound Confucian who concentrated on the Canon and sought a systematic way of thinking about human nature and seeking the way to be a sage based on the ethical philosophy of the Canons.¹⁷

Dai Zhen devoted his philosophical passion to Zhu Xi, when he was young. Therefore, Dai Zhen was well acquainted with Zhu Xi's philosophical writings and he passed local exam and tried to pass the metropolitan exam that exam question is Zhu Xi's commentary of the Canons. Also Dai Zhen quoted some Zhu Xi's commentaries in his commentaries.¹⁸ His knowledge on Zhu Xi and Neo Confucianism is well enough accuracy but his understanding on Buddhism is not well known.

Dai Zhen intended to discard the Song Confucian notions of human and sage that were based on the fallacies and mistakes of Zhu Xi's theory, and to build a solid base from which to promote the correct understanding of human nature and sagehood. It is argued that Dai Zhen's real aim and purpose was in

¹⁶ Chan, Wingsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. p.711.

¹⁷ Li Kai, 1992. p23.

¹⁸ See Dai Zhen's early commentary on *lunyu*, *Quanji*, v.1.

fact to replace entirely the earlier Neo Confucian idea of the human with the Canon's concept of human nature.¹⁹

Dai's *Shuzheng* declared that Neo Confucian *li* (principle) is based upon fallacy and error and had over the course of history become mixed with heterodoxy such as Daoism and Buddhism. Dai Zhen criticises the Neo Confucian idea of principle, because he does not believe that there is such a thing as principle. Dai claims that Zhu Xi built up his concept of human nature and his idea of the sage alongside a version of principle that is borrowed from heterodoxy, and that this adopted concept of principle has distorted the concept of *Dao*. Dai Zhen rejects Zhu Xi's principle - at the same time as he rejects the concept that 'a man can possess principle'²⁰ - because there is no mention of such principle in the Canon: he does not believe that man has "principle" and "human nature", as the Song Confucians claimed. Dai Zhen's criticism of the Song Confucians therefore rejects the possibility of a philosophical anthropology on which the debate on human nature is necessarily based.

Criticism plays a very important role in Dai's philosophical approach. As the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant has shown, criticism consists of analysing and reflecting upon limits. In this sense, philosophical criticism is a fully philosophical practice that is necessary in creating a philosophy. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has so as not to

¹⁹ Dai Zhen, *Xu Yan*, Article 2, *Quanji*, v. 6.

²⁰ Dai Zhen, *Shuzheng*, article 15.

transgress them.²¹ Dai Zhen's criticism is a fully philosophical practice that is necessary in creating a philosophy, and even Dai Zhen transgresses the limitation of Zhu Xi's theory. Dai Zhen knows what the limits of Song and Neo Confucian philosophy are and tries to transgress them intentionally. It seems that with Dai Zhen, critical questioning is turned into positive philosophical investigation. In Dai's philosophical system, criticism is no longer to be practiced in the search for universal principle, but rather as an evidential investigation directed towards the constitution of a moral philosophy based on the Canons, and towards building a concept of human nature as the subject of what the sages referred to in the canon, but without the limitations of the Neo Confucian perspective.

These evidential research inquiries have their methodological coherence in the evidential study of practices envisaged simultaneously as a technological type of rationality and as strategies for the interpretation of the Canons.²² His evidential works focus mainly on rebuilding the Canons free from the contamination of heterodox theories such as Buddhism, Daoism and Western science.²³ His mathematics, astrology and calendar works in particular sought to

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader, What is Enlightenment ?* Paul Rabinow ed., Pantheon Books, 1984. p.42.

²² In here, I apply the Michel Foucault's philosophical method on Dai Zhen. See Michel Foucault, 1984, p.43.

²³ Li Kai, 1992, p.3.

restore and explain the ancient Chinese systems in order to repel the European science introduced later by the Jesuits.²⁴

Dai Zhen was a strong ethical realist because he claimed moral base of human nature commence physical body and activities of life and concrete things in human life. Dai Zhen regards the cause of activities for life is desire and feeling and he claimed that it is the prime concern of his moral philosophy. He set up a strong monastic moral philosophy base on the individual human desire and feeling. Therefore he is called ethical realist.

However the concreteness of moral is positively not the result of his observation on natural phenomenon but the research through the words of ancient Canons. Dai Zhen's 'nature' references the sense of characters of texts called *Dao* rather than actual nature.²⁵

The moral philosophy of Dai Zhen can be summarised as "fulfil desires and express feelings".²⁶ Because he believed that life is the most cherished thing for all man and thing, he maintains "whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture."²⁷ He also claimed that "caring for oneself, and extending this care to those close to oneself, are both aspects of humanity"²⁸ He

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Yu Yingshi noted that Dai Zhen wanted to prove that his reasonings were not just empty thoughts but were rooted in texts. Yu Yingshi, *Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng, Quanji*, vol.7. p.580

²⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 10.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 21. .

set up a strong monastic moral philosophy based on individual human desire and feeling.

This dissertation consists of four chapters, which attempt to give a complete picture of the philosophy of Dai Zhen in accord to the Preface of *Shuzheng*.

Firstly, in order to introduce Dai Zhen I shall introduce his life and works in the setting of the formation and development of a distinguished academic community. Concerning his life and evidential works on various fields, Dai's writings are deemed to be a form of translation of the labours of diverse philosophical inquiries. Dai Zhen's three major philosophical writings - *On Goodness, Prolegomena, and Commentary on the Words and Meanings of Mencius* - are introduced in detail. The titles of his works demonstrate that what he tries to deal with to built the original sense of Confucius and Zhou Civilization: the ancient words and meaning: through the contexts and definitions of work of Mencius and the contents of words: the goodness.²⁹

Under the heading of 'The Intellectual Milieu of Dai Zhen' in the second chapter, I shall detail the philosophical genealogy and originality of Dai Zhen and show the effects of his influence. This chapter is displayed the opponents and friends of Dai Zhen who insisted that the champion of ancient and Confucius' *Dao*.

³⁰ In this respect, his relations with his contemporaries, the research of later

²⁹ *Shuzheng*, Preface: And once Confucius did speak them, actually articulation what the former Sages had left unsaid, without Confucius who would be able to follow and hear?

³⁰ *Ibid*, Mencius disputed with Yang and Mo. When later men, accustomed to hearing the

scholars and Dai Zhen's own influences will be expounded. Although Dai Zhen had no opportunity to meet the Song Confucians he criticised so fiercely, he did come into contact with Neo Confucians everywhere he lived throughout his life. I shall suggest that Dai Zhen's focus with regard to criticism was on contemporary concerns rather than on Zhu Xi or Wang Yangming. Historically Dai Zhen's philosophy was so effective and successful precisely because he was a philosopher who was aware of the *Zeitgeist* and took a keen interest in contemporary concerns. Also in this chapter, I shall briefly draw a modern comparison between Dai Zhen and British empiricist D. Hume and elucidate my latest research on the comparison between Dai Zhen and the French philosopher M. Foucault.

Chapter Three describes the method Dai Zhen applied to his studies, which can be regarded as the basis of his originality. For Dai Zhen, the methodology is seriously important to his philosophy. His method is not an excavate tool or ladder for the Dao but it is the only way to ancient sages and that is come from the Confucius and Mencius.³¹ If He employed a linguistic approach in order to

language of Yang, Mo, Lao. Zhang, and Buddha, moreover use this language to make nonsense of the language to make nonsense of the language of Mencius;

³¹ This Chapter also follows the Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng*, Preface: Thereupon Mencius could not refrain from engaging in disputation. ...In the writings of Mencius there is (a text) which says, "I know language." And (another) which says "it is difficult for language to come up to the expectation of someone who has studied under a sage." For the error of language does not end with language, but will alter the dispositions of men's heart; and when the heart suffers this beclouding, necessarily it harms the conduct of affairs and of government. leading them on

determine the precise meanings of terms in the text by evidential study. In the first section, the history and concept of evidential study is explicated, and later the two methods that Dai Zhen employed in the *Shuzheng* are described in detail. Dai Zhen sets out two ways to build his philosophy on the bedrock of critical and constructive methods; these are not merely methodological but fundamentally philosophical. One is to display the limits of earlier metaphysics, and the other is to build a possible new concept of the human using the Canons and the Way as justification.³²

The last chapter is devoted to the philosophy of Dai Zhen, that is to say the shape of Dai Zhen's moral philosophy. It is here that we see what Dai Zhen really wants us to know and what he desires from the old Canons. The philosophical content of Dai's moral philosophy can be divided into three areas. They are the metaphysics of the way, human nature, and ethics. Chapter four consists of four sections: the philosophy of the human being; metaphysics; the ethical human being; and learning, morality and the Canons.

with seductive language which enters deeply into men's hearts and bring great calamity on the people without anyone even awakening, how can one refrain from disputation!

³² Ling Yicheng , *Shibuchuan yu Dai Zhen de Jiejing fangfa (Commentary of Book of Odes and Methods of Dai Zhen)*, Taipei, Wenlu publisher. 1995. pp.67-93.

I. The Life and Works of Dai Zhen

This chapter demonstrates that what Dai Zhen attempts to re-built the words of Confucius and Zhou Civilization.

Although Dai Zhen's life seems to resemble that of an ordinary self-established scholar of the mid-Qing period, his achievement was extraordinary. He was the founder of the dominant evidential research school Wan, and the philosophical successor of Gu Yanwu (1613-82), the founder of the Qing philosophical trend. His efforts to attain the truth through the veil of an orthodoxy contaminated by heterodoxy initiated a new era of Qing scholarship.³³

Dai Zhen's life-long search for the truth of the Canons, all his works and all his activities are closely related to his own quest for the truth. Dai's philosophical works and analysis are concerned chiefly with his linguistic approach and with scientific and mathematical and calendrical understanding. His aim is to restore and explain the Chinese Classical texts without the help of western mathematics and science. Dai Zhen devoted his life to mastering all aspects of ancient Zhou culture, because he believed that in this ancient culture could be found the original Confucian truth (*Dao*). Most of his philosophical works also have the clear

³³ Bao Guoshun, *Dai Zhen yanjiu* (Research of Dai Zhen), Guoli bianyiguan, Taipei, 1998, p20.

aim of restoring the original meaning of the Canons and the Classics so as to free them from heterodoxy and other outside influences.³⁴

1. The Life of Dai Zhen

Dai Zhen was born on 19th January 1724, as the first son to a poor second-hand cloth merchant. For generations, his family lived in Lungfu, a village in Xiuning County just a short distance from Zhejiang and Jiangxi. His hometown Xiuning was part of the mountainous region of the Huizhou prefecture.³⁵

According to biographers of Dai Zhen, Hong Bang (1745-1779) and Duan Yucai (1735-1858), Dai Zhen did not speak at all until he was eight years old, at which point he suddenly started to talk. He could read fluently when he began to speak and memorised thousands of words a day. Even as a child, Dai Zhen was obsessed with knowing the truth, and relied more on common sense than on faith or authority.³⁶ Dai attended the local school, because his family could not afford a private tutor. He made great efforts to understand each and every possible meaning of the words he encountered. His hunger for truth was satisfied after reading the *Shuowen jiezi* (an explanation of the sentence and an analysis of characters), which he loved so much that he studied every single item in it. He

³⁴ Li Kai, 1992, p2.

³⁵ Anping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.1.

³⁶ *Xingzhuang* p. 4. *Quanji*, v. 7. *Nianpu* p. 650. *Quanji*. V. 6.

also studied the *Shisanjing zhushu* (*Commentaries and Sub-commentaries to the Thirteen Canons*).³⁷

When he was sixteen, Dai Zhen accompanied his father on a long trade trip, during which he found a job as a schoolteacher in the town of Shaowu near Fujian. He stayed there for two years.³⁸

Jiang Yong (1681-1762) was a lecturer at the local Neo Confucian academy called Ziyang Shuyuan.³⁹ In 1750, Dai was one of the young scholars visiting the academy in order to attend lectures and take part in discussions. Dai generally accepted Jiang's instruction but did not follow his Neo Confucianism. Jiang encouraged him to continue detailed research not as a teacher but as a senior colleague and scholar.⁴⁰ Dai Zhen stayed there for about two years, during which time he formed important ties with such talented Huizhou scholars such as Wang Wufeng, Fang Ji, Cheng Yaotian, Jin Bang, and Zheng Mu.⁴¹

In the mid-Qing era, there arose a massive scholastic movement against Zhu Xi and Neo Confucianism, which had hegemony over Imperial China. Critical scholars demanded that, in contrast to Song learning, they were looking for a clear understanding of their classical tradition with a solid base of study that no other opinion could challenge. For this, they required concrete evidence and firm

³⁷ *Nianpu* p651. *Quanji*. V. 6.

³⁸ *Xingzhuang* pp. 5,6. *Quanji*. V. 7.

³⁹ *Nianpu* pp. 654-655.

⁴⁰ Yu Yingshi (1966) , *Quanji*, vol.7. p.582.

⁴¹ Prefaced by *Xu Chengyao*, *Quanji* v.7 pp. 171-172.

ground, and therefore set up the research techniques advanced by the Han exegetes with their emphasis on etymological research as the most convincing, as it sought to gain direct access to the meanings of words, which were themselves beyond doubt.⁴²

After returning from the Academy in 1748, Dai married and had a son and a daughter. However, his family was so poor that he had no income. To sustain his family, he had to work as a tutor in Xiuning. At that time, this area was suffering from a severe famine and this came to be one of the hardest times in Dai Zhen's life. According to one of his letters, "Every day I would go to the noodle shop and take home whatever scraps they could give me. That would be our meal."⁴³ That year, Dai wrote *A Treatise on Geometry*, which became one of his major works on mathematics (*Gaogu gehuanji*), and the *Commentary on Qu Yuan's Rhyming-Prose (Qu Yuan fuzhu)*.⁴⁴ At around the same time he also completed a *Commentary on the Mao Recension of the Book of Odes (Maoshi buzhuàn)* and his *Commentary to Some Unclear Parts in the Astronomy Section of the Arithmetic Classic (Zhoubei)*, in which he attempted to explain the path of the sun in relation to the celestial North Pole. In addition, he documented the results of his inquiry into Yang Xiong's (53 BC-AD 18) *Study of Dialects (Fangyan)*. Two years later (1755) his *Records of Artisans (Kaogongji)* and *Mathematical Treatise (Cesuan)* were published.

⁴² Elman (1984) pp. 3-6

⁴³ *Nianpu, Quanji*, v.6 pp. 662-663.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 664. *Quanji*, v.6. *Nianpu*

In the following year (1753), Dai Zhen had personal trouble with a rich and powerful kinsman of his clan, who levelled an accusation against him of unjust usage of the clan's cemetery. The clansman had close relations with an officer, who sued Dai Zhen on a bogus charge. He was left with no option but to run away to Beijing without any clothing or money. Without any means of keeping warm or avoiding hunger, his refuge in Beijing might well have been the most miserable period of his life.⁴⁵ From his place of refuge he sent a letter to his classmate Fang Xiyuan on three possible approaches to learning, and lamented his hardship:

"If the ancients were alive today, they would surely be distressed and feel pity for a person like me, who has no place to go. It's the same with everything: you won't know it until you've passed through it; you can't feel the anguish until you've experienced it. I do not presume to compare myself with the ancients, but I would like to think that at least I have their sympathy. In any case, I shall under no circumstances seek sympathy from people who are unlike the ancients."⁴⁶

Beijing then offered Dai Zhen another opportunity. Qian Daxin (1728-1804) and Wang Mingsheng (1722-1798) paid Dai Zhen a visit. They were the rising stars of Beijing scholastic society, having just passed the Metropolitan examination and been awarded the scholars degree (*Jinshi*) in 1754; they were of comparable age to Dai Zhen. Their special interest was in applying to historiography the exact methodology developed in classical study. They thought that the purpose of writing history was simply to ascertain the truth, and that historians should record

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 665-668.

⁴⁶ Reply to Fang Xiyuan. *Quanji* v.7 p.375.

their findings only after examining all available sources. In their view, novels, poems and local papers should all be employed in the reconstruction of this type of concrete history.⁴⁷

Qian Daxin introduced Dai Zhen to Qin Huitian. At that time Qin Huitian was compiling a comprehensive study of the *Five Ritual Canons (Wuli tungkao)*. He was deeply impressed with the proficiency of Dai Zhen's knowledge of the sciences and reflection. Qin asked Dai to help interpret the meaning of references to mathematics and astronomy in the ritual text. However, Qin thought that the concepts of principle (*li*) and nature (*xing*) were totally unnecessary for his research. This was the difference in approach between the two men, and it made Dai Zhen begin to consider both principle and nature.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Qin and Dai took heed of the Western methods that the Jesuits had brought to China during the Ming and early Qing, since they held them in high regard.⁴⁹ Both recognised the importance of mathematics and the exact science of precise scholarship. In this project on the Five Ritual Canons, the assistance of Dai Zhen was crucial to Qin, including much of Dai's analysis of ancient mathematics and astronomy, which were included in the final version: he added three chapters from Dai's treatise on the relationship of right triangles to a circle (*Gaogu gehuanji*).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Elman, *Ibid.* p. 71

⁴⁸ Yu Yingshi (1976) p. 589.

⁴⁹ Elman, *Ibid.* p.p. 80-83.

⁵⁰ *Nianpu, Quanji*, v.6 pp. 667-668.

In 1756, Dai Zhen became the tutor of Wang Niansun (1744-1832) who was the son of Wang Anguo (1694-1757), the minister of the Board of Rites in Beijing. Wang Niansun later became a very important figure in the field of etymology and phonology.⁵¹

At the end of 1757, Dai Zhen went to Yangzhou to become a guest of Lu Jianxuan, who was the chief commissioner of the Salt Administration and had built up a good reputation in the Lower Yangtze area. As a very rich and munificent man he had a special love for friends and scholars, and used to support talented men from the academic communities. Dai Zhen became one of these charges.⁵²

Traditionally, a Chinese scholar's dearest wish was to become a government officer in order to allow his ideas to come to fruition. A government post promised a fixed salary and good social standing. The competition to reach officialdom, the *jinshi* degree, was always keen and only about three hundred applicants every three years were able to attain this highest of degrees. Nevertheless, during the Song and Ming dynasties a number of prominent Confucians chose not to participate in the examinations. The implication was that these people could still afford to make a choice (though a difficult one) about their

⁵¹ *Xingzhuang Quanji*, v.7 p.8.

⁵² *Nianpu* pp. 669-670.

calling, and that perhaps a good scholar was still a rarity, so highly prized that he could consider other means of supporting himself.⁵³

In Yangzhou, Dai Zhen became a friend of Hui Dong (1697-1758), one of the most important figures in the Kaozheng School at the time. He came from the Suzhou scholarly community, which were disposed toward the Han commentary tradition. Hui Dong created the Han Learning Movement and encouraged the *Kaozhengxue*, though his own method was not identical with it.⁵⁴

In 1762, Dai Zhen passed the Anhui provincial examination for the *Juren* (elevated man) degree, which was a form of screening examination for the Metropolitan examination. The following year he sat the Metropolitan examination in Beijing but failed. This was his first failure of the *Jinshi* degree.⁵⁵

In the same year, Dai Zhen met Duan Yucai in Beijing, who became Dai's first disciple. Dai and Duan formed a strong relationship; after the death of Dai Zhen, Duan became the most important figure in the defence of Dai Zhen and his Kaozheng School.⁵⁶

⁵³ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.10.

⁵⁴ Yu Yingshi (1975) pp.602.

⁵⁵ *Nianpu. Quanji* v.6 pp. 676-677.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 535-536.

In 1766, Dai Zhen met Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801) in Beijing. Dai Zhen was there to take the Metropolitan examination and stayed in the Xiuning hostel. At that time Zhang Xuecheng was twenty-eight years old, a gifted, self-confident scholar and a student of the Imperial Academy.⁵⁷

In 1769, Dai Zhen and Duan Yucai went to the shanxi province. Duan Yucai had a job there as lecturer in the Shouyang Academy. Zhu Gui (1731-1807), like his brother Zhu Yun (1728-1781), was a supporter of intellectuals and linked with the jiangnan academies.⁵⁸ He introduced Dai Zhen to the prefect of fenzhou, who persuaded him to become the head of a project on the history of their Prefecture. Dai Zhen completed the compilation of documents of the fenzhou prefecture (in thirty-four *juan*) within a year. His work was good and was well received. Two years later, the magistrate of fenyang County in the shanxi province called Dai Zhen back to do similar work. Consequently, Dai Zhen became the principal contributor to the local historiography of fenzhou and fenyang.⁵⁹

In 1770 Duan Yucai was appointed magistrate of Yuping County in the Guizhou province, when Dai Zhen was working as a local historian. Their last meeting was in 1772 at Hong Bang's home in Beijing. They maintained their

⁵⁷ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p19.

⁵⁸ Elman, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁹ *Nianpu, Quanji* v.6 pp. 683-684.

relationship through regular correspondence. Duan Yucai carefully dated each and every letter they exchanged.⁶⁰

Dai Zhen's reputation as a scholar was already so firmly secure that he occasionally received attractive offers. This notwithstanding, he still had to travel from place to place in order to make a living and send money to his family. He accepted a position in the zhejiang province as head of the Jinhua Academy. That its duration was short was due to another irresistible offer: he was called by imperial command to serve in Beijing as a compiler of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries (*Siku quanshu*). The directors of the Imperial Manuscript Library Yu Minzhong (1714-1780) and Qiu Yuexiu (1712-1773) and the chief editor of the project Ji Yun (1724-1805) strongly recommended Dai Zhen to the Qianlong emperor. Despite all positions having been filled by famous officials and scholars who were holders of the *Jinshi* degree at least, Dai Zhen had only passed the local examination. The fact that he was only a *Juren* made his appointment a very special occasion.⁶¹

To work in the Imperial Library, appointees had to work in full-time service without payment. This was the decree of the grand councillor on establishing the *Siku quanshu* commission. A month later the grand councillor changed his mind

⁶⁰ In the *Quanji* v.6, there are eleven of correspondence are listed between Dai Zhen and Duan Yucai.

⁶¹ Ibid, *Quanji* v.6 pp.688-692. Also see R. Kent Guy. *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late QianLung Era*. Harvard University, 1987. p.80.

and compensated them with food and drink. Obviously, this job was designed for those who possessed wealth and fortune. The Imperial Library did not take into account men like Dai Zhen who had no other source of income. Financially, he was much worse off than when he had been employed privately. His appointment to the Imperial Library was a significant honour for Dai Zhen personally.⁶²

However, it made him suffer considerable economic hardship and drove him to physical exhaustion. According to a *Letter to Duan Yucai* in 1773, he confided to Duan:

"I can't say that this work in the capital is due to an unfortunate invitation. In the past two years, I have had virtually no money to spare, but at least I was free in the mornings and evenings [to do something extra to supplement my income]. And even under those circumstances, I could barely take care of the needs of my family. Being in the capital, we will have to increase our spending, and so I don't know how we are going to sustain our life."⁶³

It is said that the biggest problem Dai Zhen faced throughout his lifetime was financial shortage. He always managed to find work but he remained a poor scholar until his death. Occasionally he had to borrow money from Duan Yucai who made his living primarily as a civil servant; but even he attained only low status as a travelling magistrate, a temporary post which made his financial situation more stable. He also published a very important etymological study of the *Shuowen jiezihu* that had been deeply inspired by Dai Zhen. He had to earn

⁶² See Kent Guy, 1987. pp 79-87.

⁶³ *Nianpu. Quanji.* v.6 p.538.

money not only for his own survival but also to send to his family and parents in Longfu in Xiuning County.⁶⁴

According to this response to a letter from Duan Yucai, he had received a draft of Duan Yucai's work on the ancient phonological system extracted from the Six Canons, the *Liushu yinyunbiao*, and also asked for a loan of forty taels.

"Ever since the third month of last year, my feet have been suffering from an ailment, and up to now I have not been able to get out of house. My eyesight is also failing me. It appears that this summer the editing will progress slowly. Therefore, I have decided to ask for a leave of absence in the seventh and eighth months so that I can travel south and get medical treatment and also visit an academy of some sort and perhaps eke out a living."⁶⁵

In 1775, Dai Zhen once again attempted the Metropolitan examination but failed, this being his sixth attempt. However, he had one more chance to take the examination: he was allowed by imperial decree to take the palace examination, which was usually taken by the recently successful candidates of the Metropolitan examination so as to quantify their relative capabilities. He passed it, and as a result he was both honoured with the *jinshi* degree and chosen as a bachelor of the Hanlin Academy.⁶⁶

In 1776, Dai Zhen was gravely ill and nearing the end of his life; economic difficulties, a circulatory disease and maybe diabetes had confined him to his

⁶⁴ Ibid. *Quanji* v.6. pp.533-535.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 693.

bed. He talked about his physical pain and worries, about his old father and family, and tried to pay back some debts but had to borrow more money from other friends. His aged father knew that he was anxious about his family. He suffered from sore feet so badly that he had to be carried to places where he might find employment.⁶⁷ By the late spring of 1777, just months before he died, he was critically ill, but nevertheless replied to Duan. Even in this letter he was desperately worried about his financial situation:⁶⁸

“My father is seventy-one, I must find an academy somewhere. Governor Bi Yuan wants me to go to shanxi, but to journey there is too far a distance, and I simply can’t make it.”⁶⁹

He died on 1st July 1777, in a friend’s house. However, “the most important work” of his life, *An Evidential Study of Meaning of Terms in Mencius* had been completed and printed in the last months before his death. In his letter to Duan, he wrote:

“[People who] think that they will not be obsessed when they don’t have desire do not know that the act of desiring is the way to nurture life mutually, that it allows one to look upon others as one’s own self.”⁷⁰

A year later Dai Zhen’s biographer Hong Bang wrote a lament for Dai Zhen:

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Anping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p17.

⁶⁹ *Nianpu. Quanji* v.6. p.535.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* v.6. p. 543, *Letter to Duan Yucai, Quanji.* v.6.

“Although at the time the master's teaching was not formally established and now he himself has succumbed to mortality, what he said will live on forever.”⁷¹

2. The Philosophical Works of Dai Zhen

Dai Zhen produced a great number of works. In addition to many books on mathematics, astronomy, philology, phonetics, and geography, Dai wrote three books on philosophy. They are: *On Goodness*, *Prolegomena*, and *Commentary on the Word and Meanings of Mencius*, the latter being the most significant, for it embodies his final view on the subject. Although Dai entitled his most important work merely as a commentary on one of the Canons, it is nevertheless an original work containing his own philosophy.

The first attempts at collecting and publishing his writings came a year after his death. The first edition of the *Literary Writings and Letters of Dai Zhen* (*Dai Zhen wenji*) was printed in 1778. The second edition had twelve chapters and went to press in 1792. In 1936, the *Complete Works of Dai Zhen* (*Dai Dongyuan xiansheng quanji*) was published by the Anhui Congshu project and listed twenty-two separate works. Three years later in 1942, Sichuan Province Library released *An Evidential Study of Private Aspirations of Mencius* (*Mengzi sishukao*). However, it had many errors and paid no regard to the editing of the manuscripts.

⁷¹ Xingzhuang, *Quanji* v.7 p.11.

Later, in 1961, Beijing National Library compared three editions of manuscripts and printed the definitive version through the Zhonghua Shuju. Subsequently, twelve more unpublished works were discovered and the existence of three lost writings was confirmed. Now, thirty-eight separate works are listed in all and have been published in a new *Complete Works of Dai Zhen*.⁷²

The definitive edition of the *Complete Works of Dai Zhen* (*Dai Zhen quanji*) was published in 1997 by the Anhui Congshu project (with Zhang Dainian as the chief editor). It consists of all the surviving documents that Dai Zhen wrote and articles on him by contemporary colleagues and modern scholars.

Dai Zhen's Works on Philosophy

a. *Inquiry into Goodness (Yuanshan)*

The ontology of Dai Zhen differs from that of the Neo Confucians, who strongly asserted that the prime attribute of being can be nothing but principle (*li*). Dai's *Inquiry into Goodness* argues against this view. Dai appraised *qi*, the vital force, and *Dao*, the Way, instead of *li*, as being analogous to what is necessary (*biran*) in human nature.

⁷² *Quanji*, v.7. *The editor's postscript*. pp. 652-53.

The first draft of his *Three Essays of Inquiry into Goodness (Yuanshan)* was written between 1757 and 1762; the definitive revised version of *Inquiry into Goodness* was completed in 1766.

The first version consisted of only three short essays, but Dai Zhen was delighted by what he had accomplished. The *Nianpu* states:

“The Master’s monumental works, such as his *Inquiry into Goodness* in three chapters, were all written in the ten years between 1753 or 1754 and 1763. I, Yucai, had once copied these works in 1763. The Master once said, ‘having completed the first chapter of *Inquiry into Goodness*, I am so happy that even the rice seems to me to have a special flavour.”⁷³

This asserts that Dai Zhen’s *Inquiry into Goodness* in three chapters was written before 1763, because Duan Yucai had already copied some of it that year. But, it is not easy to state the exact year that Dai Zhen wrote the book. Although Duan says it was finished in the ten years after 1753 and 1754, this remark is merely a supposition, and there is no concrete evidence to support it.

According to Qian Mu, Hui Dong had some influence on *Inquiry into Goodness*. Qian Mu claimed that the *Inquiry into Goodness* was probably written around 1757, when Dai Zhen had already visited yangzhou and had met Hui Dong, because it was only after this that Dai Zhen’s view on learning began to change. Hui Dong advocated a return to Han Confucians’ writings on the subject. But the Han people’s writings on the *Book of Changes* centred mainly on

⁷³ *Nianpu*., *Quanji* v.6. p. 673.

numerology and divination, and contained very little discussion of moral principle. However, in his study of the *Book of Changes*, Hui Dong did not follow the Han trend, but wrote *Yi weiyan*, which synthesised the common features found among the several schools of philosophy with the *Yici* in the pre-Qin and the two Han eras. He listed the various topics, adding his own opinions to them. At that time, Dai Zhen was deeply impressed by what Hui Dong had achieved.⁷⁴

In 1766, Dai Zhen completed a full revision, in which he attempts to establish unique definitions of such Confucian terms as nature (*xing*), decree (*ming*), potential (*cai*), the internal texture of things (*tiaoli*), desire (*yu*), selfishness (*si*), obsession (*bi*), and judgement (*quan*).

The *Nianpu* continues:

Inquiry into Goodness in three *juan* was included in Dai's Literary Remains, gathered in one volume, and was printed by the President of the Board of Revenue, Kong. Originally, however, the Master's *Inquiry into Goodness* in three chapters was included in the President of the Board of Revenue's [Dai Zhen's] printed *Collected Literary Works* which I, Yucal, copied and memorised well in 1763. In 1766 I saw the Master further elaborate on the thesis by extensively using statements in the Canons to support it. He still had three chapters with headings, to which he combined meaning; and the ancient sages' discourse on moral principle would not have gone beyond him. The *Shuzheng*, moreover, was also intended to elucidate this thesis."⁷⁵

In Dai Zhen's own preface to his *Inquiry into Goodness*, he wrote:

⁷⁴ Qian Mu, *Dai Dongyuan, Quanji* v.7. pp. 481-82.

⁷⁵ *Nianpu*., *Quanji* v6. p. 673.

I wrote the three chapters of *Inquiry into Goodness* because I feared that scholars might be misled by heterodox ideas. Later on, basing on the Canons, I elucidated on the [thesis]. I first wrote it in three chapters with appropriate headings, and then expanded it into three *juan*, with which I combined meanings; and therefore all the important points were presented. The Way of Heaven and man and the great teaching embodied in the Canons are included therein. Since the present period is distant from the ancient sages in time, and since students of the Canons might not be able to comprehend [the meanings in the Canons] and are too much accustomed to what they have been taught, I fear that a heap of errors might become a right; and, as I fear that my remarks are inadequate to uplift the decline of the sages' teaching, I have stored the [*Inquiry into Goodness*] in village school, so as to await other competent men to preach it.⁷⁶

The *Inquiry into Goodness* in the *Collected Literary Works* was Dai Zhen's original version in three chapters, whereas the three versions of the same piece included in his *Literary Remains* represent a later revised edition. In the *Literary Remains* edition, chapter one has eleven topics, chapter two has five topics, and chapter three has sixteen topics. Moreover, the first chapter in each chapter comprises the three topics of *Inquiry into Goodness* in the *Collected Literary Works*, but there are differences in the phrasing of statements in the *Collected Literary Works* version.

In 1766 Duan went to the capital and saw Dai Zhen's old manuscript of the *Inquiry into Goodness* in three chapters, which used the words of the Canons to support and elucidate his own thesis, and which supported what Dai Zhen had told Duan, namely that he had recently completed a book on moral principle.

⁷⁶ Dai Zhen, *YuanShan. Preface. Quanji v6.*

However, this book was in fact the enlarged version of the *Inquiry into Goodness* in three chapters, but Duan had mistakenly thought that the book Dai Zhen had mentioned was the *Shuzheng*.⁷⁷

b. *The Prolegomena (Xuyan)*

The Prolegomena (Xuyan) was composed in 1766, and is the first draft of Dai Zhen's greatest philosophical work, the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*. It is not mentioned in other biographies or bibliographies of Dai Zhen, but Duan Yucai wrote about the relationship between it and the *Shuzheng* and then printed it.⁷⁸

The *Nianpu* states:

"*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* in its original manuscript was entitled *Xuyan*, and there was a manuscript edition of *Xuyan* in the ninth month of 1772. Cheng Yaotian made a copy of it in 1766."⁷⁹

In Kong Guangsen's printed *Literary Remains*, the *Xuyan* was not included. Moreover, in their discussions of Dai Zhen's writings, Qian Daxin, Wang Chang, Hong Bang, and Kong Guangsen did not mention it, and it is in fact only included in the *Yueyatang Congshu (Collection of Yueyatang)*. Cheng Yaotian deemed that the *Shuzheng* was not the final version, for the title of the final version was

⁷⁷ Qian Mu, *Dai Dongyuan, Quanji* v.7. p.497

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.497.

⁷⁹ *Nianpu.*, *Quanji* v6. p. 676.

changed to *Xuyan*; he also wrote that he had made a copy of it in 1766. In the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, there is the words “hand-copied edition, in the ninth month of 1772,” and its content cannot therefore have been altered from 1772 to 1776. Duan, however, considered the *Shuzheng* to be the final version and *Xuyan* as the first draft of the book.⁸⁰

According to the *Nianpu*:

“In 1776, I, Yucai, went to the capital to take the Metropolitan examination. I saw the Master who remarked that recently he had completed a book on the study of principle, namely, the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, but I could not get him to show it to me at the time. After the Master died, the president of the Board of Revenue, Kong [Guangsen], printed it, and I have only recently been able to see its subtle ideas.⁸¹

According to Zheng Izhou's *Letter to Duan Yucai*, Duan was tutoring in Zhu Gui's (1731-1807) home in the capital in 1772. Duan claimed that Dai Zhen had formerly lodged in the Governor's [Zhu Gui's] yamen in shanxi where he had pretended to be ill for around ten days. Then he “recovered” and told the Governor that he was not genuinely sick but was becoming frenzied and wanted to smash the Supreme Ultimate Chart of the Song Neo Confucians. Duan said that Dai Zhen was pretending to be ill, and that this was exactly the time he wrote the *Xuyan*.⁸²

⁸⁰ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. pp. 502-505.

⁸¹ *Nianpu*., *Quanji* v6. p. 682.

⁸² Dai Zhen, *Letter to Venerable Cheng Yaotian*. *Quanji* v.7. p. 545.

This book was first begun in 1765 and 1766 and was completed in Governor Zhu's yamen in 1769. In 1768, when he was forty-six years old, Dai Zhen accepted the invitation of Fang Guancheng (1698-1768), the viceroy of Zhili (Hupei), to compile *Zhili hequshu* (*Waterways and Canals in Zhili*) in one hundred and two volumes comprising twenty-four chapters. For the next five years, Dai Zhen was journeyed between the Beijing and shanxi and he devoted all his energy to the compilation of local gazetteers. According to Cheng Yaotian's reiteration of his pretended illness, the rough draft of the *Xuyan* must have been written before the autumn of 1769 when he was a guest at Zhu's yamen in Shanxi. Cheng Yizhou made a hand-written copy of it, which can be taken to be the rough draft rather than the edition completed in the ninth month of 1772.⁸³

Dai Zhen revised his old manuscript of 1769. According to the above, the *Xuyan* was first begun before the fall of 1769 and was completed in the ninth month of 1772.⁸⁴

c. Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius (Mengzi ziyi shuzheng).

⁸³ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. pp. 111-113.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Shuzheng, the most important work of Dai Zhen, demonstrates the impact philology had on theoretical issues. Kaozheng methods were now used to analyse key concepts in Confucian philosophy. Both the title of his work and the approach used in it were clear signs of the impact of Kaozheng research on philosophical issues.⁸⁵ Also, the methodology Dai Zhen applied to his study of Mencius was essentially a linguistic approach used to determine the precise meanings of terms in the text. He began with careful glosses of 'li' (principle, reason, inherent pattern, and so forth), and of 'qi' (material force, vital energy, and so forth). This appeal to etymology, Dai Zhen thought, would enable him to refute the later meanings that Zhu Xi and other Neo Confucians had attached to these concepts.⁸⁶

Dai Zhen stated:

“What the ancients called comprehension is but to seek something's principle and to analyse it. The so-called Heavenly Principle, for example, according to Zhuang Zhou, is that Heavenly rules implicitly. The ancient worthies and sages deemed that to give consideration to people's feelings and to fulfil people's desires is the *li*. Nowadays, however, men regard an opinion not emanating with a selfish purpose as the *li*. Thus, when one uses an opinion to murder people, he still deems that it is in accordance with the *li*. This is just like someone wishing to learn about the sages' *Dao* (truth) in the Canons without

⁸⁵ Elman, 1984, p.19.

The technical term *Shuzheng* (evidential analysis, “verifications on the form of sub-commentary”) in the title indicated that Dai Zhen saw his efforts as part of the evidential research movement. The same term had been used earlier in Yan RuoJu's title to his definitive critique of the *Old text chapter Book of Document*.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

bothering to study the meanings of words, institutions, semantics of technical terms, language, and philology.”⁸⁷

Having completed *On Goodness* in three chapters, Dai Zhen deemed that the Song Confucians’ discussions on human nature, principle, the Way, ability, sincerity, enlightenment, authority, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and courage were not the true words of Confucius, or Mencius, or within in the Six Canons, as these had become mixed with heterodox teachings. Therefore Dai Zhen started to cite words in Mencius so as to point out the Song Confucians’ semantic errors.⁸⁸

In the preface to the *Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius*, he quoted from the second book of *Mencius*: “I understand words.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, he wrote that “Erroneous words do not just end with words; they change and influence the minds of men. A mind that is beclouded must do damage to the conduct of affairs and to government.”⁹⁰

The ‘correction of erroneous words’ is the key concept of this book. The *Shuzheng* aims to correct Confucian words abused by the Neo Confucians, Daoists and Buddhists, as demonstrated through questions and answers.

⁸⁷ *Shuzheng*, Article 1. .

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, Preface.

⁸⁹ *Mencius*, 2A:2.

⁹⁰ *Shuzheng*, Preface.

Therefore, it is a philosophical thesis with a linguistic approach, rather than a commentary on Mencius as such.⁹¹

By the time he was thirty, the doctrines that Dai considered “erroneous” included those of Lu Xiangshan, Chen Baisha, and Wang Yangming. These three Confucians, in his opinion, had abandoned “the Way of learning and inquiry”. He observed only slight differences in doctrine between their teachings and those of the Buddhists and the Daoists.⁹² Eventually the list grew to include Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, and by the time Dai began writing the *Shuzheng* in 1772. He had long objected to their research techniques, which he thought sloppy, but now he felt uneasy about their ideas, especially with regard to the power these ideas assumed as words.⁹³

The *Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius* was completed in 1776. The writing of *The Prolegomena (Xuyan)* and *Shuzheng* spanned over ten years. Between these two works, there is one more draft that was not published until 1943. After major revision, *An Evidential Study of the Private Aspirations of Mencius (Mengzi sishikao)* was released by the Zhonghua Shuju in 1961. The *Shuzheng* consists of three chapters and considers eleven important Confucian definitions and forty-two questions and answers.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Annping Chun, Freeman M. (1990), p.36.

⁹³ Yu Yingshi, *A new interpretation of the history of thought in the Qing period*, Zhonghua wenhua boxing 9 (1976), pp 1-13.

⁹⁴ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7, p. 505.

Duan said that the revised version of *Xuyan* was made between the winter of 1776 and spring 1777, and was re-titled *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*.⁹⁵ On the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month of 1777, Dai Zhen wrote his *Letter to Duan Yucai*, in which he said:

"I have had this foot ailment for over a year already and am unable to go outside. I have decided to ask for a leave of absence in early autumn and to return to the South. Actually, I will not leave home again. The most noteworthy writing in my life is the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, and it is a substantial work aimed at rectifying man's mind Nowadays a person, regardless of whether he is a righteous or wicked man, always mistakenly takes personal opinion as the *li* and has thus brought calamity to the populace. Therefore, I had to write the *Shuzheng*."⁹⁶

There is also his *Letter to Peng the Metropolitan Graduate*, written in the fourth month of 1777. Dai Zhen had earlier showed Peng his *On Goodness* and *Shuzheng*, and Mr. Peng had sent Dai Zhen a letter. Dai in turn answered Mr. Peng. With regard to his *Letter to Peng Yunchu*, this was written after Peng Yunchu, while in the capital, had shown Dai Zhen his *Erlinju zhiyi* and had asked to see the *On Goodness* of Dai. It follows, therefore, that Peng also did not know that Dai Zhen had completed the *Shuzheng*. When Dai Zhen showed Peng the new book, *Shuzheng*, Peng wrote a letter to Dai Zhen asking to discuss it, and Dai Zhen answered him mentioning the date on which he would return to the South; also, we can see that Peng was in the capital at the time.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.512.

⁹⁶ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Duan Yucai*, *Quanji*. v. 6. p.544.

⁹⁷ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7, p. 516.

Also, in *Letter in Reply to Dai Zhen Discussing li and desire*, it reads:

I received your letter in early spring but have procrastinated in answering it Your studious study of Canonical works far surpasses other scholars, since you have taken on yourself the mission to edit and to expound the [the sages' message]. Wherefore is the sudden remark that you plan to take a leave of absence in the autumn to return home? . . . In your letter, you pointed out the recent Confucians' teaching on *li* and desire. You stated that they expressed their thought out of a biased mind and deemed that [their opinion] was the *li* and, moreover, that this so-called *li* [of theirs] was fallacious. You certainly have pinpointed the errors of these vulgar scholars.⁹⁸

On examining this letter, we can see that it was written in the summer of 1777 just before Dai Zhen's death. Dai Zhen had written a letter to Lu Zaogong in early spring of the same year and had said he would take a leave of absence to return home in the autumn, which was similar to the idea stated in his *Letter to Duan Yucai* saying that he had a foot ailment (above). At the time, Zhaogong was in Xinan (Shangdong). As Dai Zhen had just completed his *Shuzheng* and could not send it to Zhaogong by mail, he wrote him a summary of his newly-acquired thesis on the distinction between *li* and desire.⁹⁹

Dai Zhen's distinction between *li* and desire, devised in order to refute the views of the Song Confucians; can only be seen in the *Shuzheng* but not in either *On Goodness* or the *Xuyan*. The fact that Dai Zhen mentions this distinction most emphatically in his two letters to Duan in 1777 indicates that he had just finished

⁹⁸ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Peng Yunchu*. *Quanji*. v. 6 p.358.

⁹⁹ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Duan Yucai*. *Quanji*. v. 6.543.

this book. This therefore indicates that the *Shuzheng* was first started in 1776 after Cheng Yaotien had copied the *Xuyan*, and was completed in the same year. The reason that Dai Zhen wrote a letter to Duan in the first month of the following year, 1777, is precisely that the interpretation of the word *li* in the *Shuzheng* was his latest discovery. Thus, having barely finished the book, Dai Zhen immediately told him about it in a letter. We can see Dai Zhen's satisfaction upon the completion of the new book in the letter written in the fourth month of 1777, in which he states that the *Shuzheng* is the most significant book he had ever written.¹⁰⁰

Among his three books on moral principle, Dai Zhen acquired his thesis on the distinction between *li* and desire last of all, between 1776 and 1777. Along with his *Letter to Lu Zhaoqong* there are altogether five letters we can account for on the subject of *li* and desire, which were probably all written in 1777: in his *Collected Literary Works* there is a *Letter to Someone*, though it is not known who that someone was; there is the *Letter in Reply to Peng Yunchu*; there are two *Letters to Duan Yucai*. Dai Zhen mentioned the subject repeatedly in his letters simply because he so was exuberant about his doctrine. All this proves conclusively that the *Shuzheng* was completed in 1776.¹⁰¹ His *Letter to Someone*," contains the following remarks:

In this study of the Canons, a person must first study the meaning of the words and then proceed to grasp the ideas in the text. If he intends to learn about the Way himself, he must be free from reliance on other

¹⁰⁰ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 524.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.525.

[people's interpretation]. The Han Confucians' annotations of the Canons followed their master's school of interpretation, but they sometimes also added their own guesses. As for the Jin people, they appended even more unfounded ideas to the Canons. The Song people, however, formed judgments based on wild speculation, and therefore what they adopted to be true was preposterous in most cases; whereas what was not preposterous, they chose to abandon. ... In our study, one should have an impartial mentality in order to grasp the meaning of a Canon's text. If there is one written character whose exact meaning we misunderstand, then our comprehension of the Canon itself must necessarily be incorrect, and the Way eludes us... Scholars from the Song onward arbitrarily assigned their own opinion to be the theme of the writings of the ancient worthies and ages, but they really had no comprehension of either language or etymology. As for the [political and social] affairs of the empire, they arbitrarily imposed what they considered to be the *li* and wanted it to be carried out, but they actually know nothing about the real causes and subtle details of them. Therefore, the great *Dao* has been lost and man's action is perverted.¹⁰²

Thus, Dai Zhen's theory of learning moral principle through philological study remained unchanged even at this time. In Hong Bang's *Letter to Chu Yun*, it reads:

As for Mr. Dai's view on human nature and the Way, there is no more complete work on the subject aside from his exposition *on the Mencius*, and that was the reason for his entitling his book, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*. Therefore this book was not aimed at expounding human nature and decree but on philology, numbers, and measurements.¹⁰³

It would be difficult to claim that this description is an inappropriate account of Dai Zhen's aims in his discourse on learning. Nonetheless, what people at the

¹⁰² Dai Zhen, *Letter to Someone*. *Quanji*. v. 6. p.495.

¹⁰³ *Xingzhuang*. *Quanji*. v. 7

time exalted Dai Zhen for went beyond his philosophical achievements. In 1773, when he was invited to the capital to work as a compiler of the *Four Treasury Collection of Books of the Imperial Library*, the official versions of the books he collated included subjects such as astronomy, mathematics, geography, the *Waterway Classics*, traditional linguistics and dialectology – subjects for which he was renowned among his contemporaries when he first went to the capital. Even towards the end of his life, his contemporaries still exalted his ability in these subjects, and praised him for his competence in the study of numbers and measurements, but not in philosophy.¹⁰⁴

Hence, when Hong Bang wrote his *Biography of Dai Zhen* and included in it the *Letter to Peng Yunchu*, Zhu Yun remarked after reading it that:

It is not necessary to record this, since human nature and the Heavenly Way cannot be known. There other doctrine besides Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi's teaching! Mr. Dai's portion of learning which can be transmitted to posterity does not [lie on human nature and decree].¹⁰⁵

On this point Dai Zhen wrote:

Matters like *Liushu* [six ways in which the written characters are classified] and *Zhishu* [mathematics] may be likened to the duty of a sedan-chair carrier – to lift the passenger sitting in the sedan chair. If I am acclaimed to be excellent in matters such as *liushu* and *Zhishu*, it is

¹⁰⁴ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 523.

¹⁰⁵ *Xingzhuang*. *Quanji*. v. 7.

similar to making the mistake of taking the sedan chair carrier as the sedan chair passenger.¹⁰⁶

Dai Zhen did not want to confine himself to the study of *liushu* and *Zhishu*, and he held such a view even before he had gone to the capital. But his public attack on Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi only started in earnest in old age. Zhang Xuecheng sneered at him:

What the ancients wrote on bamboo slips and cloths were the same as what they uttered ... But nowadays cunning persons differ ... They use writing to win the trust of those who know the subjects but use their mouth to deceive those who do not know too much about [the subjects] ... Such a person's relation to Master Zhu may be likened to someone who having drunk the water treacherously forgets its source – the fountain; and [when this someone] writes about Master Zhu, the reader can detect only slight insinuations, for he dares not blatantly attack [Master Zhu]. And this is the reason why this someone would not make himself abominable in the eyes of those who really understand [Master Zhu's teaching]¹⁰⁷.

Those who have no deep understanding of Master Zhu, however, openly vilify him without compunction, because they have become accustomed to hearing Dai Zhen's fulminations: they hold that this man's statements must be correct, and therefore that Zhu Xi deserves to be denounced.

In 1773, when Zhang Xuecheng and Dai met in Dai's yamen at nanfeng, Dai Zhen's opinion had already changed somewhat and he therefore attacked

¹⁰⁶ Duan Yucai. *Preface in Dai Dongyuan's Collected Literary Works (Dai Dongyuan Ji)*, Shanghai, Hanfenlou ed. *Quanji*. v. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Zhang Xuecheng 'Zhu Lu Chapter', *Wenshi Tongyi*, Beijing, 1956. pp. 56-57.

Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi orally, but in his *Xuyan* this attitude cannot be detected. This was the reason that Zhang giped at him that his writing-brush and tongue differed and that he was devious.¹⁰⁸

Among the people at the time only Zhang Xuecheng truly perceived that Dai Zhen was indeed the philosopher who created philosophical arguments and not the one who merely compiled them.

The *Shuzheng* enjoyed great success after the death of Dai Zhen, becoming the philosophical foundation of the anti-Neo Confucian movements of the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Social reform movements were based mainly on Dai Zhen's works and methods. His advocates and opponents raced to develop better theories with which to surpass each other.

¹⁰⁸ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 522.



II. The Intellectual Milieu of Dai Zhen

After the declaration of Gu Yanwu's that "to study the Canons is to study principle",¹⁰⁹ for both public motives and political reasons, scholars of the Qing dynasty tried to reconstruct the authentic Mozi, or the historical Confucius, the *Book of Odes*, *Book of Documents*, and *Rites Canons* so that they would be free from the defects of Buddhist and Daoist interpretations.¹¹⁰ Dai Zhen also tried to reconstruct the Canons and the lost classics, and to find the truth and original meaning of the Canons by breaking through the influence of Buddhism and Daoism. Finally, he applied the Kaozheng method to Mencius to correct the Zhu Xi orthodoxy that was infected by Buddhism and Daoism and had important political and philosophical implications. Dai Zhen's philological philosophy acted as a foil for the articulation of an antithetical philosophy.¹¹¹

Like other evidential scholars, Dai Zhen seems to have truly believed and followed Gu Yanwu's statement. However, it seems that whilst most scholars concentrated more on the details of the reconstruction of the lost Classics, they departed from the principle of their original intention of study, to the point where

¹⁰⁹ Bao Guoshun, 1998, p20

¹¹⁰ Elman, *From Philosophy To Philology*: 1990. pp. 17-18

¹¹¹ Elman. 1990. p.20. i.e. Fang Dongshu (1772-1851), a staunch advocate of the Neo Confucian orthodoxy from Dongcheng, Anhui. Fang Dongshu, *Hanxue Shangdui*, Taipei, 1963. 2A:19A. *Quanji*. v. 7.

they seem to have forgotten entirely what the purposes of research and meaning were. However, Dai Zhen's philosophy did not lose sight of his aims: he simply looked back to the roots of his knowledge and built from there, a process which went on to generate both radical and progressive elements of anti Neo Confucian philosophy. The great achievement of Dai Zhen's research was to unify the two categories of 'Canon' and 'principle' on the one hand and 'positive science' and 'metaphysics' on the other in one unique philosophy that draws a complete picture of the philosophy of the Canon. In this sense, Dai Zhen was proper heir of transmission of the *Dao* as he insisted. In this chapter I will displayed the opponents and friends of Dai Zhen who insisted that the champion and heir of ancient and Confucius' *Dao*. At the same time, Dai Zhen was at once the successor of Gu Yanwu and the creator of the Qing philosophical tradition.

For Dai Zhen, philosophy is also a form of evidential work similar to the various fields of philology. His philosophical works can be seen as applications of the evidential research method employed to restore the Chinese classics. The impact of Kaozheng research on philosophical issues is clear both from the title of his works and the approach used in it.

1. The Origins of the Philosophy of Dai Zhen

Dai Wang (1837-1873) intimated that when Dai Zhen wrote the Mencius commentary and the *Xuyan* in the middle period of Emperor Qianlong's reign, he developed Yan Yuan's thesis on human nature.¹¹² Some Chinese contemporary scholars have suggested that Dai Zhen's thought was derived from Yan Yuan and Li Gong's system.¹¹³

Central to Dai Zhen's thought are the distinctions between what is natural (*ziran*) and what is morally necessary (*biran*), and the distinction between principle (*li*) and desire. Although these two ideas may be similar to the teachings Yan and Li's, they might not necessarily have been copied from them. More important, however, is the fact that Dai Zhen's advocacy of obtaining an understanding of moral principle by means of philology is patently at variance with the essence of Yan Yuan's work. Also, the fact that both Yan and Li repudiated Cheng and Zhu makes it highly improbable that Dai Zhen's ideas originated from their teachings.¹¹⁴

Moreover, the Ming Confucians had already discussed original state (*benti*), *li* and *qi* and the differences and similarities between human nature and capacity,

¹¹² Liu Zhaoren, *Ruan Yuan*, Taipei, Taiwan commercial press. 1979. pp.37.

¹¹³ Liang Qichao, 1939, pp22-24.

¹¹⁴ Liu Jinxian, *Dai Dongyuan Sixiang silun (Inquiry into the thought of Dai Dongyuan)*, National University of Education, Taiwan 1977. pp.268-269.

and it was therefore not necessary for Dai Zhen to derive his ideas from Yan and Li; also, Dai Zhen could conceivably have learned them from his own philological study, in which he interpreted moral principle (*yili*) and Heavenly Principle (*tianli*) as orderly principle (*tiaoli*).¹¹⁵ Also, Chen Que (1604-1677) postulates that Heavenly principle is seen from human desires, and that only in the full development of man's capacities can his goodness be seen.

Since scholars could have received inspiration from their social interaction and reading, one should not conclude the origin of a particular scholar's thought by holding fast to one or two points.¹¹⁶ In the realm of thought, each individual could conceivably think about the same thing and arrive at the same conclusion independently; by way of example, one need only consider Wang Fuzhi's (1619-1692) discourses on *Dao* and *qi*, naturalness and human nature's formation, and on the suppression of anger and the elimination of desire.

On the other hand, it is probably closer to the truth to say that Dai Zhen's view on learning underwent slight change after he journeyed to yangzhou and met Hui Dong, and that Hui Dong perhaps influenced his philosophical works to a certain extent.¹¹⁷

Since Hui and Dai's views were very similar, why should it be necessary to seek to locate the origin of Dai Zhen's thought as far back as Yan and Li?

¹¹⁵ See Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng*, *Quanji*, vol.6.

¹¹⁶ Liu Jinxian, 1977. p.243.

¹¹⁷ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 480.

Moreover, Hui's discourse on learning exalted antiquity, and he often cited the writings of philosophers of the Zhou and Qin periods, saying that these were complementary to the Confucian Canons. Studying Dai Zhen's thought, it can be seen that a large part of his system may be traced to the thinkers of the late Zhou period. This, combined with the fact that he followed Mencius' thesis of human nature being good, would seem at this point to make the origin of Dai Zhen's philosophy clear.¹¹⁸

On the other hand, Qian Mu insisted that the origins of Dai Zhen's philosophy could be found in Xunzi. According to Qian Mu, although Dai Zhen followed Mencius' thesis of human nature being good, his statements often resembled those of Xunzi, who maintained that human nature is evil and greatly emphasised man's actions.¹¹⁹

Thus Xunzi wrote, "He who knows the distinction between Heaven and man may be regarded a sage."¹²⁰ ... The sage purifies his natural ruler, rectifies his natural sense, makes the natural nourishment sufficient, obeys the natural government, nourishes his natural emotions, in order to develop to perfection his natural usefulness.¹²¹

This looks very similar to Dai Zhen's thesis of studying meticulously what is natural in order to gain an understanding of what is morally necessary.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Xunzi, *Xunzi*, 17, 1A.

¹²¹ Ibid, 17. 4A.

According to Qian Mu, Dai Zhen said that *li* can be sought in man's feelings and desires, and their complete fulfilment without deviation is known as *li*. This corresponds well to Xunzi's idea of following what is deemed possible and rejecting what is deemed impossible. But Xunzi concluded that the essential element lay in the rules of proper conduct (*li*). He said:

Man at birth has desires. When these desires are not satisfied, he cannot remain without seeking their satisfaction. When this seeking for satisfaction is without measure or limit, there can only be contention. When there is contention everything will be disorder; when there [was] disorder, [people] hated this disorder, and so they established the rules of proper conduct (*li*) and [a] standard of justice to satisfy men's desires. This is how the *li* originated.¹²²

Qian Mu noted that Dai's learning arose later, but that it also based its doctrine on the rules of proper conduct (*li*). This is another point that the two thinkers have in common. Moreover, even Dai Zhen's statement "the best way to disperse delusion is to study" owes much to Xunzi, since the key term "to disperse delusion" came from Xunzi's book. As such, we can see that many of Dai Zhen's ideas are similar to those of Xunzi. Also, in his *Xuyan*, he put Xunzi in the same category as the Song period's Cheng brothers, Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi.

Dai Zhen said,

¹²² Dai Zhen, *Letter to Peng Yunchu*, *Quanji*, v.6.p.352.

"Xunzi exalted rules of proper conduct, whereas the Song Confucians exalted *li*. Although he did no harm to the sages' teaching, nonetheless he did not know about human nature."¹²³

According to Qian Mu, Dai Zhen found the doctrine to restore beginning and to return to the origin of human nature's goodness¹²⁴ most repugnant. This was also true of Xunzi's statements that propriety (*li*) and righteousness (*yi*) result from the teachings of the sages, but not that they also derive from the nature. He said that they consist of the manifestation of what is morally necessary, but not that this moral necessity represents the highest ultimate pattern of the natural, to which it gives final perfection.

Xunzi's views place great emphasis on learning, but he does not know the whole substance of the nature. His articulations come from honouring the sages, from emphasising learning, and from exalting propriety and righteousness... But Mencius, when he emphasises learning, [says that a foundation for it already] does exist within, and that this is then to be further supported by what lies without.¹²⁵

Qian Mu continues that from Dai Zhen's point of view, therefore, both Xunzi and Mencius have need of further understanding of human nature. Amongst all the philosophers of the late Zhou period, there was no one who could better repudiate the natural than Xunzi. Dai Zhen borrowed his idea to refute Laozi and Buddha, and he also appended Mencius' "human nature is good" thesis to that of Xunzi. One nineteenth and twentieth century scholar, Zhang Binglin, said:

¹²³ *Shuzheng*, Article 27.

¹²⁴ *ibid*, Chapter 32.

¹²⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article. 25.

Examining what Dai Zhen stated, it seems his ideas are the same as those of Xunzi. However, since Xunzi held that human nature was evil, which was at variance with Dai Zhen's own viewpoint, therefore he interpreted it differently and expounded it in his *Inquiry into Goodness*.¹²⁶

Qian Mu finally concluded, "His is indeed an appropriate observation of Dai Zhen's learning. As to Dai Zhen's vilifying of the Song Confucians in his discourse on *li* and desire in the *Shuzheng*."¹²⁷

Many scholars have linked Dai Zhen to Xunzi, and the comparison is neither unwarranted nor unhelpful. Because Dai Zhen's first interest was meaning of ancient words, as long as Xunzi used the proper words and meaning there is no reason to dispel the Xunzi. Secondly, Dai Zhen thought that the Way had transmitted from the Confucius to Mencius: the human nature is good. However, Xunzi had faith that a calm and careful analysis of traditional rituals and norms would eventually convince anyone that they are the unique solution to life. But he insisted that one could only come to such an understanding by diligently practicing these traditional forms for many years under the strict discipline and guidance of a proper teacher. Those who are just beginning to learn the Way are largely unaware of the reasons that justify the things they practice.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Zhang Binglin, *Shidai (An interpretation of Dai Zhen)*, *Quanji*, p.338.

¹²⁷ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 482.

¹²⁸ Philip J. Ivanhoe. *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, Hackett, Indianapolis/ Cambridge, 2000. p. 95.

As Zhang Binglin shows, Dai Zhen was born at the end of Emperor Yongzheng's reign. Having seen imperial decrees that punished people without the process of law, he therefore admonished the ruler by adopting the statements of Canons. The authorities would supervise every detail of society, and would even prosecute people for conducting private conversations. Thus ordinary scholars and people would be breaking the law even by merely moving their hands. In creating such an atmosphere, the Emperor inflicted a deep wound on the society of the time.¹²⁹

When he was young, Dai Zhen was a merchant and regularly travelled a distance of a thousand miles, through which he gained an intimate knowledge of the conditions people were living in. Dai was indignant at the fact that the government had not said a single lenient word about the people's living conditions, and consequently wrote his *Inquiry into Goodness* and *Shuzheng*, in which he emphasised impartiality and reflective love. Dai Zhen's statements were based on the position that the governed should admonish their ruler, as he wanted the Emperor to practice moral restraint so that the people would not suffer.¹³⁰ In Dai's own words:

In good government, if the government officials are not excessively oppressive, the governed will not mutter complaints; if there is an abundance of clothing and food, they could very well substitute punishment.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Zhang Binglin, *Quanji*, p.339.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.340.

¹³¹ *Shuzheng*, Article 15. .

It is an understanding that motivated by his enlightenment social activism; therefore he tried to interpret Dai Zhen as a revolutionary thinker.

According to Philip J. Ivanhoe. "Dai Zhen was a strongly ethical realist, and he believed that one approached moral truth by making the facts of a matter clear to oneself. The knowledge one gains through study leads to moral understanding. For him, philosophy and self-cultivation consist of a systematic, critical, comprehensive, careful and thorough study of the Canons. In his own terms, study nourishes one's mind just as food nourishes one's body."¹³² He continues that "Dai expressed no interest in developing some nascent moral capacity, nor did he emphasise the need for shaping the self through ritual practice. He did not advocate cultivating and maintaining a state of constant inner vigilance, nor did he engage in practices such as quiet sitting. He believed that proper intellectual understanding of the Canon without any premise was the only way to grasp the *Dao* " fully."¹³³

2. Dai Zhen and His Contemporaries

a. The Neo Confucians and Dai Zhen

¹³² *Shuzheng*, Article, 9.

¹³³ Philip J. Ivanhoe. 2000. pp 92-97.

Dai Zhen never had the opportunity to meet the Song Confucians criticised. It is said that Dai Zhen's criticism and philosophy are based in contemporary concerns over the wrong usage of the words of the Canons, and he is heavily critical of the source of the fallacy, namely Zhu Xi. Because he lived in a country ruled by Neo Confucians and their law, Dai Zhen himself also had a strong background of Neo Confucianism, and it could indeed be said that Neo Confucianism is a part of the genealogy of his philosophy and is a strong influence on it.

Ironically, when Dai Zhen was a young scholar, he devoted his philosophical passion to Neo Confucianism, especially Zhu Xi. He studied Neo Confucian philosophy in a local academy under the supervision of a strong supporter of the Cheng and Zhu orthodoxy. Because his county of Anhui was Master Zhu Xi's native county,¹³⁴ this influence continued, and scholars often adhered to the model he had set down for posterity. Therefore, Dai Zhen was well acquainted with Zhu Xi's philosophical writings and he passed local exam and tried to pass the metropolitan exam that exam questions is Zhu Xi's commentaries of the Canons. Also Dai Zhen quoted some Zhu Xi's commentaries in his commentaries. His knowledge on Zhu Xi and Neo Confucianism is well enough accuracy but his understanding on Buddhism is not certain.

¹³⁴ Zhu Xi was the son of a local official in Fujian. His first official position (1151-58) was as a registrar in Dungan, Fujian. But his family came from Anhui, so the people of Anhui believed that Anhui was Master Zhu Xi's native county.

Dai Zhen passed the local exam and attempted to pass the Metropolitan examination.¹³⁵ The intellectual and political hegemony of Zhu Xi's brand of Neo Confucianism in the Yuan, Ming, and the Qing eras turned the attention of scholars and the educated elite as a whole to the Four Books. Mastery of these texts with the authorised commentaries by Zhu Xi and his associates was almost essential for passing the imperial civil service examinations in late traditional China.¹³⁶

In Dai Zhen's time, the most famous scholar in Huizhou was Jiang Yong (Shenxiu, 1681-1762). Jiang Yong was a self-made man, and a strong supporter of the Cheng-Zhu schools. His most famous writing is a commentary on the three Confucian Canons of *Rituals of Zhou (Zhouyi)*, *Decorum Ritual (Iyi)*, and *Book of Rites (Liji)* and a treatise on Zhuzi and Lu Zu Qian's compilation of the early Song philosophers, *Reflections on Things at Hand (Jinsilu)*. He had studied under the supervision of the great astronomer and mathematician Mei Wenting (Wuan, 1633-1721).¹³⁷ His learning emphasised the study of names of things, meaning

¹³⁵ Yu Yingshi, *Discourse of Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng, (Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng)*, Hong Kong, 1976. pp.146-78. Dai Zhen eagerly passed the imperial civil service examinations. To apply for the examination six times, he mastered Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi texts, and Dai Zhen himself was one of the strong supporters of the Cheng-Zhu school. In this sense, some critics' insistence that Dai Zhen misunderstood Zhu Xi's philosophy is nonsense or almost misunderstanding of Dai Zhen.

¹³⁶ Henderson, John, *The Construction of Orthodox and Heresy*, State University of New York Press, 1998. pp72-75.

¹³⁷ Yu Yingshi (1976) pp. 164-78.

of words, phonology and arithmetic, which were, after all, the essence of the Anhui people's practical learning.

Dai Zhen sent letters and manuscripts of his essays to introduce himself to Jiang Yong. In his letters, Dai Zhen assured Jiang of his loyalty to the Neo Confucianism and the philosophy of Zhu Xi. The early part of Dai Zhen's learning was similar to Jiang Yong's.

As a young scholar, Dai visited Jiang Yong in 1750. Jiang wanted to discuss the calendar system with Dai Zhen, which Jiang was unable to understand. Dai Zhen's analysis and explanation were clear and distinct. Dai and Jiang built up a relationship that resembled the traditional master-disciple relationship.¹³⁸ However, Dai Zhen was certainly not supposed to be a disciple of Jiang, as he was by this time already a self-made scholar and took pride in his independence. As such, he accepted Jiang's instruction, but did not follow Neo Confucianism completely. Dai Zhen used to refer Jiang as "the old scholar from my district", but other scholars strongly disliked this expression. They thought there were no scholars without a teacher apart for Confucius himself and treated Dai Zhen's words as immoral. Neo Confucian scholars considered Dai Zhen to be one of Jiang's disciples.

At the age of twenty-six, when he met Jiang, Dai Zhen was treated as a scholar who determined his own path. There is some similarity between Jiang and Dai's learning. According to Dai Zhen's friend from Beijing, Qian Daxin, Dai

¹³⁸ *Xingzhuang Quanji* v.7 p. 6.

praised Jiang's learning on astronomical calculation highly, saying it was an achievement not inferior to that of Mei Wenting.¹³⁹ When Dai Zhen first went to the capital, his learning was certainly in a similar vein to Jiang's.¹⁴⁰ However, it could well be that the resemblance was due to the fact that they came from the same region, and so it is not necessarily true that Jiang enlightened Dai Zhen. Jiang Yong only encouraged him to pursue precise research further as an elder colleague.¹⁴¹

Jiang Yong agreed with Dai Zhen on the subject of evidential study, but at the same time did not realise that Zhu Xi's teaching was antithetical to canonical learning (*Jingxue*). Zhu Xi applied philological research in his works, and said that the 'investigation of things' was the beginning of moral cultivation. However, many scholars of the Qing, enthusiastic about Han scholarship, no longer concerned themselves with Zhu Xi; they preferred to criticise Neo Confucianism and Zhu Xi from a distance. Yu Yingshi also said:

When Qing philologists talked about Song learning unanalytically, they meant almost without exception *Daoxue* or *lixue*. Because Zhu Xi's moral philosophy and metaphysical constructs were so overwhelming one simply could not look at his ideas beyond those boundaries. Some scholars in Qing regarded Zhu Xi as one possessed by the wildest dream.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Annping Chin, Freeman M.1990. p.4.

¹⁴⁰ See. Annping Chin, Freeman M.1990. pp.5-9.

¹⁴¹ Yu Yingshi (1966) pp. 164-165.

¹⁴² Ibid. pp116-20.

Zhu and Dai's methods were similar, but their objectives and interests in learning were entirely different. Master Zhu's investigation of things was to investigate things in nature. For Dai, however, investigation meant to investigate the semantics of technical terms and philology in the Six Canons. Jiang Yong was closer to Master Zhu's approach of the investigation of things in scholarship. Dai Zhen's investigation of things, however, focused on the semantics of technical terms in the Six Canons, meaning that he remained essentially within the spirit of Kaozheng learning rather than Neo Confucianism.

With regard to the most important concern in Dai's philosophy, the sage, Dai Zhen is convinced that the Neo Confucians' philosophy of principle cannot make one a sage because their theory is based not on the Confucian Canons but on heterodoxy.¹⁴³ As mentioned, Dai devoted his whole life to excavating the true meanings and intentions of the words of sages from the original Confucian Canons so as to show the proper language of the Confucian sage. Thus Dai Zhen said:

Before the Song, Confucius and Mencius were distinctly Confucius and Mencius, and Laozi and Buddha came from the Laozi and Buddha. Those who discussed Laozi and Buddha used exalted and abstruse language without depending on Confucius and Mencius, but since the Song, Confucius and Mencius have completely lost their interpretation. For scholars have indiscriminately plagiarized the words of Laozi and Buddha to interpret them. From that time, readers of Confucian books flowed and entered into Laozi and Buddha. They loved Laozi and Buddha too much so they drowned in it; in the end they eclipsed [the] Confucian Canons and enjoyed borrowing help from the Confucian *Dao*.

¹⁴³ In Dai Zhen's context, sage is exactly the Confucianism term.

For that reason, they lean on the Confucian Canons for discussion of Laozi and Buddha. When they meet [the] same people, they share the evidence of the tenet of mind, but when they meet others from themselves, [they] entrust their theory to [the] *Six Canons*, Confucius and Mencius. They said, "What my acquirement is profound language and the great meaning of the sages." And then they make it interlocking and confusing, repeatedly changing and more complicated. They mix everything to make a crack in the earthenware to prevent a leak.¹⁴⁴

With regard to the Neo Confucian philosophy of principle, Dai Zhen's logic is simple and clear. According to Dai Zhen, Neo Confucianism from the Song Confucians cannot create Confucian sages because the Neo Confucians' notion of principle is adopted from the Buddhist concept. As such, he claims, the Neo Confucian concept of the sage can make someone a Buddha, but the Neo Confucian notion of principle cannot make someone a Confucian sage. Buddha and the Confucian sage have different 'references' and 'senses'.¹⁴⁵ In other words, they are wholly different species, and, of course, it is impossible to make Buddha a Confucian sage. Dai Zhen's view can be seen as a Chinese version of logical positivism, by which the Neo Confucian notion of principle is nothing but a categorical fallacy. His research, covering etymology, mathematics, science and phonetics is all directed towards the one aim: to understand the words of the sages and thereby clearly and finally to become a sage through the Canon, despite all the obstacles of false interpretation.

It is like a grandson who has never seen his grandfather's face and mistakenly draws another man's face as his grandfather's, in order to

¹⁴⁴ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Dr. Peng, Quanji*, v. 6.

¹⁴⁵ For 'reference' and 'sense', see the Frege's Reference and Sense.

make obeisance. Indeed, the obeisance is made to his grandfather, but the face is not his. Actually the grandson cannot draw his grandfather's face. What a hurt that is! However, others try to encroach upon our ancestors with their grandfather's face. Others entice our clan to become theirs, indeed. That is why I cannot help writing *Elucidation of the meaning of word in Mencius*. The aim of this book is to destroy the wrong picture and to draw the correct picture of our ancestors so as to perpetuate our clan and to foil [the] long-standing corruption of our ancestry. For a long time, our clan has been shattered and has become other races. How little toleration can be allowed! ¹⁴⁶

b. Hui Dong and Han Learning

Hui Dong was the most influential figure in Dai Zhen's philological and philosophical research. After encountering Hui, Dai Zhen was set firmly on his path and method, which was later to become the backbone of Qing evidential study. It was chiefly the difference and similarities between Dai Zhen and Hui that influenced Dai's philology and philosophy. The differences between the two induced Dai to try seeking the truth of philosophy through philological research, whilst their similarities induced him to study so as to find ways to defeat the Neo Confucians effectively.

Dai Zhen befriended Hui Dong in Yangzhou. Hui Dong (1697-1758) and Dai Zhen were great masters of Han Learning at the time, and men of later

¹⁴⁶ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Dr. Peng*, *Quanji*, v. 6.

generations talked about the Wu [Jiangxi] and Wan [Anhui] schools, which were derived from Hui and Dai respectively. Hui was from the Wu county of Jiangxi, where his family had taught the Canons for three generations. His grandfather was Hui Zhouti (1679-1691) and his father was Shiqi (1671-1741), both of whom are famous for their Han learning.¹⁴⁷

Hui and his followers wanted to change the study of the Canon. Their doctrine was Han Learning; their examples were Zheng Xuan (A.D.127-200) and Fu Sheng (A.D.200-?). Their method involved glossing the meaning of words to let the words light the way of the sages in the Canon. They studied especially the Han people's studies of the *Book of Changes*. The version of the *Book of Changes* that is extant came from Fei Shi, and Fei was a member of the Old Text School. Since Wang Bi (226-249) completely altered the *Book of Changes* into a vulgar book and created abstruse ideas in it, he had shorn the substance of the scholarship of the Han period, and therefore ancient learning was lost. This, then, was Shiqi's view. Hui Dong maintained Shiqi's view, and his faith in the latter's doctrine was ever more firm.¹⁴⁸

Hui Dong wrote *Yishou* in six volumes. In it he commented on the Han Confucians' discussion on the *Book of Changes*. Scholars praised his work as the recrudescence of Han Learning after fifteen hundred years.

¹⁴⁷ See Anping Chin, Freeman M.1990. p.10-11.

¹⁴⁸ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 480.

Scholars of the Jiangxi and Zhejiang regions, from Huang Zongxi (1601-1714), and the brothers (i.e., Zongyen and Zonghui), Mao Qiling (1623-1716) and Hu Wei (1633-1714) onward, when talking about the *Book of Changes*, bent every effort towards refuting the *Taiji tushuo* of Zhou Dunyi. As the theories of these authors appeared, the numerous discussions on the diagrams of the *Book of Changes* that appeared from the Song Period onward were pushed aside.

As the Hui father and son followed Huang and Mao, they disregarded the Song scholars' research on the *Book of Changes* and studied the Han scholar's writing. Their action was in accordance with the trend of the time. The Huis' study of other Canons was just like their study of the *Book of Changes*, in which they generally praised Han Confucianism, exalting the method of various Han schools, and believed in the ancient interpretations. As the elucidation of a Canon's meaning lay in the philological study of ancient written characters, an acquaintance with and understanding of the ancient written characters' usage and their pronunciation enabled a person to know the Canon's meaning, and therefore philological study of the ancient written characters could not be changed.¹⁴⁹

Hui Dong claimed that there was a considerable lapse of time between Han Zhou, and an even greater one between Han and Tang. How, therefore, could one expect men from the Song onward to understand the meaning of the ancient written characters? Although the writings of philosophers in the Zhou and Qin

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 481

period's texts were not all researched, the Han documents were written at a time closer to antiquity. Hui Dong therefore decided to take the text of the Canons as his theme, the commentaries as headings, the Zhou and Qin periods' philosophical writings as supplementary proof, and the Han Confucians' works as complements.¹⁵⁰

This, then, was Hui Dong's position on the study of the Canons – to follow the ancient interpretation of the Canons. In doing so, he relied on the Han Confucians, sought supplementary assistance from philosophers of the Zhou and Qin periods, and was unwilling to adopt the expositions of Tang and Song scholars.

Examining the differences between Hui's school of learning and Dai's school of learning and their historical origins shows that the latter began by exalting Song learning and reviving Zhu Xi, whereas the former started with anti-Song learning and a revival of antiquity. Gu Yanwu said that the precondition for learning the principle (*lixue*) in antiquity was the learning of the Canons (*jingxue*). In order to understand the Canons, it was necessary to know the written characters; and in order to know the written characters, it was necessary to study their sounds.¹⁵¹

Gu Yanwu wrote *Yixue wushu*, which used Tang scholars' writings to correct those of Song scholars, and then in turn used the ancient Canons to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p.478.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

correct the Tang scholars' writings. His intention was to rebel against Song by reviving antiquity, and to repudiate the Song and Ming scholars' recorded sayings (Yulu) using the philological study of the Canons. Gu's influence permeated the Three Wu region, and this work became the historical origin of the Wu School of Han Learning.¹⁵²

Moreover, in Yaojiang County in eastern Zhejiang, Wang Yangming's influence was still very much alive. All Yangming scholars' arguments against Zhu Xi arrived at the same conclusion as Gu Yanwu, which made scholars realise that the ancient Canons and Song learning were not one and the same. Also, although Yan Ruoju's research on the *Guwen Shangshu* had had the intention of exalting Zhu Xi, the result was in fact to make people realise that the understanding of the Canons lay in studying antiquity. Writings from the Jin (265-420) and Tang (618-907) periods onward have doubtful veracity, not to mention those in the Song and Ming eras, since these latter eras lay so much further in time from antiquity.¹⁵³

As a result, the main target for Hui Dong and his followers was Neo Confucianism, e.g., Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. They claimed the Song Confucians were illiterates, and that the disasters caused by the Song Confucians had become ever more serious. Hui Dong said, "I, Dong, consider the debacle brought on by the Song Confucians as worse than the Qin dynasty's burning of

¹⁵² Ibid. p.483.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

the books to ashes.”¹⁵⁴ Hui Dong created the Han Learning movement and encouraged the Kaozhengxue (but was not identical with it).¹⁵⁵

The relationship between Dai Zhen and Hui Dong was warm and harmonious. Dai Zhen was twenty-seven years younger and was greatly influenced by Hui Dong. The encounter with him marked a crossroads in Dai Zhen's progress; it is possible that Hui Dong's *Yi weiyan* influenced Dai Zhen's philosophical works to a certain extent.¹⁵⁶

Yi weiyan has a note on *li*, saying:

The meaning of the word *li* is dualistic. The Record of Music states [that] Heavenly Principle consists of like and dislike. Like is nearer to benevolence and dislike is nearer to righteousness; the proper expression of like and dislike is Heavenly Principle, whereas [the] casual expression of like and dislike is [the] destruction of Heavenly Principle which is what the Great Learning refers to as [going] against human nature. That which Heaven decrees is known as nature (*xing*). Nature contains *yin* and *yang*, firmness and softness, benevolence and righteousness: all of which are known as Heavenly and man, and *li* and desire; and they said, moreover, 'Heaven is *li*', which is particularly ridiculous.¹⁵⁷

The above statement is similar in general to Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 498.

¹⁵⁵ Yu Yingshi (1975), *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 584.

¹⁵⁶ See Anping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. pp.12-13.

¹⁵⁷ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 480. p. 421.

The following year, in 1758, Hui Dong passed away. Seven years later, when Dai Zhen was passing through Suzhou, Hui Dong's hometown, he wrote a preface to *Hui shoujingtu* (*Diagram of Receiving Instructions*) to remember the time and to give meaning to what they had shared.¹⁵⁸

However, Dai Zhen could not accept Hui Dong's idea that there were two paths in the study of the Canons. Hui encouraged Dai Zhen to look at the two categories, ancient glosses and rational meaning, as inseparable; one being the method and the other its philosophical justification. In Dai Zhen's terms, "If the ancient glosses are not employed for the purpose of understanding the reason and meaning of things at the same time, then what is the point of pursuing that type of research?" The differences between them are obvious and very important in the Kaozheng movement. Later the Dai Zhen School distinguished itself from Hui Dong School.

c. Duan Yucai and the Kaozheng School

Dai Zhen had established his school, regardless of his lack of desire to create one. At first, he strongly refused to form any kind of teacher-disciple relationship, as he preferred to have a "brother" or "companion" rather than a disciple. Dai

¹⁵⁸ *Nianpu, Quanji* v6. p. 687. also see Dai Zhen, *Shoujingtu* (*Diagram of receiving instructions*), *Quanji*, v.6. p.396.

Zhen thought the only the teacher to be Confucius, and that each man has to face the words of Confucius and words of the sages independently. Dai Zhen's Kaozheng School emphasised the importance of independence from the later authorities or exegetes. With regard to truth, the Dai Zhen School encouraged the correction of errors and the criticism of the fallacy of the work even of one's master, something not allowed within the traditional Chinese master-disciple relationship. Dai Zhen's denial of the traditional limits of such a relationship can perhaps be seen as a prognostication of the negative effects of this kind of relationship in his eyes.

In Beijing, Dai Zhen met Duan Yucai, who became Dai's first disciple. At that time, Duan was a teacher of the Manchu children in the Palace. Dai Zhen and Duan Yucai formed a strong relationship; after the death of Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai wrote a biography about Dai and became the most important scholar in the Kaozheng School and Dai's strongest defender.

At the time Dai Zhen met Duan, Dai had to return south with haste and so he and Duan did not have time to establish a formal master-disciple relationship. But some time later, in a letter to Dai Zhen, Duan referred to himself as a "disciple". Three years later, Dai Zhen was again in Beijing for the Metropolitan examination that both had failed. The two men met again, and Dai refused to be Duan Yucai's teacher.¹⁵⁹ Dai Zhen said:

¹⁵⁹ Anping Chun, Freeman M. (1990), p.14.

I kept the letter which you kindly wrote me a year ago with the intent of returning it to you. At the time of my hurried departure from home, I searched but could not find it. It was out of your enormous love for [learning that you honoured me], but I must decline the honour, not because I am modest. By the ancient means friendship is understood that people learn from each other. We must be friends in the ancient manner. I am, therefore, returning your letter.¹⁶⁰

Dai Zhen regarded learning to be such that each person ought to be his own teacher and that this was an intensely personal experience. However, Dai Zhen gave weight to the view that mutual teaching prevented obstinacy. Just as he had not allowed Jiang Yong to be his teacher, Dai Zhen regarded the traditional teacher-disciple relationship as somewhat limited and as being likely to hamper him in the way he thought and worked. But Duan was determined, and so three years later when he saw Dai again in Beijing when taking the Metropolitan examination, Dai gave in and agreed grudgingly to the more formal relationship.¹⁶¹

Duan Yucai was very close to Dai Zhen, and what they shared was more a brotherly than a formal master-apprentice relationship. When Dai Zhen sent him copies of his works, Duan would read and comment on them with loyalty. When money was tight, Dai Zhen would ask for help and Duan did what he could. Dai gave Duan comfort and encouragement when he was deeply depressed over his

¹⁶⁰ Dai Zhen, *A Letter to Duan Yucai*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.535.

¹⁶¹ Yu Yingshi (1975) , *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 588.

job security.¹⁶² Dai Zhen sent him three letters while gravely ill in the last year of his life; he was anxious not only to hear from Duan but also to speak to him about what he had finally grasped after a lifetime of studying the Canons and deciphering the meaning of words from his most important work, the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* (*An evidential study of the meaning of terms in the Mencius*). However, Duan's interest was not philosophy but etymology and phonology. Even though Duan became Dai Zhen's most faithful defender after his death, he had almost no concern for philosophical matters. It is said that except for scholarly methods, no philosophical vision was transmitted from the older to the younger. In this sense, Duan Yucai was in fact not Dai Zhen's disciple.¹⁶³

Even as the strongest defender of Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai tried but failed to understand Dai Zhen completely, and so Duan tried to place Dai Zhen's name among those of the Zhu Xi line of Neo Confucians. However, Dai Zhen's other scholastic descendents Wang Niansun and his son Wang Yinzhi understood Dai Zhen better, and so they extended Dai's approach and attempted to become sages by using the "meanings" of Chinese words as a method of reconstructing the "intentions" of the sages.¹⁶⁴ In the second generation of Dai Zhen's School, Jiao Xun and Huang Sanshi attempted to extend Dai Zhen's philosophy. The distinguished scholar and patron Ruan Yuan composed essays on Confucian philosophy modelled on Dai's linguistic approach to philosophical terms. Ruan's

¹⁶² Ibid, pp. 535-536.

¹⁶³ Anping Chun, Freeman M. (1990), p.16.

¹⁶⁴ Kuhn, Philip. *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970. p157.

treatise made use of etymological and phonological procedures to reconstruct the meanings of key Confucian concepts. The most famous scholar of the Later Qing period, Gong Zizhen (Wang Yinzhi's grandson) referred to himself as a genuine inheritor of Dai Zhen's philosophy.

d. Zhang Xuecheng and Historiography

Zhang Xuecheng, an eminent Kaozheng historian of the mid-Qing period, was influenced by Dai Zhen despite their very different stances. The differences between Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng give a clear and distinctive view of character and limitations of the philosophy of Dai Zhen. As Zhang indicated, while Dai's lack of historical perspective could be seen as a limitation, it is precisely this anti-historical character that is such a strongpoint in Dai's philosophy.

Dai Zhen met Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801) in Beijing in 1766. Dai Zhen was there to take the Metropolitan examination and stayed in the Xiuning hostel. At that time, Zhang Xuecheng was twenty-eight years old, a gifted, self-confident scholar and a student of the Imperial Academy.¹⁶⁵

To gain insight into philological research, he paid a visit to Dai Zhen and questioned him about his learning. Dai Zhen presented a general outline for him.

¹⁶⁵ Anping Chun, Freeman M. (1990),. p.18.

At that time, many scholars admired Dai Zhen because of his skill at glossing words and terms and because of his knowledge of the Six Canons and the nine branches of mathematics. But what Zhang Xuecheng found was not what Dai Zhen had promised. He was a totally different kind of scholar.¹⁶⁶

After reading Dai Zhen's philosophical treatise *Inquiry into Goodness* (*Yuanshan*) many scholars commented that "he had wasted his energy on something useless."¹⁶⁷ However, in Zhang's view, the scholars who criticised Dai Zhen's discussion of principle and *qi* as "empty words" did not truly discern him. Zhang Xuecheng labelled himself as "the one who understood Dai Zhen most profoundly." He wrote, "I gather that Dai's secret feelings were most subtle. There are mistakes as well as brightness in his scholarship."¹⁶⁸

After the first meeting, Zhang felt "ashamed and alarmed," stating, "my heart felt a chill." But six years later, the two scholars saw each other twice. Their talks on these occasions did not go well, turning into a dispute over Zheng Jiao's (1104-1160) work on a comprehensive history (*Tongshi*). Neither was prepared to accept the other's position; nonetheless, their discourses conveyed a genuine concern, both understanding the other intuitively. Each had the self-confidence to attempt to make sense of a universe that was not always clear and distinct, and

¹⁶⁶ Yu Yingshi (1975) p. *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 593.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

each wanted to release his learning and himself from a dependency on accumulated evidence.¹⁶⁹

In 1772, when Zhang Xuecheng and Dai met in Dai's at Nanfeng, Dai Zhen's view had already shifted somewhat and he attacked Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi orally, although this attitude cannot be detected in his *Xuyan*. This was the reason that Zhang giped at him that his writing-brush and tongue differed and that he was devious.¹⁷⁰ Thus Zhang said:

Mr. Dai was a great scholar of his time. However, as he had a devious mind, scholars nowadays are revolted by his behaviour, and therefore I wrote a "Zhu [Xi] and Lu [Jiuyuan] Chapter" to correct him. Mr. Dai had passed away more than ten years before. Although he blatantly inveighed against [the Song thinkers], this does not pillory Mr. Dai's [reputation] ... Mr. Dai's learning was steeped in philology and excelled in semantics of technical terms and institutions. He may be said to have discovered the truth of these matters, with the assistance of which he was to expound the Way. Since people in his own days valued erudition and empirical research, and since they knew of his competence in philology and the semantics of technical terms which fitted in with the current fad, they considered that these subjects were what Dai excelled in. However, when Dai wrote *On Human Nature (Lun xing)*, *On Goodness*, and other treatises, he expounded new ideas on Heaven, man, *li* and *qi* that men of by-gone ages had never expressed. His contemporaries commented that he talked emptily about moral principle and that he could have dispensed with the trouble of writing these treatises. They certainly did not know about Dai's learning.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ See, Anping Chun, Freeman M. (1990), p.19.

¹⁷⁰ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v. 7. p. 522.

¹⁷¹ Zhang Xuecheng, *Zhangshi yishu*, Beijing University, 1934. p.34.

According to Zhang's own account of their meeting, "Dai Zhen was comprehensively practised in the skill of glossing the Canons ... but he did not realise what historiography was, and when he heard me discussing it, he suddenly become dictatorial and started to belittle me."¹⁷²

Zhang, however, had given considerable thought to historiography, focusing mainly on the problem of methodology. He was convinced that evidential research was important for the study of the past. It was not evidential research that gave learning meaning and purpose but historiography that delivered pictures of change. By Zhang truth was not something contained in any single body of data, not even the Canons; it was to be seen as changes or the flow of events over time, and Zhang himself intended to become the most conscientious observer of change in the history of China. Zhang Xuecheng wanted to go one step further in historiography, "to liberate evidential research from the monopoly of those who study the Canons," whereas Dai Zhen felt this was not necessary because the vastness of the universe was totally encompassed in the Canons.¹⁷³

However, Dai Zhen did not want to confine himself to the study of phonetics (*liushu*) and mathematics (*zhishu*), and he held such a view even before he had gone to the capital. But his public attack on Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi only started in earnest in old age. Zhang Xuecheng sneered at him:

¹⁷² Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tungyi* (*General principle of literature and history*), in Zhang Xuecheng, 14:37a.

¹⁷³ Yu Yingshi (1976) p.140.

What the ancients wrote on bamboo slips and cloths were the same as what they uttered . . . But nowadays cunning persons differ . . . They use writing to win the trust of those who know the subjects but use their mouth to deceive those who do not know too much about [the subjects] . . . Such a person's relation to Master Zhu may be likened to someone who having drunk the water treacherously forgets its source – the fountain; and [when this someone] writes about Master Zhu, the reader can detect only slight insinuations, for he dares not blatantly attack [Master Zhu]. And this is the reason why this someone would not make himself abominable in the eyes of those who really understand [Master Zhu's teaching]¹⁷⁴.

Those who have no deep understanding of Master Zhu, however, openly vilify him without compunction, because they have become accustomed to hearing Dai Zhen's fulminations: they hold that this man's statements must be correct, and therefore that Master Zhu deserves to be denounced.

In comparing Dai Zhen and his contemporaries, Zhang Xuechang, Yu Yingshi points out that Dai does not throw commentary out of the window. Whereas Zhang Dai "attempts to escape from the tyranny of the commentarial tradition by advocating a direct relationship with the text of the canon itself."¹⁷⁵ Dai Zhen wishes to maintain the integrity of both text and tradition. His return to the genuine meaning of *Mencius* is evidenced by his use of that the Canons, but his keeping to tradition is also shown by his acceptance that reading *Mencius* can be done in the light of the metaphysics that developed from the *Great Appendix*. Where he castigates Song metaphysics is in it's reading of the text of the *Great*

¹⁷⁴ Chang Xuecheng 'Zhu Lu Chapter', *Wenshi Tongyi*, Beijing, 1956. pp. 56-57.

¹⁷⁵ Campbell, D., *The Body of the Way is without edges: Zhang Dai and his Four Books Epiphanies*, Conference Paper CSAA: Adelaide 1997

Appendix resulting in a dualism of Principle and Matter. In other words Song Confucian metaphysicians are not guilty of constructing a metaphysical system, but for poor exegesis made critical error to interpret the Canon.¹⁷⁶

As mentioned, Zhang Xuecheng labelled himself as “the one who understood Dai Zhen most profoundly.” Yet Zhang himself gravely misunderstood Dai and rebuked him for being a “man who forgot where he came from”. However, Dai Zhen did not in fact come from the Zhu Xi School or indeed any other established school of philosophy. As shown above, Dai Zhen was a self-established philological scholar and was not subject to any master-disciple relationship with the Neo Confucians. In this sense, Zhang Xuecheng's criticism is therefore misdirected and misguided.

Despite Zhang's criticisms, in Dai Zhen's philosophical framework historiography is an unreliable tool with which to grasp the truth of the Canons. Dai Zhen was a philologist of the Chinese Classics and his philosophy is a form of extension of his philological works. For him, there is no truth outside the text of the Canons written in the Zhou period by Confucius, Mencius and the sages. Unlike Zhu Xi, Dai's main concern is with words. The truth dwells in the Six Canons and it's commentaries and semantics research is the only tool with which to discover the truth.

Dai Zhen claimed that the Canon is not formed by the passage of history, but that the words of the sages are a rigid designation. Without doubt, Dai Zhen

¹⁷⁶ Yu Yingshi, (1975) p.142.

believed that the Canons can be received directly from the sages and that they contain the truth that must be salvaged from the contamination of history. So, there is no truth outside the text of the Canons, and history does not bring out the meaning of the Canons, but is rather something that has to be cleared away so that the truth of the Canons can be revealed.

2. Modern Understanding of Dai Zhen

As a result of Dai Zhen's anti-Neo Confucian philosophy, modern Chinese philosophers view him as representing the opposite of Zhu Xi's metaphysics, almost as a counterpart, rather than placing him in a separate category. By way of analogy, to place Dai Zhen in the same category as Zhu Xi is like placing Thomas Aquinas in the same category as Wittgenstein. Although Dai Zhen does attack the metaphysics of Zhu Xi, Dai Zhen's philosophy has a different discourse and paradigm and therefore a different Epistemé from Zhu Xi's. In other words, their respective philosophies have different objectives: Zhu Xi meditates on things themselves and verifies his insight through the Canons; whereas Dai Zhen inquires only into the semantic structure of the words of the sages rather than into the things themselves. It must be noted that, despite the fact that he continually praised Zhu Xi in many respects, Dai did attack Zhu Xi's usage of words and the origin of his concept of principle.

The first important writer to elaborate on Dai's philosophy was Zhang Binglin. Zhang had studied with Yu Yue of the Wan School in his youth, and was therefore well acquainted with Dai's philosophical writings. In addition to treatises on philology and phonetics, a tradition he inherited from the Wan School, Zhang made a brief survey of the intellectual trends of the Qing period in general and a review of Dai's thought in particular. Zhang's interest in Qing intellectual history undoubtedly had an influence on later scholars, notably Liang Qichao and Qian Mu.¹⁷⁷

Zhang honoured Dai by quoting him and by giving praise to many of his philosophical views. Zhang begins by first making a distinction between Song Confucians' aims and Dai's. Thus Zhang says:

The Song Confucians' teaching was intended for personal cultivation and not to be applied in government. Hence, Dai did not grasp the main purpose of the Neo Confucians' exposition."¹⁷⁸

Zhang observes that since Dai's having been a merchant when he was a young man made him intimately familiar with the common people's hardship. Although Dai served in an official capacity in his later years, the emperor gave him little encouragement for his toils. Zhang notes that this could be the reason for the writing of *On Goodness and Commentary on the Words and Meaning of*

¹⁷⁷ Liu Jinxian, 1977, p.373.

¹⁷⁸ Zhang Binglin, *Shidai (An interpretation of Dai Zhen)*, *Quanji*, p.336.

the Mencius, in which he expressed the concepts of impartiality (*ping*) and reciprocal love (*shu*).¹⁷⁹

According to Dai, Zhang continues, the ancient sages assisted the people in improving their livelihood, but rulers in subsequent ages have neglected this. All of Dai's views are expressed in a similar vein. Zhang adds that Dai's postulate was based on the common people's position, and that he admonished the ruler that he should abide by his duty to care for his people. When Dai elucidated the origin of human nature, decree (*ming*), feeling, and desire, Zhang asserts, he always had in mind the improvement of the common people's material conditions.¹⁸⁰

Binglin made an eloquent supplication to Heaven, Zhang declares. He also showed that if one breaches the law there is hope of mercy; but if he commits a violation against principle, there is no hope of consolation for him from society, since Neo Confucian social mores do not tolerate a breach of the all-important *li*. However, Zhang holds that it was Xunzi who first enunciated the dictum that "appropriate desire is the principle". Zhang criticises Dai for seemingly being in agreement with Xunzi, but, since the latter's thesis was that "human nature is evil" and therefore at variance with his own view, for interpreting this originally as stating that human nature is good. In addition, Zhang chides Dai for utilising the name of Confucius but really embracing the Daoist view of obeying naturalness (*ziran*) and regarding Mencius as a convenient mouthpiece through which to

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Liu Jinxian, 1977, p.376.

express his own ideas. Furthermore, Zhang observes that Dai made merely superficial criticism of the Daoists, and that this is his main failing.¹⁸¹

It seems that Zhang did, however, truly admire Dai, and showed this admiration by lashing out at Dai's so-called followers who, from Zhu Yun (1724-1850) on, professed to practice his admonitions but behaved contrary to the spirit of them. The implication was that they did not have any true understanding of their master's teaching.¹⁸²

Zhang was a famed essayist. Aside from the fact that he had a deep-seated interest in Qing intellectual history, his exposition on Dai Zhen seemed to be politically motivated. As an inveterate opponent of the Manchu and an implacable enemy of the alien Qing dynasty, he always keen to preach the overthrow of this hateful foreign dynasty. In his incisive comments, he wished to point out the evil of the autocratic Manchu government and its abuse of the Song Neo Confucian school's words (such as *li*) in oppressing the people. In any event, Zhang aroused the intelligentsia's interest in Dai and showed that he was a philosopher as well as a master of Han learning.¹⁸³

As a result of Zhang Binglin's expounding on Dai Zhen's ideas, his work as a philosopher belatedly received the scholarly attention due to it. The political revolution of 1911 was followed by an intellectual revolution in the late teens of

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Zhang Binglin, *Ibid*, *Quanji*, p.337.

¹⁸³ Liu Jinxian, 1977, p.374.

the new century. The “May Fourth Movement” of 1919, which started as a patriotic protest against the Paris Peace Conference and the Beijing regime, inaugurated a new era in which China’s traditional civilisation underwent critical evaluation by Chinese intellectuals.¹⁸⁴

Two years later in 1921, there came what has since been called the “New Culture Movement,” in which many radicals adopted the slogan “Down with Confucius and his sons.” They blamed Confucianism, particularly the Cheng and Zhu Rationalistic school of Neo Confucianism, ignoring its solid contribution to Chinese civilisation. Although Chinese traditional culture was not without its apologists, the trend of the time was to disparage anything that was remotely related to tradition and to nurture an increasing infatuation with Western ideas and ways of living. Indeed, for a time the very words ‘Zhu Xi’ or ‘Confucianism’ seemed to be synonymous with obscurantism, autocracy, and debilitation. In an intellectual atmosphere such as this, it is no wonder that anti-Rationalistic school writers such as Dai Zhen received attention, and that his philosophy was widely publicised by well-known intellectuals of the time.¹⁸⁵

Liang Qi-chao was an intellectual who, in his own words, had no fixed ideas, and whose intellectual outlook underwent several changes throughout his life. As a leading student of Kang Youwei, he had been a member of the Modern Text School movement in his youth. After a sojourn in Japan as a result of his participation with Kang in the abortive reform movement of 1898, Liang had

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. p.380-381

acquired some familiarity with Western philosophical and political ideas through Japanese translations, and intellectually began to diverge from Kang. Although he had a period of disillusionment with Western civilisation, it seems that certain Western concepts such as liberty, human rights, and material satisfaction, persisted in his mind.¹⁸⁶

Hence, in 1923, when he was teaching at Qinghua University, Liang, along with a returned student from America, Hu Shi, started a series of lectures to propagate Dai's philosophy. Although Liang and Hu differed in background and in age, they both shared the conviction that the Neo Confucians, particularly the Song Confucians, had misled the people with their false teaching of the denial of desire. Since Dai Zhen had made pointed criticism of the Song Confucians on this point, it is not surprising that these two intellectuals were enthusiastic promoters of his philosophical system.¹⁸⁷

Aside from doctrinal belief, however, Hu Shi had another reason for eulogising Dai's scholarship. Whereas Liang was Cantonese, Hu was from Anhui, a fellow provincial of the Han learning master. As Hu proclaimed in his speeches and lecture, "Anhui people ought to study Anhui learning". Sentimental reasons, therefore, were a contributory factor in his promotion of Dai's learning.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.356.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.358.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p.361.

According to Liang, the Confucian school affirms life, and therefore considers that all political and social mores should be sympathetic to human emotions and needs. The Daoists and Buddhists, on the other hand, advocate having no desire. Although the Song Confucians did not negate life, Liang asserts, they made the fundamental error of adopting the nonsensical idea of having no desire. This, then, is where they are wrong and is the main reason why Dai wished to refute them.¹⁸⁹

Agreeing with Dai, Liang points out the Song Confucian's three main errors. As desire is inherent in man, and as even a *junzi* (gentleman) has need of food, drink, and sex, how could anyone do without them, Liang asks. And, since according to the Neo Confucians, only a person with no desire is a *junzi*, many so-called *junzi* were unsympathetic to human emotions and needs.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, they insist that the *li* (principle) is their own biased opinion. According to the Neo Confucians, Liang continues, even someone's arbitrary action would not stir his conscience at all if he considered that it did not originate from desire. Even worse, if other people's views are contrary to his own biased opinion, the self-styled *junzi* would accuse them of being "at variance with the *li*".¹⁹¹ Finally, the Song Confucians forced the population to become hypocritical, Liang adds. The Neo Confucians followed this precept that *li* and desire are incompatible as a criterion even in government. They deemed the material needs of man to be

¹⁸⁹ Liang Qichao, *Dai Dongyuan de zhexue (Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan)*, *Quanji.v7* pp. 355.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 354-357.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 367-380.

connected to human desire and therefore to be something that ought to be eliminated altogether.¹⁹²

Hence, according to Liang, the main reason for Dai's holding human emotion and desire in such high regard is that he wished to establish a normal-life philosophy as opposed to the Song Confucians' non-life philosophy. However, it is obvious to us that there seems to be a misrepresentation of the Song Confucians on Liang's part, for, as Feng Yulan points out, what the Song Confucians condemned was not desire itself but excessive desire.¹⁹³

Hu Shi, on the other hand, praises Dai as knowing that philological study is merely the means to an end and not an end in itself. Dai did not, Hu argues, want merely to be a philologist as a philosopher. Dai's cosmological theory is a form of naturalism that is also contains material elements. Differing from the Song Confucians' dualistic view of *li* on the other hand, Hu maintains, Dai regarded that there is only the *qi*. In Dai's cosmological system, the things in the universe are all active, in which point his philosophy differed from the Song Confucians' dual interpretation of activity and passivity in the universe; and, as a matter of fact, he explains that they emphasised the passive aspect of their philosophical system.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Ibid, p.378.

¹⁹³ Liu Jinxian, 1977, p.380.

¹⁹⁴ Hu Shi, *Dai Dongyuan de zhexue (The Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan)*, *Quanji*,v7. pp. 384-386.

Dai's view on human nature derived from his cosmological theory. Dai regarded man's nature, says Hu, as really his blood, breath, and consciousness. The Song Confucians held that man has a moral nature within him on the one hand and a material nature on the other. As the Song Confucians insisted that only moral nature is the true nature, Hu comments, this put Dai directly at variance with them. Moreover, Dai refuted the Song Confucians' denial of the worth of material nature. According to Dai, Hu adds, if man expands the intellect contained in his mind so that whatever he does he would not be deluded, he would be able to return to what is natural and to what is morally necessary in his activity, and he would have the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom.¹⁹⁵

Although Dai also considered that human nature is good, Hu remarks, his view was not based on the dualism of *li* and *qi* in the same way as the Song Confucians'. Moreover, according to Dai, the Song Confucians' fundamental error lay in disparaging the material aspect of human nature as evil while asserting the goodness of the moral aspect. Dai insisted that man's blood, breath, and consciousness, i.e. the material aspect, was the nature. Herein, says Hu, lies the main difference between Dai's philosophy and the Cheng and Zhu schools of Neo Confucianism.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, Dai held that feeling, desire, and knowledge are all equally worthy, this assertion acting as a protest against the Song Confucians who

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p.393.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p.381.

repudiated them and advocated quiescence as the ideal. Dai, according to Hu, particularly praised knowledge, for only by means of knowledge could one's feelings and desires be fulfilled, and only because man has knowledge is he capable of surmising other people's feelings, on which morality is based.

The ideal morality is the complete fulfilment of every man's desires and feelings. Hu comments that Dai berated the concept of *li* because he felt that many of the self-styled followers of the Song Confucians had abused the word. As for the *li*, Dai deemed that it could only be found within matters and affairs. He also refuted the Idealistic school (Song Confucianism), Hu Shi goes on, and held that the mind could not be the *li* as the Idealists (Song Confucians) insisted but was merely an organ of the human body that is capable of thinking and absorbing knowledge.

According to Hu, Dai advocated that man must use his mind's enlightenment to scrutinise human affairs, and Dai's methodology in learning was to analyse things minutely and to emphasise verification. According to Dai, Hu adds, another evil emanating from the Song Confucians' teaching was that a man could now insist that his biased opinion is the *li*, and could use this hallowed word to reprimand other people for their feelings. Hu summarised Dai's philosophy as adopting a scientific attitude towards seeking knowledge and towards seeking the principle of the solution to the problem of life. In addition, Hu concludes, Dai

elevated the idea of desire, which represents a significant contribution to the history of Chinese thought.¹⁹⁷

Liang and Hu's promotion of Dai Zhen's philosophy epitomised the restless intellectuals of the early republican era, whose faith in the orthodox doctrine and the Neo Confucians had been shattered, and who were searching for a new guiding philosophy. As the orthodoxy had been discredited, intellectual atmosphere arose in which all sorts of novel and extreme ideas found their eloquent champions. As criticism against tradition became a fad, the way was paved for the eventual ascendancy of Marxist thought in China from the late 1920s on.¹⁹⁸ Liang and Hu's espousal of what they held to be anti-Song Learning reflected the chaotic political and intellectual climate of the time.

Liang's fulmination against the Neo Confucians was not due to any fundamental lack of understanding of their philosophy; rather, his denunciation of the Neo Confucians was partly due to his want of fixed ideas, and partly due to his earlier infatuation with certain Western concepts such as individual freedom, the fulfilment of man's material needs, national wealth and strength, etc. These ideas had made an indelible mark on him, and it seems that they were not obliterated from his subconscious even after his disillusionment with Western civilisation. It is therefore no surprise that he praised Dai's anti-Neo Confucian

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. 396-412.

¹⁹⁸ Liu Jinxian, 1977. pp.367-369.

philosophy, holding that the Neo Confucians had imposed unreasonable restraints on man's emotions and needs.¹⁹⁹

Liang's attack on the Song Confucians was not due to any deep-seated antipathy toward them; rather, he was a patriot with the praiseworthy aim of the rejuvenation of China, for which goal he was willing to clear away any obstacle he perceived. Earlier in his career, many of his numerous articles in newspapers had as their theme the strengthening China against foreign aggression and the improvement of the Chinese people's spiritual and material well-being.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, his friend and collaborator, Hu Shi, was educated in the United States, and was an unequivocal follower of pragmatism. He prescribed "science and democracy" as the panacea for China's ills. One thing that is apparent, however, is that Hu found in Dai's philosophy a convenient weapon with which to strike a fatal blow to the Neo Confucianism that had, according to him, done incalculable harm to the minds and bodies of the people for the previous seven hundred years. For him, the prerequisite condition for the revival of China was the casting aside of Confucianism, especially Song Neo Confucianism. It is for this reason that he heaped praise on Dai's predecessors, Yen Yuan (1635-1704) and Li Gong (1659-1733), seeing in them Chinese pragmatists and stout anti-Song Confucianism crusaders.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.365.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.392.

After 1923, the enthusiasm for the study of Dai's philosophy died down, and Hu, its chief promoter, soon left his teaching position at Beijing University and in 1926 embarked on an extended trip abroad. Dai's philosophy again received attention when Feng Yulan(1895-1990) published the second volume of his *History of Chinese Philosophy* in 1934. Feng, like Hu, had also studied in the United States on a government scholarship in 1919, and after the completion of his studies in philosophy in 1923, he returned to China and held teaching positions at various universities.²⁰²

In his interpretation of Dai Zhen's philosophy, Feng saw an essential difference between this Qing thinkers' view on desire and that of his Song precursors, for, according to Feng, the Song Neo Confucians condemned only excessive desire and not desire as such. Where Dai really differed from the Cheng and Zhu school, however, is that he deemed the *li* to be immanent in the *qi*, whereas the latter considered it to be transcendental. This view, Feng suggests, was held by most of the early Qing scholars such as Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi, Yan Yuan and Li Gong. Moreover, Dai flatly denied the Song Neo Confucians' contention that every man has a Supreme Ultimate (*taiji*) in his mind, which is the sum total of all the *li* and which is man's own nature. Thus men's own nature also has all the *li* in the world. Dai, Feng comments, categorically rejected this view.²⁰³

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid. p.397.

Like Hu Shi, Feng considers that Dai Zhen, Yan Yuan and Li Gong were all anti-Neo Confucian, and that the reason for these early Qing thinkers' diatribe toward the Song philosophers was the fact that the latter "had the appearance of truth; yet in reality they were confusing it". This, then, is the reason for Dai's vituperation of Song Confucianism. Nevertheless, although Dai differed from the Song philosophers' system, adds Feng, his thought was not very profound, and he could not therefore set up a full-blown philosophical system to vie with either Song Confucianism or the Idealistic school of Neo Confucianism.²⁰⁴

Qian Mu wrote a biography of Dai Zhen, in which he pointed out the influence of other scholars on the evolution of Dai's thought. Because both the Yen and Li school and Dai fulminate against the Song Confucians, Liang Qichao and Hu Shi hold that the early Qing "pragmatists", Yen Yuan and his disciple Li Gong, inspired Dai's philosophy. Qian contends, however, that it was not necessarily so, for thinkers could conceivably arrive at the same view independently, and one scholar did not necessarily have to derive his ideas from another. Qian suggests, moreover, that Ming scholars had already taken up Dai's discourse on ontology, principle, *qi*, human nature, and ability. Hence Dai did not necessarily derive his ideas from these early Qing critics of the Song Confucians.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ *ibid.* p.401.

²⁰⁵ See Qian Mu's *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshu shi*.

Qian Mu made an exhaustive research on the evolution of Dai's philosophical system, tracing the date of completion of his three philosophical books.

The central focus of Dai's philosophical system, Qian asserts, is his distinction between naturalness (*ziran*) and moral necessity (*biran*) on the one hand and *li* (principle) and *yu* (desire) on the other. Although these distinctions are in line with the Yen and Li School's precepts, and although both the Yen and Li schools and Dai impugned Zheng Yi (1033-1108) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Qian notes, Dai's philosophical ideas were not necessarily inherited from his early Qing predecessors. On the contrary, Qian comments, Dai's insistence on the understanding of the ancient sages' philosophy by means of philology was in opposition to Yan's teaching, which frowned on book-learning and the study of sentences.²⁰⁶

According to Dai, Qian maintains, the *li* is man's feelings and originates in desire. In Dai's philosophical system, if one ignores human desire when discussing the *li*, he misses the perception of it, and this so-called *li* would really be nothing more than his opinion. Moreover, Qian Mu comments, if one compelled others to follow his own biased opinion by claiming it to be the *li*, he would only bring calamity and suffering to the world. Dai reproached the evil derived from the Song Confucians' distinction between *li* and *Yu*, for which reason he railed against the Song, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, treating them as he did the Buddhists and the Daoists. For this reason, Dai regarded the Song Confucians teaching as baneful to political and social morals. Nonetheless, Dai

²⁰⁶ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 499-502.

emphasised the intellect, Qian adds, in order to understand things and affairs. Since he stressed the intellect, he also valued knowledge and its accretion.²⁰⁷

Beside Dai Zhen, Qian Mu wrote a lengthy exposition on the followers of the Dai school, as their views were in many instances similar to Dai's. Qian notes that there were significant differences between Dai Zhen and Zhu Xi's ideas. Moreover, Qian adds, Dai vilified the Song Confucians, whereas Dai Zhen's friend Zheng Yaotian did not. Quite on the contrary, Yaotian in fact praised Zhu Xi highly.²⁰⁸

On the other hand Yu Yingshi makes the point that Dai's addition of the quotations was motivated by a desire to justify his exegetical technique in the face of an intellectual climate that valued exegesis. He wanted to prove that his reasoning were not just empty thoughts but were rooted in texts. Yu makes clear that Dai Zhen's main protagonists were his fellow exegetes whose interest failed to extend to the philosophical meaning of the texts they were reading. Using Isaiah Berlin's distinction of the fox and the hedgehog, Yu says that while Dai was engaged in the scavenging task of the fox, he was really a hedgehog, bent on discovering the underlying philosophical enterprise.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. Cheng Yaotian (1725-1814) was one of student of Jiang Yong and close friend of Dai Zhen. Cheng's philosophy of human is similar to Dai's but it is based on the philosophy of Zhu Xi.

As has been mentioned above, Liang Qichao and Hu Shi were eager to espouse anti-Song Neo Confucian philosophy, the reason being that they felt it bore chief responsibility for social injustice and material backwardness, traditionally China's glaring weaknesses. Feng Yulan, however, found Dai's philosophy neither profound nor really creative as compared with that of the Song Neo Confucians whom Dai criticised. Qian Mu, on the other hand, was a thorough Confucian scholar, whose interpretation of the history of ideas followed the orthodox tradition.

3. Comparison of Dai Zhen with Western Philosophers.

Dai Zhen's philosophy has been compared with that of a number of Western philosophers, such as Plato, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Feuerbach, J. Rousseau and the encyclopaedist F. Voltaire, the British utilitarian J. Bentham and J.S. Mill. While some of the comparisons that have been made have some validity and can be helpful in reaching an understanding of Dai's philosophy, some of the essays written are less helpful.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Xu Ximin, *Dai Zhen yu zhongguo wenhua* (Dai Zhen and the Chinese Culture), Quizhou

a. Dai Zhen and David Hume

Dai Zhen and David Hume differ in most respects even they are the naturalists in every aspects. Unlike Hume, Dai Zhen does not see any reason to be a sceptic, because he strongly believes in the guarantee and wealth of the truth to be found in the ancient Canons.²¹⁰ In other words, the two thinkers have different theories of truth. Dai Zhen is a sort of naturalist, who believes that the human is a product of the process of nature. However, Dai views the human as the components of the physical body, desire, emotion, and intellect, that all grow into the right proportions, and for him it is this attained perfection that becomes the human moral basis, rather than a series of sense data and experience that fashion morality in terms of habits. Dai Zhen's concept of human nature and its morality derive from an interpretation of the Canons, according to which man is good because of nature, and the source of morality is nature and the learning of the Canons. Dai does not give precedence to experience, but rather applies the ancient usage of words, with the result that his theory is coherent according to the text of the Canons. However, Hume uses as a starting point that which he

renmin chubanshe 2000, pp.347-348.

²¹⁰ Dai Zhen, *Yuan Shan* chapter 3, "One may appeal to the ancient teachings to testify to these truths."

experiences through his senses, and composes his theory in terms of cause and effect.²¹¹

Recently Edmund Ryden²¹² published research on the comparison between Dai Zhen and Hume, though unfortunately his work focused on the possibilities to be gained for modern philosophy from pre-modern works, rather than being a direct comparison between the two thinkers.

According to Ryden, the chief idea that Hume wished to express in his *Enquiry on Human Understanding* is that our use of the term 'cause' does not mean that there is a metaphysical entity that ensures necessity, but rather that experience leads us to form habits, whereby we universalise using known experience so as to affirm rules that are valid regardless of our past experience. Where such a habit is engrained, we may say that x causes y.

According to Ryden, Hume stresses with regard to moral actions the social context in which human behaviour is found. Habit teaches us which actions benefit society as a whole and thus enables us to form moral norms. It is thus habit that leads us to infer causality, the basis for all scientific reasoning in Hume's view, just as it is habit that impels us to draw up moral norms. In both

²¹¹ For D. Hume see Green, T.H. & Grose, T.H., *David Hume: The Philosophical Works*, Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen 1964 [reprint of *New Edition*, London 1882] Vol. IV pp 167-288 *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*.

²¹² Fifth Biennial Conference of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia held at Adelaide University, 16-18 July, 1997.

cases experience is paramount, for without it we should not know what human social life is like and thus could not form habits based on observation.²¹³

Thus Ryden maintains that both Hume and Dai Zhen each have a consistent approach to metaphysics and morals. Habit based on experience is the determining feature of Hume's reasoning, whilst Dai Zhen seeks to maintain a unitary approach to reality in the face of dualism. Yet they come closer than this mere parallelism. Dai Zhen's concern for universal human society, for the search for truth in daily reality and in things is reflected in Hume's concern for the voice of nature and experience.²¹⁴

Ryden's main comparison is between the quotations of the two thinkers and their usage of words, which he uses to determine their modernity and pre-modernity. Ryden states in conclusion that:

Post-Cartesian thought has conditioned us to seeking truth on grounds established by reason on its own rights. Even when contemporary thought challenges the limits of the rational enterprise it still remains sure of its own ability to affirm its authority by itself. Hume is no exception to this goal. Yet even Hume admits a fondness for Cicero and thus demonstrates that the modern philosopher can never be wholly free of his/her pre-modern setting. Dai Zhen speaks from a pre-modern setting and claims only to be presenting the real meaning of an ancient text. Yet in so doing he has constructed a cognitive theory of morality that is systematic to a degree Mencius himself would doubtless never have imagined. The pre-modern philosopher is thus able to create a

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

new system of thought even though it comes with the label of an ancient classic.²¹⁵

b. Dai Zhen and Michel Foucault

According to my research, among post-modern philosophers it is Michel Foucault's philosophy that are most easily comparable with Dai Zhen's in terms of tactics and strategy, method, doctrine, and the aims of their philosophies, but it must be noted that there strongly divided in terms of time, space, culture and language. While it is not possible in the framework of this dissertation to compare the contents of their philosophies in detail, since this would require a lengthy and complex cross-cultural comparison of context, it is however possible to make an introductory comparison between the two.

Foucault schematises his philosophy along three axes: the axis of knowledge (the relations of control over things), the axis of power (the relations of action upon others) and the axis of ethics (the relations with oneself).²¹⁶ Dai Zhen philosophy is also set out in three parts: the metaphysics of the Way, the human nature as an individual, and ethics.²¹⁷ Although these two schemes do not correspond exactly, there is some similarity in the way they are schematised.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?, The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow ed., Pantheon Books, 1984. pp.48-49.

²¹⁷ Structure of Dai Zhen's *Yuanshan* and *Shuzheng* divided into three parts as metaphysics, human nature and ethics.

Among the axes (or in Dai's case parts) precedence is given to ethics over the others, and in both cases the intention of the ethics section is to create a new concept of human nature. Foucault calls it an objectivization of the subject, or a subjectivization that consists of the placement of oneself in the game of truth.²¹⁸ The semantic research of the Canons in Dai Zhen's philosophy and criticism lead him to a new dimension of subjectivism as an individual, the ethical goal of which is to become a sage.²¹⁹

Foucault suggests two methodologies²²⁰ - archaeology and genealogy - while Dai Zhen demonstrates the two methodologies that lead to the truth of the Canons, namely evidential study and interpretation of the Canons. These methodologies seem superficially to be entirely different, yet have enough in common to make a comparison possible. The aim of Foucault's archaeology - that is to say his detailed research of the history of ideas - is to discover the discourse and its Epistemé, while Dai Zhen's research seeks the similar goal via an examination of semantic structure and the usage of words of the Canons. Thus both works reject history and the metaphysics that is formative of human nature through history; furthermore, in this sense, both works reject history, metaphysics and science as well. Their later methodologies have strong ties with their ethics and with their philosophies of human nature. Foucault emphasises

²¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power*, H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Leslie Sawyer trs. The University of Chicago Press, 1982. p.209.

²¹⁹ See Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng*, Articles 30-45.

²²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader, What is Enlightenment?* Paul Rabinow ed., Pantheon Books, 1984. 45-46

the freedom to be oneself; Dai Zhen places great importance on the possibility of becoming a sage so as to be free from metaphysical restrictions and universal agreement.

Foucault claimed that the main concern of philosophy is to criticize the limits that make up a philosophy and the possibilities of transgressing those limits.²²¹

Criticism plays an important role in Dai's philosophical approach. His philosophical criticism is a fully philosophical practice and his philosophical problematization.²²² Thus Foucault says:

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.²²³

With regard to moral philosophy, Foucault and Dai Zhen both stress the importance of concrete ethics and philosophical activities rather than metaphysical abstract ethics. From the time of Confucius, Confucian ethics were based on one's feelings (忠) and the extension of one's feelings from oneself to

²²¹ Ibid. P42. "This philosophical ethos may be characterized as a limit-attitude. We are not talking about a gesture of rejection. We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analysing and reflecting upon limits. ... The point in brief is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression."

²²² Problematization is Foucault's term *The Concern for Truth, Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, Lawrence D. Kritzman ed., Routledge, 1988. p. 257.

²²³ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader, What is Enlightenment?* P.40.

the others (恕).²²⁴ According to Dai Zhen, the fulfilment of these feelings is the starting point of ethics. Thus Dai Zhen said that: "If a man who has desires understands everyone else's desires, he is a man of benevolence; if a man who has consciousness also comprehends everyone else's consciousness, he is a man of wisdom."²²⁵ According to Foucault, ethics is the freedom to transgress limitations and is the "ontology of ourselves" which must exist "as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life".²²⁶

Caring for oneself is also an important concept in Dai's ethics:

Care for oneself, and extending [this care] to those close to oneself, are both aspects of humanity: to care for oneself is to be humane towards oneself; to extend [this care] to those close to oneself is to be humane towards those who are close to one. Spontaneous manifestations of conscious knowing are something like this. And man's difference from the birds and beasts also does not reside here.²²⁷

Foucault's ethical theory also stresses the idea of caring for oneself, (he even wrote a book entitled *The Care for Oneself*, the third volume of the series *The History of Sexuality*).

²²⁴ *Analects*, 4:15.

²²⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 40.

²²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader, What is Enlightenment?* Paul Rabinow ed., Pantheon Books, 1984. 45-46

²²⁷ *Shuzheng*, Article 21.

One must not have the care for others precede the care for the self. The care for the self takes moral precedence in the measure that the relationship to self takes ontological precedence.²²⁸

There is also an interesting coincidence between two philosophers in that Foucault wrote a book entitled the *Order of Things*,²²⁹ which is also the English translation of Dai's Zhen's definition of principle,²³⁰ (by which the knowing of the "order of things" from the words of the sages enables a man to become a sage). For Foucault, the *Order of Things* is a reference to the 'Epistémé' that he suggested as being attainable through his main concept of the 'archaeology of knowledge'.²³¹

There are of course many more possible comparisons between the two philosophers, as, despite the fact that they are so far apart in so many respects, the tendencies within their philosophies are remarkably similar. To build on this brief comparison, it would be necessary to conduct more precise research in order to widen the horizons of both philosophies.

²²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom*, p.7, James Bernauer & David Rasmussen ed., *The Final Foucault*, J.D. Gauthier, S.J. trs., The MIT Press, 1988.

²²⁹ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, London, Tavistock, 1980. Original French title is *Les mots et les choses* (the words and the things) but Foucault preferred the English title.

²³⁰ Chan, Wingtsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. p.711. Wingtsit titled Chapter of Dai Zhen as 'the Order of Things'.

²³¹ See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of knowledge*, A. Sheridan trans. New York, Random House, 1979.

III. Method of Dai Zhen

The titles and the approach of Dai Zhen's philosophical writings make use of Kaozheng research on philosophical issues. The technical term *Shuzheng* (verifications on the form of sub-commentary) in the titles indicates that Dai Zhen saw his efforts as works of evidential research. The same term had been used earlier in Yan Ruoju's title to his definitive critique of the old text chapter of the *Book of Documents*. In addition, the methodology Dai Zhen applied to his study of Mencius was essentially a linguistic approach used to determine the precise meaning of terms in the text. Dai Zhen thought this appeal to etymology would enable him to refute the later meanings Zhu Xi and other Neo Confucians had attached to these concepts.²³²

Dai Zhen differs from his Neo Confucian contemporaries in a number of ways. His view of the nature of philosophy was at variance with that of the Neo Confucians, and the originality of his relation to philosophical terms and usage led to his often being misunderstood and excluded from the more conventional approaches to philosophy. As mentioned above, Dai Zhen's writing has a number of strong and distinctive features that are extraordinary for his time: he believes the truth to be attainable from the semantic relationships within the text of the Canons, rejects historical discourse, Neo Confucian metaphysics, Western

²³² Elman, 1984, p.19.

science and so on. It is as though he was living intellectually in another time and place, namely in the Zhou Dynasty, and it is in this sense that Qian Mu asserted that "his intellect reached back to the ancient Zhou directly".²³³ In this sense, the methodology is seriously important to his philosophy. His method is not an excavate tool or ladder for the Dao but it is the only way to ancient sages and that is transmitted from the Confucius and Mencius directly.

It is suggested that much of the originality of Dai Zhen's philosophy was a result of his particular way of attempting to attain the truth; this chapter will explore the methodologies that contributed to that originality.

Qian Mu suggested that there are two stages to Dai Zhen's philosophy whilst Yu Yingshi claimed there were three. Yu Yingshi's three stages are better applied to the Dai's philology and philosophy, but Qian Mu's two-stage theory focused only on his philosophy. Qian Mu's theory on Dai's approach to philosophy is that it consists of the critical method and the constructive approach to the Canons. The critical method is used by critics of the distortions made by the Song Confucians and of the stubbornness of the Han Confucians. The constructive approach claims to excavate the true meaning of the sages from the Canons. However, all these philosophical methods are based on the philological evidential study that Dai spent his whole life developing. While the end and meaning of Dai's philosophy, to hear the *Dao* of the sages, was clearly a single,

²³³ Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 480.

unified goal, his tactics, method and approach to the Canons are contained in two distinct stages.²³⁴

1. Dai Zhen's Evidential Study

Dai Zhen and most of the scholars of his school of "evidential study" (Kaozhengxue) stressed the importance of exacting research, rigorous analysis, and of the collection of impartial evidence drawn from ancient artefacts and historical documents and texts. Evidential scholars made verification a central concern for the emerging empirical theory of knowledge they advocated, namely "to search for the truth from the facts" (*shishi qiushi*). This scheme involved the placing of proof and verification at the centre of the organisation and analysis of the classical tradition in its complete, multi-dimensional proportions, including aspects of natural studies and mathematics.

Liang Qichao shows that the intellectual tendency of the Orthodox school may summarise as follows:

1. Generally speaking, if one attempts to confirm the meaning of a word, then one has to base this on the evidence; if something is without verification it must be discarded.
2. If one chooses evidence, old data has priority. Someone can use Han or Tang materials to drive the Song and Ming into the corner, but he cannot use Song and Ming to make an attack on the Han and Tang.
3. It is said that validation of the Canon

²³⁴ Ibid.

has to come from the Canon and confirm all the Canon and historical material and vice versa. 4. Concentrate on the evidence; do not depend on a general opinion. If there is no obvious counter-evidence, hold on for a while; if it has supporting evidence, it gains ground inch by inch. However, if it encounters strong counter-evidence, it must be discarded. 5. It is disgraceful behaviour to conceal or distort the evidence. 6. There is keen interest in categorizing similar items as a basis for comparative study in order to find a law. 7. If someone applies an old theory, it must be noted where it comes from. Plagiarism is the most disgraceful behaviour. 8. The cross-reference of evidence is needed when one comes across confliction between opinions. Even the disciple drives the master into the corner; it cannot be evaded, because sometimes an initiator defies his teacher. 9. Sentence style has to be sincere and courteous. Even if the theories of others are conflicting with yours, respect their opinions. 10. Bend all your energies to one task and be absorbed in your research.²³⁵

The research contributions made in the seventeenth-century by Gu Yanwu (1613-82) and Yan Ruoju (1636-1704) in the formation of the method of evidential study were continued in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philological research of Dai Zhen, Qian Daxin, Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun (1744-1832), Wang Yinzhi (1766-1834), Jiao Xun (1763-1820), and Juan Yuan (1764-1849). Philological studies developed and evolved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because their published works were parts of a dynamic classical research enterprise whose goals were not "scientific" or "objective" per se, but were instead tied to a new commitment from the literati to use the

²³⁵ Liang Qichao, *Zhongguo jinsanbainian xueshushi (Intellectual history of China during the 300 years)*, Taipei, Zhonghua shuju, 1955. p.77-79.

language of the ancient Classics as an impartial means to recapture the ideas and intentions of the sages of antiquity.²³⁶

By the eighteenth century, reflecting the scholarly trends of the Qianlong era (1736-95), the policy questions for the civil examinations began to exhibit a common five-way division of topics, usually in the following order: 1) Canons; 2) history; 3) literature; 4) statecraft; and 5) local geography. The primacy of Canon learning in policy questions was due to the impact of Han learning and evidential research among literati scholars. What was fuelling the popularity of the revival of first a poetry question on session one and then philology in the policy questions (in session three of the civil examinations) was the close tie between the rules of rhyming in regulated verse and the field of phonology, which became the predominant aspect of philology during the reign of Qianlong. The role of phonology in evidential research studies was paying dividends by improving the literati's knowledge of classical sounds and rhymes.²³⁷

One by-product of these philological trends was the full realization of how important poetry - particularly regulated verse - was for the reconstruction of antiquity via phonology, palaeography, and etymology. For example, Liang Zhangkhu (1775-1849), who assembled one of the first cultural studies of the

²³⁶ Elman, 1984, p.123 and p.176.

²³⁷ Benjamin A. Elman, "*Chinese Sciences and the Triumph of Modern Science in China*." For presentation at the Conference on "*Rethinking Science and Civilization: The Ideologies, Disciplines, and Rhetorics of World History*," organized by Roger Hart and Haun Saussy. Sponsored by the Stanford University Department of Asian Languages and the Program in History and Philosophy of Science. May 21-23, 1999.

examination regime entitled *Collected Comments on the Crafting of Eight-Legged Civil Examination Essays (Zhiyi conghua)* in the early nineteenth century, also compiled a collection on poetry studies in which he outlined the study of poetry and the rules of regulated verse. In the conclusion, Liang traced how Qing classical scholars had finally unravelled the rhyme system of the poetry Classics. They had thereby illuminated the technical rules in regulated verse and made major advances in the study of phonology.²³⁸

As shown above, Liang Qichao summarized the basic approach of the evidential school. According to him, there were two distinct trends during the middle of the Qing era; one focused on Han study, the other on Kaozheng study.

Hui Dong emphasised the importance of the Classics and the exegetical tradition of the Han. The tactic of Hui Dong and his followers was to let the words shed light on the way of the sages, and all were skilled in glossing the meanings of words. Their credo was Han learning, their role models were Zheng Xuan (A.D. 127-200) and Fu Sheng (fl. Second century B.C.), and Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi were their targets.²³⁹

Hui Dong, therefore, had an agenda, and his learning created the Han Learning movement that fell under the rubric of evidential research but was nevertheless not identical with it. His followers, true to the revolutionary spirit, instigated a number of incidents within the Qing intellectual community because

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.11.

they sought to fix the meaning of evidential study, and to define it in their terms.²⁴⁰

Kong Zizhen (1735-1815), grandson and student of Dai Zhen's disciple Duan Yucai, having read Jiang's manuscript prior to publication, urged his friend and colleague to revise his categorical approach toward learning. In a much-publicised letter written to Jiang in 1817, Kong said, "Those who read Canons search for the truth in actual facts (*shishi qiushi*). For a thousand years it has been the Way. Although to search for the truth in actual facts is a Han Dynasty expression, it is not the monopoly of (Han learning)." Kong Zizhen²⁴¹ criticised the artificial distinctions Jiang made between Han learning and Song learning. For Kung this simple delineation distorted how things really were. "Didn't the people of Han discuss issues such as nature (*xing*) and the *Dao*?" he asked. And "how can one deny that people of the Song discussed names and their referents (*mingwu*) and textual glosses?" Finally, what about those "superlative gentlemen" of the "present dynasty"? "They patiently master their texts and make new discoveries concerning the Classics. They are neither Han nor Song, but search only for the truth."²⁴²

For Kong Zizhen, the controversy over Han learning and Song learning was a petty dispute when the real issue was learning itself. In his view, a good scholar

²⁴⁰ Yu Yingshi, Yu Yingshi 余英時. *Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng* 論戴震與章學誠 (*Discourse of Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng*), Hong Kong longmen Shudian 龍門書店. 1976. p112.

²⁴¹ Kong Zizhen, *Letter to Zhuang Zibing, Kong Zizhen Quanji* (*Complete Works of Kong Zizhen*), Hong Kong, *zhonghua shuju*, 1974. 2:347-48. (tras. Elman, 1990, p.239.)

²⁴² *Ibid.*

was one who searched "for the truth in actual facts", irrespective of whatever group identity he might have had. But for someone like Jiang Fan, the school a person belonged to determined the kind of scholar that he was; therefore, in his *Record of Han Learning Masters of the Qing Dynasty*, many scholars were either misplaced or omitted.²⁴³

When Dai Zhen first met Hui Dong in Yangzhou, these scholarly divisions had not developed far. After the encounter with Hui, Dai began to create his own method, which later became the Wan school that dominated evidential study. Although their admiration was mutual, the encounter had a greater impact on Dai Zhen, who was twenty-seven years younger than it did on Hui Dong. Qian Mu believes it marks a turning point in Dai's intellectual and philosophical development.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.11

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p.12.

2. Dai Zhen's Method of Philosophy

Dai Zhen is famous for his critiques, especially of Neo Confucian philosophy and the Han exegetes. However, it must be noted that philosophical criticism is itself a philosophical practice, and Dai went beyond the subject of the limitations of Zhu Xi's philosophy in ways not acknowledged by Chinese scholars.²⁴⁵ In terms of methods of philosophising, Dai Zhen suggested that criticism of fallacy and method of truth are closely related. In *Shuzheng*, a critical method was used to correct errors and demonstrate the limits of Neo Confucian philosophy and, at the base of his criticism he reveals his philosophical perspective of the Canons.

Dai's critical method approach to the Canons is in keeping with his time and the issues confronting him. As mentioned, he believed Neo Confucian philosophy to be a hybrid between Confucianism and heresies such as Daoism and Buddhism. Because of this hybrid, Neo Confucians made errors and distorted the words and meaning of the Canons.

The Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi joined with heresies at first, all tried to invert their theory to ours, and invert ours to theirs. Together they made Heaven and mind a unity, as they did with the principle and awakening of the mind. With all of our terminology, they let the heretic help and borrowed from them to establish themselves. According to the Cheng brothers' and Zhu Xi's interpretation, heretics interpreted the Canons, *Six Cannons*, *The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*. All of these

²⁴⁵ In this point, Dai Zhen can be compared with the German philosopher E.Kant.

manners came with the Cheng brothers' and Zhu Xi's help and with ours. Consequently, they became dependent on ours.²⁴⁶

Dai Zhen claimed that the Confucians after the Han were deceptive with their false theories. These Confucians committed three main iniquities. The first is that they created definitions of the words of the Canon according to their own context. The next is that they transmitted invalid obstinacy²⁴⁷ and fallacy by making the definitions of the words from their own context so that the interpreted meaning is not the real sense of Canon but merely inherited glosses of words. And the third is that they reach forced and far-fetched interpretations without grounding them in the Canons. Because of these misleading notions, the words of the sages are damaged and defective.²⁴⁸ Their invalid obstinacy and transmission of fallacy makes the 'Canon' no longer the words of the sages that originally came from Confucius and Mencius.

Thus Dai says:

The philological (method) of the Han scholars was based on an orthodox line of transmission. At that time, the old Canon suffered from forced interpretations. The Jin men had even more far-fetched interpretations and groundless speculations.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Dai Zhen, *Reply letter to Peng Yunchu*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.352.

²⁴⁷ Dai Zhen critique Han exegetes as stubborn because they exclusively transmit an interpretation of Canon in their family. Han Confucians never correct even the errors are obvious and exclusive to others because it is directly transmitted from his ancestors. Dai Zhen criticise their inherited errors.

²⁴⁸ See *Dai Zhen's Reply letter to Peng Yunchu*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.352.

²⁴⁹ Dai Zhen, *Letter to someone(Yumoushu)*. *Quanji*, v.6.494.

Fallacies and mistakes are the first enemy of the Qing evidential scholars, who placed emphasis on exact research. The Han Confucians employ the *xungu* method to work on the exegesis of the Canons. Dai criticises the Han Confucians for providing the “definition of the word according to their own context”. Because the Han Confucians separated the words from the context of the Canons and only produced glosses and etymologies of words, according to Dai, Han Confucians could not understand the reason and the meaning of the Canons, since they were merely absorbed in the words and characters.

The Han people’s study of the Canons was based on the individual method, and therefore they were taught orally by a master of a Canon, and, later, it was recorded on bamboo and silk. Thus in the Han, a master of a Canon’s interpretation was officially established, and it was preserved along with the Canon itself. Only a master of a Canon could understand [the meaning of] the ancient written characters and ancient statements; therefore the philological study of written characters [in ancient documents] could not be abandoned, nor could [the expositions of the Han] master of a Canon be done away with. My family transmitted the Canons for four generations, and we all understood their old meaning. I therefore expound my familial teaching by writing.²⁵⁰

The foregoing account is a justification for preserving the practice of interpreting ancient written characters, respecting the tradition of the ancient teachers, and preserving the methods of the various Han schools. Henceforth Han learning attained an unassailable position, and it was firmly established as a scholarly trend in the Qing period. Hui Dong’s disciples, Yu Xiaoke (1729-1777) and Jiang Sheng (1721-1799), who also came from his Hui’s native country,

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

defended his view successfully. From the influence emanating from these men, scholars within China came to emphasise an understanding of the Canons that in turn depended on believing in antiquity. Hui started this trend, which has since been given the name of the Suzhou [or Wu] School.

If a person wishes to go to the altar of a house, he must go via the steps and cannot skip them; a wild guess has two faults: first, "deriving by wild guess at a statement" (*yuanzi shengshun*); and second, "preserving falsehoods and transmitting ridiculousness" (*shouwei chanmiu*). *Yuanzi shengshun* means that the interpretation is not the original meaning; and *shouwei chanmiu* means that the Canons used are not the original texts. Now Zhonglin (i.e., Yu Xiaoke) learned antiquarian research from Hui Dingyu of his home county. Mr. Hui and I were good friends, and he was disgusted with a wild guess being equal to knowing the Canons.²⁵¹

In this sense, there is also the same limitation of Han learning in the Qing period that is led by the Hui Dong School. In 1758, Hui Dong died, and seven years after that, whilst Dai Zhen was passing through Suzhou, Hui Dong's hometown, Dai wrote a preface to Hui's *Shoujingtu (Diagram of Receiving Instructions)* to commemorate the occasion and to make sense of what they had shared. The piece reads:

It has been said that there is Han classical learning and there is Song classical learning: the former emphasises the ancient glosses (*guxun*) and the latter is concerned with [understanding] the reason and meaning of things (*li*). It is said that this statement is not easy to understand. If one can understand the reason and meaning [of things] by sheer speculation, then anyone can grab them out of emptiness. If that is so, what can we hope to gain from classical learning? It is

²⁵¹ Qian Mu, *Quanji*, v.7. p.487.

precisely because sheer speculation cannot lead us to the reason and meaning [of things] as intended by the sages and worthies that one has to seek it from the ancient Canons. Only when the ancient glosses are clear can the Classics be understood and only when the Classics are understood can the reason and meaning [of things] as intended by the sages and worthies be grasped.²⁵²

Zhu Xi believed that his insight into the notion of principle was inspired by a passage that did not exist in the original Canon, *Book of Documents*, so where does that leave him or his insight? This was Hui Dong's strategy – to weaken the credibility of the Song thinkers. Thus, while pursuing their scholarship, proponents of Han learning were constantly mindful of their opponents. What they wanted to establish beyond any doubt was that they were right and others were wrong. Dai Zhen did not follow the same agenda, although at times he was caught up in the same rationale and revolutionary rhetoric.²⁵³

In Dai Zhen's view there is only one path in classical scholarship. "If the ancient glosses are not employed for the purpose of understanding the reason and meaning of things," he asked, "then what is the point of pursuing that type of research?" The reverse is also true: "If one's effort is not grounded in the study of the Canons, then "it is easy to for one to be swept away by heterodox teachings and perverted doctrines." In the above preface, Dai Zhen seems to suggest that it was Hui Dong who influenced him to look at the two categories – ancient glosses

²⁵² Dai Zhen, *Hui Dong Shoujingtu (Diagram of receiving instructions)*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.396.

²⁵³ Qian Mu, *Quanji*, v.6. p.485.

and reason and meaning – as inseparable, one being the method and the other its philosophical justification. This could have been simply Dai Zhen's perception of things. Since he was edging toward this conclusion, his discussions with Hui Dong may have only confirmed his predilections.²⁵⁴

The historiographer Wang Mingsheng framed his comparison of the two scholars as follows: "Master Hui studied the Classics in order to understand them anciently. Master Dai studied the Classics in order to understand the truth in them, but ultimately he believed that without a knowledge of the ancient text, one would have no basis for establishing the truth."²⁵⁵ Both took the Classics as their source, expending their energy on exacting a correct understanding of every word and phrase, yet their aims were different. Dai Zhen was absorbed with the study of the Three Ritual Canons; he delved into every subject – astronomy, mathematics, geography, ancient pronunciation, and rhymes – because he wanted to know everything about the early Zhou. Hui Dong, on the other hand, undertook a scrupulous reading of the *Book of Documents*, but he was concerned more with the question of authenticity. He followed the example of Yan Ruoju, who had offered powerful evidence for the Old Text version of the Documents by sorting out the true from the false. Of course, his purpose was not merely to refine his research skills.²⁵⁶

Dai Zhen commented:

²⁵⁴ Dai Zhen, *Hui Dong Shoujingtu*, QuANJI, v.6.p.396.

²⁵⁵ *Xing zhuang*, QuANJI, v.7. p8.

²⁵⁶ Anping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.13.

Though the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi all engaged with Mr. Buddha at first, eventually they realised that this was wrong. Chengzi said, "We Confucians are based on the Heaven, the heresies are based on the mind." Zhuzi said, "We Confucians regard the principle as neither born nor destroyed. Mr. Buddha regards the awakening of mind as neither born nor destroyed." As regards awakening of the mind, although one tenet is different from another, it barely tries to invert their saying. ... Zhu Xi said that their tenet of mind "became similar to Buddhism", but he did not specifically mention that it is different from ours. It can never be said to be 'similar' too. The Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi studied them, so they knew Buddhist teaching very well. When they inquired into Confucianism, they realised that the tenet of ours was different from theirs. Therefore, they could not have it as a basis, but they said with conjecture that they had made Heaven as basis. Of all men and things, which is not based on Heaven? How can one say that mind and heaven have to be separated! They are one who could rise to fight. If one follows their way, even a fool must be clever and even a weakling must be strong. If one develops their theory, it says that if a person completes his mind, he can fulfil the *Dao*! Thinking like that, he cannot truly join in the *Dao* of Yao and Shun, even if he says principle, knowledge, learning, all are fake and suitable to bring disorder to virtue.

Dai said that "over several hundreds years, the harmful influence of the false theory is nothing but error and mistake." Thus he also said that:

Those of the Song Confucians judged by introspection; they often made many errors, renouncing preciseness that cannot be laid aside... Scholars since the Song have wrenched their own ideas back to what the words of ancient sages and wise men intended to say.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Dai Zhen, *Letter to someone (Yumoushu)*, *Quanji*, v. p.495.

Criticism of “the forced and more far-fetched interpretation without grounds in the Canons” refers to Song Confucianism. According to Dai Zhen, the Song Confucians were not only in error but also distorted and placed arbitrary definitions on the words and meanings of the Canons.

Dai Zhen commented:

The Song Confucians discussed the principle without any reflection on philology. Are they trying then to discover the meaning of the old Canons? Or do they want to dwell in the old Canons? If they want to stay, why are they twisting the old Canons? The essence of the Canon is the Way and the thing that brings the right meaning to the Way is only the language [of the Canons]. ... The Song Confucians mocked the study of etymology in the Han period and slighted philology. What they did was the same as trying to cross the river without a boat and wanting to climb to a high place without ladders. Having done this work for thirty years, now I know with perfect clarity that, from past to present, the key to bringing order to the world lies in these texts.²⁵⁸

It is clear from this that the errors of the Song Confucians were greater than those of Han scholars; however, the more serious problem is that the Song Confucians' fallacy is far beyond the reach of correction by *xungu*. This is because Han learning does not have any means of treating the philosophical problems that arise from the mixing of heresy with Confucian tradition or orthodoxy as represented by Mencius. As a result, the orthodoxy insisted on by

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

Zhu Xi and the Neo Confucians no longer has any validity.²⁵⁹ This quotation shows why Dai Zhen felt he had to write against the fallacy he faced:

Mencius disputed with Yang and Mo. When later men, accustomed to hearing the language of Yang, Mo, Lao, Zhuang, and Buddha, moreover use this language to make nonsense of the language of Mencius, it is on this account that one who comes after Mencius should also be able to refrain. If I were unable to know this, that would be an end of it; but if, knowing it, I were not to speak, this would be to devalue their learning, and with regard to humane persons of the empire and of later generations it would be to make myself a stranger to benevolence. Therefore I am apprehensive, and have set forth [these] Verified Explanations of the Meanings of Terms in Mencius in three juan.²⁶⁰

Dai Zhen was critical of those who were absorbed in a search for reason and meaning (*lii*) and had no time to refine their methods of research. In his view, the Song Confucians were preoccupied with the reason and meaning of things. Dai Zhen also criticised both the Han and Song Confucians for their forced interpretations based on false theories. Contrary to Han Learning, Dai Zhen claimed that the meaning of the Canons could not be kept within the boundary of etymology, since it reached far beyond the restricted usage and glosses of words:

In Han, one finds the Confucian study of the Canon; in Song, one also finds the Confucian study of the Canon, but the Han Confucians mainly researched glosses and etymology, while the other mainly investigated meaning and principle. The Song Confucians seek meaning and

²⁵⁹ Ling Yicheng, *Shibuchuan yu Dai Zhen de Jiejingfangfa (Commentary of Book of Odes and Methods of Dai Zhen)*, Taipei, Wenlu publishes. 1995. p.33.

²⁶⁰ *Shuzheng*, Preface.

principle without the Canon and so make people receive a fictitious version ... If the Han Confucians' commentary of the Canon is good, then the wise man and the sages' meaning and principle will be illuminated naturally when people read their commentaries. However, the ancient sages' meaning and principle is not like theirs. It is said that the meaning and principle of the ancient sages is kept in the rituals, documents, vessels and in civilisation.²⁶¹

So, Dai Zhen claims that the Canons hold the meaning and principle of the sages. The ancient sages' meaning and principle are not only written in the old Canons but also kept in the rituals, documents and civilisation. As mentioned, Dai tried to reconstruct the Canons and lost Classics and attempted to discover the truth of the Canons by breaking through the veil of Zhu Xi's orthodoxy, that had become infected and damaged by Buddhism and Daoism²⁶².

Through his critiques, Dai Zhen clearly displays the aim and meaning of learning: to hear the *Dao*. However, he rejects the inspirational or intuitive approach, which certainly offered a more direct route. Dai Zhen wanted to attain a higher form of knowledge and to have a greater understanding of things, but not at the risk of self-deception and fallacy; since, for him, such goals had to be genuine when reached, he was sceptical of shortcuts and the types of experience described as "sudden enlightenment."²⁶³ To perform this task reliably required

²⁶¹ Dai Zhen, *Yumoushu, Quanjì*, v.6.p.494.

²⁶² Nowadays the fact that the Song Confucian philosophy influenced by the Buddhism and Daoism turned into a common sense. Song Confucians defeat of Buddhism has political and economical reason rather than philosophical. But the time of Dai Zhen, it was very dangerous to attack the Neo Confucian systematically. It is the one of Dai Zhen's major achievement in the history of Confucianism.

²⁶³ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.32.

new methods that would neither bear falseness and transmit fallacy nor define words from within their own context.

Thus Dai Zhen says:

Scholarship in ancient and present times can be categorised into three branches: (1) dealing with principle; (2) dealing with institutions; and (3) dealing with literature. Dealing with literature is the least important ... The sages' *Dao* (Way) is in the Six Canons. The Han Confucians obtained its institutional aspect but missed its principle. [On the other hand], the Song Confucians obtained its principle but missed its institutions.²⁶⁴

As new methods, he suggested two synthetic methods to approach to the words of the sages. It is said that the first approach to the Canons is to hear the *Dao*, which clearly reveals the aim of research. The next approach assumes that the *Dao* is laid within the ancient culture and the Canons. In this sense, the meaning has to be excavated from the language of the old Canons.²⁶⁵

Thus Dai Zhen said:

When I was young, my family was poor, and I did not have a tutor. I had heard that amongst learned men there was a man called Confucius who had decided that the Six Canons should be the basis of instruction for later people, and so I got hold of one [of those books] and began to read it. I was at a loss. After much contemplation, I realised that what the

For Dai Zhen what the Classics transmit is not an implicit sphere of inner value but a record of the institutionalized practices of a society in which the Way of the sages had been fully realised.

²⁶⁴ Dai Zhen, *Jiangshenxiu xiansheng shiluezhuan*, (*A Brief Note on Master Jiang's Life*), Quanjia, v. 6. p.409.

²⁶⁵ Ling Yicheng, p.85.

Canons attain is the *Dao*, what unravels the *Dao* is the phrases [contained in them], and what make up these phrases is words. If through words I were to understand phrases and through phrases the *Dao*, then I would make progress.²⁶⁶

To hear the *Dao*, one must know where the truth resides, and according to Dai Zhen, the source of truth lies within the Canons, and to attain the truth from this place without error or fallacy one must understand the rules of the warehouse of truth. According to Dai, the first step towards reaching an understanding of the Canons is the use of precise philology.

The acme of the Canons is the *Dao* (Way), and by means of statements, the *Dao* is known. That which forms a statement cannot be anything other than words. Therefore, knowing words, a person understands language; and knowing language, a person understands the mind of the ancient sages and worthies²⁶⁷.

It is not just the skills of ancient philology that are needed to grasp the truth of the Canons, but also a knowledge of the structure and system of the Canons, that one must have in order to understand their uniqueness and coherence. It is only through such labour that we can know the meaning of the ancient sages words. Thus Dai Zhen says:

To inquire into a Canon, first of all one has to study philology and then understand the uniqueness and coherence of the Canons. The aim is

²⁶⁶ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Shi Chungming*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.369.

²⁶⁷ Dai Zhen, *Gujing jiegouchen (Research and Interpretation of the Old Canon)*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.377.

clear: hearing the *Dao* and aspiring to reach the truth; a man must purge himself completely of all of his dependence.²⁶⁸

It is to be noted that Dai Zhen does not in this quotation that omit to stress the importance of completely independent research. When speaking of evidential study, Dai Zhen advised that one should concentrate on the evidence; do not depend on a general opinion. If there is no obvious counter-evidence, hold on for a while. Independence from a general opinion or later theories is also a very important notion in Dai's concept of evidential study. The distinction drawn between opinions and truth is one of his most valuable contributions.²⁶⁹

Dai Zhen claims that the Canons hold the meaning and principle of the sage. However, the ancient sages' meaning and principle are not only written in the old Canons but are also to be found in the unspoken truth contained within rituals, documents and civilisation. Equally, the ancient materials contain plenty of evidence that verifies and confirms the meaning of the words of the sages. According to Dai Zhen, anyone who talks of principle without having mastered the Canons, the meaning of words, rituals, documents and civilisation, must be deceiving his listeners.

Since Confucius, not attaining the proper position, could not manifest [his virtue] in institutions, ritual, and music, he corrected their basis and traced out their origins so that with regard to the appropriateness of preserving changing institutions, ritual, and music, men would have, as it were, a steelyard to assess the heavy and the light, or a compass and square or marking line to determine the square, the circular, or the level

²⁶⁸ Dai Zhen, *Yumoushu (A Letter to Someone)*, *Quanji*, v.6.p.495.

²⁶⁹ Liang Qichao, *Zhongguo jinsanbainian xueshushi* p.77

and abstruse. This could not have been left unspoken. And once Confucius did speak them, actually articulating what the former sages had left unsaid, without Confucius who would be able to follow and hear? This is what [Zi Gong] meant by “cannot manage to hear.”²⁷⁰

Civilisation and ritual were the unspoken inner meanings of the sages, and are the reason why Dai Zhen tried to master all aspects of Zhou civilisation. As mentioned, Dai Zhen attempts not only to build a comprehensive encyclopaedic knowledge of Zhou civilization, ritual and science, but also suggests that such mastery is a very important method for his philosophy. He recommends that anyone who researches a particular field must aim for an encyclopaedic knowledge of a specific area, touching every corner on the way, and doing so he will gain ground inch by inch by bending all his energies to this one task. Even so, if one encounters strong counter-evidence, Dai Zhen suggests that such efforts should be abandoned.²⁷¹

When I read the ancient Book of Rites, I first encountered the chapter on the “*Capping Ceremony for the Young*” (*shiguanli*). Since I did not know anything about ancient dwellings, clothing, and other social conventions, I was lost; I could not decide what the functions were. Since I did not know the changes made from past to present regarding place-names, when I read the “*Tributes of Yu (Yu Gong)*” [in the *Book of Documents*], I could not figure out the places under the charge of the Office of Tribute and Maps. Since I did not know anything about the extraction of mathematical roots and trigonometry, I could not understand from the texts the engineering techniques described in the “*Record of Artisans*” (*Kaogongji*) [in the *Ritual of Zhou*]. Since I did not know the names and classifications of birds and beasts, insects and

²⁷⁰ *Shuzheng*, Preface.

²⁷¹ Liang Qichao, p.78

fish, flowers and trees, I made incorrect interpretations of poems [from the *Book of Odes*] that were composed allegorically [to reflect people's feelings toward their ruler] and of poems meant to inspire moral sentiments.²⁷²

There is one more important method that Dai Zhen implies in his philosophy and study of the Canons. In order to confirm the meaning of a word, a cross-reference of evidence is always needed between one text and another. He states that the validation of an ancient Canon must come from a Canon composed in a similar period and place so as to confirm the meaning through all the Canons and historical material.

The following provides a good example of Dai Zhen's encyclopaedic knowledge and skill at cross-referencing; in *Shuzheng* Dai Zhen wrote on principle:

"Principle" (*li*) designates the subtle incipencies that must be distinguished according to type when [something] is examined; thus it is called "pattern" (*fenli*). With regard to the physical substance of things one speaks of "skin texture" (*jili*), of "capillary passages" (*couli*), "structural pattern" (*wenli*). [When something is] in its proper place, well ordered and not confused, it is called "orderly" (*tiaoli*). ... What the ancients meant by "principle" was never anything like what latter day Confucians have called "principle".²⁷³

²⁷² Dai Zhen, *Letter to Shi Chungming*, *Quanji*, v.6. p.370.

²⁷³ *Shuzheng*, Article 2.

Dai Zhen had in mind a systematic research agenda that built on palaeography and phonology to reconstruct the "meanings" of words of the Canons as a method of reconstructing the "intentions" of the sages. Moreover, when he applied technical phonology to the study of the language of the Canons, he reached unprecedented levels of precision. To achieve this end, evidential scholars chose to use philological means to study the Canons.²⁷⁴

Dai Zhen's methods not only provide a way to examine the ancient Canons, but also pave the way towards his Confucian moral philosophy. He emphasises the understanding of the minds of the ancient sages and worthies and claims that this can only be achieved through knowledge of words and language.

After this the privately wise and the narrowly dogmatic also became alarmed at the world's disorder, and either relied on their Way to preserve themselves and avoid disaster, or else relied on its ability to entice men's hearts, [promising] order without disorder yet confused about the great root. Singling out one thing to the neglect of a hundred others, their intentions were not bad, but their language was sufficient only to injure the Way ... Mencius disputed with Yang and Mo. Later men, accustomed to hearing the language of Yang, Mo, Lao, Zhuang, and Buddha, moreover use this language to make a nonsense of the language of Mencius; it is on this account that one who comes after Mencius should also be able to refrain. If I were unable to know this, that would be an end of it; but if, knowing it, I were not to speak, this would be to devalue their learning, and with regard to humane persons of the empire and of later generations it would be to make myself a stranger to benevolence. Therefore I am apprehensive, and have set forth [these]

²⁷⁴ Kuhn, Philip.1970. p157.

Verified Explanations of the Meanings of Terms in Mencius in three
juan.²⁷⁵

According to Ewell, Dai Zhen's philosophy was a re-inventing of the *Dao* of the sages in much the same manner as that of Confucius and Mencius. As in the famous phrase "interpreting but not composing"²⁷⁶ Confucius directed his efforts towards defining the Way that he insisted was communicated by the ancient sages. Moreover, the Way Confucius found was the meaning of the culture, institutions and norms of the Zhou. Confucius sometimes identified his philosophy with Zhou culture and bemoaned the culture's decline. However, in every age, characteristic misunderstandings would arise; and thus in every age it would be necessary to address these misunderstandings, to diagnose their origins, and re-find and refashion the Way anew.²⁷⁷ In Dai Zhen's view, says Ewell, it was Mencius who understood the imperative nature of this task the best. Mencius rebelled against the contamination of Confucianism popular scholarship of the time such as that of Mozi Yangzi. Dai Zhen believed his work *Shuzheng* to have the same purpose as Mencius' rebellion against the heresies, as it was a tool with which to fight to re-fresh the *Dao* from the pollution and misunderstandings of Neo Confucianism.

Ewell's theory certainly provides a good explanation of the historical background to Dai Zhen's work. However, an obvious limitation of his theory is that it does not give a comprehensive picture of Dai's moral philosophy: in other

²⁷⁵ *Shuzheng*, preface.

²⁷⁶ *Analets*, 7.1,

²⁷⁷ J. Ewell, 1990, p50.

words, Ewell failed to show the *raison d'être* of Dai Zhen's re-invention of the Way, namely the goal of becoming a sage through the moral philosophy of the Canons. Ewell denoted that as a Confucian philosopher, Dai Zhen sets out to define who the "Yang and Mo" of his own age were, to diagnose their errors, and to show the solutions to their dilemmas. In response to this challenge, Dai's treatise speaks well for itself.

Although he criticises the Song and Ming Confucians relentlessly, Dai is in fact closer to these philosophers as Zhang Xuecheng denoted. Duan Yucai recalls Dai Zhen saying that:

[Investigating] the six Canons and the nine branches of mathematics is the work of those who shoulder the sedan chair. The person they serve is the one sitting in the sedan chair.²⁷⁸

As Zhang Xuecheng noted clearly this remark was intended for the evidential scholars who were the footmen. Their accomplishment was all legwork. They bustled around breathlessly, yet believed they were the ones moving "without touching the ground" – this was the image Dai Zhen had of those who chose to confine their work and thought to the discipline of textual exegesis.²⁷⁹ However, Dai did not consciously identify himself with either the footman or the person in the sedan chair, although he did say:

²⁷⁸ Duan Yucai, *preface to the 1792, 3rd edition of the Dai's Literary Writings*. *Quanji*, v.7. p202.

²⁷⁹ Annping Chin, Freeman M. 1990. p.31.

“To take my research in the Six Canons and nine branches of mathematics as my highest achievement is the same as to mistake the footman for the person in the sedan chair.”²⁸⁰

He never considered doing philosophy in any way other than through philological work on the Canons. At the same time, he thought of this philological work on the Canons also as a philosophical activity. It is suggested that Dai Zhen’s originality and profoundness in Confucian philosophy lie precisely in the fact that he never separated philosophy and philology. He saw his quest to discern the teachings of the sages as a task of ‘finding’, not ‘making’.²⁸¹ For him, providing an account of why one does what one does is a task one can approach only after one has mastered the Canons. It is only through such a course of study that one can become the kind of person who will make the right moral choices; this in turn provides one with the understanding necessary for discerning the reasons behind one’s actions.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Duan Yucai, *Ibid. Quanji*, v.7. p.203.

²⁸¹ *Analects*, 7.1, “transmits rather than creates.”

²⁸² Philip J. Ivanhoe. *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, pp.96-97.

IV. The Moral Philosophy of Dai Zhen

The moral philosophy of Dai Zhen can be summarised as “fulfil desires and express feelings”. Because he believed that life is the most cherished thing for all humans and living things, he maintains that, “whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture”. He also claimed that, “caring for oneself, and extending this care to those close to oneself, are both aspects of humanity”.²⁸³ He established a strong monastic moral philosophy based on individual human desire and feeling.

Dai Zhen was fascinated with how Confucius had been able to construct a moral philosophy based on his knowledge of the past and his study of human conduct. As such it was Confucius’ discourse on human nature above all else that he wished to elucidate. Yet the discourse only seems to exist in the *Analects*.²⁸⁴ Dai Zhen realised this; he called most interpretations “forced and far-fetched”,²⁸⁵ trusting only that of Mencius. Mencius gave Confucius’ discourse on human nature a continuity, clarity and logic that, in Dai Zhen’s view, is entirely

²⁸³ *Shuzheng*, Article 21.

²⁸⁴ *Analects* 15:2.

²⁸⁵ Dai Zhen, *Yumoushu*, *Quanji*, vol. 6, p. 498.

persuasive. In the *Shuzheng*, Dai was determined to build a philosophy of human beings based on Mencius' vision.²⁸⁶

Since Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi believed that natures, being principle, are all the same, by some means they had to account for the differences between themselves and Confucius. Consequently, they claimed that Confucius was "referring only to man's physical endowment", or physical nature, which was to be distinguished from the nature construed in Mencius' theory that "human nature is good". Zhu Xi, quoting Cheng Yi, explains why Confucius said that "Human natures are nearly together"²⁸⁷: "The nature referred to here is the physical nature, not the original nature. When one speaks of the original nature, that nature is the principle. Principle is always good – this is what Mencius meant by 'human nature is good.' Why then should nature be only alike?"²⁸⁸

Dai Zhen wholly disagrees with what the Neo-Confucians' argument suggests. In Dai Zhen's view, Confucius and Mencius were talking about the same nature, because according to the words of the *Analects* and *Mencius*, the idea that man has two natures – a physical nature and an original nature – simply

²⁸⁶ Dai Zhen thought there to be no difference between the philosophies of the Six Canons, Confucius and Mencius. However, Mencius' situation was different from that of Confucius. During Mencius' lifetime there were heresies like Yang and Mo, against which he had to make more detailed explanations than Confucius was compelled to. Dai Zhen declares that the one who disclosed and clarified the Way of Confucius was Mencius; there is no fundamental difference in their philosophies. *Shuzheng*, Article 24.

²⁸⁷ *Analects*, 17A2.

²⁸⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 21

does not make sense. Dai Zhen claims that Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi must have invented the term “physical nature”²⁸⁹ to refer to what Confucius called “nature”. A number of assertions seem to support the Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi understanding. However, Dai Zhen feels that there is a misunderstanding behind the verification that Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi present, and that there are inconsistencies in their reasoning, which together constitute solid grounds for disbelieving Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Thus Dai Zhen sets out to disprove Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi.²⁹⁰

Dai Zhen thought that their theory of two natures was just Cheng Yi’s justification, and that Zhu Xi’s evaluation was self-serving. Their theory that nature is principle and that principle is always good is certainly well served by the assertion that human nature is good, but they try to avoid essential subjects whenever the text does not fit their analysis. According to their dualism theory, a human cannot be a moral agent by his subject, as maintained by the ancient Canons always maintained. Consequently, Dai Zhen applied the Kaozheng method and produced his own account of the morality of human nature. His reading, he claims, clarifies rather than distorts the version Mencius intended to convey.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ *Articles*, 22-23.

²⁹¹ See the Preface of *Shuzheng*.

1. Dai Zhen's Philosophy of the Human being

According to Dai Zhen, the physical body is an important concept because all the characteristics of human nature are based on the physical body, and the ultimate virtue of life and things is hold onto life. Thus Dai Zhen claimed that it is because this bodily self exists that there are desires, feelings and the possibility of intellect; therefore, conversely, desires, feelings and intellect are all part of an individual's physical body. Furthermore, his morality is also a part of himself, rather than being a transcendental abstract, as was believed by the Neo-Confucians.

Because this bodily self exists, there are desires of sound, colour, smell, and taste; because this bodily self exists and the relations of ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger, and friend and friends are present, there are feelings of pleasure, anger, grief, and joy.²⁹² Drink and food become the protective part and management part of a body, skin and marrow. The whole body is to be a unity together. A substance raises a body, [other things] a material force raises a material force [of human body], and vital force, creating greater mental ability, grows up naturally. If the body were shattered then it would return to the Heaven and the Earth, if it is gathered then it is a man and things. One who gets through Heaven and the Earth, is alive, if disconnected from the Heaven and the Earth one is dead. It is analogised with a plant. Leaves get through the Heavenly force to

²⁹² *Shuzheng*, Chapter 30.

collect the wind, the sunshine, the rain, and the dew. Roots get through the Earthly force to connect with the soil, manure and moisture.²⁹³

That things and man become what they are is due to further differentiations of the *yin* and *yang* into the so-called five elements. According to Dai Zhen, *Dao* has the functions of creative activity and ordering, and furthermore *Dao* has a type of power distinguishable by its function of “making the nature” of things, that is, by making things what they are, which is defined as “goodness”.²⁹⁴

The *Book of Odes* denotes that “Great! The virtue of Heaven and Earth is in giving birth” and “Benevolence is the virtue of producing and sustaining. The common people are contented. For daily they have their drink and food”.²⁹⁵ For Dai Zhen, the idea of goodness clearly means the function of making the nature of *Dao* and the producing and sustaining of man. Therefore human desires and feelings that sustain and nourish life are also defined as goodness.

Human Nature

Dai Zhen’s definition of nature (*xing*) is “allotments from *yin* and *yang* and the five elemental forces”.²⁹⁶ Each thing, animate or inanimate, follows its own allotment to assume a particular form, and each completes its own nature. *The*

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Dai Zhen, *Fa Xing Lun (On Law and Phenomena)*, *Quanji*, vol. 6, p. 343.

²⁹⁵ *Book of Odes*, p. 166, Waley trans., p. 176.

²⁹⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 16.

Elder Dai's Record of Rites implies that an allotment is "as allotted from the Way it is 'decreed', and formed as one thing of which it is 'the nature'".²⁹⁷ The words of the *Elder Dai's Record of Rites* explain the differences in the natures of things and the unevenness among things of the same kind. Confucius says that, "Human natures are nearly alike"²⁹⁸

"That which emanates from the Heaven is called the decree" in *The Book of Rites of the Elder Dai*. *Dao* is the transformation of the material force of *yin* and *yang*, therefore it can be said that to be an emanation. There is nothing but emanation and formed natures are not the same. Therefore, *The Book of Changes* says, "The successive movement of *yin* and *yang* is the Way". *The Doctrine of the Mean* says: "What Heaven has conferred is the very nature" and Mencius distinguished between "nature of dog", "nature of cow" and "nature of Human".²⁹⁹

Dai Zhen clearly displays the development and component parts of the human being. According to Dai Zhen it is only because there are Heaven and Earth that there are man and thing. There being man and thing, we can thus distinguish their attributes, termed 'nature'. Both man and thing have desires; and desire falls within the realm of nature. Both man and thing have consciousness; and consciousness lies within the function of nature.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ *Dadai Liji (The Elder Dai's Record of Rites)*, *ben ming pian*, p. 13. *Wenyuange siku quanshu* edn, vol. 128, p. 531. See also *Shuzheng*, Article 16.

²⁹⁸ Confucius, *Analects*, 17:2.

²⁹⁹ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Peng Yunchu*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Dai notes that the nature of the myriad of creatures is made up of their physical components, ability, and capacity. According to Dai Zhen, 'Nature' means what is passed on to a thing in the course of its transformation in Heaven and on earth. The size to which a thing is limited in the process of transformation is determined by a decree (*ming*), whilst it is nature that shapes its form.

Thus Dai Zhen made interesting analogy:

When *The Book of Odes* and *The Book of Documents* talk of the decree of Heaven, most of them use the phrase "The king has received the decree from Heaven". [...] It is compared to the relationship between a king and a wise minister. After the king orders once, [he waits for the execution of his order] carefully, attentive and ceaselessly. One should praise the capability of a king to appoint a superior man [as a minister]. How can one not admire the king's profound and high virtue? One who is able to quote this, can say, "It is the reason that a king can be a king". Generally speaking, to be commanded is the same as when the king orders the east; the minister cannot do the west. All commands have specified limitations; consequently, one who receives an order cannot pass over it. With simulating order of king, it is said that even if the position of a less wise minister is higher than that of a wiser one, each position is placed by the order of the king. This 'specified order' can be named and called the 'order of the king'. The king notifies the minister that they have rules of conduct and the king makes them courteous in their public business. This 'instructed order' can be named and is called the 'order of the king'. The command of the 'specified order' has its limitation from the beginning of receiving of the decree, eventually both the honorable and the low are governed too. In the command of 'instructed order', their accomplishments show their abilities, which therefore makes for maximum efficiency. Even if it just maximises their duties, 'to command' and 'to specify' are in the same category. When the king commands the best at public duties, they dare not do it. Just as,

when the king commands the east they dare not go to the east. It is said that the 'command' is a 'definitive noun' when there are disputes over destinies and principle and meaning.³⁰¹

Dai Zhen analyses the usage of ancient words in order to distinguish between 'specified order' and 'instructed order' so as to make the meaning of the decree clear. The 'specified order' is same as the 'definitive noun' to determine the shape of the form.

According to the decree of *Dao*, a thing develops into a concrete form and shape according to its prescribed nature, termed as its 'capacity' (*cai*). Dai Zhen explains it in terms of flowers from within, manifested in its appearance, colour, and sound.³⁰²

Heaven and the Earth can be analogised with a big tree. Its flowers, fruits and leaves are not the same but flowers, fruits and leaves all emanate from the tree. Its thick or thin trunk, lightness or darkness of color and smell, savoury or poor taste, and flower and flower, fruit and fruit, leaves and leaves are not the same at all. In a word, it is an emanation. Each of the parts of the tree has been defined by its own emanation. It is the same as what humans have from Heaven, though humans have been defined from their own emanation too. Everyone is able to complete their innate natural gift. It can be compared to a human body. It has a heart, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, legs and arms, beard, eyebrows, skin hair and hair, but only the Heart governs all of them. As for the rest of it, each part has its own capacity. Hence according to the saying of *The Book of Rites*, "the man is the heart of the Heaven and Earth". To the blind man, the heart cannot see in place of the eyes; as to

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² *Yuan Shan*, Chapter 2.

the deaf, the heart cannot listen in place the of ears. This means that the heart also defines what has been emanated.³⁰³

By the decree of *Dao*, everything has its capacity. Everything has its individuality from others, even if they come from the same root and the same species. This process of transformation is called the individualising power of *Dao*.

Thus Dai Zhen says:

Someone ladles water out from a brook, fills large earthenware jug, a small bottle and a piece of pottery with water. When it becomes ice, the size of the ice will be the same as the large earthenware jug, the small bottle or the piece of pottery. If it were not filled, then each depth would be different. Although the water was ladled from the same brook, it differs according to the time and region. There are differences in taste and purity as well. Even if they came from the same brook, each of them has been defined by their own emanation.³⁰⁴

After the physical body has been transformed and characterised by capacity, desire (*yu*), feeling (*qing*) and consciousness (*yi*) accompanied it. Since a person has desires and feelings, a person also develops cunningness and intellect within him; and, since a person's nature is manifested in cunningness and intellect, he develops a liking for and a repugnance to beauty and ugliness, right and wrong respectively.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Peng Yunchu, Quanjì*, vol. 6.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

From birth onwards men have desires, have feelings, and make cognitive distinctions. These three [capacities] are the spontaneity of blood and breath and of conscious knowing. What are given in desires are sounds, colours, smells, and tastes, and accordingly there is liking and disliking; what are manifested in feelings are pleasure, anger, grief, and joy, and accordingly there is misery and happiness; what are distinguished in cognition are the beautiful, the ugly, the true, and the false, and accordingly there is approving and rejecting. Desire of sound, colour, smell, and taste are what supply and nourish one's life; feelings of pleasure, anger, grief, and joy are responses to contact with [other] beings; when cognitive distinctions of beautiful and ugly and true and false reach their furthest extent they penetrate the operations of heaven and earth.³⁰⁶

After one has acquired desire, feelings, cunningness and intellect within him, then requires the natural development of moral virtues.

The way of living lies in desire and in one's feelings. The two [desire and feeling] are in the nature of naturalness so that everything under Heaven can be accomplished. Cunningness is the source by means of which beauty and ugliness are developed to the full, and from which the power of control is derived. Intellect is the source by means of which one's sense of right and wrong is developed to the full, and from which the worthy and the sage's virtue are developed. And these two aspects are also in the nature of naturalness; when these two are cultivated to such finesse that they become a moral necessity, and then all the abilities under Heaven can be made full use of.³⁰⁷

It is said that nature is due to *Dao* or the *Dao* of Heaven, and that the individual natures of things and men are describable in terms of their vital forces

³⁰⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 30.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

(*qi*) and their refined existence, of which the mind and intelligence are the fundamental aspects. This is the definition of nature that Dai Zhen proposes. Dai Zhen considers the *yin* and *yang* and the five agencies as the essence of *Dao*. Using this framework, he regards these vital forces and refined existence as the substance of individual nature. The essence of individual nature is the power of the individualising distribution of *Dao*.³⁰⁸ In order to be able to combine this individualising function of *Dao* with its creative and ordering functions, the sense in which Dai Zhen spoke of goodness should be noted:

With regard to Heaven and Earth, "transformation" is their productiveness and "spirit" their governing [aspect], and these cannot be separated and distinguished; thus it is said that transformation encompasses spirit and that spirit also encompasses transformation. It is from transformation one knows spirit, and from transformation and spirit that one knows virtue, which is the central correctness of Heaven and Earth. With regard to man, whose possession of blood and breath implies conscious knowing, even though from the sages on down there are individual differences with regard to ignorance and clarity, all who have [this capacity for] conscious knowing are able to learn, and thereby enlighten their ignorance and advance toward clarity.³⁰⁹

According to Dai Zhen, at any time since the ancient times at which people have talked about the nature of things, they are actually referring to the "characteristics of their vital energy [*qi*]", which are distinguished by their intelligence and sense. But all living things "made up of blood and *qi* cherish life

³⁰⁸ Chungying Cheng (1971), p. 33.

³⁰⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 15.

and fear death”, and they “seek what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful”.³¹⁰

In this regard, birds and other animals are not different from man. And if they know only their mothers, not their fathers, it is because they are limited in their perception and sensation (their capacity to feel). However, they all love their offspring; in loving them, “in the love between male and female, and in not devouring their own kind or biting those they are associated with, they have advanced well beyond cherishing life and fearing death”. They have extended their care and concern to those who are close to them and in the process have exhibited the virtue of benevolence.³¹¹

“Man is different from the birds and beasts in that he has an understanding of ritual, principles and righteousness; in fact, his perception and sensation are more acute than those of other animals [...] This explains why Mencius said that man’s nature is good”.³¹²

Dai Zhen claimed that human nature is good, and also that the natures of dogs, oxen, and human beings all differ. Dai Zhen explains what Mencius' words means.

With regard to nature, Mencius fundamentally holds that it is good. In the phrase “may become good” he says, “may” because natures have differences, but asserts [the nature’s] goodness because there are none who cannot [become good]. The following phrase, “this is what goodness means”, is in response to [Gongduzi’s] preceding remark, “now you say that the nature is good”, [and thus refers to the nature.]

³¹⁰ *Shuzheng*, Article 21.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* Article 21.

³¹² *Ibid.* Article 27.

And when he goes on to say: "If one becomes not good, it is not the fault of one's capacities",³¹³ [it means] in sum that those who become not good are those who "ensnare and drown their hearts"³¹⁴ and "let go of their true hearts"³¹⁵ to the point of becoming completely "fettered and lost"³¹⁶ and "not far removed from the birds and beast"³¹⁷. When one speaks of capacities, nature is seen, and when one speaks of nature, the capacities are seen; the reason is that the capacities add nothing to nature and take nothing from it. Since man's nature is good, his capacities are also fine. If they are sometimes not fine, it is always the result of "ensnaring and drowning one's heart". That is why [Mencius] says, "It is not that the capacities bestowed by Heaven are thus different".³¹⁸

If nature is principle, as Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi insisted, then nature must always be good, whether it is the nature of an animal or of a human being. According to the original text that is untouched by the Song commentators,³¹⁹ the two statements do not, however, contradict one another. Dai Zhen explained this as follows:³²⁰

That the capacities may at first be fine and later not fine is from capacities losing their capacities, but one cannot say that nature is at first good and later not good: one speaks of "nature" with regard to the

³¹³ *Mencius*, 6A6.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 6A7.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*. 6A8.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*.

³¹⁸ *Ibid* 6A7. *Shuzheng*, Article 30.

³¹⁹ There is Canonical difference between Zhu Xi and Dai Zhen. Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi support the New text of the Canon whilst Dai Zhen and early and mid-Qing Evidential scholars support the Old text. The political attitudes expressed in the Old and the New texts are different.

³²⁰ *Shuzheng*, Article 20.

root and origin, and of “capacity” with regard to the physical makeup. If when the physical makeup is popped and ruined it is not the fault of the physical makeup, how much less can it be blamed on the root and origin? If one considers such Song Confucian articulations as: The nature is principle and: After men are born, when this principle has already fallen in the midst of [physical] form and material force, [their being is not entirely [identical with] the original substance of this nature. In the light of Mencius’ articulation that even after the nature has been “ensnared and drowned” and “fettered and lost” and “others see one’s wickedness” it is still “not the fault of the capacities”, [it is clear that] with regard to “the capacities that Heaven bestows” the Song Confucians do “blame the capacities”.

Dai Zhen noted that clearly “goodness is the great thing shared in common by all things in the world and activity of Heaven and earth; *Dao*. *Dao* gives rise to everything; *Dao* individualises everything as everything; and, finally, *Dao* orders and harmonises everything with everything else – all these are connoted in the use of the term “goodness”.³²¹

³²¹ Dai Zhen, *Duyi xici lunxing* (*Reading the Great Appendixes on Nature in the Book of Changes*), *Quanji*, vol. 6, p. 348.

2. The Metaphysics of the Way

Dai Zhen is not attempting to destroy the credibility of metaphysics in general, only a particular metaphysical system, namely the Neo-Confucian brand of metaphysics called the metaphysics of *li*. But Dai Zhen also attempts to build a concept of the metaphysics of the human being based on *Dao* and *qi*. He rejects the Neo-Confucian notion of *li* and affirms his notion of *li* as the order of things. And he extends this meaning to universal agreement of feelings of man. As a principle of reality and benevolence, according to Dai Zhen, *li* should be rectified to assume the true Confucian sense.³²²

Yamanoi Yu, in his illuminating essay on Dai Zhen's philosophy of *qi*, distinguishes Dai Zhen's categories from Zhu Xi 's as follows:

[In Dai Zhen's philosophical categories] there exists the realm of *qi*, which is related to objects and forms, but not the realm of principle, which transcends forms and objects and is the most essential part of Zhu Xi 's teaching. This does not mean, however, that the notion of principle is absent in Dai Zhen's thought. Principle had a special significance for Dai. It is just that the idea of principle as "reason" and "something above shape" is missing.³²³

³²² *Shuzheng*, Article 16–19.

³²³ Yamanoi Yu, "Tai Shin no shisō ni okeru "ki" (the idea of *qi* in Dai Zhen's philosophy) in *Ki no shisō (The philosophy of qi)* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1978), p. 478.

Using his reading of the early sources, Dai Zhen tries to reconstruct a metaphysical system of human nature and morality based on the *Dao* of the Six Canons.³²⁴ Dai only trusts and relies on the Six Canons and he is proud of what he has gained from an entire lifetime's philological and philosophical research. He derives his sense of metaphysics from the *Book of Changes*, the *Record of Rites* (particularly the chapter "Record of Music"), the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the glosses in the *Shuowen jiezi*, and, of course, the *Book of Mencius*.

Dai Zhen says:

I sought to prove [my view by] philological study [of the Canons] and to check the ideas contained therein as they were expressed at the time. Only when I arrived at a clear understanding of them could I test my mind.³²⁵

Thus, Dai Zhen claimed that the origins of human beings do not go beyond *yin*, *yang*, and the five elemental forces; and that the source of our morality lies in our blood and *chi* and in the knowing mind (*xueqi zhixin*). For Dai, it is not necessary to imagine the heart and mind as the storehouse of moral principles set out in the Six Canons. Morality requires an explanation but does not need to be put in a separate category or attributed to any source other than the Six Canons and the words of the ancients.³²⁶

³²⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 1.

³²⁵ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 1.

³²⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 17.

a. Dai Zhen's Criticism of Principle

According to the Song Confucians, *li* is the universal principle, form, and structure of things. It not only constitutes the guiding spirit in human nature but also represents the truth and reality of it; in effect, *li* is associated with the rational part of human nature. Man knows *li* because *li* is clearly present in man's nature. The objectivity of *li* testifies to, and guarantees, the unity and uniformity of human nature. *Li* is therefore also the principle of virtue inherent in human nature. The rest that is found in human existence is non-*li*, which has nothing to do with virtue and is not to be tolerated.³²⁷

Thus for Dai Zhen, *li* is seen as being coextensive with human needs and feelings when they are properly satisfied and balanced in a social setting. *Li* is not separable either from human needs and feelings or from the whole of the society of man.³²⁸

The Neo-Confucians regard *li* as a form of ontological substance, but Dai Zhen disagrees with them and claims that *li* is the order of all things man's intellect can perceive. As an ontological substance man can possess the *li*, but as an epistemological observable facts man both knows *li* and creates it.

³²⁷ See Zhuzi, *Zhongyoung*, SOCT, p. 732-3.

³²⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 15.

The Song Confucians, who also make *li* indistinguishable from *Dao*, Dai Zhen claimed, appropriated the idea of an immortal spirit. For instance, Shao Yong said, "For want of a better name we call the *Dao* and One 'spirit'". The human spirit, according to this view, is identical with the spirit of Heaven and Earth; it has "no spatial restrictions", but when manifested in man as his nature, it has a material base; therefore, nature is "the form and body of the Way".³²⁹ These ideas, in Dai Zhen's opinion, "showed the profound influence of Laozi and Zhuangzi", as well as Buddhism. "What Shao Yong said about the spirit, that it constitutes the *Dao* and nature, Zhu Xi appropriated for his idea of principle".³³⁰

Dai explains:

The interest of Master Zheng and Master Zhu in Daoism and Buddhism was all for the sake of seeking the way. As long as they could see their way as true, they were unconcerned even if others regarded it as false. Their initial [intent] was not to turn against the Six Canons, Confucius, and Mencius and put their trust in [Daoism and Buddhism]. Not having attained the explanation of [the Confucian way], and seeing that [the Daoist injunction to] "returning and observing within" were close to [the Confucian method of] "empathetically investigating what is near to the self", they considered that these [Daoist and Buddhist practices] could also gradually clarify thoughts and worries, and hoped [by mastering them] to attain a basis from which to assess affairs and things. But [the problem with maxims such as] "illuminate the heart and see the nature", or "return to the original substance of one's spirit", is their implication that as soon as the original substance is reached it is already without deficiency or lack, whereas in actuality as soon as one acts there are mistakes and errors. Lao, Zhuang, and the Buddhists are of course

³²⁹ Ibid. Article 15. Shao Yong in *Huangjijing shishu* (*Supreme principles governing the world*), SBBY edn, 8B:17.

³³⁰ *Shuzheng*, Article 15.

unconcerned with such mistakes and errors, but Master Cheng and Master Zhu, determined as they were to seek the way, eventually realised that [such maxims] could not be relied on to weigh and assess affairs and things, and so said in the end that they were false.³³¹

Like the Daoists and the Buddhists, Cheng and Zhu make the mistake of first believing in the existence of an entity distinct from *qi* and then exalting it as that which transcends the process of change. Cheng Yi accuse the Buddhists of separating *qi* from the mind, but in Dai Zhen's view, Zheng commits a similar fallacy – he creates a basis that he calls Heaven and says that the heart and mind belong to man and nature belongs to Heaven. The yearning for an other-worldly entity was as powerful among the Song Confucians as among the Daoists and Buddhists; for their part, the Song thinkers call their idea the “principle of necessity” and claim that they have taken it from the teaching of Confucius and Mencius.³³²

In the Six Canons and books written by Confucius and Mencius, I have never heard of the dichotomy between *li* and *qi*, but the Song Confucians were trailblazers in making such a discourse. Moreover, when they identified *Dao* as *li*, that was, after all, an erroneous definition for the term.³³³

In the *Shuzheng*, Dai Zhen tries to make sense of the logic underlying Song metaphysics. Principle is Heavenly principle but is bestowed on all things. Zhu Xi

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Dai Zhen, *Xuyan*, Article 1.

says, "Wherever material force condenses and takes shape, principle is present in it", and conversely, "Were it not for material force, although there would still be this principle, there would be nothing to which it could attach itself".³³⁴ Principle lodges in the heart and mind:

What Dai Zhen calls principle is not what Zhu Xi calls principle, because their elemental sense of the world was different. Dai Zhen claims that all major Song metaphysicians thought alike, with the exception of Zhang Zai:

Only the theories of Master Zhang can be separately recorded. For example when he says: from the transformations of material force "the Way" is derived, and: transformation is Heaven's way, and: when they interact and have effects it is transformation; when they are united and unfathomable it is spirit, if a sage were to arise again there would be nothing to change in these various remarks. Master Zhang saw that necessity is what is meant by principle, and so he did not simply say "spirit", but said, "when spirit is constant". Genuinely to speak like this is not to take principle as separate, like a thing, and is close to the Six Classics, Confucius, and Mencius.³³⁵

It is of course clear from Dai Zhen's testimony on *li* that his sense of what principle is derives from the Six Canons. In these tests, *li* is often paired with *tiao* and *fen* to mean the "internal texture" of things or the "order and arrangement" that can be distinguished among things and affairs.

³³⁴ *Yulei*, 1:3, 5:3a; Shao Yong, *Huangjijing shishu*, 8B:17.

³³⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 15. Zhang Zai, *Zhangzi Quanshu*, SBBY edn, 2:36.

"Principle" (*li*) designates the subtle incipencies that must be distinguished according to kind when [something] is examined; thus it is called "pattern" (*fenli*). With regard to the physical substance of things one speaks of "skin texture" (*jili*), of "capillary passages" (*couli*), and "structural pattern" (*wenli*). [When something is] in its proper place, well ordered and not confused, it is called "orderly" (*tiaoli*).³³⁶

"Principle" always refers to a pattern "that gives the whole its distinctive property or characteristic". After an etymological survey of the word, Dai Zhen ends the first article of the *Shuzheng* with an unsettling statement: "What the ancients called principle was never the same thing as what latter-day scholars call principle".³³⁷

As long as one is tranquil and not yet affected by things, one's blood and breath and heart's discernments are calm and without loss; thus [the text] says "Heaven's nature". When one moves in response to things then desires spring forth from nature, and one man's desires are what all men similarly desire. Thus it says "the nature's desires". When, with one's likings and disliking already formed, one follows one's own likings and disliking to the neglect of those of others, often one cripples others in the indulgence of one's own desires. To return to oneself is to consider how one would feel in response if another were indulging his desires. When feelings reach their proper level, this is the regulation of one's likings and dislikings, and this is what it is to accord with heaven's principle. What the ancients meant by "heaven's principle" was never anything like what latter-day Confucians call "heaven's principle".³³⁸

³³⁶ Ibid. Article 1.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid. Article 2.

To explain this more precisely, Dai Zhen displays the difference between decree and principle. According to Dai Zhen, when the Neo-Confucians talked about *li*, it was equivalent to the ancients' idea of decree (*ming*). Decree and *li* are inexorable limitations imposed on things and human affairs. The capacity to know such a limitation is dependent on a person's learning and wisdom. Thus, he says:

The ancients often talked about decree, whereas men of later ages often talked about *li*, both of which are different terms for the same actuality. The desires craved for by the ear, eye, and by various organs of the body are caused by his nature. If one understands that such desires are necessarily so, he is in accord with the normality of Heaven and earth, and therefore he imposes self-restraint on his desires and dares not trespass against Heaven and Earth's normality. This is what is called decree. Therefore decree is nothing other than the necessary limitation one finds in the naturalness of [human] nature after careful investigation and through understanding of it. Thus it [decree] is the ultimate law inherent in the naturalness. If we allow a thing to run its course naturally but fall into error in the process, it loses its naturalness and is not naturalness per se. Hence, [the discovery of] what is morally necessary is actually the completion of what is natural... Also, it is by means of the desires of the ear, eye, and many other organs that living creatures are nourished. However, if a person permits his desire to run wild and does not control himself, he is bent to drive himself on towards death.³³⁹

Decree and principle are different terms for the same actuality. According to Dai Zhen, decree is nothing other than the necessary limitation one finds in the naturalness of nature, and it can be found after careful investigation and through a proper understanding of it. However, the two concepts differ with respect to

³³⁹ *Xuyan*, Article 3.

nature. Decree is given order in Dai Zhen's term; it is a 'definitive noun', and, on the other hand, principle is the inner coherence of readily shaped things. Dai Zhen discerned "what is antecedent to form" (*xingershang*) and "what is subsequent to form" (*xingerxia*),³⁴⁰ which Zhu Xi interprets as "what is within form" and "what is above form".³⁴¹

By order of decree, capacity is adhered to in moulding humans and creatures into form and substance, each according to its nature. Capacity is also the naturalness of human nature as physical embodiments. Physical capacities are the manifestations of natures; without physical capacities, there can be no human activity at all.³⁴²

Concerning *li*, *li* is not a kind of natural cause or sense organ but is the product of human observation, rather than a physical endowment or cause of shape or form. Even though it is not the first product of nature, principle is also a part of the nature of humans as an inner coherence of its endowments. Dai Zhen claimed that it is this that enables the expansion (or extension) of nature and human morality.

Because the desires are rooted in the blood and breath they are spoken of as "the nature"; but there are limits (pertaining to them) which may not be exceeded of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, (which) is not the same in all

³⁴⁰ *Yi Xici*, 1.12; cf. Legge trans.

³⁴¹ *Shuzheng*, Article 16.

³⁴² *Shuzheng*, Article 29.

men and is limited by the initial (conditions of one's) life, is described as "decreed"; but that all may broaden and fulfil (this excellence) is man's nature.³⁴³

Dai Zhen's concept of *li* can be further explained in three ways:

Li is the pattern of things and is therefore not apart from things: the order of things.

Li is the overall understanding of human desires and feelings: order of desire and feeling.

Li is therefore the function of intellect that enables man to recognise both these points – the first and the second – which is the discerning and guiding ability of the mind to achieve comprehensive goodness in oneself, society, and the universe as a whole:³⁴⁴ the order of human understanding.

Conceiving *li* as the order of things, Dai Zhen proposes a concept of *li* that is highly individualistic and highly empirical, as discussed in the following. *Li* dwells in things and varies with things. It is open to man's observation, and its understanding and discovery depend on man's discernment and distinction. In other words, Dai Zhen considers *li* as the name for what we can discern in things and distinguish in their minute details, which is why *li* is also called the principle of discernment as well as the patterning and the shaping of things. If we know how

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Chungying Cheng (1971), pp. 19-20. Dai Zhen also defines principle as a desire of the intellect.

things differ from one another, we should know the distinguishing traits of these things, these being called the *li* of structuring.³⁴⁵

Li is the inner coherence of *qi*, and it does not exist prior to the latter, nor is it a separate entity that controls the *qi*. *Li* is just a necessary, unchanging law within things and human affairs themselves. What is known as a necessary, unchanging law within things and human affairs is the natural order within them.³⁴⁶

Pointing out perpetual production and reproduction is to verify the existence of a natural order [within a thing]; on the other hand, he knows the meaning of *li*.³⁴⁷

Although every person is complete, the propensities of their physical existence prevent most people from achieving understanding. As mentioned above, in Dai Zhen's view, the Song Confucians distinguish "principle and *qi* as having two separate origins and then put the blame on the physical form". Certainly, they try to mix and knead principle and *qi* into a single lump, but "this did not prevent these two things from being each a separate entity". Principle is always described in "the most glowing manner", characterised as "pure and

³⁴⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 1.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, see Article 2-5.

³⁴⁷ *Xuyan*, Article 1.

expansive” and placed in a category above the transforming force of the *yin* and *yang*.³⁴⁸

When Masters Cheng and Zhu honour principle and regard it as something conferred on the self by Heaven, it is like Xunzi honouring propriety and righteousness and regarding them as something conferred on the self by the sages. When they say that principle has been corrupted by physical form and materiality, so that for all who are not sages physical form and materiality are in all respects greatly deformed, this is Xunzi’s theory that nature is evil. And yet when they say that principle is a separate thing that is anchored and attached [to physical form and materiality], it is like Lao, Zhuang, and the Buddhists saying that the True Governor or True Emptiness is anchored and attached to the physical body. If principle is complete and self-sufficient it becomes difficult to say that one must study in order to illuminate principle, and therefore they could not but distinguish “principle” from “material force” as “two roots”, and lay the blame [for the difficulty of apprehending principle] on physical form and materiality. Their theory is put together from a variety of mixed elements, and leads scholars into confusion and doubt. Although the formulations of the Six Canons, Confucius, and Mencius are all there, [the learner] merely becomes accustomed to them instead of grasping their truth, and no longer seeks to comprehend them. Alas! How could I dare be silent and rest?³⁴⁹

Dai Zhen points out that *li* originates in desire. Putting these two points together, it follows that *li* is man’s feelings and that *li* originates in man’s desire, because if there is no desire, there is no action. He states that:

³⁴⁸ *Shuzheng*, Articles 13 and 14.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Article, 14.

Li exists in desire. In one's dealing with affairs, he is motivated by desire; if there is no desire, there is no action. Since there is desire, there is action, and actions that are appropriate [i.e. action neither in excess nor deficient in what is required] are known as *li*. How could there be *li* if there is no desire or action?³⁵⁰

Dai Zhen further considers *li* to be a result of the investigation of things by analysis after synthesis and by synthesis after analysis.³⁵¹ Of course, *li* in this sense is not devoid of metaphysical basis. What Dai Zhen is objecting to is Zhu Xi's assertion that *li* originates in Heaven and resides in the mind. For Dai, *li* always dwells within things themselves; and what he seeks is the understanding of things. All things follow the natural principles of their existence. But these natural principles of existence (*ziran*) have to be understood as necessary principle (*biran*).³⁵² Therefore, Dai Zhen says:

The *li* of things and affairs can be obtained only in an analysis and dissection of the minutiae of things. [...] The ancients take understanding as a matter of analysing the patterning and lining of things. [...] The *li* is to be found in the unchangeable rule in all things as well as in human affairs. [...] The *li* will clearly reveal itself when we seek the unchangeable law in all things and in human affairs that are by themselves necessary. And to say that *li* and *qi* are mixed together and yet separate entities is to make a learner seek in vain such entities even though his head has turned white.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Ibid. Article 10.

³⁵¹ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Duan Yucai*, See also the *Nianpu (Biographical Chronology of Dai Dungyuan)*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

³⁵² *Shuzheng*, Article 14-15.

³⁵³ *Xuyan*, Article 3.

To summarize this chapter, Dai Zhen completely rejected the abstract and metaphysical concept of *li* in Neo-Confucian philosophy as being not in accord with the benevolence and reality of human desire and feeling.

The sage is also a man, and everyone praises an exhaustive grasp of human principles as sagely wisdom. But an exhaustive grasp of human principles is nothing else but an exhaustive grasp of what is necessary in the activities of daily life. To push out to the limit with regard to what cannot change is [what is meant by] the necessary, and this is to speak of the perfection [of the matter at hand], not to penetrate to its root. The later Confucians searched too far, taking ideas and arguments meant only in reference to the perfection [of things] as if they were substantial entities, and saying that these achieved completion when “merged” with material force. Those who heard [these theories] became accustomed to them and did not examine them, and did not know their difference from the words of the Six Cannons, Confucius, and Mencius.³⁵⁴

b. Dai Zhen’s Metaphysics of The Way

Dai Zhen uses the same words when referring to the five agencies and describing *Dao*. He states that the *yin* and *yang* connote the five agencies just as the five agencies connote the *yin* and *yang*. The five agencies and *yin* and *yang* determine that things become what they are. It is they that are the cause of the

³⁵⁴ Ibid. Article 13.

various forms of distribution. Things have their individual natures, which in turn have their own unity. Conversely, these individual natures are derived from *Dao*, the *yin* and *yang*, and the five agencies that are the elemental differentiations of *yin* and *yang*. *Dao*'s power to individualize things can be seen as one of its chief characteristics. Given such an understanding, it is easy to see why there are individual things and individual men: individual things and individual men are different from each other because they have different distributions of *Dao*.³⁵⁵

The *Yi* says: "one *yin*/one *yang* is what is meant by the Way; what continues it is goodness, and what form it are natures".³⁵⁶ Dai maintains the ethereal transformation of the twin forces of *yin* and *yang* in his cosmology. He writes:

Dao means unceasing transformation [...] Perpetual production is the origin of transformation, and perpetual production in an orderly manner is the proper course of transformation.³⁵⁷

Generally speaking, the perpetual ethereal transformation in the universe is known as *Dao*; and in human affairs, *Dao* is the normal course in human relations in daily life, which is similar to unceasing ethereal transformation:

As Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi perceived that the ethereal transformation of *yin* and *yang* is untraceable, they therefore regarded all concrete matters as coarse and sought the formless [*li*] as something sublime...

³⁵⁵ *Shuzheng, Quanjì*, Article 8.

³⁵⁶ *Yi, Xici*, 1.5.

³⁵⁷ *Yuanshan*, chapter 1.

According to them, they were suddenly enlightened to the fact that herein lies the distinction between *li* and *qi*.³⁵⁸

For his analysis of word *Dao*, Dai Zhen gives a semantic analysis in the context of the *Book of Changes* to confirm the meaning of the metaphysical term.

There is a difference in the usage of the ancients between the expressions “is what is meant by” (*zhi wei*) and “is called” (*wei zhi*). “Is what is meant by” always takes what comes before it as the meaning of what comes after it. The *Yi*’s One *yin* and one *yang* is what is meant by the Way gives an account of the Way of Heaven, and is like saying that “the Way” means one *yin* and one *yang*. [But] “Is called” always uses the term that follows it to make a distinction with regard to the actuality that precedes it.³⁵⁹

Dai Zhen clearly demonstrates the word usage of *The Book of Changes* (*Yi*), according to Dai’s definition.³⁶⁰ Thus he says:

What is antecedent to form is called the Way; what is subsequent to form is called a vessel. The Way or of vessels, but merely uses “the Way” and “a vessel” to distinguish between “antecedent to form” and “subsequent to form”. “Form” refers to what has already achieved physical form. “Antecedent to form” is like saying “before form”, and “subsequent to form” is like “after form”. When *yin* and *yang* have not yet achieved physical form, this is what is meant by “antecedent to form”; it is clear that they are not “subsequent to form”. “Vessel” refers to what does not change once it is completed; “the Way” refers to what “substantiates things and cannot be left out”. Not only are *yin* and *yang* not “subsequent to form”: when the five modes [appear as] water,

³⁵⁸ *Xu Yan*, Article 2.

³⁵⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 16.

³⁶⁰ Nowadays this usage of the Chinese phrase for “is called” is widely accepted by Chinese Classicists. This distinction between the usages of the words was discovered by Dai Zhen.

fire, wood, metal, and earth they have physical matter, can be seen, and are certainly “subsequent to form” and “vessels”, but their material force, which men and things all receive and embody, is “antecedent to form”.³⁶¹

When we examine the theories regarding “what is antecedent to form” (*xingershang*) and “what is subsequent to form” (*xingerxia*),³⁶² we find that what Dai Zhen says about “what is antecedent to form” and certainly what he says about “what is subsequent to form” both fit into Zhu Xi’s category of “what is within form”. Zhu Xi’s notion of “what is above form”, in other words, the realm of “principle”, simply does not exist in Dai Zhen’s thought.³⁶³ When we examine the theories regarding the “successive movement of *yin* and *yang*”, we again find that the realm of “principle” - that is to say what Zhu Xi considers to be the “reason” (*suoli*) underlying “the successive movement of *yin* and *yang*” - also does not exist in Dai Zhen’s philosophy. Dai Zhen defines his own categories for “what is antecedent to form” and “what is subsequent to form”: “form is the designation for things that have definite shapes and characteristics. To say something is antecedent or above form is like saying ‘before there is any form’; to say something is subsequent to or below (or within) form is like saying ‘after there is form’; there exists the realm of *qi*, which is related to objects and forms, but not the realm of principle; it is merely the case that the idea of principle as “reason” and “something above shape” is missing.”³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ *Suizheng*, Article 17.

³⁶² *Yi, Xici*, 1.12; cf. Legge trans.

³⁶³ *Shuzheng*, Article 17.

³⁶⁴ Yamanoi Yu (1978), p. 478.

Tracing back the origins of men and things, it ends with this. In the Six Canons and in the writings of Confucius and Mencius I have not heard of a distinction of principle from material force, but the later Confucians invented and articulated one, and thus assigned *yin* and *yang* to what is “subsequent to form”.³⁶⁵

It is clear that before the *yin* and *yang* assume shape and characteristics, they should be referred to as being antecedent to form, not subsequent to it. ‘Concrete things’ (*qi*) means those things that have assumed specific forms and no longer undergo change”.³⁶⁶

The [ethereal forces] of *yin* and *yang* flow naturally; and, to say it idealistically when the flow of *yin* and *yang* reaches a state of perfection, it then becomes the *li*. *Li* is nothing other than that which is necessarily so (*biran*), and may be likened to the way in which the flow of the *yin* and *yang* forces is expected to be perfect; it may also be likened to the way in which a person’s actions are expected to be faultless, when we talk about the necessity of the perfect and the faultless, we talk about the matter after the actions, from the point of view of after the – fact, not before; and, moreover, [we can only concretely] make judgment on something in every individual case. How could we use empty words as the criterion by which judgment on a thing [or a person’s action] is to be made, and furthermore, regard [the criterion as the principle which] is mixed together with the corporeal ether, thus becoming the controlling mechanism of a thing?³⁶⁷

Dai remarks that a thing’s nature (*xing*) is derived from the ethereal forces of *yin* and *yang*, in other words physical constituents, ability, and capacity. Nature

³⁶⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 17.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Articles on the Heavenly Way, 16–19.

³⁶⁷ *Xuyan*, Article 3.

means something that is derived from naturalness (*ziran*), whereas benevolence (*ren*) and intellect (*zhi*) are rules resulting from something that is morally necessary (*biran*). Dai continues (as partially quoted above):

The desires of the ordinary man, when loosed to the point of perversity and meanness, lead to wrangling, strife, and disorder; the desires of the sage are all excellent virtue. The desires are the same, but with regard to moral excellence the difference is as great as this. Desires are the spontaneity of blood and breath, and liking this excellent virtue is the spontaneity of conscious knowing: this is the basis on which Mencius says that the nature is good. The spontaneity of conscious knowing always delights in principle and righteousness, but has just been able exhaustively to attain principle and righteousness. When one thoroughly examines [what issues] from the spontaneity of blood and breath in order thereby to know its necessity, this is what is meant by principle and righteousness. Spontaneity in relation to necessity is not two things. When according to the spontaneity [of an action] one thoroughly understands it and there is not the slightest incipient flaw in it, this is its necessity; and if thereupon one is without regret and at peace, this is then spontaneity's ultimate norm. If in giving free rein to one's spontaneity one flows into error, this is to shift and lose one's spontaneity and is not spontaneity. Therefore to return to necessity is to fulfil one's spontaneity.³⁶⁸

Thus, metaphysical arguments on *Dao* and nature lead to the desire and consciousness of man's morality. For Dai Zhen, his main concern and the goal of his metaphysical arguments were the human being and ethics rather than metaphysics itself as a separate entity.

³⁶⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 15.

3. The Ethical Human Being

Both men and things have physical bodies and their endowments are made different by the individualising power of *Dao*. The goodness of *Dao* is defined as the eternal activity of producing life and things, therefore it is human life that, as a direct production of *Dao*, is good and every action of sustaining life is good because bodily self exists. It is at this point that the moral philosophy of Dai Zhen begins. Principle is defined as the order of man's desire and feelings and the order of the organization of human society; through the *li* man can improve his given endowments.

a. Principle and Ethics

With regard to the understanding of *li*, Dai Zhen's criticism of Neo-Confucian ethics is clear and relevant. According to Dai Zhen, the Neo-Confucians locate the *li* of virtue and human nature in a place other than in feelings and desire. Thus, after they denounce feeling and desires as being totally devoid of *li*, according to Dai Zhen, Neo-Confucians have no basis for justifying ethical principles other than their arbitrary opinions, which, only serve to diminish an individual's life.³⁶⁹ For Dai Zhen, *li* was nothing but the appropriateness of human feelings and desire and the harmony of all men in the developments of their feelings and desires. Thus he proclaimed:

³⁶⁹ Ibid. Article 15.

It is “principle” when [appropriate] feelings do not fail. There is never a case of not attaining the [appropriate] feeling and yet still attaining the principle. In all one’s actions towards others one should reflect and silently think: if another were to act towards me in this way, would I be able to accept it? Whenever one demands something of another one should reflect and silently think: if another were to demand this of me, would I be able to fulfil it? If one measures one’s stance toward others by oneself, the principle will be clear. “Heaven’s principle” refers to spontaneous patterning. Spontaneous patterning is precisely a matter of using my feelings to assess the feelings of others so that all reach their proper level.³⁷⁰

According to Dai Zhen, since *li* is on a metaphysical level nothing other than patterns and organisations inherent in concrete things and revealed by cognitive capacities, *li* should consequently be found in human feelings and needs, in that these represent concrete facts in life. Dai Zhen thought that without desires and feelings, no ethical values and activities could be fulfilled and expressed, and so without desires and feelings nothing has any order.

It must be recognised, affirms Dai Zhen, that the reality of human nature is its desires and feelings, which are universal human traits. They are universally human because the use of Neo Confucian notion of principle without the recognition of the value of these traits will lead only to monstrosities to which man will react immediately with aversion. Human needs and feelings that define

³⁷⁰ *Shuzheng*, Article 2.

benevolence have a metaphysical justification: they are derived from universal life, material in the world that is intrinsically good:³⁷¹

Mencius says: even nowadays, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. But this “distress” – and “benevolence” [which fulfils it] – is not something separately stored away in the heart, apart from [the ordinary operations of] conscious knowing. It is because one knows in oneself the love of life and fear of death that one is alarmed at the child’s danger, and feels distress at the child’s [impending] death. If one did not have these feelings of love for life and fear of death, wherein could one feel alarm and distress?³⁷²

Let us consider the question of the distinction between *li* and desire.

According to the Neo-Confucians, either *li* or desire must motivate a person’s action. When they talk about *li*, it seems to them that this is an object that derives its existence from Heaven and that it dwells within the mind. Hence all the Neo-Confucians regard opinion as the *li*. As to their response to affairs, if, luckily, they happen to be correct, it is not that from subtle comprehension of the situation they seek to stabilise it in this way. If, unluckily, having not understood the situation, they hold to their opinion, believing only that they are acting according to Heavenly principle and not out of human desire - so that at the very least one man suffers under the calamity of it, and possibly states and families and all under Heaven suffer under the calamity of it - as long as they believe that it has not issued from desire there is no way they can be awakened. Whenever one

³⁷¹ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 3.

³⁷² *Shuzheng*, Article 21.

holds that principle resides in the heart, and that whatever does not issue from desire must issue from principle, one always takes one's opinions to be principle and brings calamity on all under Heaven.³⁷³

Since it is only a matter of using feeling to assess feeling, with regard to one's affairs it is not that the heart puts forth an opinion to deal with them. Were one to discard feeling and search for principle, this so-called principle would be nothing but an opinion. One cannot give free rein to one's opinions without bringing disaster upon the people.³⁷⁴

Dai Zhen states unambiguously that *li* is the order of man's feelings:

To understand people's feeling in the world, to fulfil people's desire in the world, and to evaluate their feeling and desire without being amiss is *li*.³⁷⁵

Interpreting *li* in terms of the order of man's feelings and desire represents the major change in thinking found in the *Shuzheng*; when Dai Zhen wrote his *Xuyan*, he had not yet arrived at this view. On the basis of *qi*, he makes a distinction between the interpretation of *li* among men in ancient times and in the present in the following way:

When the ancients spoke of principle, they sought it according to human feelings and desires, and took causing them to be without flaw as principle. When moderns speak of principle, they seek it apart from

³⁷³ Qian Mu, *Dai dongyuan, Quanji*, vol. 7, pp. 506-507. See also *Shuzheng*, Article 43.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Article 5.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Article 43.

human feelings and desires, and take causing them to be repressed and uncaring as principle. This distinction of principle and desire is suited to turning all men under Heaven into swindlers and frauds. How can words express its injuriousness?³⁷⁶

Dai Zhen noted that principle must base on the one's concrete individual feeling and desire.³⁷⁷

As long as one is tranquil and not yet affected by things, one's blood and breath and heart's discernments are calm and without loss; thus (the text) says "heaven's nature". When one moves in response to things then desires spring forth from the nature, and one man's desires are what all men similarly desire: thus it says "the nature's desires". When, with one's likings and dislikings already formed, one follows one's own likings and dislikings to the neglect of those of others, often one cripples others in the indulgence of one's own desires. To return to oneself is to consider how one would feel in response if another were indulging his desires. When feelings reach their proper level, this is the regulation of one's likings and dislikings, and this is what it is to accord with heaven's principle.

Moreover, since everything has its natural principle of existence, there should be no a priori imposition made on things – an imposition that is our mind's arbitrary interpretation of things. This, says Dai Zhen, is the reason why we need an open mind in order to understand the variety of *li* in a variety of things. Once we know the variety of *li* in a variety of things, we can obtain insights into the

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

nature of things of various kinds; and, on that basis, we can then make predictions and universal generalisations.³⁷⁸

The mind is capable of understanding moral principle. In Heaven's ethereal transformation, production and reproduction are its natural order. Man and thing distinguish themselves in the process of ethereal transformation, during which each entity obtains its own nature (*xing*). Since man is given a pure nature that is enlightened, he is therefore able to comprehend a thing's nature and Heaven; and if he practises what he knows to the extent of being faultless, he [may be said to] act in accordance with Heaven and Earth's virtues.³⁷⁹

That the mind (*xin*) knows *li* naturally is one possibility; that the mind comes independently to know *li* through an investigation of things is another; the important point here is that both lead to the position of *li*. However, the Song Confucians put the subjective imposition of one's opinions onto *li*. It is precisely this point that Dai Zhen was referring to when he said that the difficulty with the notion of *li* is that it cannot be conceived of in such an a priori and abstract way for settling disagreements concerning *li*, for the settlement of opinions concerning *li* will often rest with those who have the authority of prestige or power. Any argument on the basis of *li* will eventually lead to an argument by those in

³⁷⁸ *Yuanshan*, chapter 2.

³⁷⁹ *Xu Yan*, Article 2.

authority, as is often seen in the case of Dai Zhen's Neo-Confucian opponents those who justify their own vicious and intemperate acts in the name of *li*.³⁸⁰

Mencius says: What hearts affirm in common is principle and righteousness,³⁸¹ the sages only apprehended before me what my heart affirms in common [with others]. Pursuing his critique of [Gaozi's] theory that righteousness is external, he says that principle and righteousness are the nature, not that the nature is principle and righteousness. The nature is that wherein blood, breath, and conscious knowing, rooted in yin, yang, and five modes, are in all cases discriminated and distinguished in humans and creatures. Principle and righteousness man's conscious knowing penetrating when it thinks, and his capacity to be undeluded in what he does. When Mencius took the goodness of the nature as his Way, and in his articulations always cited Yao and Shun.³⁸²

Dai Zhen anticipates a possible objection to his view in light of the following statement by Mencius: "What the mind shares in common is called *li* and *yi* (principle and righteousness); it is the sage who acquires the knowledge of what the mind shares in common with every man".³⁸³ The objection is to the idea that *li* can be localised in the mind. Although Dai Zhen agrees with this statement of Mencius', he sees no reason to draw from it the conclusion that the mind is *li* or

³⁸⁰ Ibid. Chapter 2.

³⁸¹ *Mencius*, 6A7.

³⁸² *Shuzheng*, Article 21.

³⁸³ *Mencius*, 6A7.

that *li* is the mind, as the Neo-Confucians of the Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming School appear to have done:³⁸⁴

From antiquity to the present, what may be said generally of the natures of humans and creatures is that they each differ in physical kind. Speaking specifically of [those possessed of] blood and breath, they not only each differ in physical kind, but their consciousness is also different. Those humans differ from the birds and beasts by virtue of their possession of propriety and righteousness – which is so because in truth human consciousness is very far from [that of other living] things – [that] is what Mencius calls the goodness of the nature. But Xunzi, seeing propriety and righteousness as something that the knowing of the ordinary man cannot reach, ascribed it separately to the sage.³⁸⁵

Concerning the objectivity of *li* in concrete things and the rationality of the mind as being capable of knowing *li*, Dai Zhen believes that the mind is not separated from the life materials of which we are made. The mind and intelligence are only the subtle and refined parts of our natural existence. The activity of the mind – thinking – is the subtle and refined part of the mind. In all living things, according to Dai Zhen, there exist refined and subtle parts, refined and subtle to different degrees and on different levels. Even within the order of man there exists the difference between the intelligent and the obtuse. But this fact does not affect the objectivity of *li*. The mind knows *li* only in the light of learning and discerning. The more learning and investigation a mind receives, the more *li* it will discern in things. But to say so is not to confuse *li* with the mind or with the nature of human beings, as the Neo-Confucians do. It is in this sense

³⁸⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 21. In this article, Dai Zhen criticises the Neo-Confucians.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 27.

that Dai Zhen declares that desire and virtue come from the same root: the nature.³⁸⁶

In the *Shuzheng*, Dai Zhen compares moral growth to physical growth: just as blood and *qi* desire food and drink as nourishment for growth, the knowing mind desires learning to enlarge itself. When the body develops, it begins by being immature and small, but ends in wisdom. Growth is an extension and an expansion, but according to Dai Zhen, the Song thinkers had a different view of moral development.³⁸⁷

Cheng Hao says that “When sages and worthies discussed Heavenly virtue, they thought that each person is naturally complete and self sufficient”.³⁸⁸ Although complete and self sufficient, when nature is actualised (or, as Zhu Xi put it, “when nature is implanted in *qi*”³⁸⁹), it can become fettered and even destroyed. Cheng Yi calls this “turning one’s nature into feelings”.³⁹⁰ Thus, both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi advocate learning – learning purifies nature of its “sauce and salt”.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ *Yuanshan*, chapter 3.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Article 14. See also *Dai Zhen’s Letter to Peng Yunchu*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

³⁸⁸ Cheng Yi, *Yishu*, 1:1.

³⁸⁹ *Zhuzi quanshu (Complete Writings of Master Zhu)*, 1714 edn, 43:3b.

³⁹⁰ *Ercheng wenji (Collected literary writings of Cheng Yi)*, in *ErCheng Quanshu*, 4:1a.

³⁹¹ Zhu Xi distinguished original nature from physical nature as follows: “Original nature is like water; physical nature is as though you have sprinkled some sauce and salt in it, and it then acquired a peculiar flavour.” See *Zhu–zi Quan–shu*, 43:4a (trans. Wing–tsit Chan), *A Source*

From Dai Zhen's point of view, the Song Confucians had to distinguish principle and *qi* as two separate origins and then put the blame on physical form. Otherwise, it would be illogical to advocate learning. This is the same as saying that having received the Heavenly principle is no different from having none at all. The principle bestowed in the heart and mind is like the four thousand pecks of grain that a wealthy man has in his storehouse. He labours each day to obtain a peck of grain and then says, "What I've earned with effort, I already possess in my storehouse".³⁹²

Dai Zhen's theory of understanding follows from his concept of principle. Principle is that which has endured the test of time despite differences in historical circumstance and individual experience; it does not contradict Nature's mode of operation and "can be laid before the spiritual beings without misgivings or fear". What is necessary, therefore, refers to the principle "that cannot be altered no matter how far it reaches". Dai Zhen says that when he speaks of principle, he has in mind "its extension" and he is not interested in knowing "its origin".³⁹³

Dai Zhen believes that *li* is the balanced manifestation of individual life in both its rational and emotive dimensions in a society and a community. In this

Book in Chinese Philosophy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 624.

³⁹² *Shuzheng*, Article 14. For example, when Master Cheng Yi says, "be reverent to cure it and restore it as it was", he does not mention learning, and Master Zhu, in his discussion of Zhongyong's (1.5) "extend the inner and harmonious," seems to regard it as a matter of "cautious apprehension" and "inner watchfulness" see Zhu Xi, *Zhong yong zhangju*.

³⁹³ *Shuzheng*. Article 13. The first quotation comes from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 29.

sense, *li* is derived from the vital nature of man: it is the disciplined and well-regulated expression of the feelings and needs of man. *Li* should not, and cannot, be separated from its function as the embodiment of universal needs and feelings if harmony and proper satisfaction of feelings and needs are to be obtained. *Li* must therefore be conceived as being consistent and coherent with its reasonable application. But the phrase “reasonable application of *li*” implies that *li* is to be found only in concrete life forms and activities, such as needs and feelings.³⁹⁴ In fact, *li* is the internal ordering and balancing of feelings and desires that contribute to or lead to the being of an individual in all his relationships with other individuals. As such, feelings and desires need to pass the test of universal agreement and universal application in order to be justified:³⁹⁵

The “common tendency” is something like the tendency to the perfection of humaneness and the fulfilment of righteousness, and “diverse paths” are something like individual distinctions of circumstance; the “single attainment” is something like the understanding of the heart’s discernment being fulfilled in sagely wisdom, and the “hundred considerations” are something like according with things to understand their norms.³⁹⁶

The test of universal agreement and universal application was criticised by Hu Shi as being misleading on the grounds that the individual who thinks of others’ feelings in terms of his own may project his own feelings into others.³⁹⁷ This is a

³⁹⁴ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 1.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Article 39.

³⁹⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 41.

³⁹⁷ Hu Shi, *Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan, Quanjil*, p. 402.

plausible criticism only when one fails to see the open texture of this test. Nothing can guarantee the absolute desirability of a certain feeling and action. But the continuous and consistent use of the test of universal agreement and universal application should gradually bring goodness to full realisation, because, over a period of time, one's intelligence becomes refined and one's understanding and experience increase. It is only in this context of learning, of a type that contains a vision of comprehensive goodness, that the test of universal agreement and of universal application can be seen to be the most rewarding and most appropriate method of establishing value-claims and, for that matter, the genuine value of morality or virtues.³⁹⁸

b. Decree and Capacity

Every creature is different and every man is also different according to his decree and capacity. Consequently, each creature has its own desires and feelings to fulfil and to express as part and parcel of its life. As such, Dai Zhen claimed that whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture.³⁹⁹ It is according to decree and capacity that man has his physical body and all the senses, desires and feelings that make his life possible. It is through the individualising power of *Dao* that man can do his moral activities as a subject.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 410. See also *Yuanshan*, Chapters 2 and 3, and *Shuzheng*, Articles 41-42.

³⁹⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 10.

To say the above, according to Dai Zhen, is not to ignore the distinction between men and things. Things have small endowments from *Dao* and remain things, whereas man takes great endowments from *Dao* and becomes a man as a result.⁴⁰⁰ All things in the world, including men, are created, individualised, and ordered by *Dao*, and, different as they are, they still possess something in common. As desires (*yu*) and perceptive abilities (*jue*) constitute parts of the nature of things, animal beings and men share the same desires and perceptive abilities.⁴⁰¹

“Capacities” are what Mencius speaks of as “the capacities that Heaven bestows”.⁴⁰² humans and the hundred creatures each according to its nature becoming form and substance, so that perception may thus discriminate and distinguish them. When the transformations of material force bring forth humans and creatures, in their limitation to what has been allotted they are spoken of as “decreed”; as to their becoming the original fundament of humans and creatures they are spoken of as “natures”; as physical embodiments they are spoken of as “capacities”. Because each nature is different, physical capacities also differ. Physical capacities are the manifestations of natures; without physical capacities, how could what are called “natures” be observed? If a man or thing is compared with an implement, his capacities are the implement’s material. Formed by allotment from *yin* and *yang* and the five modes, natures each differ, and material capacities thus differ accordingly. It is like smelting gold or tin: if one smelts gold to make an

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. Chapter 2.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. Chapter 3.

⁴⁰² *Mencius*, 6A7.

alloy, the implement is golden, and if one smelts tin to make the implement it is tin. Differences among particular things are like this.⁴⁰³

Dai Zhen analogises the endowments that different metals have as different natural qualities, and applies them to the class of things called men. Men have the same kinds of natural endowments from *Dao*, which forms their nature. Analytically speaking, man has nature, natural inclinations, and necessity, all three referring to the same reality:

When this nature is completed, it has these capacities. Speaking of it in its separate [aspects] it is “decreed”, it is “the nature”, and it is “capacities”; speaking of it as one, it is the nature [endowed by] Heaven [...] Thus Mencius says: form and appearance are the nature [endowed by] Heaven, but only a sage can fulfil the form.⁴⁰⁴ The natures of humans and creatures are not the same, and therefore the form and appearance of each is different. Although the organs and functions of the human form far surpass those of creatures, if with regard to the way of man one it is unable to be without fault, one does not fulfil this form, just as when one articulates something in words that one’s actions do not reach, one does not fulfil these words. “Fulfilling the form”, means the same as “realising the nature” or “realising one’s capacities”.⁴⁰⁵

Decree has two manners of describing the actual and the ideal – the factual and the potential or the ethical and metaphysical – aspects of man and Heaven. Dai Zhen distinguishes between the natural and the necessary. The mind, intelligence, capacities and performing virtues are what are naturally inherent in

⁴⁰³ *Shuzheng*, Article 29.

⁴⁰⁴ *Mencius*, 7A 38.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

man. Further, it is natural that man should have his individual human qualities. But whether man fulfils his capacities to the utmost is a matter of individual development and cultivation.⁴⁰⁶ If man is to conform to the metaphysical virtues of *Dao*, it is necessary that he develop his nature and capacities to the utmost; and if man develops his nature and capacities without omission, he is said to realise the virtue of Heaven and Earth, which is also the virtue of man. Dai Zhen calls this the virtue of man – a result of the development of human nature in conformity with the activities of Heaven and Earth – *li*. In this sense, *li* is again not an abstraction, a principle, to be grasped, as is the case in the Neo-Confucian practice of eliminating one's desire.⁴⁰⁷

The individualising power of *Dao* can therefore be called the power that gives both nature and decree to things and, hence, the power that lays down the natural qualities of things for the things themselves and for their relationship with other things.⁴⁰⁸

Because the desires are rooted in the blood and breath they are spoken of as "the nature"; but there are limits [pertaining to them] which may not be exceeded by benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, [which] is not the same in all men and is limited by the initial [conditions of one's] life, and is described as "decreed"; but that all may broaden and fulfil [this excellence] is man's nature.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Chungying Cheng, 1971, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁰⁷ See, *Shuzheng*, Article, 16-28.

⁴⁰⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 20.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Article 28.

It is suggested that what broadens and fulfils this excellence is man's nature. As we seen above, principle is the extension of human nature and moral virtue is the fulfilling of it. And thus:

The gentleman does not make an excuse of the nature to indulge his desires, and does not make an excuse of the limitations of what has been decreed and so not fulfil his capacities. The later Confucians did not carefully examine the literal meaning, and missed the point of the articulation that Mencius established. "Does not say '[It is] nature'" (*buwei xing*) is not the same as "does not regard it as the nature" (*buwei zhi xing*); "does not say [it is] decreed" (*buwei ming*) is not the same as "does not regard it as decreed" (*buweizhi ming*). Articulating it from this, when Mencius speaks of "the nature" it is precisely "the mouth's [desire for] tastes, the eye's [desire for] colours, the nose's [desire for] odours, and the four limbs' [desire for] ease and rest" that are the nature; when he says "there are no men who lack a tendency to goodness" it is precisely their ability to know the limits [of these desires] and not exceed them that is good, and it is the ability of the blood and breath and conscious knowing to be grounded in what is without fault that is good; and when he speaks of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom it is precisely to designate that blood and breath and conscious knowing, which originate in Heaven and Earth's virtues.⁴¹⁰

Further more, Dai Zhen raised an interesting point in his discussion of human nature. He observed that, "in common speech, from ancient times to the present, when we want to condemn someone who is stupid, we do so by saying emphatically that 'he does not have human nature (*renxing*),'⁴¹¹ but in the case of a person who still has some evidence of goodness, we say that 'he still has some

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ The two classical phrases with which the colloquial expressions on "having" or "lacking" human nature are paired are both taken from Mencius' "Ox Mountain parable" Mencius 6A8.

human nature.' Human nature, therefore, has been equated with goodness".⁴¹²

His remarks imply that Mencius acquired his ideas regarding human nature from this common figure of speech. A person devoid of goodness, in Mencius' words, "is one who, in the eyes of others, resembles an animal".⁴¹³ According to Dai Zhen, goodness is merely the characteristic of being a natural human; it is not a holy entity or perfect principle that is something supernal and beyond human reach.⁴¹⁴

There are different degrees of goodness, which explains Confucius' remark that "by nature men are nearly alike".⁴¹⁵ Dai Zhen likes to describe the gradation as shades, measuring goodness in terms of light and darkness. Confucius uses the words "wisdom" and "stupidity" to indicate that the differences in the human nature of different people are a matter of degree; "wisdom" and "stupidity" do not suggest an antithetical relationship in the way that "goodness" and "badness" do. When Confucius says that human natures are alike,⁴¹⁶ he means that they are alike in being good but differ in the degree of their goodness. All human beings are capable of the feelings of commiseration, shame and dislike, deference and compliance, and a sense of right and wrong. These feelings did not originate from an external source; Heaven did not confer goodness on man. Human beings are good because they are living beings of blood and *qi*, and their knowing minds

⁴¹² Ibid. Article 23.

⁴¹³ *Mencius*, 6A: 8.

⁴¹⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 23.

⁴¹⁵ Confucius, *Analects*, 17A.2.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

have the potential to develop their native endowments to the full. Goodness is not the same in everyone because it cannot be ascribed to an unchanging, universal principle; as a function of the particular, its expression is idiosyncratic.⁴¹⁷

Dai Zhen wrote:

What constitutes a man is his entire composition. If we leave out of this composition his physical endowment and physical body, what does he have left to be called a man? When Mencius said, "man by nature is good", he had in mind his entire composition, whereas Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi talked about nature in abstract terms, as an entity whose original substance is distinct from what is human.⁴¹⁸

c. Nature and necessity

Dai Zhen regards goodness and nature as overlapping, although nature refers to concrete things, developments and goodness, to the balanced and perfect development of natural things. When a thing is called good, that thing must be in accord with the nature of Heaven and Earth. Different things may have different natures, but their goodness is always one not two. In light of these explanations, the significance of Dai Zhen's assertion in the following should stand out immediately:

⁴¹⁷ *Shuzheng*, Article 27.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Goodness is what [something] must be, and [its] nature is what it spontaneously is. In merging with what it must be it completes what it spontaneously is; thus spontaneity's furthest reach, and the Ways of Heaven and Earth and of humans and creatures are fulfilled in it. With regard to Heaven and earth, [spontaneity and necessity] are not articulated separately, but with regard to humans and creatures their separate articulation becomes clear.⁴¹⁹

It is common sense that the facts cannot produce the value; however, Dai Zhen claimed that these two aspects of "what something must be" it and "what it is" must be merging. He explains how to extract moral values from the facts.

Dai's proposition is based on the human nature that is a direct emanation of the *Dao* and, it is claimed, the heart of the *Dao*. It is said that one of the aims of Dai's strong monistic philosophy is to unify the fact with value. Within this point is an attack on Neo-Confucianism, since the Neo-Confucians, when explaining material fact and metaphysical moral value, divide nature into two.⁴²⁰

Thus the extension of human nature from nature to necessity denotes the development from physical fact to moral value; and in Dai Zhen's moral philosophy, the extension of human nature leads to the way to become a sage. However, as G.E. Moore indicated, this may be merely another naturalistic fallacy that is to be avoided.⁴²¹ Nevertheless, it is suggested that there as a certain degree of validity and worth in Dai's premise and definitions of nature as goodness, because it denotes a creative and active form of "what it is" itself is

⁴¹⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 32.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ For G.E. Moor, see *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1989).

“what should do”. Because Dai Zhen thought all creatures emanate from *Dao*, and it is through the individualising power of *Dao* that every creature has its capacity and its own desires and feelings.⁴²²

Thus Dai Zhen says:

Something that develops naturally is known as in accord (*shun*); something that develops from moral necessity is known as constant (*chang*); something that develops intrinsically is known as virtue (*de*). All the *Dao* under Heaven are ultimately in accord; all the teachings under Heaven unify in [undeviating] constancy; and, under Heaven everyone’s nature is similar in virtue. [...] A being, which has blood, breath, and consciousness, has desires. Since a person’s nature is manifested in desires, he would therefore exhibit a love for and an aversion to certain sounds, colours, and odours; and, since he has desires he therefore has feelings. Since a person’s nature is manifested in his feelings, he therefore exhibits joy, anger, sorrow, and jubilation, all of which are divided into the two aspects of Capacity and natural expression (*shu*) among these feelings.⁴²³

Like water seeking low ground,⁴²⁴ human nature has inclinations. All eyes prefer beautiful colours, all ears pleasant sounds, and all mouths tasty food.

Inclinations are desires, and they are not limited to our physical senses. We are

⁴²² *Shuzheng*. Chapter 1.

⁴²³ *Yuanshan* Chapter 2.

⁴²⁴ *Memcius*, 1A6.

born also with an appreciation of righteousness and principle – we have an inborn moral sense that takes man from nature to necessity.⁴²⁵

According to Dai Zhen, the five human relationships are referred to in the *Doctrine of the Mean* as the Way of Man (*rendao*), because man cannot act outside the context of these relationships. These five human relationships, on the one hand, depend for their existence on the nature of man and the nature of *Dao*; on the other hand, they must prescribe how human beings should act and live in the context of these relationships. It is in terms of these prescriptions that the nature of man is defined; and it is by following these prescriptions that the nature of man will be developed.⁴²⁶

According to Mencius, these prescriptions are as follows: between father and son, there must be affection (*qin*); between ruler and subject, there must be righteousness (*yi*); between husband and wife, there must be differentiation (*bie*); between the elder and younger brothers, there must be orderliness (*xu*); between friend and friend, there must be truthfulness (*xin*). Affection, righteousness, distinction, orderliness, and truthfulness are all the virtues that man is capable of attaining.⁴²⁷ They are natural to humans, but that man should develop and

⁴²⁵ *Shuzheng* Article 29-32.

⁴²⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 33.

⁴²⁷ *Mencius*, 3A 4.

cherish these virtues is a moral requirement and necessity that is rooted in the nature of man and in the nature of *Dao*.⁴²⁸

Man's blood and breath and conscious knowing originate in the transformations of Heaven and Earth. Once there is blood and breath, what supplies and nourishes one's blood and breath are sounds, colours, odours, and tastes. Once there is conscious knowing, one knows [the relationship between] father and son. [The relationship between] elder and younger brother, [the relationship between] husband and wife, and not stopping with the intimacy of a single household one also knows [the relationship between] ruler and subject and [the relationship between] friend and friend. When these five relationships mutually sustain and regulate each other, one responds appropriately to each stimulus with pleasure, anger, sorrow, or delight. When the desires of sound, sound, sight, odour and taste are united with the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and delight, the Way of man is complete.⁴²⁹

Dai Zhen formulated Classical Confucian ethics in terms of his doctrine of nature, which is natural, and goodness, which is necessary or obligatory. All the precepts that should govern the five basic human relationships are the bases for the cardinal virtues⁴³⁰ – benevolence, propriety and righteousness – which are

⁴²⁸ Ibid. Article 36.

⁴²⁹ Ibid. Article 28.

⁴³⁰ Ibid. Dai Zhen explains the cardinal value to be genuineness: Dai Zhen said that when one is entirely wise, humane, and courageous, and one's practice of these virtues in the daily functioning of human relationships is such that all under heaven see the benevolence and see the propriety and righteousness of these relationships, and there is nothing to add in the way of excellence, this is to understand through genuineness. When one learns in order to explain and clarify the daily functioning of human relationships, and seeks to fulfil benevolence and to fulfil propriety and righteousness, and the extent of one's wisdom, benevolence, and courage thus daily increases until it reaches the abundance of a sage's virtue, this is to become

described above and which represent the development and fulfilment of human nature and the nature of *Dao* in perfect and balanced form.

If one penetrates to the furthest refined incipencies of the daily functioning of human relationships, it is spoken of as “benevolence”, as “righteousness”, and as “propriety”, and if one unites these three to judge the affairs of the world, it is like a weighted steelyard in relation to the heavy and the light, if with regard to benevolence; in Heaven what makes for orderliness in the successive transformations of material force, and in man what makes for the unconfused penetration of this orderliness by his heart's knowing, is the virtue of wisdom.

Dai Zhen claimed that all the value of virtue comes from the activity of *Dao* and the moral virtue of accordance with it. Virtue is therefore a product of man's “producing and sustaining”, in other words a product of desire and feeling.

Only virtue of orderliness is producing and sustaining [the myriad creatures], and if the orderliness is lost the Way of producing and sustaining is cut off. Paired bi-names such as “benevolence and righteousness” and “wisdom and benevolence” all link producing and sustaining with orderliness and articulate them jointly.⁴³¹

Virtues all pertain to the preservation of human society and the development of individual natures in their social context. That is why benevolence is the virtue of preserving life among men and of developing individual natures in the context of man, and also why benevolence is considered the most basic

genuine through understanding.

⁴³¹ Ibid. Article 36.

virtue. Every imperfection regarding the practice of other virtues can be traced to an imperfection in the practice of benevolence. Propriety and righteousness are the most conspicuous and concrete results of practising benevolence. They are all based on the patterning and ordering activities of *Dao*, just as benevolence is based on the creative activity of *Dao*. Since the patterning and ordering activities of *Dao* are at the same time the creative activity of *Dao*, a man of true benevolence is at the same time a man of propriety and righteousness. Dai Zhen thus sees an organic interrelationship among all the fundamental virtues in the *Analects of Confucius*:⁴³²

Dai Zhen explained it augments benevolence and righteousness with propriety, as that by which benevolence is perfected and righteousness is fulfilled. One speaks of the flourishing of virtue as complete in wisdom and benevolence alone, but when the *Zhongyong* denoted; wisdom, benevolence, and courage – these three are the world's universal virtue.⁴³³ It augments wisdom and benevolence with courage, as that by which virtue is realized.⁴³⁴

From blood, breath, and conscious knowing one speaks of wisdom, benevolence, and courage: it is not that apart from blood, breath, and conscious knowing there is a separate "wisdom", "benevolence", or "courage" to be conferred on them. With regard to the daily functioning of human relationships one speaks of benevolence and of propriety and righteousness: were it not for the daily functioning of human

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Zhongyong*, 20.8.

⁴³⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 36.

relationships there would be no “benevolence”, no “righteousness”, and no “propriety”.⁴³⁵

Thus he said:

Articulated with regard to its fulfilment, the Way has nothing greater than benevolence, together with righteousness and together with propriety; articulated with regard to what is able to fulfil it, the Way is nothing greater than wisdom, together with benevolence and together with courage. In the three [attributes of] benevolence, righteousness, and propriety, goodness is complete; and although the excellences of the virtuous nature cannot be numbered, in the three [attributes of] wisdom, benevolence, and courage, virtue is complete. It is the full actuality of goodness and virtue that is meant by genuineness.⁴³⁶

Dai Zhen, consistent with his reconstruction of Classical Confucianism, holds that not only are virtues a natural basic element in man but that they also are part of daily human relationships; for it is in the context of daily life and human relationships that man discovers virtues such as benevolence, propriety and righteousness. Since any given basic human relationship presupposes, and gives rise to, all other human relationships, it can be shown that each of the basic virtues also presupposes and gives rise to other virtues. There is another reason for the interrelation of virtues. Dai Zhen claimed that all virtues are nothing but the Way of man in his creative activity, which he defined as goodness.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. Article 38.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

Benevolence is the virtue of producing and sustaining. The common people are contented. For daily they have their drink and food: it is in just this that the way of man is produced and sustained. When one man fulfils his life, and extends this so that he fulfils it in common with the entire world, it is benevolence. The articulation of benevolence may encompass righteousness: if one's cherishing and love [of intimates], recognition [of elders], and nourishing [of the young] do not accord with correct and magnanimous sentiment, then righteousness is [in that measure] not fulfilled, and benevolence also is [in that measure] not perfected. The articulation of benevolence may encompass propriety: if there are no distinctions of close and distant or of above and below, then propriety is lost and benevolence is also not attained. The *Yi* says: establish the Way of man as benevolence and righteousness.⁴³⁷

d. The Ethics of the Way

Dao is described as having a metaphysical value and an ethical value, because the creative activities of *Dao* are none other than the ethical value of human nature, which is equated with goodness. The foremost metaphysical value of *Dao* is benevolence, but there are two more cardinal values to be followed according to the function of *Dao*, namely propriety and righteousness. Only human intellect can fully understand of the virtues of *Dao*. According to Dai's definition of nature and moral value, there is value in unifying natural fact and moral value, and the completion of this process of the goodness of *Dao* is in fact man's task. The man who completes this task is a sage.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. Article 36.

According to Dai Zhen, the Neo-Confucians often identify *Dao* with *li*, calling it Heavenly principle (*tianli*), and contrast this with *qizhi*, and as both are related to *Dao*, there should be no more disparaging of the natural functions of desires and feelings in man. What should really concern man is how to fulfil his desires without trespassing against the mean and the balance of the universal creative activities of *Dao*:⁴³⁸

Later Confucian accounts of the Way are largely derived from this. Master Zhu says: *yin* and *yang* are material force and “subsequent to form”; that by which it is “one *yin*/one *yang*” is principle and “antecedent to form”. Principle is what is meant by the Way.⁴³⁹ Master Cheng and Mater Zhu saw that that it would not do for the ordinary man to give free rein to the spontaneity of his blood and breath and conscious knowing, but that [he could] advance by means of the necessity of Principle. The spontaneity of blood and breath and conscious knowing they called the physical temperament, and the necessity of Principle they called the nature. They also united blood and breath with conscious knowing as one root, and then added another root.⁴⁴⁰

There are two observations to be made here concerning Dai Zhen’s view of the relationship between man and *Dao*.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ *Shuzheng*, Articles 16–19.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.* Article 17.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Article 15.

⁴⁴¹ Chungying Cheng (1971), pp. 35-37.

Firstly, Dai Zhen opposes the separation of the natural inclinations of man from his nature. Man, besides having desires and feelings, has intelligence and the capacity to know things. But intelligence and desires and feelings are all natural inclinations.

Whatever has life is not separated from Heaven and Earth's transformations of material force. The ceaseless movements of *yin* and *yang* and the five modes are Heaven and Earth's transformations of material force, and the life [...] of humans and creatures [is] rooted in this. [But] because of inequalities of allotment, completed natures are each different.⁴⁴²

In pointing out that nature is not separate from natural inclinations and that human nature is not separate from human inclinations, Dai Zhen recognises that the inclinations of man differ from those of things in having a special natural inclination towards the principle of reason and righteousness (*liyi*), just as the ears have a special natural inclination towards pleasant sounds, and eyes towards luxuriant colours.

That human beings have a mind and intelligence in their natural inclinations differentiates man from things. That in the mind and intelligence man has a natural inclination towards the principles of reason and righteousness indicates man's capacity for developing into a sage, because the mind and intelligence are faculties that enable him to comprehend principles of reason and righteousness, to see what is appropriate for action in a situation. They are therefore most subtle

⁴⁴² Ibid. Article 21.

and sensitive. When they are fully developed, they are capable of a moral deliberation that makes man free and capable of participating in the activities of *Dao*. In fact, both the mind and intelligence and their natural inclinations toward the principles of reason and righteousness are natural endowments of man. This is the reason why man can be said to be naturally good. Goodness in human nature is not something abstract, but is formed from these natural endowments of man.⁴⁴³

Those who from birth are incorrigibly stupid, and who are difficult to speak with about principle and righteousness, do not change because they cut themselves off from learning. But if [such a one] fears authority or cherishes favours, it often happens that on suddenly encountering one whom he fears or cherishes his heart is opened and he awakens from his stupor. If he then repents and follows the good he is no [longer] incorrigibly stupid, and if he applies himself to learning he will daily advance towards wisdom. When one decides that [someone's] not changing is incorrigible stupidity, often it is on account of his knowing the good and not doing it, or knowing what is not good and doing it; thus it is said that [such people] "do not change", not that they "cannot change". Although from antiquity to the present the incorrigibly stupid have not been lacking and their germinal intelligence is almost the same as an animal's, their irreducible difference from animals is that there is none who cannot change.⁴⁴⁴

Secondly, in his *On Goodness*, Dai Zhen strongly emphasises that the mind, intelligence and the perceptive capacities are comprehended in natural inclinations. All our perceptual and emotional activities, to the extent that they

⁴⁴³ See *Yuanshan*, Chapters 1, 2.

⁴⁴⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 22.

follow their natural bent without trespassing against universal harmony, are the Way of Heaven. There is no reason, therefore, to discriminate against them, because there is no basis on which to make an absolute dichotomy of the mind on the one hand and intelligence on the other, in terms of their source or origin:

To speak [of someone's action] from the viewpoint of the Heavenly Way, that leaves nothing regrettable, is known as Heavenly virtue; to speak [of someone's action] from the viewpoint of his nature's desires, in which no failing can be detected, is known as nature's virtue. The desires of [man's] nature come from naturalness. Nature's virtue is to be cultivated eventually to the extent of being morally necessary and thus fulfils the proper development of what is natural [in man]. And this is known as the full development of the natural. If one knows what is natural, he understands Heaven and Earth's transformation; and if one knows what is morally necessary, he understands Heaven and Earth's virtue.⁴⁴⁵

Dai Zhen argues that *Dao* determines nature, and that the individual natures of things and men are describable in terms of their vital forces and their refined existence – the mind and intelligence. He regarded these vital forces and refined existence as the substance of individual nature, whereas he regarded the *yin* and *yang* and the five agencies as the substance of *Dao*, even though it should be noted that the substance of individual nature is no more than the individualising distribution of the substance of *Dao*. In order to combine this individualising function of *Dao* with its creative and ordering functions, the sense in which Dai Zhen spoke of goodness should be noted:

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

Goodness is the great thing shared in common by all things in the world. *Dao* gives rise to everything; *Dao* individualises everything as everything; and, finally, *Dao* orders and harmonises everything with everything else – all these are connoted in the use of the term “goodness”. [...] Goodness is used to mean what is inherent in man [and things]. That which man has and acts upon is due to his nature and in turn forms their basis. The so-called goodness is nothing other than the formation and transformation of Heaven and Earth and the function and capacities of nature. To know these should enable us to know goodness.⁴⁴⁶

The creative activity of *Dao* is said by Dai Zhen to be a virtue of benevolence. But since the creative activity of *Dao* is also an ordering activity, the ordering of things by *Dao* also reveals the fundamental virtues of *Dao*. Thus, Dai Zhen said:

The very order of things produced by the ordering activity of *Dao* is a virtue of propriety; and the very distinction drawn by *Dao* in its ordering activity is ultimately a virtue of righteousness.⁴⁴⁷

In this metaphysical usage, benevolence, propriety and righteousness are taken to be metaphysical characteristics of *Dao*; and they denote respectively those natural powers of being creative, order, giving, and individuation of the *Dao*. The reason why Dai Zhen used ethical terms to describe the activities of *Dao* is that he believed that it is within the function and structure of universal principle that man acts and things operate.

⁴⁴⁶ Dai Zhen, *Du Yixi cilunxing*, *Quanji*, vol. 6, p. 348. See the opening sentence of the *Yuanshan*. *Quanji*, vol. 6, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 1.

Dai Zhen's argument may be explained as follows: if man participates in *Dao* and is not separated from it, the realisation of ethical virtues can certainly be regarded as the realisation of the virtues of *Dao*. Therefore, by implication, the ethical virtues certainly belong to the true nature of *Dao*. In fact, Confucius and Mencius said that only man could realise, make explicit, and expand the *Dao*. Dai Zhen elaborated this doctrine by formulating the regularity of Heaven and Earth in terms of the three metaphysical virtues: benevolence, propriety and righteousness.⁴⁴⁸

"Nature" and "Way" are terms which refer to the substance and actuality [of something]; "benevolence", "propriety", and "righteousness" are terms which praise its purity and correctness. The human Way is rooted in natures, and natures originate in the Way of Heaven.⁴⁴⁹

According to Dai Zhen, the three metaphysical virtues constitute the basis of the goodness of *Dao* of Heaven and Earth – metaphysical virtues that are not separated from the ethical virtues, just as Heaven and Earth are not separated from man. In man are seen the activities and potential of Heaven and Earth; because human is the heart of Heaven and Earth, the true virtues and powers of Heaven and Earth lie in ethical virtue. At the same time, the metaphysical virtues of Heaven and Earth are the root of human value and virtue; hence, man should realise and conform to human nature through realisation of and compliance with the metaphysical virtues of Heaven and Earth.⁴⁵⁰ *The Book of Changes*

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 32.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. Article 24.

maintains that "Heaven and Earth are completed by the anticipation of human moral activities", (or, in other words, "man can be the third part of Heaven and Earth"). Therefore there is only one nature, but it has two aspects, the metaphysical and the ethical.

That [Confucius] mentions only wisdom and not benevolence or propriety and righteousness [is due to the fact that] wisdom, with regard to heaven and earth, men and things, and affairs and actions, is entirely sufficient to know their unchanging norms; if benevolence were not perfected and propriety and righteousness not fully realised, could one speak of unchanging norms? The one who disclosed and clarified the Way of Confucius was Mencius. There is no difference.⁴⁵¹

One aspect of the nature of man is his intellect, by which he can comprehend the complete capacities of Heaven and Earth. That is, as Dai Zhen saw it in the genuine spirit of Confucianism based on the Six Canons, man in his complete nature partakes of every power and quality of *Dao* and is therefore not separated from *Dao*. Man is rather a plenum of *Dao*, though only in potential form. Nothing is deficient in him, though it is true that individual men may differ in their nature in terms of degrees of crudeness and refinedness or, as Dai described it in terms of the gradation as shades, in degrees of light and darkness. However, human beings are good because they are living beings of blood and breath that emanate from *Dao* that is defined as "goodness", and their knowing minds having the potential to develop their native endowments to the full. Goodness is not the same in everyone because, of necessity,⁴⁵² it cannot be

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² *Shuzheng*, Articles 32-35.

ascribed to an unchanging, universal principle.⁴⁵³ Man is capable of comprehending the metaphysical and ethical value of *Dao* because he has a mind and intelligence that are determined by *Dao*, and because he is the heart of *Dao*. Therefore he is capable of realising all the virtue of *Dao* because the realising and procession of *Dao* is merely a fulfilment of his own nature.⁴⁵⁴

In general, if a man can make sure that what issues from himself is always loyal, treats others with consideration, and conducts his affairs like this, even though he may have faults and errors they will be few. Anyone who has not yet become a sage cannot yet be spoken of as humane or be without regret with regard to propriety and righteousness; but if what one's character has attained and what one's heart's discernment has understood can be called loyal and considerate, it is almost the same. The sage is humane and wise, what is manifest in his conduct of affairs is entirely humane and entirely proper and righteous, and loyalty and consideration are inadequate to define him; yet the ultimate perfection of loyalty and consideration is nothing other than this.⁴⁵⁵

For Dai Zhen, the important point of Mencius' statement lies in the phrase "to share in common". The mind is not denied the function or ability to discern *li*, because the mind can be mistaken in its discernment and universal application. If what the mind finds *li* not to be universally applicable or agreeable, then that so-called *li* is merely opinion. We should not justify the objectivity of *li* simply in terms of the functioning of the mind, i.e. its activities of judging and discerning. The

⁴⁵³ *Shuzheng*, Article 27.

⁴⁵⁴ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 2.

⁴⁵⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 41.

mind can know *li*, and it can judge the rightness or wrongness of a representation of *li*. But only when the true knowledge of *li* is ascertained can *li* be considered as *yi*:

What the *yi*, the Analects, and Mencius say of the nature is all said according to its allotment from *yin* and *yang* and the five modes to become the nature; once [the nature] is formed then humans and hundreds of creatures each differ, being limited to their allotment as partial or complete, thick or thin, clear or turbid, muddled or intelligent. To speak of it only as "life" is to assimilate humans with dogs and oxen and not see their differences.⁴⁵⁶

Yi and *li* can therefore be known only by a conscious mind; thus it is important that we should keep unhampered the mind's faculties of distinguishing and judging. Only then will there be no beclouding of our conception of things and no ambiguities or prejudices in our understanding of things:

Dai Zhen says:

Those with the highest understanding are sages. [...] The sages acquire complete and exhaustive understanding of things and their knowledge knows no limit. [...] In order to seek the enlightenment of the mind, one must pursue learning.⁴⁵⁷

The sage is a man of compassion and insight. He bases his actions on feelings but weighs all things impartially so that what he grasps is "what all

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. Article 21.

⁴⁵⁷ *Xuyan*, Article 1.

human minds agree upon". In Dai Zhen's view, Mencius' employment of the two words "principle" and "righteousness"⁴⁵⁸ should be understood precisely as referring to the making of distinctions and the making of judgments. And when Mencius described Confucius' teaching as complete and correct, he meant that Confucius was able to initiate an "order" (*tiaoli*) of things and to carry it to completion.⁴⁵⁹ Dai Zhen says:

What is grasped as constant is a "norm"; what is entirely in accord with its articulations is "principle"; what is actualised in speech and conduct is "excellent virtue". A "thing" is an affair (or undertaking), meaning something that does not depart from the eating and drinking of daily life. If one casts this aside to speak of principle, it is not what the ancient worthies and sages meant by principle.⁴⁶⁰

On the other hand, what all hearts and minds possess is "an appreciation of moral principles", but not the principles themselves. For Dai Zhen there is an important distinction here: a person can act out of good intent and still fail miserably in what he tries to do because he is not born with a set of moral principles to guide him - the heart and mind know spontaneously what is good and desires it without thought, but without fine discernment and accurate assessment there cannot be correct action.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ *Mencius*, 6A7.

⁴⁵⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 4 and Article 1.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Article 15.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.* Article 6-8.

“Mencius used what was known to prove what was not known. He attributed the desire to hear, see, smell, and taste to the ear, eye, nose, and mouth, and the appreciation of moral principles to the heart and mind. All these desires and preferences are within the bounds [of one's natural tendencies] and are not outside them”.⁴⁶²

What is natural is complex but has discernible order; its internal texture is subtle, but the human mind has the power to comprehend it. For Dai Zhen it is necessary to exercise this power to the full, because when proper differentiation is made, there will be order without confusion.⁴⁶³

The mind and intelligence are the capacities for comprehending these virtues. Moreover, as the mind itself contains the very virtue of benevolence, it is extremely sensitive, empathically energetic, and highly creative. Thus, when the mind is rightly exposed, it will develop what is inherent in it and regulate every desire and feeling and act of man, from its natural state of tranquillity to its natural state of harmony. All the desires of the body are benevolence (*ren*) when fulfilled in accordance with the regulations of the mind, and are therefore creative and beneficial. The ultimate goal of man is to attain the supreme goodness that is described in terms of the three virtues of benevolence, propriety and righteousness. To attain this is to understand the virtues and to practise them.⁴⁶⁴

This is what *Zhongyong* articulates as: to cultivate the Way is instruction. ... Heaven –and earth's transformations of material force

⁴⁶² Ibid. Article 7.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. Article 1-3.

⁴⁶⁴ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 3.

flow forth without end, ceaselessly bringing forth. ...The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is to bring forth. Thus, when one speaks of the Way with regard to Heaven and earth, one need only refer to its substance and actuality, and the Way appears of itself: ... man's conscious knowing may be clear or dim; when it is clear there is no loss, but when it is dim there is confusion and error. Thus, when one speaks of the Way with regard to man, the daily functioning of human relationships is all the actuality of the Way: what accords with nature is the Way, and cultivates one's person with the Way, and the world's far-extending Way is five-fold [if all have] this [meaning]. [But] what is thus designated as the Way cannot but be cultivated: cultivating the Way with benevolence and the Sage's cultivation of it as instruction [both signify] this.. Its purity and correctness are what is meant by establishing the Way of man as benevolence and righteousness, and by taking the "regular" as [the world's] "far-extending Way", when the "regular" is taken as a "far-extending Way", purity and correctness are extended as a standard for the world.⁴⁶⁵

The question arises of how the three virtues of benevolence, propriety and righteousness can actually be understood and practised by man. To answer this, Dai Zhen introduces the Confucian virtues as being the consequence of the effort to understand and practise the metaphysical virtues or the goodness of *Dao*:

"Goodness" is the term that praises the purity and correctness [of something]; "nature" is a term that refers to its substance and actuality. When something is good it is united with heaven; although formed natures differ, their goodness is one. Goodness is what [something] must be, and [its] nature is what it spontaneously is. In merging with what it must be it completes what it spontaneously is; this spontaneity's furthest reach, and the Ways of Heaven and earth and of humans and creatures are fulfilled in it. With regard to Heaven and earth [spontaneity

⁴⁶⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 32.

and necessity] are not articulated separately, but with regard to humans and creatures their separate articulation becomes clear. The *Yi* also says:⁴⁶⁶ when the humane see it they call it benevolence, and when the wise see it they call it wisdom; the common people practise it daily but do not know. Thus the Way of the superior man is rare.⁴⁶⁷

He pointed out that one may approximate benevolence by understanding and practising faithfulness or trustfulness to oneself (*zhong*); that one may approximate propriety by understanding and practising integrity or truthfulness to others (*xin*); that one may approximate righteousness by understanding and practising empathy and compassion or reciprocity (*shu*):⁴⁶⁸ These three moral values are different expression of benevolence by situations man faced.

“What you don’t want” and “what you hate” are no more than the ordinary feelings of men; they do not speak of principle, yet principle is fully realised in this. Since it is only a matter of using feeling to assess feeling, with regard to one’s affairs it is not that the heart puts forth an opinion to deal with them. Were one to discard feeling and search for principle, this so-called principle would be nothing but an opinion. One cannot give free rein to one’s opinions without bringing disaster upon the people.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ *Yi, Xici*, 1.5.

⁴⁶⁷ *Shuzheng*, Article 32.

⁴⁶⁸ Translated by Graham as “Likening to oneself”: A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (Illinois: La Salle, 1989), pp. 20-21.

⁴⁶⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 5.

He further defined these approximate virtues: to fulfil one's capabilities is truthfulness to oneself; to fulfil one's understanding is truthfulness to others; to be fair in one's giving is compassion:

Now let us suppose that the man who gives free rein to his opinions will err, but that the man who seeks out his own feelings will find them. When Zi Gong asked: "Is there a single doctrine that may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said: "Wouldn't it be reciprocity? What you don't want for yourself, don't inflict on another".⁴⁷⁰ The Great Learning, in explaining [how to] govern the state [and so] bring tranquillity to the empire, says only: do not use what you hate in those above in your treatment of those below, or what you hate in those below in your service of those above, to explain [the principles governing] high and low position; do not use what you hate in those before in your precedence of those behind, or what you hate in those behind in your following of those before; to explain [the principles governing] elders and juniors; do not use what you hate in those on the right in your relations with those on the left, or what you hate in those on the left in your relations with those on the right, to explain [the principles governing] relations of equal rank.⁴⁷¹

The remaining two virtues, sincerity (*cheng*) and moral deliberation or assessment (*quan*), though not appearing prominently in the *Analects*, receive

⁴⁷⁰ *Analects*, 15.24. See also 15.3, in which Confucius asks Zi Gong: "So, do you think I am one who learns much and remembers it?" He replied, "Yes, is it not so?" The master said "No, for me there is a unity that threads it together" . Zi Gong also remarks, in 5.13, that this is what Confucius says of the nature and the Way of Heaven that one cannot hear, (see Dai's Preface of *Shuzheng*).

⁴⁷¹ *Shuzheng*, Article 5. The quotation is from the *Great Learning*, X.2, where the three injunctions are summarised as "the way of the measuring square".

special consideration from Dai Zhen. He explains sincerity as being what is real (*shi*) and truthful. It is the same as goodness. Dai Zhen says:

Since it is speaking in terms of *qian* and *kun* [= Heaven and Earth] it does not say "humaneness and wisdom", but says "the Easy and the Simple". When one "knows through the Easy", one's knowing is identical with humaneness and reciprocity; if one is "able through the Simple",⁴⁷² one's ability is identical with "doing what gives one no trouble".⁴⁷³

Dai Zhen continues:

The sages accorded with the desires of their blood and spirits and so made the way of mutual nourishment: thus, to regard another as like oneself is loyalty; to rely on one's own [feelings] and extend them is reciprocity; to be concerned about and rejoice with others is benevolence; what issues from the correct and not from the deviant is righteousness; to be respectful and reverent and not insulting and negligent is propriety; to be free from the flaws of mistake and error is wisdom. What else are loyalty and reciprocity, or benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom?⁴⁷⁴

This is the completion of the development of virtues such as benevolence (*ren*), wisdom (*zhi*), and courage (*yong*) in conformity with benevolence, propriety and righteousness. Hence, it is rooted in the reality of daily life and human relationships and starts with the vital intelligent activities of individual men; it then leads to the reality of moral enlightenment of *zhi*, *ren*, and *yong*. But it may also

⁴⁷² Yi, Xici, 1.i. 6.

⁴⁷³ Ibid. Article. 40.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. Article, 15.

start with learning and moral enlightenment, and then proceed to a state of perfection in daily life. The former is referred to in the *Doctrine of the Mean* as a process that starts with sincerity and moves on to enlightenment; the latter, as a process that starts with enlightenment and moves on to sincerity.⁴⁷⁵

Wisdom, benevolence, and courage – these are the universal virtues. And that it does not speak of righteousness and propriety is not because it is leaving out righteousness or leaving out propriety: wisdom is that by which righteousness and propriety are known. In “benevolence, righteousness, and propriety” the Way is fulfilled, and “wisdom, benevolence, and courage” are that by which it is fulfilled. Therefore benevolence, righteousness, and propriety are without gradations; but wisdom, benevolence, and courage dwell in the person, and so there are differences between “knowing from birth and practising with ease”, of “knowing through study and practising to gain advantage”, and of “knowing through adversity and being forced to practise”.⁴⁷⁶

The virtue of moral deliberation is the ability of a person to weigh values given in all human situations and to make the right decisions for the purposes of action and self-cultivation. Every human situation and relationship must have its own regularity or a principle that is its internal patterning and ordering.

Assessment (*quan*) is the ability to discern the regularity of principle therein and is therefore essential to the development of the human virtues. But a human situation may vary on different occasions. What is most valuable on one occasion may become less valuable on another. Assessment is the ability of a man to discern changes in situation; it is therefore the intrinsic appropriateness of an

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. Articles 29–33.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. Article 33.

action. Thus *quan* is in effect the utmost development of wisdom (*zhi*) or the understanding of things. But the utmost development of *zhi* does not involve the abolition of desires and feelings; rather, it depends upon the satisfaction of feelings in the right places and the understanding of proper values of feelings and desires. To have this understanding is to have assessment.⁴⁷⁷

The daily functioning of human relationships is that by which the sages communicate the feelings and fulfil the desires of all under Heaven; when through assessment its component elements are not lost, this is principle. But because the Song Confucians speak of being “be-clouded by human desire”, as long as [their actions] do not proceed from desire they are confident that they are not beclouded. From antiquity to the present there has been no lack of stern and upright men, hating evil like an enemy, who affirm what should be affirmed and reject what should be rejected, grasping [distinctions of] heavy and light that are obvious and seen by all but not knowing that there are times when assessment [shows that] the heavy here becomes light and the light here becomes heavy: as soon as their affirmations and rejections and their [assessments of] heavy and light are mistaken, all under Heaven receive the calamity of it and cannot be rescued.⁴⁷⁸

Since the Neo-Confucians do not recognise the proper value or significance of a moral life in terms of a universal comprehension of feelings and universal satisfaction of vital desires, they lack the understanding of the virtue of assessment. Because of this, Dai Zhen implicitly suggests that their minds, in a sense, were beclouded:

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. Article 40–43.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. Article 40.

Among the afflictions of men is 'selfishness' and 'beclouding'. 'Selfishness' arises from feelings and desires, through which one becomes humane, or by getting rid of the heart's discernment, through which one becomes wise. Thus the way of the sages and worthies is to be without selfishness but not without desires, while that of Lao, Zhuang, and the Buddha is to be without desires but not without selfishness. It is by means of desirelessness that the latter complete their selfishness, whereas it is by means of unselfishness that the former communicate the feelings and fulfil the desires of all under Heaven.⁴⁷⁹

Dai Zhen emphasises that it is through the most intimate experience of man's desire and feelings, by doing what is proper and appropriate in each different situation in life, and by following what is upright and orderly, that man will approximate benevolence, propriety and righteousness; and that a man truthful to himself and others will be unselfish, sincere, and straightforward. When all these virtues are fulfilled, man will possess the virtue of wisdom (*zhi*), because only then will he truly comprehend the goodness in *Dao* and the virtue of courage (*yong*), a result of his serious and consistent practice of virtues carried out so as to attain the supreme good. A man who develops these virtues and concentrates on the performance of these virtues is called a "superior man" (*junzi*); a man who is able to develop and accomplish these virtues from his nature is called a "sage" (*sheng*). In this way, what is nature in man is finally completed in what is necessary and essential in *Dao*. Thus Dai Zhen says:

What desire is, when it arises, we want to achieve that, it prepares us for the best condition. What the emotion is, there is intimacy and

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*

distance, elder and younger, the high and the low, it is feeling and stirring naturally. What the principle is, it defines the boundary of the delicateness of emotions and desires. It lets the emotion and the desire be [...] apportioned to all people, even if only a little, that is the very principle. Desire, do not worry about lack of desire, the only worry is a glut of it. A glut of desire is a bad habit which is selfish and careless of others. The heart is drowned in it, and behaviour is wicked. Therefore, Mencius said "To nourish the heart there is nothing better than to make desires few". This is proper for emotion. Worrying about the lack of desire and not allowing a glut of them is not proper for the emotions yet. Do not worry about the glut, just try to help oneself away from mistakes through the examination; but if desires are not moved to egoism, this is benevolence. If it is not drowned and wicked it is righteousness. If the emotions were stirred, to be in the state of Equilibrium is the state of Harmony. This is the very principle of Heaven. When the emotions and the desires do not move, and one is calm and makes no mistakes, this is called the innate disposition. The innate disposition is not contained in themselves, the emotion and the desires are not contained in themselves, but only the heavenly principle is just heavenly principle.⁴⁸⁰

The ethical virtues of man obtain not only a sanction but also confirmation in the metaphysical nature of *Dao* or Heaven and Earth. The metaphysical theory of *Dao*, as discussed here, can then be said to provide a sanction and justification for moral virtues, whereas moral virtues provide a confirmation for the metaphysical nature of man. The ethical theory in Confucian philosophy is always embedded in, and consistent with, a theory of reality and a theory of human

⁴⁸⁰ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Peng Yunchu, Quanjì*, vol. 6.

nature, and this is nowhere as evident, as explicit, and as clear as we find in Dai Zhen's concept of goodness:⁴⁸¹

How are [such men] "beclouded by human desires"? The principle of [their] self-confidence is not principle. But where Mencius speaks of holding to the middle without assessment, the later Confucians have added a "holding to principle without assessment".⁴⁸²

e. Selfishness and Becloudedness

In explaining *Dao* and individual things in terms of goodness, Dai Zhen inevitably left unsolved the problem of evil and misconduct. If man has intrinsic goodness in his nature and is naturally capable of cultivating himself into a sage, then the question arises of how the presence of evil and misconduct in life should be accounted for. That man has notions of evil and misconduct is empirically obvious. It is further true that man can distinguish between what ought to be desired and what ought not to be desired.

Desire that is not fallen into selfishness is benevolence; consciousness that is not deluded is wisdom. Benevolence and wisdom are not

⁴⁸¹ *Shuzheng*. Article 40–43.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.* Article 40.

something added to the ability of a thing or a man, since these are inherent in its very nature.⁴⁸³

We are aware that performing what ought to be desired in a situation may entail personal unhappiness and that performing what ought not to be desired may sometimes entail personal happiness. But we usually consider our acts to be wrong if we perform what we ought not to do merely on the basis of avoiding personal unhappiness or pursuing personal happiness. We need an explanation and justification for what we would in general call evil and misconduct. The question here is whether such a justification and such an explanation are possible and intelligible in Dai Zhen's philosophy of goodness:⁴⁸⁴

If a man is born dull, even if he is without desire he will still be dull. Whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture. The defect of desire is selfishness, not beclouding. It is the one who believes he has attained the principle, when what he holds to is actually in error, who is beclouded and does not understand. The two great afflictions of all men at all times, selfishness and becloudedness, are simply the product of two roots: selfishness arises from faults in desiring, and becloudedness from faults in knowing. Desire arises from the blood and spirits, and knowing from the heart. On account of selfishness one blames desire, and on account of desire one blames the blood and spirits; on account of becloudedness one blames knowing, and on account of knowing one blames the heart.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁸⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article, 10.

The Neo-Confucians were the first to attribute evil or misconduct to the inherent and natural qualities (material nature) of man. In this point the Neo-Confucian's theory is comparable with Xunzi's belief that "human nature is evil". However, Xunzi and the Song Confucians differ in their view of human nature. The Song Confucians divide human nature into two - material nature and original nature - and then designate material nature as evil and original nature as good. But Xunzi regards nature as one, not two, and his theory of nature is almost the same as that of Mencius. The most critical difference between Xunzi and Mencius is that Xunzi's views place great emphasis on learning, because his articulations come from honouring the sages, from emphasising learning, and from exalting propriety and righteousness; Xunzi considered men to be capable of becoming sages. In articulating that human nature is evil, he says:

"It is possible for an ordinary man to become a Yu... Ordinary men all can know the righteousness that should rule between father and son at home, and the rectitude that should rule between sovereign and minister abroad... The capacity to know them and the ability to put them into practice belong to the ordinary man... it is clear that it is possible for him to become a Yu. Let an ordinary man addict himself to learning with all his heart and the entire bent of his will, thinking, searching, and closely examining; -- let him do this day after day, through a long space of time, ceaselessly accumulating what is good, and be a third with heaven and earth. Thus sagehood is something reached by accumulation... but if sagehood can be reach by accumulation, how is it that all cannot accumulate?"⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ Xunzi 23, *xinge*, SPPY 17, 6a4-7a1; translation based on Legge, in *The Works of Mencius*, *Prolegomena*, Chapter II, Apendix I, pp. 85-86.

Xunzi's view that human nature is evil is simply that the ordinary man is not as much of a genius a sage. As mentioned above, humans' natural endowments vary and according to endowment there are wise and stupid men, sometimes referred to in the terms 'he does not have human nature'. Confucius uses the words "wisdom" and "stupidity"⁴⁸⁷ to indicate that the differences in the human nature of different people are a matter of degree. In other word, evil in Xunzi's first definition is close to "stupidity" and "selfishness and becloudedness" rather than to the ordinary usage denoting immorality.⁴⁸⁸

Xunzi saw that the sages' inborn godlike understanding could not be generally ascribed to all humans, and that all others who are not sages become good only after learning, whereas by following their spontaneity they fall into evil. When he therefore describes the nature as evil, it seems that his discussion is one-sided and corresponds only to the idea that "some are by nature not good". But when he says that propriety and righteousness are the mind of the sage, this amounts to saying that the sage's nature alone is good. Therefore The Neo-Confucians were the first apart from Xunzi to attribute evil or misconduct to the inherent and natural qualities (material nature) of man.⁴⁸⁹

Nowadays the nature of man is such that from birth he has a fondness for profit; if this is indulged, wrangling and strife arise and modesty and complaisance are lost. From birth he has (feelings of) envy and hate; if these are indulged, violence and crime arise and loyalty and good faith are lost. From birth he has desires of the ear and eye and a fondness

⁴⁸⁷ *Analects*, 17,3.

⁴⁸⁸ *Shuzheng*. Articles 25-26.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

for (pleasing) sounds and sight; if these are indulged, license and wantonness arise and propriety, righteousness, and elegant form are lost. Thus, if man's nature is followed and his feelings are indulged, inevitably there will be wrangling and strife, violation of allotments and confusion of forms, and anarchy. That is why there must first be transformation by teachers and laws and guidance by propriety and righteousness; only then can there be modesty and complaisance, elegant form, and good order. Observing it from this, it is clear that man's nature is evil.⁴⁹⁰

With regard to the distinction between *qizhi* and *yili* – or between the emotions and the conscience - the Neo-Confucians claim that desires and feelings can be equated with evil or misconduct as parts of human material nature, and consequently condemned human desires and feelings as being completely devoid of original nature, *li*, or conscience. Indeed, the Neo-Confucians might have accepted the idea that man can achieve complete goodness in a physical life; but, even if they had, their distinction between the good and the evil in human nature would not have permitted a complete removal of evil in human nature because human nature does embody natural qualities such as feelings and desires, which the Neo-Confucian believed to be devoid of goodness:

Today, since principle and desire are sharply distinguished as two, and since in governing oneself one regards what does not issue from desire as principle and in governing others one also necessarily regards what does not issue from desire as principle, whatever the people experience of hunger and cold, gloom and resentment, pleasure in food and drink,

⁴⁹⁰ Xunzi 23, *xinge*, SPPY 17: 1a7-1b1.a1; translation based on Legge, in *The Works of Mencius, Prolegomena*, p. 79.

sexual attraction, and the responses of ordinary sentiment and inner feeling is all seen as the extreme triviality of human desire. "I treat what is trivial as trivial, and hence what I give due weight to is heavenly principle and public righteousness": the formulation is exquisite, but when one uses it to govern others one injures them, and when it comes to those below responding to those above with deceit and falsehood one speaks of it as "the evil in others".⁴⁹¹

For Dai Zhen, evil misconduct does not originate in and is not inherent in human nature, since human nature is a continuum of intelligence, feelings, and desires, all derived from, and also manifesting, the nature of *Dao*. Thus any evil or misconduct must be due to contingencies in the empirical developments of human capacities. In fact, according to Dai Zhen, evil or misconduct is considered as the specific failure of individual men in achieving such virtues as benevolence, propriety and righteousness.⁴⁹²

These injuries of partiality and selfishness cannot be blamed on the capacities, and especially cannot be articulated as [pertaining to] the nature. Mencius took the goodness of the nature as his Way.⁴⁹³ When this nature is constituted it has these capacities, and since the nature is good its capacities are also excellent. But it is not absence of partiality or selfishness that makes [the nature] good and [the capacities] excellent. When a person is first born, if he does not eat he will die; when a person is naïve and immature, if he does not learn he will be stupid. One eats in order to nourish one's life, the fulfilment of which is to become an adult; one learns in order to nourish one's instincts, the fulfilment of which is to become a worthy or a sage. The reasons are the same. Although the capacities are good, they may be compared with a

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. Article 43.

⁴⁹² *Yuanshan*, Chapter 2.

⁴⁹³ *Mencius*, 3A1.

piece of fine jade: if one forms it into an implement and treasures it, its lustre becomes daily more refined, and after a time it comes to gleam and its value is greater than before; but if one gouges and erodes it and carelessly throws it away, after a time it becomes damaged, poor, and colourless, and its value is less than before.⁴⁹⁴

Dai Zhen shows that evil or misconduct, as found in specific cases, is due to the lack of fulfilment of the natural inclinations of man; therefore, that special evil or misconduct stems from individual imperfection. He argues that the development and perfection of human nature consist in satisfying and respecting the desires and feelings of men without inappropriateness or disharmony. Thus, it is only natural for Dai Zhen to hold that, in the final analysis, evil or misconduct result from the satisfaction of one's own desires and the respecting of one's own feelings without satisfying the desire or perhaps hindering the satisfaction of the desires of other men, and without respecting the feelings of other men. Evil can be further identified with the failure of the mind and intelligence to attain a comprehension of virtue and to secure guidance in reason for one's desires and feelings.⁴⁹⁵

All that pertains to oneself in relation to others is called 'feeling.' When feeling is without excess and without deficiency it is principle.⁴⁹⁶ Lao, Zhuang, and Buddhists give first importance to being without desire and without action, and so do not speak of principle; what matters to the sage is that desires and actions should all reach principle. That is why the gentleman also is only without selfishness, and does not value being

⁴⁹⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 31.

⁴⁹⁵ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁹⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 3.

without desire. Although the gentleman makes sure that his desires issue from the correct and not from the deviant, he is not necessarily without hunger and cold, gloom and resentment, pleasure in food and drink, sexual attraction, or responses of ordinary sentiment and inner feeling. Thus, when slanders and false accusations return to provoke biting discussion and condemnation, this distinction of principle and desire leaves the gentleman with no way to perfect his conduct. Such is its injuriousness! [...] What they call “desire” is what emperors and kings devote their hearts to with regard to the people; what they call “principle” is not what the ancient sages and worthies called principle. They have mixed in the formulations of Lao and the Buddha in making their [own] formulations, and thus the corruption inevitably comes to this.⁴⁹⁷

If a person has not developed his capacities to the full, it is due to two possible causes: selfishness and delusion. Dai Zhen calls selfishness (*si*) the failure to have a universal regard for other men's desires in one's attempt to satisfy one's own desires. He also describes it as “doing harm to benevolence”, which is the creative harmony of things in the world. Similarly, Dai Zhen refers to the failure to have universal regard for the feelings of other men in judging other men as partiality (*pian*); and in light of this understanding, he refers to the failure to recognise the true nature of man and the patterning of things, and the failure to guide the development of one's nature toward virtue and perfection, as beclouding (*bi*):⁴⁹⁸

“Wisdom” is articulated with regard to one's not being beclouded.
“Benevolence” is articulated with regard to one's not being selfish, and
“courage” is articulated with regard to one's own strength. If one is not

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid. Article 43.

⁴⁹⁸ *Shuzheng*, Articles 30–39.

un-beclouded and unselfish and strong in oneself, wisdom, benevolence, and courage cannot be spoken of; but as soon as one acts with wisdom, benevolence, and courage one is genuine. If one's wisdom, benevolence, and courage were not genuine, one would be neither wise nor humane nor courageous - and again how could one speak of wisdom, benevolence, and courage?⁴⁹⁹

The problem with the development of man's nature is not that man has feelings and desires, but that his desires are selfish, the feelings of the human being unsympathetic, and his mind and intelligence beclouded. As Dai Zhen saw it, all desires and feelings are intrinsically good because they are not separated from *Dao* or from Heaven and earth. But in order to realise their intrinsic goodness in actual behaviour, desires and feelings must be free from selfishness and partiality, and the mind and intelligence must be cleansed of beclouding.

Hence, Dai Zhen says:

The defect of desire is selfishness, and from selfishness greed and depravity follow; the defect of feeling is partiality, and from partiality obstinate perversity follows; the defect of cognition is blindness, and from blindness mistakes and errors follow. If one is not selfish, one's desires are all humane, and all proper and righteous; if one is not partial, one's feelings are easygoing and fair; if one is not blinded, one knows what is called intelligence and sagely wisdom.⁵⁰⁰

The best way to get rid of selfishness is to adopt selflessness, whereas the best way to set oneself free from being beclouded is to engage in learning. A

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid. Article 39.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. Article 30.

person who has the qualities of benevolence and intellect is neither selfish nor beclouded; a person who attains an understanding of the unceasing production and reproduction of things in the universe is a man of benevolence; and a person who gains an understanding of the orderly principle of things is a man of intellect:

An ordinary person obtains [*Dao*'s] aspect on desire, but a [Confucian] superior man obtains its aspect on benevolence. If a person also thinks about the fulfilment of other people's desire when he is satisfying his own desire, then he possesses boundless benevolence within him. If, however, he forgets other people's desire while satisfying his own desire, then he is a selfish person lacking benevolence... The quality of wisdom is to enable a person to know [the *Dao*], whereas the quality of benevolence is to enable him to practise it.⁵⁰¹

Dai Zhen clearly assumes that man, in the process of developing his nature, might be subject to any of these failures; he may, therefore, incur all specific evils or misconducts in personal behaviour, in social relationships, and in government.

⁵⁰¹ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 2.

4. Learning, Morality and the Canons

Dai Zhen strongly believed that man could become a sage if he fully understood the truth, the goodness of *Dao*. As mentioned, Dai Zhen claimed that the truth dwells in the Canons. At the same time, the method of excavating the truth is significant; therefore, the theory of truth and method of Dai Zhen is obviously different from that of Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi suggested that when man fully realises that the meaning of wisdom is hidden and stored, the “investigation of things” becomes essential for the extension of knowledge.⁵⁰² However, Dai Zhen claimed that the truth was to be found in the Canons, and that there was no hidden or stored meaning, but that attaining wisdom was merely a matter of producing the proper meaning from the words that had come to have different connotations from those they bore when written. Zhu Xi induced the principle from the investigation of things, whereas Dai Zhen took what he believed to be the truth from the Canons and then proved it in reality. It seems he applied a deductive rather than an inductive method. Dai Zhen was certainly not empiric and, in this sense, the comparison with D. Hume is not an appropriate one. Dai Zhen’s attitude is unquestionably more similar to that of a Biblicist than that of a scientist or a philosopher like Zhu Xi.

⁵⁰² Wingsit Chan, SOCT, 729.

Dai Zhen's theory of truth is comparable to Plato's theory of Knowledge. Plato, in his work *Tha⁵⁰³etetos*, created a dichotomy between opinion (*doxa*) and truth (*logos*), using an analogy of the Wax Tablet and the Aviary. Dai Zhen's theory of knowledge is similar to Plato's analogy of the Aviary, that denoted a collection of knowledge and the possibility of error, in that Dai Zhen emphasises the importance of exact knowledge and the skill of taking language from the texts. Another comparable aspect is that Dai Zhen also created a dichotomy between opinion and principle. Dai criticised the Neo-Confucians' concept of principle for being merely an opinion (*doxa*), because to attempt to find a correspondence between Zhu Xi's definitions of words and the words in the Canons themselves, was to discover that there was no such meaning as Zhu Xi's contained in the Canons (*logos*).

Michel Foucault made an interesting assertion that philosophy is the playground of game of truth, and that the whole game of truth has to be carried out in this ground. It is notable that Chinese texts are very rich in culture, politics and moral philosophy, but it is also obviously that the metaphysical aspect is relatively lacking. This is possibly one of the reasons that the Song Confucians looked for metaphysics outside the Confucian Canons; Dai Zhen, however, saw the Neo-Confucians' importing of the concept of principle as a breach of the rules of the game.

⁵⁰³ Plato, *Thaetetos*, Conford edn, pp. 130-190.

Dai Zhen's moral philosophy strongly emphasises the role of the intellect in realising the Way – both in the sense of recognising what is right and directing the self to follow what is right. These two aspects of moral philosophy appear to occur simultaneously in his view of things:

Heretical theories always give first importance to unselfishness, and do not seek to be un-beclouded; they emphasise practice, but do not first emphasise discernment. Others observe their earnest practice, and since they are without desire all respect and trust them. The learning of the sages and worthies grounds earnest practice in broad learning, close inquiry, careful thought, and clear distinctions; one's practice is thus the un-beclouded practice of the daily functioning of human relationships, and not, like theirs, a discarding of the daily functioning of human relationships in the belief that absence of desire is a capacity for earnest practice.⁵⁰⁴

First of all, the answers on how to remove selfishness and therefore partiality, as has been shown, are clearly given in *On Goodness*; there is no better method than to strengthen one's virtue of compassion (*shu*), that is to say the universal regard for the desires and feelings of other men:

If a man who has desires understands everyone else's desires, he is a man of benevolence; if a man who has consciousness also comprehends everyone else's consciousness, he is a man of wisdom.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 40.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

If one wishes to remove beclouding from one's mind and consciousness, there is no better method than to concentrate on the learning (*xue*) of the Canons. The most important factor in self-improvement, however, should be a recognition of one's selfishness, partiality, and beclouding, and the consequent discontent that results. Once a man is always on the alert for evil and misconduct in his dealings with men, with the management of things, and with the comportment of himself, he will prevent himself from deviating into the track of misconduct, and he will feel the urge to develop his nature into the virtues of goodness, benevolence, propriety and righteousness:

Let us take man's physical form and his moral nature and discuss them comparatively. Physical form is initially young and immature, but becomes full-grown; the moral nature is initially wrapped in childish ignorance, but becomes sagely and wise. The maturation of the physical form depends on the nourishment of food and drink, and is a matter of daily growth, not of restoring its initial condition; and when the moral nature, nourished by learning, advances to sagemess and wisdom, it is clear that this [also] is not a matter of restoring its initial condition... Humans and animals differ in kind, and since the allotment of material force which humans receive is clear and bright, they differ from birds and beasts that cannot be enlightened. But when humans are compared with each other, their differences of natural talent are all slight. The ancient worthies and sages knew that humans differed in natural talent, and on this account emphasised learning and valued expansion and fulfilment.⁵⁰⁶

Man can either avoid or eliminate evil and wrongfulness if he sets his mind toward the prescribed virtues and practises them constantly. Man should follow

⁵⁰⁶ *Shuzheng*, Article 23.

the good impulses in his nature by becoming aware of the supreme goodness in his nature and in Heaven and Earth as a goal of his conscientious efforts towards perfection. Dai Zhen, in the third part of his *On Goodness*, gives ample illustration and explanation of what he means by following the virtues of benevolence, propriety and righteousness as a means of avoiding and eliminating evil and misconduct. In these senses, Dai Zhen is typically Confucian in believing that all specific evil and misconduct can be removed, and that every man can then become a sage. Dai Zhen refers to Mencius' statement that:

Form and colour are the same as Heavenly nature; but only sages can exhaust all that is inherent in form and colour.⁵⁰⁷

Dai Zhen, however, devotes little attention to how learning can be used as a method to counter the beclouding in one's mind and intelligence. Objecting to the Neo-Confucian belief that man will be free of beclouding if he simply rids himself of all his desires, Dai Zhen proposes learning, as used in the Classical Confucian sense, as a means to remove beclouding. Learning involves wide learning, close inquiry, deliberate thinking and clear discernment; learning is the inquiry into and the practice of things, i.e. by seeing reason in the nature of things. In light of Dai Zhen's critique of the Neo-Confucian notion of *li* and in light of the Neo-Confucian method of investigating *li*, it may perhaps be suggested that beclouding of one's mind and intelligence is reflected in subjective opinions, which the Neo-

⁵⁰⁷ Mencius, 7A 38.

Confucians call “principle” (*li*); and hence, that beclouding leads one to abstract speculation. Thus:

To remove beclouding by learning is to remove one’s private opinions by opening one’s mind to actualities and forming accurate notions of them.⁵⁰⁸

Dai Zhen offers a simple explanation when asked why we must learn. If humans accept that they are human, then learning naturally ensues. And who are the humans? Humans, like all animals, are born with desires and have a tendency to become indulgent and thereby lose moral balance. Humans will never be able to rid themselves of their likes and dislikes and should never try to do so, for their likes and dislikes are the sources of their human benevolence. They are the reason that humans are able to empathise with the circumstances of others. Thus Dai Zhen says:

Mencius says: “The Way is like a wide road; how could it be difficult to find”⁵⁰⁹... Articulating it roughly, one speaks of the “far-extending Way” and of the “universal virtues” [by which it is enacted]: articulating it strictly, the fulfilment of the Way of the ruler, of the minister, of the father, and of the son with complete wisdom, benevolence, and courage, and with each affair performed without fault, is called the Way. Through the ultimate articulation of the greatness of the Way like this, how does it depart from the daily functioning of human relationships? And when the perfected Way is ascribed to the man of perfected virtue, how is this easy for ordinary learners to fathom?

⁵⁰⁸ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 2.

⁵⁰⁹ *Mencius*, 6B2.

The ability to empathise is what Confucius called “the method of benevolence”, and what Mencius meant by “the innate ability to do good” (*liangneng*). This virtue is not particular to humans, because all sentient animals are capable of projecting beyond their own situation, but only human beings are able to broaden their knowing mind until it arrives at perfect understanding.⁵¹⁰

Nowadays, if those who would learn from the sages are assessed in view of the words and deeds that are proper to a sage, it is like students of Yi Qiu not being able to fathom his skill in Weiqi.⁵¹¹ none is able to reach them quickly. *Zhongyong* spells out the steps as: extensive study accurate inquiry careful reflections [...] clear discernment [...] [and] earnest practice⁵¹²[...] And concludes by saying: “Let a man proceed in this way, and, though dull, he will surely understand; though weak, he will surely become strong.”⁵¹³ To proceed in this way to reach the Way of the sage is actually to proceed thus to a daily increase in one’s wisdom, in one’s benevolence, and in one’s courage, so that one’s wisdom, benevolence, and courage may become equal to a sage’s. But this daily increase may be difficult or easy. It is like learning a craft or skill: at first there is change from day to day and from month to month, but after a while others do not see one’s progress, and later still one feels oneself that one can make no further advance; yet though others may admire one as “the best... in the whole country”,⁵¹⁴ one knows it is still not perfected.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁰ *Shuzheng*, Article 24.

⁵¹¹ This analogy is a reference to the story of Yi Qiu in *Mencius* 6A6.

⁵¹² *Zhongyong*, pp. 20,19.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 20, 21.

⁵¹⁴ This analogy is a reference to *Mencius* 6A9.

⁵¹⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 35.

Spiritual brilliance (*shenming*) is like a flame imbued with the power to illuminate every last corner of a room perfectly. What the person sees in the light is moral principles – “the distinct order and pattern of events and affairs”; and when the mind has grasped the principle, “there is understanding whenever there is thought, and one can be free from doubts in the course of his action”. The person also “invariably feels at ease and contented”. Dai writes: “When Mencius stated that ‘moral principles are agreeable to the mouth,’ he was not merely making an analogy”.⁵¹⁶ The mind takes pleasure in acquiring moral principles; it gains an emotional satisfaction from them:

Flavours, sounds, and appearances reside in things and not in me, but when they are received by my blood and breath [these faculties] can distinguish and delight in them, and what they delight in must be what they find especially fine; order and rightness reside in the order and distinctions of the inherent tendencies of affairs, but when these are received by my heart’s discernment it can distinguish and delight in them, and what it delights in must be what it finds most affirmable. Zengzi explains: the refined material force of *yang* is called spirit, and the refined material force of *yin* is called receptivity. Spirit and receptivity are the root of particular things.⁵¹⁷ For in general the ear’s ability to hear, the eye’s ability to see, the nose’s ability to smell, and the mouth’s ability to taste pertain to the bodily form (*po*); they are called “receptivity” (*ling*), and *yin* governs their receiving. The heart’s incipient luminosity (*jingshuang*), such that if it thinks it will penetrate, pertains to *hun* and is called “spiritual” (*shen*), and *yang* governs its putting forth. What governs putting forth makes determinations; what governs receiving complies. Thus Mencius said: the organs of hearing and seeing are unable to think.... [but] the organ of the heart can think⁵¹⁸. Thus thinking

⁵¹⁶ Ibid. Articles 6, 21 and 8.

⁵¹⁷ *Dadai Liji, zengzi tianyuanpian*.

⁵¹⁸ *Mencius*, 6A15.

is the ability of the heart. There are times when its incipient luminosity is beclouded and blocked off and cannot penetrate, but when it is not beclouded or blocked off and there is nothing it does not penetrate, it is designated as "spiritual brilliance" (*shenming*).⁵¹⁹

What Dai Zhen understood by learning may even be discerned in his own practice of academic inquiry and in his methodology for pursuing the truth.

According to Duan Yucai, Dai Zhen, as a great master of textual criticism and clear thinking, once remarked:

We should always understand what Mencius means by specific patterning and ordering. We should obtain the specific patterning and ordering of things. Then, from synthesis to analysis (*fen*) or from analysis to synthesis (*ho*), there is nothing that cannot be done.⁵²⁰

Learning the Canons, then, can be said to consist in finding the specific patterning and ordering of things by the "synthesis" and "analysis" of specific objects. This is directly opposed to the speculative methods of Neo-Confucianism. In applying his method of investigation to the study of Classical Confucian doctrine, Dai Zhen naturally found it necessary to look into the meanings of words, as well as institutional histories, so as to discover and

⁵¹⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 6. For A.C. Graham's translation of this term as "psychicity" see his *Two Chinese Philosophers*, p. 112. This word would appear to be Dai Zhen's paraphrase and expansion of the Zhou Xuan explanation of the relationship between *shenming* and *jingshuang*. *Jingshuang* is thus *shenming* in its germinal or potential form.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.* Article 3.

understand the truth of *Dao*. Thus, when Dai Zhen speaks of the “investigation of things for the extension of knowledge”, he said:

Investigation means to know a thing's nature correctly without any fault and to think thoroughly about it without leaving out the point. Only then can a person's mind not be deluded and when he exercises authority in the empire, his action will not make him have regrets later. This, then, is known as “the extension of knowledge”.⁵²¹

It might be said that Dai Zhen oriented his studies in phonological and historical research towards his search for the truth of *Dao*.

He wrote to Duan Yucai:

Since I was seventeen years old, I have had the desire to learn *Dao* and have told myself that *Dao* can be found only in the Six Canons and the works of Confucius and Mencius. [But if we are to achieve this purpose], unless we are clear about the meanings of the words, and the institutional background and history, we will not even understand the language of these works.⁵²²

Dai Zhen's motivation for his critique of Neo-Confucianism is his belief that the Confucian scholars of the Song period did not really understand the language and meanings of the words of the ancient sages, but only claimed to have understood whilst in fact merely projecting their own opinions onto the doctrines of the sages. He believes that this was why the Neo-Confucians were misled

⁵²¹ *Yuanshan*, Chapter, 2.

⁵²² Dai Zhen, *Letter to Duan Yucai*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

themselves, and why they were further misleading others. This was also the reason why Dai Zhen thought so highly of his *Shuzheng*, in which he applied his method of “synthesis” and “analysis”.⁵²³

This being so, it is permissible to say that “if it does not issue from the correct then it issues from the deviant, and if it does not issue from the deviant then it issues from the correct”, but not permissible to say that “if it does not issue from principle then it issues from desire, and if it does not issue from desire then it issues from principle”. Desire is the “thing” and principle is its “norm”, and what does not “issue from the deviant” and what “issues from the correct” still often has the bias of opinion and has been unable to attain the principle.⁵²⁴ [...] Alas! The harm of mixing in Daoist and Buddhist explanations when formulating doctrine is thus worse than [the harm from] Shen (*Buhai*) and Han (*Feizi*)! Where in the writings of the Six Canons, Confucius, and Mencius is there any taking of principle as a kind of thing, external to the expressions of man’s nature in feelings and desires and rigorously controlling them?⁵²⁵

Dai Zhen relies upon rather straightforward philological arguments supported by extensive classical references. He argues convincingly and decisively, that the Canons of Confucianism can be understood through careful examination and study.⁵²⁶ This understanding is not within us already; it is something we come to realise through acquiring certain kinds of knowledge and augmenting this with systematic application. Dai Zhen began with faith in the

⁵²³ Ibid. *Yumoushu*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

⁵²⁴ *Book of Odes* 260, as quoted in *Mencius* 6A6 and discussed by Dai Zhen in *Shuzheng*, Article 3.

⁵²⁵ *Shuzheng*, Article 10.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

Canons and the sages, and his careful, objective study of the language and history of these convinced him that the true meaning of the Canons had been lost. He believed that he had arrived at their truth by relying on careful research and reasoning, and this in turn convinced him that the truth of the Canons must itself be an unchanging standard, something that is necessary. But if the Confucian Canons themselves are simply a manifestation of this unchanging standard, and one can arrive at this standard through the careful application of the Canons, it would seem as if one should be able to realise the standard simply by appeals to the Canons and the Confucian golden rule:⁵²⁷

The final goal of the learning of the Canons is [the attainment of the understanding of] *Dao*. To clarify *Dao*, we need words (*zi*). But words are formed on the basis of the study of meaning and language. From the study of language, we may then understand the true meanings of words [used in the past]. From the understanding of the true meanings of words [in the Canons], we may then comprehend the mind and will of the ancient sages.⁵²⁸

Dai Zhen considered doing philosophy in no way other than through the Canons. In this he remained true to some of the oldest principles of the Confucian tradition. His quest was to discern the teachings of the sages as a task of 'finding' not 'making',⁵²⁹ more a matter of 'study' than 'reflecting.' For him,

⁵²⁷ Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, p. 95.

⁵²⁸ Dai Zhen, *Letter to Duan Yicai*, *Quanji*, vol. 6.

⁵²⁹ *Analects*, 7.1, "transmit rather than create".

providing an account of why one does what one does is a task one can approach only after one has mastered the Canons. It is only through such a course of study that one can become the kind of person that will make the right choices; this in turn provides one with the understanding necessary to discern the patterns behind one's actions.⁵³⁰

According to this picture of Dai's moral philosophy, morality is seen as being satisfying in the same way that good food and pleasant sights and sounds are satisfying. For him, a moral act is marked as morality by a special kind of joy. This joy also makes morality possible, by providing positive reinforcement for the good actions one performs. Dai clearly endorses the idea that any moral action one does produces a feeling of joy, if only one reflects upon it:

When Mencius said, "Principle and righteousness please my mind just as the flesh of grass- and grain-fed animals pleases my palate",⁵³¹ this was not an analogy. Whenever one does something that accords with principle and righteousness, one's heart and spirit will always be joyful and contented.⁵³²

However, as we have seen, Dai Zhen believes that in order to recognise something as a case of principle or righteousness, one must already have passed it through the golden rule's universal possibility test. It would seem that one could experience the joy of moral action only after one has discovered what

⁵³⁰ Philip J. Ivanhoe, pp. 96-97.

⁵³¹ *Mencius*, 6A7.

⁵³² *Shuzheng*, Article 8.

is necessary and understood the unchanging standard in the Canons and the words of the sages.

VI. Conclusion

Dai Zhen's philosophy has had a great impact on me because his philosophy seems simply to emerge from the old Canons and answer all the questions relating to ancient Chinese civilisation in a unified and coherent philosophical structure. Reading Dai Zhen, the words of the Chinese Canons seem to have their original meanings and to act as an organ clarifying the relations between other things.

Before Dai Zhen, nobody had attacked the Song Confucians so fiercely and effectively using logic and solid evidence; some of the Ming Yangming School had tried, but their attempts were not as successful as those of Dai Zhen. Without doubt, his philosophy transgressed the norms of Chinese history, certainly appears to be politically radical, and even contains elements of modern thinking.

However, as we have examined, his life was neither radical nor revolutionary but that of a philological scholar and library compiler. It is clear from the fact he attempted the Metropolitan exam for over two decades that he genuinely wanted to be an official in the Qing government and to have a secure job, though this was something he never achieved. He was never involved in any political purges, and never joined any political resistance organization. Instead, he was faithful to the Qing, and Emperor Qianlong praised his skill by appointing

him compiler of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries despite the fact he did not have the right qualifications.⁵³³

What was it that drove him to create such a dramatically radical philosophy? Was the reason, as Zhang Binglin observed, that Dai came from the working classes and was thereby intimately familiar with the common people's hardship? Contrary to the claims of some materialists, Dai's philosophy is certainly not reflective of proletarian class interests, as we have observed. So was the reason, as Qian Mu noted, that his heart was in fact cold and that he was arrogant?

First of all, it is clear that Dai Zhen directed his attention towards the language and civilization of ancient Zhou. His primary viewpoint was that of the ancients, although, of course, his stance was undoubtedly rooted in the Qing period and he certainly did comprehend the reality of his surroundings very well.⁵³⁴ Dai Zhen felt a certain duty as a philological scholar and tried to apply strict evidential scholarship to Neo-Confucianism so as to correct its erroneous use of language. He felt it his historical task to re-invent the Way so as to free it from contamination.⁵³⁵

So, Dai Zhen constructed a philosophical interpretation of the ancient Way so as to correct erroneous language and meanings, and did so from the perspective of a master of the skills of ancient civilisation and language. His work

⁵³³ See Kent Guy, 1987. pp 79-87. also, see Chapter 1.

⁵³⁴ See *Shuzheng*, Preface.

⁵³⁵ See *Ibid*.

was neither politically radical nor philosophically arrogant; few people read his work when it was published, and some of those who did criticised him for wasting his energy on something useless. Also, it must be noted that his works were published under the strong censorship of the Qing dynasty.

His works continued to be perceived as radical, until they were eventually deemed to represent the radicals. However, it was not Dai that changed but the world surrounding his work. The discourse of intellectual trends changed with the changing political situation, and similarly the perception of Dai's work changed, from being seen as research on Mencius' teaching and the correction of the erroneous words of Neo-Confucianism, to being seen as an engagement with radical political issues.⁵³⁶

Dai Zhen's *Shuzheng* and *Inquiry into Goodness* are not radical philosophical works but philological works in which Kaozheng methods were used to analyse key concepts of Confucian philosophy. The methodology Dai Zhen applied to his study of Mencius was essentially a linguistic approach used to determine the precise meanings of terms in the text. This appeal to etymology, Dai Zhen thought, would enable him to refute the later meanings that Zhu Xi and other Neo-Confucians had attached to these concepts.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ See chapter 2 'Modern Understanding of Dai Zhen' and Zhang Binglin. *Shidai (An interpretation of Dai Zhen)*, *Quanji*, p.339.

⁵³⁷ Elman, 1984, p.19.

It has been shown that Dai Zhen's works in various fields covered every aspect of Zhou culture. His efforts are based around the idea that the Way is contained in ancient culture. Dai Zhen produced a large number of works: in addition to many books on mathematics, astronomy, philology, phonetics, and geography, Dai wrote three books on philosophy. They are *On Goodness*, *Prolegomena*, and *Commentary on the Words and Meanings of Mencius*, the latter being the most significant, as it embodies his final view on the subject.⁵³⁸

The first ontological work, *Inquiry into Goodness*, appraises *qi*, the vital force, and *Dao*, the Way, instead of *li*, as being analogous to what is necessary (*biran*) in human nature. *The Prolegomena* is the first draft of Dai Zhen's greatest philosophical work, the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*. After completing *On Goodness* in three chapters, Dai Zhen deemed that the Song Confucians' discussions on human nature, principle, the Way, ability, sincerity, enlightenment, authority, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and courage were not considering the true words of Confucius, Mencius, or within the Six Canons, which had become mixed with heterodox teachings. Dai Zhen therefore began to cite the words in Mencius so as to point out semantic errors. It is in this work that he lays out his first criticism of Neo-Confucianism.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ See chapter 1 philosophical works of Dai Zhen. And Qian Mu, *Quanji*. v.7. p. 483-96.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

Scholars of the Qing dynasty including Dai Zhen made efforts to reconstruct the Canons and lost Classics, for both public motives and political reasons.⁵⁴⁰

According to Hu Shi, Dai Zhen was greatly influenced by the Ming Confucians, and in fact developed Yan Yuan's thesis on human nature.⁵⁴¹ Some Chinese contemporary scholars have suggested that Dai Zhen's thought was derived from Yan Yuan and Li Gong's system.⁵⁴² Qian Mu insisted that Dai's philosophy had its origins in Xunzi. According to Qian Mu, although Dai Zhen followed Mencius' thesis of human nature being good, his statements often resembled those of Xunzi, who maintained that human nature is evil and placed great emphasis on man's actions. However, as a strong ethical realist, Dai Zhen depended only on what he chose to concentrate on rather than on the Ming Confucians.⁵⁴³

At first, Dai Zhen devoted his passion for philosophy to Neo-Confucianism. He studied Neo-Confucian philosophy in a local academy under the supervision of strong supporters of the Cheng and Zhu orthodoxy. However, the later Dai Zhen could not accept the ideas of Zhu Xi.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ Elman, *From Philosophy To Philology*: 1990. pp. 17-18

⁵⁴¹ Liu Zhaoren, *Ruan Yuan*, Taipei, Taiwan commercial press. 1979. pp.37.

⁵⁴² Liang Qichao, 1939, pp22-24.

⁵⁴³ Hu Shi, *Dai Dongyuan de zhexue (The Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan)*, Quanjia, v7. pp. 384-386.

⁵⁴⁴ See chapter 1, the life of Dai Zhen.

Hui Dong was the most influential figure in Dai Zhen's philological and philosophical research. After encountering Hui, Dai Zhen was set firmly on his path and method, which was later to become the backbone of Qing evidential study. It was chiefly the differences and similarities between Dai Zhen and Hui that influenced Dai's philology and philosophy. The differences between the two induced Dai to try to seek the truth of philosophy through philological research, whilst their similarities induced him to study so as to find ways to defeat the Neo-Confucians effectively.⁵⁴⁵

Dai Zhen established his school regardless of his lack of desire to create one. He preferred to have a "brother" or "companion" rather than a disciple. Dai Zhen's Kaozheng School emphasised the importance of independence from the later authorities or exegetes.

Duan Yucai was the first figure in Dai Zhen's school, but it must be said that other of his scholastic descendents such as Wang Niansun and his son Wang Yinzhi understood Dai better. Among the second generation of Dai Zhen's

⁵⁴⁵ See the chapter 2. 'Hui dong and Han Learning.' Dai Zhen could not accept the idea of Hui Dong that there were two paths in the study of the Canons; ancient glosses and rational meaning, as inseparable, one being the method and the other its philosophical justification. In Dai Zhen's term: "If the ancient glosses are not employed for the purpose of understanding the reason and meaning of things at the same time, then what is the point of pursuing that type of research?" The differences between them are obvious and very important in the Kaozhengxue. Later the Dai Zhen School distinguished itself from Hui Dong's School. As a historiographer Wang Ming-sheng noted: "Master Hui studied the Canons in order to understand the ancients but Master Dai studied the Canons in order to understand the truth" *Hsing-chuang* p.8.

School, Jiao Xun and Huang Sanshi attempted to extend Dai Zhen's philosophy, and Ruan Yuan composed essays on Confucian philosophy modelled on Dai's linguistic approach to philosophical terms. The most famous scholar of the Later Qing period, Gong Zizhen, referred to himself as a genuine inheritor of Dai Zhen's philosophy.⁵⁴⁶

Dai Zhen influenced Zhang Xuecheng, an eminent Kaozheng historian of the mid-Qing period, despite their very different stances. The differences between Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng give a clear and distinctive view of character and limitations of Dai Zhen's philosophy. As Zhang indicated, while Dai's lack of historical perspective could be seen as a limitation, it is precisely this anti-historical character that is such a strongpoint in his philosophy.⁵⁴⁷

In the 20th century, Dai Zhen's works were championed by Zhang Binglin (1868-1936) and subsequently also by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi. Feng Yulan, Qian Mu and Yu Yingshih also conducted research on Dai Zhen in the context of Chinese philosophy. Zhang Binglin honoured Dai by quoting him and praising many of his philosophical views.⁵⁴⁸

Liang Qichao and Hu Shi were eager to espouse anti-Song Neo-Confucian philosophy, the reason for this being that they felt it bore chief responsibility for China's social injustice and material backwardness. Hu Shi was a profound

⁵⁴⁶ Kuhn, Philip. Harvard University Press, 1970. p157.

⁵⁴⁷ See Chapter 2. Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng.

⁵⁴⁸ See Elman 1990. pp. 10-18

scholar on Dai Zhen, and wrote *The Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan*. Hu praises Dai for knowing that philological study is merely the means to an end and not an end in itself. Dai did not, Hu argues, want merely to be a philologist but a philosopher. Dai's cosmological theory is a form of naturalism that also contains elements of materialism.⁵⁴⁹ Liang and Hu's promotion of Dai Zhen's philosophy epitomises the restless intellectuals of the early republican era, whose faith in the orthodox doctrine and the Neo-Confucians had been shattered and who were searching for a new guiding philosophy.⁵⁵⁰

Feng Yulan, however, found Dai's philosophy neither profound nor creative as compared with that of the Song Neo-Confucians whom Dai criticised. Qian Mu, on the other hand, a devoted Confucian scholar whose interpretation of the history of ideas followed the orthodox tradition, compared Dai with Xunzi. Later, Yu Yingshi compared Dai Zhen with Zhang Xuecheng.⁵⁵¹

Ryden has recently compared Dai Zhen to the British empiricist D.Hume, a comparison that serves to prove the modernity of pre-modern philosophy. Additionally, my brief comparative research on Dai Zhen and the French post-modern philosopher Foucault demonstrates their similarity in terms of tactics, attitudes and the aims of their philosophy.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ Hu Shi, *Ibid*, *Quanj*,v7. pp. 384-386. also see the chapter 2. Modern Understanding of Dai Zhen.

⁵⁵⁰ Liu Jinxian, 1977. pp.367-369.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*. P.392.

⁵⁵² Fifth Biennial Conference of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia held at Adelaide

The titles and the approach of Dai Zhen's philosophical writings make use of Kaozheng research on philosophical issues. The use of the technical term *Shuzheng* (verifications on the form of sub-commentary) in the title indicates that Dai Zhen saw his efforts as works of evidential research. The methodology Dai Zhen applied to his study of Mencius was essentially a linguistic approach used to determine the precise meaning of terms in the text. In addition, he thought this appeal to etymology would enable him to refute the later meanings Zhu Xi and other Neo-Confucians had attached to these concepts and would enable him to reproduce the proper meaning from the Canons.

Dai Zhen and most of the scholars of his school of "evidential study" (Kaozhengxue) evidential scholars made verification a central concern for the emerging empirical theory of knowledge they advocated, namely "to search for the truth from the facts" (*shishi qiushi*).⁵⁵³

Dai Zhen stressed the importance of exacting research, rigorous analysis, and of the collection of impartial evidence drawn from ancient artefacts and historical documents and texts. Evidential scholars made verification a central concern for the emerging empirical theory of knowledge they advocated, namely "to search for the truth in the facts". This scheme involved the placing of proof and verification at the centre of the organisation and analysis of the classical tradition in its complete, multi-dimensional proportions, including aspects of

University, 16-18 July, 1997. Brief comparison between Dai Zhen with M.Foucault by H. Lee.

⁵⁵³ See the chapter 3. 'Method of Dai Zhen'.

natural studies and mathematics. Fallacies and mistakes were the first enemy of the Qing evidential scholars, whose focus was on precise research.

Dai Zhen is famous for his criticism of Neo-Confucian philosophy and the Han exegesis as based on his method of evidential research. However, as well as writing negative criticism of them, he also wrote a positive philosophical perspective of the Canons. These two methods are closely related: in the *Shuzheng*, the method of negative criticism is used to correct the prevalent errors of understanding so as then to build a positive philosophical perspective of the Canon.

Dai's critical method approach to the Canons is in keeping with his time and the issues confronting him. As mentioned, he believed Neo-Confucian philosophy to be a hybrid between Confucianism and heresies such as Daoism and Buddhism. Because of this hybrid, the Neo-Confucians made errors and distorted the words and meaning of the Canons. Dai Zhen claimed that the same limitation also applied to Han learning in the Qing period, as led by the Hui Dong School. The Han Confucians employed the *xungu* method to work on the exegesis of the Canons. Dai criticises the Han Confucians for providing the "definition of the word according to their own context". Because the Han Confucians separated the words from the context of the Canons and only produced glosses and etymologies of words, according to Dai, Han Confucians could not understand the reason and the meaning of the Canons, since they were merely absorbed in the words and characters.

Dai studied the Classics "in order to understand the truth in them, but ultimately he believed that without a knowledge of the ancient text, one would have no basis for establishing the truth."⁵⁵⁴ Dai suggested two attitudes to approaching the Canons. The first attitude is to attain the *Dao* from the Canons directly. The next is to view the *Dao* as being laid within the ancient culture and the Canons. In this sense, the meaning must be excavated from the language of the old Canons.⁵⁵⁵

Dai Zhen's methods are not only methods of viewing the ancient Canons, but also methods that lead to his Confucian moral philosophy. He emphasises the importance of the understanding of the minds of the ancient sages and worthies, and claims that this can only be achieved through a knowledge of words and language.

Through his search for truth of the Canons, Dai demonstrates a concept of human nature in the context of the Canons' moral philosophy.⁵⁵⁶ Dai Zhen concentrated on the Canons and on seeking a systematic way of thinking about human nature and seeking the way to be a sage that was based on the ethical philosophy of the Canons. In his works, he intended to discard the idea of the Song Confucian notion of the human and the sage, since he believed it to be based on the fallacies and mistakes of Zhu Xi's theory, and to build a solid base

⁵⁵⁴ *Xing zhuang, Quanji*, v.7. p8.

⁵⁵⁵ Ling Yicheng, p.85.

⁵⁵⁶ Chan, Wingtsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. p.711.

from which to promote the correct understanding of human nature and the concept of the sage.⁵⁵⁷

The moral philosophy of Dai Zhen can be summarised as “fulfil desires and express feelings”. Because he believed that life is the most cherished thing for all humans and living things, he maintains that “whatever issues from desire is always for the sake of life and nurture.” He also claimed that “caring for oneself, and extending this care to those close to oneself, are both aspects of humanity”.⁵⁵⁸ He set up a strong monastic moral philosophy based on individual human desire and feeling.

According to Dai Zhen, the physical body is an important concept because all the characteristics of human nature are based on the physical body, and the ultimate virtue of life and things is hold onto life. Thus Dai Zhen claimed that it is because this bodily self exists that there are desires, feelings and the possibility of intellect; therefore, conversely, desires, feelings and intellect are all part of an individual's physical body. Furthermore, his morality is also a part of himself, rather than being a transcendental abstract, as was believed by the Neo-Confucians.

According to Dai Zhen, ‘Nature’ means what is passed on to a thing in the course of its transformation in Heaven and on Earth. The size to which a thing is limited in the process of transformation is determined by a decree (*ming*), whilst it

⁵⁵⁷ Dai Zhen, *Xu Yan*, Article 2, *Quanji*, v. 6.

⁵⁵⁸ *Shuzheng*, Article 21. Ewell Trans.

is nature that shapes its form. By the decree of *Dao*, a thing develops into a concrete form and shape according to its prescribed nature, termed 'capacity' (*cai*). Everything has its individuality from *Dao*, and this process of transformation is called the individualising power of *Dao*. After the physical body has been transformed and characterised according to capacity, the body is accompanied by desire (*yu*), feeling (*qing*) and consciousness (*yi*).

The goodness of *Dao* is defined as the eternal activity of the production of life and things. Human nature is good because humans are living beings of blood and *qi* that emanated from *Dao*, and their conscious minds having the potential to develop their native endowments to the full.

Dai Zhen was not attempting to destroy metaphysics in general, but rather a particular metaphysical system, namely the Neo-Confucian metaphysics, called the metaphysics of *li*. He also attempted to construct a metaphysics of the human being based on *Dao* and *qi*. He rejected the Neo-Confucian notion of *li*, and instead affirms *li* as being the universal needs and feelings of man. As a principle of reality and benevolence, according to Dai Zhen, the definition of *li* should be rectified to re-assume its true sense as intended by Confucius and Mencius.⁵⁵⁹

According to the Song Confucians, *li* is the universal principle, form, and structure of things. It not only constitutes the guiding spirit of human nature but also represents the truth and reality of it; in effect, *li* is associated with the rational

⁵⁵⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 16 – 19.

part of human nature. Man knows *li* because *li* is clearly present in man's nature. The objectivity of *li* testifies to, and guarantees, the unity and uniformity of human nature. *Li* is therefore also the principle of virtue inherent in human nature. Everything else found in human existence is non-*li*, which has no virtue and is not to be tolerated.⁵⁶⁰ However, Dai Zhen rejected the abstract and metaphysical concept of *li* in Neo-Confucian philosophy as being not in accord with benevolence and or the reality of human desire and feeling.

Dai Zhen's testimony on *li*, that is to say his perception of what principle is, derives from the Six Canons. In these tests, *li* is often paired with *tiao* and *fen* to mean the "internal texture" of things or the "order and arrangement" that can be distinguished among things and affairs. Therefore, when Dai Zhen uses the term "principle", he is always referring to a pattern "that gives the whole its distinctive property or characteristic". Dai Zhen's concept of *li* can be explained in three ways: 1. *Li* is the pattern of things and is therefore not separate from things: it is the order of things. 2. *Li* is the overall understanding of human needs and feelings: order of desire and feeling. 3. *Li* is therefore the function of the intellect that enables man to recognise both these points – the first and the second – and it is this that forms the discerning and guiding ability of the mind to achieve comprehensive goodness in oneself, society, and the universe as a whole.⁵⁶¹ it is the order of human understanding.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. Article 1.

⁵⁶¹ Chungying Cheng, 1971, p19-20. Dai Zhen also defines that principle is desire of intellectual.

Generally speaking, the perpetual ethereal transformation in the universe is known as *Dao*; and in human affairs, *Dao* is the normal course of human relations in daily life, which is similar to the unceasing ethereal transformation. *Dao*'s functions of creative activity and ordering are further distinguished by its function of "making the nature" of things, that is to say making things what they are. That things become what they are is due to the further differentiations of the *yin* and *yang* into the so-called five agencies – water, fire, wood, metal, and earth.⁵⁶²

Dai Zhen provides an analysis of the metaphysical phrases in the *Book of the Changes*: "what is antecedent to form" (*xingershang*) and "what is subsequent to form" (*xingerxia*),⁵⁶³ in which we find that what Dai Zhen says about "what is antecedent to form" and certainly what he says about "what is subsequent to form" both fit into Zhu Xi 's category of "what is *within* form." Zhu Xi's notion of "what is above form", in other words, the realm of "principle", simply does not exist in Dai Zhen's thought.⁵⁶⁴

Dai Zhen defines nature (*xing*) as "allotments from *yin* and *yang* and the five elemental forces." Each thing, animate or inanimate, follows its own allotment to assume a particular form, and each completes its own nature. Man has desires and feelings, and he also develops cunningness and intellect within himself; and,

⁵⁶² Dai Zhen, *Fa Xing Lun* (On Law and Phenomena), *Quanji*, v.6.p.476.

⁵⁶³ *Yi Xici*, 1.12; cf. Legge trans.

⁵⁶⁴ *Shuzheng*, Article 17.

since a person's nature is manifested in cunningness and intellect, he develops a liking for and a repugnance to beauty, ugliness, right, and wrong.⁵⁶⁵ Dai remarks that a thing's nature (*xing*) is derived from the ethereal forces of *yin* and *yang*. Thus, Dai Zhen claimed that the origins of humans and things do not go beyond *yin*, *yang*, and the five elemental forces; the source of our morality lies in our blood and *qi* and the knowing mind (*xueqi zhixin*).⁵⁶⁶

That the mind (*xin*) knows *li* naturally is one possibility; that the mind comes independently to know *li* through an investigation of things is another.⁵⁶⁷ For Dai Zhen, the important point of Mencius' statement lies in the phrase "to share in common is principle and righteousness." *Yi* and *li* can therefore be known only by a conscious mind; thus it is important that we should keep unhampered the mind's faculties of distinguishing and judging. Dai Zhen believes that *li* is the internal ordering and balancing of feelings and desires that contribute to or lead to the being of an individual in all his relationships with other individuals. As such, feelings and desires need to pass the test of universal agreement and universal application in order to be justified.⁵⁶⁸

Every creature is different and every man is different according to their decree and capacity. Consequently, each creature has its own desires and feelings to fulfil and to express. It is according to decree and capacity that man

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. Article 17.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. Chapter 2.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid. Article 39.

has his physical body and all the senses, desires and feelings that make his life possible. And it is through the individualising power of *Dao* that man can perform moral activities as a subject.

The individualising power of *Dao* can therefore be called the power that gives both nature and decree to things, and hence the power that lays down the natural qualities of things for the things themselves and for their relationship with other things.⁵⁶⁹ It is suggested that to broaden and fulfil this excellence is the essence of man's nature. As we have seen above, principle is the extension of human nature and moral virtue is the fulfilling of it.

Dai Zhen regards goodness and nature as overlapping: 'nature' refers to concrete things and their development, and goodness to the balanced and perfect development of natural things. For a thing to be called good, that thing must be in accord with the nature of Heaven and Earth. Different things may have different natures, but their goodness is always one.

According to Dai Zhen, the five human relationships are referred to as the Way of Man (*rendao*) in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, because man cannot act outside the context of these relationships. These five human relationships prescribe how human beings should act and live in the context of these relationships. It is by following these prescriptions that the nature of man will be developed. Virtues all pertain to the preservation of human society and the

⁵⁶⁹ *Shuzheng*, Article 20.

development of individual natures in their social context. It is for this reason that benevolence is the virtue of preserving life among men and of developing individual natures in the context of man, and is considered the most basic virtue.

Dao is described as having a metaphysical value and an ethical value, because the creative activities of *Dao* are none other than the ethical value of human nature, which is equated with goodness. The foremost metaphysical value of *Dao* is benevolence, but there are two more cardinal values to be followed according to the function of *Dao*, namely propriety and righteousness. Only human intellect can fully understand of the virtues of *Dao*. The capacities necessary to comprehend these virtues are the mind and consciousness, as it is the mind itself that contains the very virtue of benevolence. All the desires of the body are benevolence (*ren*) when fulfilled in accordance with the regulation of the mind, and are therefore creative and beneficial.⁵⁷⁰

Dai Zhen pointed out that one may approximate benevolence by understanding and practising faithfulness or trustfulness to oneself (*zhong*); that one may approximate propriety by understanding and practising integrity or truthfulness to others (*xin*); and that one may approximate righteousness by understanding and practising empathy and compassion or reciprocity (*shu*).⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ *Yuanshan*, Chapter 3.

⁵⁷¹ Translated by Graham as "Likening to oneself"

A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, La Salle, Illinois, 1989. pp. 20-21.

These three moral values are different expressions of benevolence to be found in three different types of situation that a person has to face.

In explaining *Dao* and individual things in terms of goodness, Dai Zhen inevitably left unsolved the problem of evil and misconduct. For Dai Zhen, evil misconduct does not originate in and is not inherent in human nature, since human nature is a continuum of intelligence, feelings, and desires, all derived from, and also manifesting, the nature of *Dao*. Thus any evil or misconduct must be due to contingencies in the empirical developments of human capacities. In fact, according to Dai Zhen, evil or misconduct can be considered as the specific failure of individual men to achieve such virtues as benevolence, propriety and righteousness.⁵⁷²

If a person has not developed his capacities to the full, it is due to two possible causes: selfishness and delusion. Dai Zhen calls selfishness (*si*) the failure to have universal regard for other men's desires in one's attempt to satisfy one's own desires, and the failure to have universal agreement for the feelings of other men in judging them as partiality (*pian*).⁵⁷³

The best way to rid oneself of selfishness is to adopt selflessness, whereas the best way to set oneself free from being beclouded is to engage in learning. A person who has the qualities of benevolence and intellect is neither selfish nor

⁵⁷² *Yuanshan*, Chapter 2.

⁵⁷³ *Shuzheng*, Articles 30 – 39.

beclouded; a person who attains an understanding of the unceasing production and reproduction of things in the universe is a man of benevolence; and a person who gains an understanding of the orderly principle of things is a man of intellect.

There is no better method than to strengthen one's virtue of compassion (*shu*), that is to say the universal regard for the desires and feelings of other people. Furthermore, if one wants to remove beclouding from one's mind and intelligence, there is no better method than to concentrate on the learning (*xue*) of the Canons.

Dai Zhen offers a simple explanation when asked why we must learn. If humans accept that they are human, then learning naturally ensues. Humans will never be able to rid themselves of their likes and dislikes, for their likes and dislikes are the sources of their human benevolence. They are the reason that humans are able to empathise with the circumstances of others.

Learning the Canons, then, can be said to consist of finding the specific patterning and ordering of things by the "synthesis" and "analysis" of specific objects. This is directly opposed to the speculative methods of Neo-Confucianism. In applying his method of investigation to the study of classical Confucian doctrine, Dai Zhen naturally found it necessary investigate the meanings of words, as well as institutional histories, so as to discover and understand the truth of *Dao*. Thus, when Dai Zhen speaks of the "investigation of things for the extension of knowledge."

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Glossary

- Anhui congshu* 安徽叢書
benming 本命
Bi Yuan 畢沅
bi 蔽
biran 必然
bushu 不疏
cai 才
Cai Peiyuan 蔡培元
Cesuan 策算
Cheng Mingdao 程明道
Cheng Tingzuo 程廷祚
Cheng Yi 程頤
Cheng Yaotian 程瑤田
Cheng Yichuan 程伊川
Cheng Zhu 程朱
chongxu 沖虛
Chousuan 籌算
Chuanxilu 傳習錄
couli 腠理
cunli 存理
daben 大本
Dadai lijì 大戴禮記
Dai Changyuan 戴長源
Dai Dongyuan 戴東原
Dai Dongyuan de zhexue 戴東原的哲學
Dai Wang 戴望
Dai Zhen 戴震
Dai Zhen Quanji 戴震全集
Daidongyuan Xiansheng Quanji 戴東先生全集
Dao 道
Dao bu xuxing 道不虛行
daoli 道理
daoxue 道學

dati 大體
de 德
Du mengzi lunxing 讀孟子論性
Du yi xici lunxing 讀易繫辭論性
Duan Yucai 段玉裁
Erlinju zhiyi 二林居制義
Erya 爾雅
fadi 法地
Fang Dongshu 方東樹
Fang Xiyuan 方希原
Fan Qju 方矩
Fangyan 方言
Feng Youlan 馮友蘭
Fenyang xianzhi 汾陽縣志
fenzhou 汾州
Fenzhou xianzhi 汾州縣志
Fu Sheng 伏勝
Fu Shun 富順
fujian 福建
Gaogu gehuanji 句股割圜記
Gaozi 告子
Gong Zizhen 龔自珍
Gu Yanwu 顧炎武
guanli 冠禮
Guizhou 貴州
Guozhao hanxue shichengji 國朝漢學師承記
Guwen shangshu 古文尚書
Han Fei 韓非
Han Tuizhi 韓退之
Hanlin 翰林
Hanxue 漢學
Hanxue shangdui 漢學商兌
Hui Shiqi 惠士奇
Hong Bang 洪榜
Hongfan 洪範
Hu Shi 胡適

Huang Sanshi 黃三式
Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲
huanzhou 皖洲
Hubei 湖北
Hui Dong 惠棟
Hui Shiqi 惠士奇
Hui Zhouti 惠周惕
Huizhou 徽州
hun-po 魂魄
hun 魂
Ji Yun 紀昀
Jiang Yong 江永
Jiangnan 江南
Jiangxi 江西
Jiao Xun 焦循
jili 肌理
Jin 晉
Jīn Bang 金榜
Jing zhi daxun 經之大訓
jingxue 經學
Jingxue ji lixue 經學既理學
jinshi 進士
Jinsilu 近思錄
Jiuzhang suanshu 九章算術
jue 覺
junzi 君子
juren 舉人
Kang Youwei 康有為
Kaogongji 考工記
kaozhengxue 考證學
Kong Guangsen 孔廣森
Kun 坤
li 禮
li 理
Li Gong 李塉
Li Yun 禮運

li zhi biran 理之必然
Liang Qichao 梁啓超
liangneng 良能
liangzhi 良知
ling 令
ling 靈
Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪
Liu Shipai 劉師培
Liujiing 六經
Liushu yinjunbiao 六書音均表
liuxing 流行
lixue 理學
liyi 理義
Longfu 隆阜
Lu Jianzeng 盧見曾
Lu Shaogong 盧紹弓
Lu Xiangshan 陸象山
Lu Zijing 陸子靜
Lu Zuquan 呂祖謙
Lunyu 論語
Ma Rong 馬融
mamu bu ren 麻木不仁
Mao Qiling 毛奇齡
Maoshi buzhuang 毛詩補傳
Mei Wending 梅文鼎
Mengzi sishukao 孟子私淑考
Mengzi ziyi shuzheng 孟子字義疏證
Menzi 孟子
Min Ziqian 閔子騫
Ming 命
Ming 明
Mo Zhai 墨翟
nanfeng 南豐
Nianpu 年譜
Peng Yunchu 彭允初
po 魄

qi 氣
Qian Daxin 錢大昕
Qian Mu 錢穆
Qian 乾
Qianlong 乾隆
Qiewenzhai wenchao 切問齋文鈔
Qin Huitian 秦蕙田
qing 情
Qiu Yuexiu 裘曰修
qizhi 氣質
Qu Yuan 屈原
Qu Yuan fuzhu 屈原賦注
Quan Zuwang 全祖望
ren 仁
Ren Zhaolin 任兆麟
renxing 人性
Ruan Yuan 阮元
shandong 山東
Shangshu 尚書
Shaowu 邵武
Shao Yong 邵雍
shen 神
sheng 生
Shengleibiao 聲類表
Shengyin 聲音
shenling 神靈
shenming 神明
shenshi 神識
shi 實
Shijing 詩經
Shisanjing Zhushu 十三經注疏
shishi quishi 實事求是
shixue 實學
Shoujingtu 授經圖
shu 恕
Shuidiji 水地記

Shujingzhu zhushi 水經注注釋

Shuowen jiezi 說文解字

Shuzheng 疏證

si 思

si 私

Sichuan 四川

Siku quanshu 四庫全書

Sishu 四書

Songxue 宋學

suoyi 所以

Suzhou 蘇州

taiji 太極

Taiji tushuo 太極圖說

Tan Gong 檀弓

Tang 唐

tian zhi xing 天之性

tiandao 天道

tianli 天理

tianming 天命

tiao-li 條理

tiaoli 條理

tiwu 體物

tiyao 提要

tizhi 體質

Tongshi 通史

Tongshu 通書

Wang Anguo 王安國

Wang Bi 王弼

Wang Guowei 王國維

Wang Lutai 王履泰

Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛

Wang Niansun 王念孫

Wang Wencheng 王文成

Wang Wufeng 王梧鳳

Wang Yangming 王陽明

Wang Yinzhi 王引之

Wang Zhuo 汪灼
Wei Yuan 魏源
weizhi 謂之
wenli 文理
wenlu 文縷
Wenshi tongyi 文史通義
Wnag Fu 汪紱
wuji 無極
Wuli tongkao 五禮通考
wuxing 五行
wuyu 無欲
xiangtian 象天
Xieju zhi dao 契矩之道
xieqi zhi xin 血氣之心
xin-qing 心情
xin 信
xin 心
xin zhi suo tongran zhe 心之所同然者
xing 性
xing 行
xing 形
xingershang 形而上
xingerxia 形而下
xingse 性色
xingzhi 性質
Xingzhuang 行狀
Xiuning 休寧
Xizhou 歙州
xu 虛
Xu Shen 許慎
Xun Zi 荀子
xungu 訓詁
Xunzi 荀子
Xuyan 緒言
Yan Ruoju 閻若據
Yan Yuan 顏淵

Yan Yuan 顏元
Yang Guangxian 楊光先
Yang Mo 楊墨
Yang Tingzhang 楊廷璋
Yang Xiong 楊雄
Yang Zhu 楊朱
yangzhou 楊洲
Yao Jiquan 姚姬全
Yao Mingda 姚名達
Yao Nai 姚鼐
yi 義
yiben 一本
yili 義理
Yingri tuiceji 迎日推策記
Yinxue wushu 音學五書
yinyang 陰陽
Yongle dadian 永樂大典
yu 欲
Yu Minzhong 于敏中
Yu Yingshi 余英時
Yu禹
Yuanshan 原善
Yuanxiang 原象
Yueji 樂記
yulei 語類
Yuping 玉屏
Yuxiashu 禹夏書
ze 則
Zengzi 曾子
Zhang Binglin 章炳麟
Zhang Xuechang 章學誠
Zhang Zai 張載
Zhangshi yishu 章氏遺書
Zhejiang 浙江
Zhen Baisha 陳白沙
Zheng Mu 鄭牧

Zheng Xuan 鄭鉉
Zheng Yi 鄭伊
zhi 智
Zhili hequshu 直隸河渠書
zhishu 治數
zhiwei 之謂
zhong 忠
Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局
Zhongyong fuzhu 中庸附注
Zhongyong 中庸
Zhou 周
Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤
Zhouyi 周易
Zhu Gui 朱珪
Zhu Lu 朱陸
Zhu Xi 朱熹
Zhu Yun 朱筠
Zhu Zhi 朱質
Zhuang Zhou 莊周
Zi Xia 子夏
ziran 自然
Ziyang shuyuan 紫陽書院
Zuozhuan 左傳

