

The Great Harmony :

The Paradigm of Harmony in Zhang Zai's Philosophical System

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Abstract

Harmony is one of the most important concepts of the Confucian tradition. Along Confucianism, harmony represented most of the time the ultimate ideal that man needs to pursue. Confucians employed the concept and paradigm of harmony in several fields from politics to ethical, aesthetics and so on. We can affirm that harmony is thus one of the most Confucian comprehensive concept, and without a proper understanding of harmony, it is not possible to entirely grasp Confucianism.

This dissertation analyzes the philosophical system of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020-1077) employing the concept of harmony and harmonization as the coherent and comprehensive paradigm of his entire philosophical system. I argue that both the concept and the paradigm of harmony represent the coherence behind all Zhang Zai's system from metaphysics to ethics, epistemology and the program of self-cultivation. This adherence to harmony roots the Neo-Confucian philosopher directly to Confucian orthodoxy giving him an important tool against heterodox doctrines.

Riassunto

Il concetto di armonia costituisce una delle idee centrali dell'intera tradizione filosofica confuciana rappresentando l'ideale per eccellenza a cui l'uomo deve necessariamente aspirare. I confuciani sembrano inoltre impiegare il concetto e il paradigma di armonia a diverse discipline che vanno dalla politica all'etica, all'estetica e altre ancora. Quello di armonia è così un concetto onnicomprensivo, e solo attraverso una sua completa comprensione possiamo cogliere il fondamento del sistema di pensiero confuciano.

Questa dissertazione si propone di analizzare il sistema di pensiero del filosofo neo-confuciano Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020-1077) utilizzando il concetto e il paradigma di armonia come chiave interpretativa del suo intero apparato filosofico. In questo studio mostrerò come la maggior parte dei concetti chiave che Zhang Zai utilizza nelle teorie metafisiche, etiche, epistemologiche e di auto-coltivazione, si riferiscono direttamente e indirettamente all'idea e al paradigma di armonia. Questo riferimento permette al filosofo sia un legame di continuità nei confronti dell'ortodossia confuciana, sia l'acquisizione di uno strumento funzionale nella critica contro le dottrine rivali.

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I. METHODOLOGY

I.1 Primary Sources

The most complete collection of Zhang Zai's works is the *Zhang Zai's Complete Collection* (*Zhang Zai ji* 《張載集》) that was published in the 1978 in Beijing. The text include all the extant Zhang Zai's writing. I have thus employed this source for all Zhang Zai's quote. All translations from this text are usually mine unless otherwise noted.

Besides this text, I have consulted the two most important commentaries of the *Zhengmeng*. The first is Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 *Zhengmeng zhu* 《張子正蒙注》, here I have employed the *Shanghai guji* 上海古籍 edition published in 2000. The second is Wang Zhi's 王植 *Zhengmeng chuyi* 《正蒙初義》¹ retrieved from the digital library *ctext.org*.

Along this dissertation there are several other quotes from both pre-Qin and imperial China. The Chinese texts from these quotes are generally from the digital library *ctext.org*² unless otherwise noted.

I.2 Review of Secondary scholarships on Zhang Zai's philosophy

Even if Zhang Zai occupies a fundamental role within the history of Chinese philosophy his position and influence on the development of the Neo-Confucian tradition³ has often

¹ The reason behind my choice of Wang Fuzhi and Wang Zhi's commentary is that because is broadly recognized as the most complete and reliable, and the second is the most clear in its explanations. However, in majority of the secondary scholarships I have consulted, the Wang Fuzhi's commentary is the most employed. Secondary scholarships on Wang Fuzhi's thought with references on his commentary on the *Zhengmeng* are Alison Black (1989), William de Bary (1975) among others. About Wang Zhi's *Zhengmeng chuyi*, the Chinese text is from SKQS retrieved from Sturgeon (ed.). 2011 Chinese Text Project. <http://ctext.org>.

² The Chinese Text Project is an online open-access digital library edit by the English scholar Donald Sturgeon. All quotes reported from this digital library are also located in a standard printed edition such as the Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series (哈佛燕京學社引得), and the ICS Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series (逐字索引叢刊).

been undervalued and misinterpreted. Probably due to these facts, Western academy did not much explore Zhang Zai's thought, and when they did this was almost exclusively linked to his original understanding of *qi*.

As a remark of this undervaluation by Western academy, until today there is only one complete translation into a Western language of Zhang Zai's work; it is the translation into German of Zhang Zai's *Zhengmeng: Rechtes Auflichtende* by Michael Friedrich, Michael Lackner and Friedrich Reimann, Hamburg Felix MeinerVerlag, 1996. Besides, the *Zhengmeng* was also translated into Japanese by Mitsuyoshi Yamane, *Seimo* 正蒙 Tokyo: Meitoku 1970. In addition to these translations there is a monography in English published in 1984 by Ira E. Kasoff: *The Thought of Chang Tsai*; and two Ph.D. dissertations: one by the French philosopher Stephane Feuillas, *Rejoindre le Ciel. Nature et morale dans le Zhengmeng de Zhang Zai*, 2009; the other that focuses on a new interpretation of the concept of *qi* is by Kim Junyuep, *Zhang Zai's philosophy of qi* 2009. There are also several essays and chapters in general volumes to which I will refer along this dissertation.

Besides the Western academia, there are both translations and monographies on Zhang Zai in mainland China and Taiwan. In the last century, eminent philosophers such as Zhang Dainian 張岱年, Chen Lai 陳來, Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978), Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995) and so on, interpreted various aspect of Zhang Zai's philosophy. Recent works on Zhang Zai published in mainland China are the translation of the *Zhengmeng* done by Zhou Yun 周贊, *Zhengmeng quanyi* 《正蒙詮譯》 published in 2014; and Yang Lihua 楊立華 monography *Qiben yu shenhua* 《氣本與神化》 published in 2008.

If we want to trace a general methodological approach employed by the majority of Zhang Zai's secondary scholarships, we see that majority of the scholarships tend to focus primarily on Zhang Zai's original interpretation of the concept of *qi*. This seems

³ What Western academy call Neo-Confucianism is an intellectual movement founded between the Tang and Song dynasties. (Bol 1992). However the name Neo-Confucianism was invented by Western academia and does not belong to Chinese tradition. The Chinese denomination for Neo-Confucianism is the general term Daoxue 道學 which means the tradition of the study of the Way; or lixue 理學, the study of *li*, which directly refers to the concept of *li*, principle or coherence, that become the key concept within this tradition. On the issue of the name Neo-Confucianism see Hoyt, de Bary (1994:135-144) .

to be coherent with the tradition internal to Neo-Confucianism that evaluate the Song philosopher for his great contribution given to the development of this concept. On the one hand, the great synthesizer of the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi greatly evaluated Zhang Zai for his original idea of *qi*, and placed him under the orthodox lineage (Daotong 道統) together with the Cheng brothers and himself⁴. On the other, Zhang Zai further and probably greater influence will be at the end of Ming dynasty where thinkers such as Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) and Wang Tingxiang 王廷相 (1474-1544), and Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) in the Qing dynasty, wanted to recover the original meaning of Zhang Zai's idea of *qi* that was corrupted by the orthodox lineage⁵. From the twentieth century's on, the philosophy of Zhang Zai is at the center of an hermeneutical debate on how is the best way to categorize his philosophy.

The first problem lies in the interpretation of Zhang Zai's philosophy within the philosophical tradition of the *lixue* 理學, or outside this tradition. The majority of scholars of the twentieth century followed the traditional view of understanding Zhang Zai through the orthodox lineage made by Zhu Xi. Scholars that follow this line of interpretation are Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990) (Feng, Bodde 1983), Chan Wingtsit 陳榮捷 (1909-1994) (1963), Huang Siuchi (1971) and many others. Besides, there are other scholars that go against this interpretation and tend to frame Zhang Zai's philosophy outside this tradition. These are philosophers such as Tang Junyi (1953), Chen Lai (1991) to quote the most important. Their argument is that first, since Zhang Zai focuses primarily on the concept of *qi* without paying much attention on *lixue*'s central concept: *li* (principle, coherence), his influence within this tradition cannot but be relative. Second, in the late Ming and early Qing there was an important strand of philosophers that highly evaluated Zhang Zai's philosophy and Zhang Zai's idea of *qi* employing his line of thinking against the same tradition of the *lixue*⁶.

⁴ Zhu Xi in the *Jinsilu* outlines a direct relationship between the teaching of the Northern Song Masters, the Classical Confucian Masters such as Confucius and Mencius, and ancient sages. The transmission of the Way includes those thinkers that contributed to proceed the Confucian Way, such as: Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) for the development of the concept of Taiji 太極 (The Supreme Ultimate); the Cheng brothers for the great contribution on the concept of *li* 理 (principle, coherence); and finally *qi* in Zhang Zai for the development of *qi*. See Cheng (2000:526).

⁵ On the influence of Zhang Zai's idea of *qi* in later thinking see de Bary (1975).

⁶ In his doctoral dissertation on Zhang Zai's idea of *qi*, Kim Jungyeup lines up with this second strand. He affirms that Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi's philosophies refer to different paradigm: "although *li* and *qi* are correlative notions and have importance in both 'philosophers of *qi* such as Zhang Zai and 'philosophers of *li* such as Zhu Xi, the difference between these two strands of philosophers cannot be

Being *qi* the key concept through which interpret Zhang Zai's system, the second problem lies in the interpretation of *qi*, and its relationship with other Zhang Zai's metaphysical key concepts such as the Great Void (*taixu* 太虛), the Great Harmony (*taihe* 太和) and the spiritual dimension (*shen* 神)⁷. The problematic arises in these scholarships are first the very definition of the notion of *qi* in Zhang Zai's system, and second, the position of this concept in his philosophical system. The most important questions the majority of scholarships aim to answer are: is *qi* Zhang Zai's ultimate category? Is Zhang Zai's philosophy a *qi*-monistic system?

The major trend within contemporary Chinese philosophers, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, was to categorize Zhang Zai's philosophy as a proto-materialist philosopher. The general interpretation was to recognize *qi* as "matter", and understand it as Zhang Zai's ultimate and comprehensive category. Some examples are from Zhang Dainian's essay *On the Thought and Works of Zhang Zai* (*Guanyu Zhang Zai de sixiang he zhuzuo* 《關於張載的思想和著作》) published within the *Zhang Zai's Complete Collection* (*Zhang Zai ji* 《張載集》 1978).

He states:

關於張載的哲學思想是唯物論還是唯心論，過去曾經有過爭論，現在多數同志都承認張載哲學基本上是唯物論了，還有少數人認為是二元論。關於這個問題還需要作一些分析 (1978:2) "Although there has been much debate in the past concerning whether Zhang Zai's philosophy is a materialistic-monism or an idealistic-monism, as of now, the majority of comrades acknowledge that Zhang Zai's philosophy is basically a materialistic monism [...] All of the world, from the vast emptiness which is empty with no corporeality to the myriad things that have shape and modality are the transformation." (Trans. by Kim 2008:3)

understood as only a difference of degree of emphasis of *li* and *qi*. Rather their definitions of the notions *li* and *qi* are different to the extent that they cannot be compared in a symmetrical manner and thus constitute different 'paradigm'. Kim further argues that it is not the case that Zhang Zai can be considered 'unorthodox', but probably his view of *qi* "can be considered to be more continuous with that of the cosmology of classical Confucianism than Zhu Xi's *li* based worldview." See Kim (2008:25).

⁷ For an accurate analysis of these three concepts and on the relationship with *qi* see chapter 2.

Similar interpretations are those from important general studies of Chinese philosophy such as Chen Lai, *Song Ming lixue* 《宋明理學》 and Feng Youlan's *A History of Chinese Philosophy*⁸.

Chen Lai states:

从哲学上看，张载的自然哲学无疑的是气一元论的唯物主义哲学。他把宇宙的统一性毫不犹豫地归结为物质性的实在“气”。(1991:60) “From a philosophical perspective, there is no doubt that Zhang Zai's naturalistic philosophy is a materialistic *qi*-monism. He did not hesitate at all in attributing the unity of the world to the material reality which is *qi*.” (Ibid:4)

Feng Youlan:

“The (visible) Ether's condensation from and dispersion into the Great Void is like ice's freezing from and melting into water. Once we realize that the Great Void is the same as the (visible) Ether, (we may then realize that) there is no non-existence (*wu*).” What Chang means by this is that the "Great Void" though seemingly completely empty, is not in actual fact utterly devoid of substance ... The term 'Great Void,' therefore, is used simply to describe the Ether when, being dispersed and uncondensed, it is therefore imperceptible, even though still existent.” (Feng, Bodde 1983:480)

A different approach within the same period was attempted by Chinese great philosophers such as Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi. Mou Zongsan disagreed with the materialist approach preferring a dualistic interpretation.

Mou Zongsan affirms:

“When the penetrating and the spiritual are characterized in terms of the quality of clear *qi*, it merely gives us an indication for the understanding of the Great Vacuity and the spiritual. This does not imply that the Great Vacuity and the spiritual in Zhang Zai's sense are qualities of *qi*. So it is impossible to claim that the Great Vacuity and the

⁸ For a survey on secondary scholarships on Zhang Zai's interpretation of *qi* through the materialistic understanding see Kim (2008).

spiritual are the subtlety of *qi* and hence identify his doctrine as a philosophy of *qi*-only.” (Chan 2011:87)

Mou Zongsan thought that *qi* is not the sole ultimate category of reality, Zhang Zai places two others fundamental concept such as the Great Vacuity and spirits that do not subdue to *qi*. Reality can be thus depicted by two categories: the subtle and spiritual world accounted by concept such as void and spirits; and the visible and tangible one, which is the world of *qi*'s changes and transformations.

Tang Junyi held a different position, but he follows Mou's critics against a materialistic interpretation of Zhang Zai's philosophy:

“It is not easy for people to understand properly Chang Tsai's theory that the origin and the nature of the mind lie in the existence of the objective universe. Often it is taken as a sort of materialism like that of the West. Not only this, but, in addition, his explanation of the Great Harmony of the universe and the nature of man in terms of the void and the ether-transformations puts him especially under the difficulty on the independence between the void and the ether and makes his view seems like dualism.” (1956:120)

Tang Junyi fought against the materialistic and dualistic approach trying to forge an unitary conception of *qi* which included both material and spiritual dimensions:

“If we want to have a true grasp of what he [Zhang Zai] is trying to say, we must know what ether means in traditional Chinese thought. The conception ether (ch'i) [*qi*] is a peculiar conception in Chinese thought.. the word ether (ch'i) could mean either something spiritual, as in ambition (ch'i-chih) [*qizhi*] or something vital, as animation (sheng-ch'i) [*shengqi*], or something material, as geogaseity (ti-ch'i) [*tiqu*]. And these three kinds of ether are usually treated by Chinese thinkers as belonging together, so that the ether that denotes something material may at the same time denote something spiritual or vital.” (Ibidem)

Tang Junyi understood Zhang Zai's *qi* as a broad concept that could be understood by following its development within Chinese several traditions.

This historical understanding of Zhang Zai's *qi* is followed by the majority of contemporary scholarships that deal with Zhang Zai. Eminent scholars such as Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang in the compendium of Neo-Confucian philosophy, recognize three major ways of viewing *qi* from pre-Qin to Song time:

“During the Qin-Han period, the first wave focused on the classification of *qi* through discussions of the cosmos. In the Wei-Jin period, the second wave explored the causality of *qi*, which arose from debates on basic ontological questions. During the Song and Ming dynasties, the third wave clarified the metaphysical articulation of *qi* through the relationship between *qi* and *li* (principle).” (2010:43)

They affirm that Zhang Zai's theory of *qi* is grounded in this third wave which was an integration of Qin-Han cosmology and Wei-Jin ontology through an interplay between Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. However their interpretation of Zhang Zai's philosophy moves toward another key concept, the concept of void as his rule category. Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang recognize the Great Void as the ultimate and the absolute Zhang Zai's category. The Great Void is the “metaphysical source” that underlies all *qi*'s changes and transformations:

“*Taixu* contains *qi*, yet it is not equal to or identical with *qi*. This is a central assumption of his ontology and moral teaching, and it enables Zhang to provide a metaphysical and ontological account of the myriad things. When *qi* coalesces, the myriad things begin to exist; when *qi* disperses, the myriad things disappear... The key point is that *taixu* is in both the dispersion and the coalescence of *qi*.” (Ibidem)

In the last decades, scholars generally recognize the comprehensive dimension of *qi* within the historical development of this concept and specifically in Zhang Zai's original understanding. One of the most complete and important scholarship on Zhang Zai's philosophy was written in 1984 by the scholar Ira Kasoff. Kasoff pinpoints the concept of *qi* as the most fundamental and comprehensive concept. She insightfully recognizes *qi*'s broad meaning that goes from the undifferentiated ontological unity, to the dynamic movement of changes and transformations (differences). Therefore, she basically pinpoints two kinds of *qi*: the undifferentiated one, and the condensed one. Hence she employs orthographical distinctions to discriminate between the two, and the

continuity between them: “I will use Ch’i to refer to the undifferentiated, primal substance, ch’i to refer to condensed, tangible matter, and *qi* when both meaning are intended.” (1984:37)

Employing *qi* as the ruling category here, she understands the other two fundamental concepts, the Great Harmony (*taihe*) and the Great Void (*taixu*), as Zhang Zai’s tool to describe the state of undifferentiated *qi*. *Taihe* and *taixu* are basically the same state, Zhang Zai employs different terms to emphasize different aspects:

“The Great Void is a very important concept in Chang’s philosophy. It refers to the same intangible above-form state as the Great Harmony. But, in contrast to the term Great Harmony, which emphasizes the coexistence of the two polar forces in a harmonious unity, Great Void emphasizes the invisibility of this state.” (Ibidem)

In Kasoff interpretation both Great Harmony and Great Void represents *qi* in the state above-forms, which seems to be in opposition with the state below-forms. Her understanding of *qi* is somehow described as dual (above and below form) and one (the continuity between the two states).

In recent years, a different approach is attempted by Kim Jungyeup. In his doctoral dissertation dated 2008⁹ he criticizes the interpretation of *qi* as substance and thus the view that interprets Zhang Zai’s philosophy as monistic. Alternatively he employs the theory of “relational opposed polarities.” For Kim, Zhang Zai philosophical system cannot be understood as substantial monism because no absolutely single/universal substance underlies his cosmology; the system can be better labeled as kind-monism¹⁰. *Qi* has to be understood in the logic of “transactional process of eternal becoming” by the interrelation of the two paradigm of all beings (yinyang)¹¹. There is no need for a singular and universal substance to keep coherence and unity in all changes and

⁹ Kim Jungyeup’s dissertation was recently published by Lexington Books (2015).

¹⁰ The difference between kind monism and substance monism is that the former monism argues that there is ultimately only one undifferentiated entity, and that the many entities and dimensions of this world are but derivative manifestations of this singular undifferentiated entity. The latter monism argues that there is only one kind of entity, but does not necessarily argue that there is only one entity. See Kim (2008:71).

¹¹ Opposed entities are differentiated via themselves and also are unified through themselves without any singular substance underlying them.. that 'x is *qi* and y is *qi* is to say that 'x and y are transactional polarities continuously affecting and creatively transforming one another.' It is not to say that 'x and y are different manifestations of a singular *qi* which they both ultimately are'. (Ibid:79).

transformations of/in the universe. Whether *qi* is understood as the unique entity in the universe by which the ten thousand things develop, the result will be a mechanical and limited¹². Besides, if we understand *qi* as the process of unification(s) itself realized by polarities (yinyang), we can grasp the infinite possibilities that underlies their union (ten thousand different combinations), and at the same time, unity is provided within individual existence.

Kim derives his idea from the American scholars Roger Ames and David Hall. They interpret the Chinese idea of polarities as such:

“Each particular is a consequence of every other. And there is no contradiction in saying that each particular is both self-determinate and determined by every other particular, since each of the existing particulars is constitutive of every other as well. The principal distinguishing feature of polarity is that each pole can only be explained by reference to the other. ‘Left’ requires ‘right’, ‘up’ requires ‘down’, and ‘self’ requires ‘other’¹³.” (Ames, Hall 1987:18-19)

Therefore emptiness and fullness, movement and stillness, hidden and manifest are strictly mutual dependent but without losing their peculiar individuality; it is through mutual relationship that they can achieve utmost completion. Furthermore, the idea of polarities “requires a contextualist interpretation of the world in which events are strictly interdependent” (Ibid:19). Same and differences are thus not fixed, change perpetually with the contexts. Ames and Hall (1995:273) describe this model as focus and field. Field is used in the sense of “sphere of influence”: “the area within which the influences of and upon an agent may be discernibly experienced and perceived.” Focus means “place of convergence or divergence”. Ames and Hall continue: “It is important

¹² See Ibid (2008:77).

Chan Wingsit (1963:492) asserts that the cosmological view of Zhang Zai is mechanical: “Chang Tsai [Zhang Zai] identifies material force (ch 'i) [*qi*] with the Great Ultimate itself. He discards both yin and yang and the Five agents as generative forces. To him, yin and yang are merely two aspects of material force, and as such are basically one.. .The universe is one but its manifestations are many.. .There is no doubt that Chang's materialistic philosophy tends to be one-sided and mechanical.”

¹³ Ames and Hall (Ibid:18) compares Chinese idea of polarities with the Western dualistic approach: “dualism involves a radical separation between the transcendent and nondependent creative source, on the one hand, and the determinate and dependent object of its creation on the other. The creative source does not require reference to its creature for explanation. This dualism, in its various forms, has been a prevailing force in the development of Western-style cosmogonies, and has been a veritable Pandora's box releasing the elaborated pattern of dualisms that have framed Western metaphysical speculations.”

to recall that fields and foci are never finally fixed or determinant. Fields are unbounded, pulsating in some vague manner from and to their various transient foci.” (Ibidem)

Kim, employing Ames and Hall focus and field model, emphasizes *qi* and yinyang as “process of becoming” where the focus is never on the “stuff” as it is, but on what can become¹⁴. Kim (Ibid:173) understands Zhang Zai’s *qi* as a “coherent scheme of configuring the relationships between the environment” and man, between the subject and the object.

“Zhang Zai’s *qi* is a practical scheme. As such, it does not constitute a separate metaphysical object of inquiry, but rather is a way of viewing this world as a transactional process in term of relationally opposed polarities.” (Ibid:12)

Kim understands Zhang Zai’s *qi* as the unity that underlies the whole process of changes and transformations. But this unity is far from being a reality itself, here unity can be grasped in term of relationship among oppositions. As Kasoff before, Kim understood the multidimensional aspects of *qi*; but if in Kasoff the coherence between these various dimension was not clarified, Kim found the way to unify these dimensions. *Qi* is thus not a reality by itself, it is the “practical scheme” that describes the interaction between

¹⁴ Kim (Ibidem: 83) affirms:

“Zhang Zai’s understanding of *qi* which is based upon the 'logic' of yin-yang, that is, the logic of 'relational opposition'. In this 'logic', things can be 'similar' on their own terms and can be 'different' on their own terms without having first to belong to something identical. For example, 'man' is similar to 'woman' and 'woman' is similar to 'man' not because they both belong to the same kind 'human', but because femininity inheres in men and masculinity inheres in women. Also, 'man' and 'woman' are different not through some 'substantial differentia' that respectively define them as 'independent species' within the same kind 'human'. Rather, as correlatives they 'define' one another.....yang accounted in terms of *qi* is not so much a scheme of dividing things into groups, but one of viewing existent segregations and groups as transactional.” Therefore there is no ultimate and universal yin or yang by which things refer to, a single thing can be either yin or yang depending on the particularity of the context: “Zhang Zai’s yin-yang-*qi* does not function to fix all things into a particular manner of being relationally opposed, but rather emphasizes that we cannot preclude any combinations that may intermingle and fuse (this is not to argue that everything and anything can intermingle and fuse) and thus we should make as many connections as possible between different entities and dimensions as we go along our lives.” (Ibid:88) .

Alfred Forke (1925:214) had a very similar understanding of Chinese general notion of yinyang: “Ultimately, yin and yang do not mean anything in themselves at all, being only employed to express a relation. Therefore a single entity can be either yin or yang. As was before, even in here the triadic system is preserved emphasizing the result of the interaction. Robin Wang (2012:13) emphasizes the centrality of generativity in the yinyang polarities model: “it is also necessary to consider the relationships between yinyang and the generativity that emerges from interaction. In fact, although we often think of yinyang as focusing on polarities, yinyang thought really is a type of triadic thinking centered on the thirdness that results from the interaction between yin and yang. The whole is made of the interactions between parts, not the individual parts, themselves.”

opposite forces in the world. *Qi* is conceived as polarities alternation and interpenetration¹⁵.

The latest work that deal with Zhang Zai's metaphysics was just published few months ago by the American scholar Brook Ziporyn. Ziporyn (2015) gives a new interpretation of Zhang Zai's metaphysics that overcomes the traditional focus on *qi*, placing the paradigm of harmony as his ultimate category. He defines Zhang Zai's system as monism of harmony¹⁶. All Zhang Zai's main concept follow this logic: *qi*, *taixu* and *taihe* all can be framed within the paradigm of harmony where "the oneness is doubleness per se, which therefore cannot appear as any particular one, or even merely as Oneness¹⁷." (Ibid:190) Ziporyn has also pointed out the primacy of Great Harmony over *qi*. "*Qi* is the one substance, but it turns out that being-*qi* is a predicate of something more basic, the Great Harmony." (Ibid:176)

I.3 The method adopted in this study

From the review of these secondary scholarships, I have outlined two important problematics that concern the interpretation of Zhang Zai's philosophy. First. Where can we place Zhang Zai's philosophy? Within the Neo-Confucian orthodox lineage, or outside it? Second how can be interpreted his system? Is it a monistic system or not? Does *qi* is Zhang Zai's ultimate category or not?

My way to answer to these fundamental questions is first of all to contextualize Zhang Zai historically, the crucial point in my view is to understand first what were Zhang

¹⁵ The idea that the notion of *qi* is intrinsically related to yinyang is totally coherent with Chinese traditional cosmology and metaphysics from Han dynasty on. As the Chinese philosopher Wang Yanxiang has pointed out: "Outside yinyang, there will be no *qi*...When heaven, earth, and everything take the forms, there are the images of clear and turbid, male and female, soft and hard, coming and going – this is called yinyang" (in Wang 2012:61). Robin Wang (Ibid:62) recognizes yinyang as the "foundations for the intellectual codification of *qi*". Yin and yang are the pulse and rhythm of *qi*, they depicts the transformation as well as the patterns, the regularities, and effects of *qi*. Here *qi* is thus conceived in term of "interplay between different elements".

¹⁶ Ziporyn (Ibid:171) defines Zhang Zai's monism as "weird kinds of monism". Traditional monism is based on the notion of one-substance which is that "thing" that cannot be predicate of something. On the contrary, harmony seems to be what is more far from it, since it is based on relationship, and thus, by definition, cannot be by itself.

¹⁷ In Ziporyn's (Ibid:182) understanding, the single Nature (oneness) that underlies all beings is double-sided, it is the key to understand all pairs of opposites in the world. "This doubleness is seen in mutual inherence of material objects and their opposites, voidness. These are in fact simply the condensed and dispersed forms of material force".

Zai's writing purposes and what were the reasons behind his choices. The key text to understand these reasons is Zhang Zai's latest and most important work: the *Zhengmeng*.

I will argue that from the analysis of the *Zhengmeng* emerges a coherent whole that link the structure and the purpose of the text with his understanding of the world. And from that, the coherence can be extend to Zhang Zai's entire philosophical system. First of all, the *Zhengmeng* is a pedagogical text that aims to enlighten the Confucian Way. But the Confucian Way is nothing but the Way of harmony as the most of the Confucian tradition tends to show. In this claim I will refers to important latest work on the concept of harmony within the Confucian tradition such as Li Chengyang, *the Confucian Philosophy of Harmony*, published in 2014, and essays by Cheng Chungying and Yao Xinzong¹⁸. I will claim that the fact that Zhang Zai's disciple Su Bing organized the *Zhengmeng* placing the Great Harmony's chapter in the first place, and the fact that traditionally this chapter is recognized as the skeleton of the text, is far from being coincidental, but shows the centrality of harmony in Zhang Zai's thought¹⁹.

Moreover, I will also claim that this structure is coherent with Zhang Zai's primal purpose which is the critique against heterodox schools. Zhang Zai focus his critique especially against Buddhism because they do not understand the natural process of changes and transformations since they have a partial understanding of reality. In other words, Buddhists fail to understand harmony as the very foundation of the cosmic process, and from this failure derives the main reason of Song society decadence. Even if the topic of Zhang Zai's critique is largely developed by Kim Jungyeup dissertation, and slightly touched by many other essays, the relationship between Zhang Zai's critique and the concept of harmony has not been deepened enough²⁰. For instance Kim (2008) focuses on the concept of *qi* as the basis of the critique; others on the different interpretation of void between heterodox schools and Zhang Zai. Here my claim is that Zhang Zai's critique include all these concepts because is based on the idea of harmony which is comprehensive and thus include *qi*, void and the spiritual dimension.

¹⁸ I will refer particularly to Cheng Chungying (2009) and Yao Xinzong (2013).

¹⁹ On the organization of the *Zhengmeng* see below.

²⁰ An interesting essay on the linguistic code employed by Zhang Zai in the critique against Buddhism see Stephane Feuillas (2004).

Setting harmony as Zhang Zai's key concept, my position will be similar to Ziporyn (2105) last essay, but different in the understanding of *qi*, since I will read *qi* in term of "relational posed polarities", which in my view follow the paradigm of harmony²¹.

²¹ I can say that my understanding of Zhang Zai's metaphysics synthesize the position of Ziporyn and Kim Jungyeup since harmony will be taken as the ruling category, and I will consider the very structure of *qi* in term of the process of relational oppositions.

II. INTRODUCTION

II.1 The issues

This dissertation analyzes the philosophical system of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020-1077)²² employing the concept of harmony and harmonization as the coherent and comprehensive paradigm of his entire philosophical system. The choice to analyze Zhang Zai's philosophical system was given by the fact that despite his great contribute to the success and development of the Confucian school in the Song era, he has often been overlooked by Western scholars. While there are several works on Song philosophers such as the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao 程顥 1032-1085, Cheng Yi 程頤 1033-1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) along the last decades, Zhang Zai's thought has not drawn much attention in the academy. As we will see, the majority of scholarships that deal with Zhang Zai's thought focus on metaphysics, and specifically to the concept of qi 氣. Works that intend to deal with Zhang Zai's philosophy as a whole are just a few and already dated. The aim of this investigation will be to reinvigorate and enrich the debate around Zhang Zai's philosophy and try to redefine his position and contribute within the philosophical development of the Confucian school of the eleventh century.

²² There is a debate on the date of Zhang Zai's death. The few information that we can get on Zhang Zai's life are from two comprehensive volumes: the Southern Song *Records of books read in my studio in the province* (*Junzhai dushu zhi* 《郡齋讀書志》); and the Yuan *Comprehensive investigations based on literary and documentary sources* (*the Wenxian tongkao* 《文獻通考》). But the most detailed information are from Fan Yu's *preface of the Zhengmeng* (《正蒙 範育序》); and in particular from Lü Dalin's *biographical notes* (《呂大臨橫渠先生行狀》) both published in the Zhang Zai's collection *Zhang Zai ji*. For what concern Zhang Zai's death date, Fan Yu and Lü Dalin's writings slightly differs. Su Bing points Zhang Zai's death in autumn: "in the Year of Xi Ning Ding Si (1077)... that year in autumn the Master going back to west, felt sick and died under the mountain Li." (熙甯丁巳歲...其年秋, 夫子復西歸, 歿於驪山之下) (Zhang Zai 1978:4) Lü Dalin, instead, points his death on the same year on winter: in the twelve month of the sexagenary cycle (this period goes from November to December) he died on the route in a guesthouse in Lin Tong. He died at the age of fifty-eight." (十有二月乙亥, 行次臨潼, 卒於館舍, 享年五十有八) (Ibid:381). The Chinese scholar Liu Ruiqing 刘荣庆 (1984:25) tends to converge with Lü Dalin's date. In brief, he argues that since Lü Dalin's relationship with Zhang Zai were closer than Fan Yu's one, and his brother was a close friend of Zhang Zai, his information could be more reliable. Moreover there is a debate even among Western scholar on the year of the death. The majority of scholars (especially Americans) point Zhang Zai's death in the end of the 1077 following the version of Lü Dalin; besides some European sinologist such as Michael Lackner, Philippe Feuillas and Anne Cheng indicate his death on January 1078. Since Lü Dalin's *biographical note* seems to be the more reliable, here I will follow his writing.

This dissertation wants to analyze the philosophical system of the Neo-Confucian philosopher trying to overcome the focus on *qi*, and instead employing the concept of he 和, harmony and harmonization, as the coherent and comprehensive paradigm of his entire philosophical system. I will argue that one of the key to understand Zhang Zai's philosophical program is the critique he moved against heterodox schools²³, and the ideal of harmony is his main argument within this critique. In my view this is clearly shown in Zhang Zai's latest and main work, *Rectifying the ignorance* (*Zhengmeng* 《正蒙》).

We will see that in the *Zhengmeng* Zhang Zai shows that the fallacious thinking of those who have lost the Way of Confucianism (rudao 儒道) can be rectified through the pursue of harmony. Zhang Zai claims that those “ignorant” are not able to recognize reality as a whole, their vision is partial and one-sided. Some are just interested in what stands beyond the world of perception (Buddhists and Daoists), and there are others that focus their attention just to what they can see and hear²⁴. Those people are the most dangerous threat to Song society. The first, due to their escapist attitude toward society: they think about the world as an illusion and therefore do not strive to improve it. They think about their own salvation losing the “bigger picture”. The second, due to their inability to go beyond and grasp the substance of reality, they think about the world as what is given by the senses and thus they do not develop the ability to know the reason behind things. They become attached to things and in the end they become themselves things. But even if they have two different views of reality, and they are two different kinds of people, in the end they share the same inability to grasp reality as a whole.

Zhang Zai answers to the inability of these people by showing the concept and the paradigm of harmony as the only one possible solution. Despite Zhang Zai does not often employ the concept of he 和 (harmony and harmonization) directly in his works, all key concepts in his works follow the ideal and the paradigm of harmony. Zhang Zai reveals that the concept of harmony and its model can be applied to every aspect of reality, from cosmology to ethics and self-cultivation. Harmony is the underlying structure of the whole reality, is the one single thread able to unify the multiple

²³ Confucian philosophers of the eleventh century generally refer to themselves as belonging to the Confucian orthodoxy (zhengtong 正統). Besides they often refer to Buddhist and Daoist doctrines as heresies or heterodoxies (yiduan 異端).

²⁴ Zhang Zai calls them “average people” (shiren 世人).

principles of reality. Moreover, it is through the pursue of harmony that one can rectify the self and the others, can attain sagehood and thus can be an example for the family, the society and the entire world.

Among all texts, the *Zhengmeng* here is particularly important because it shows the paradigm of harmony better than other works. This is due for several reasons. First, being Zhang Zai's final work, it includes his most developed and mature thought. Second, the *Zhengmeng* is a comprehensive text far from being systematic. It touches several philosophical fields from metaphysics to ethics, epistemology and so on. Therefore it presents the philosophy of Zhang Zai as a unique and synthetic system where an underlying coherence ought to be grasped. Third, the aim of *Zhengmeng*, as we will see, it is first of all pedagogical. Through the text Zhang Zai wants to show the one single Way (Dao 道) to the learners and discredit the heterodox thinkers. Fourth, the very structure and chapter's organization of the text show the primacy of harmony. For instance, the fact that Zhang Zai's disciple, Su Bing 蘇昺(11th century), chooses to set the Great Harmony's chapter as the first and crucial chapter of the *Zhengmeng* seems to be an important clue to the primacy of this concept in the text and in Zhang Zai's whole system.

Along this dissertation I will try to justify this claim by showing how all Zhang Zai's key concepts follow the Confucian paradigm of harmony and harmonization. Therefore, in the first chapter I will outline this paradigm and its development from the Confucian classical texts to the Han systematization. In the second and in the third chapters, my focus will be on recognizing the model of harmony in Zhang Zai's metaphysics. And finally, I will see how his metaphysics is justified and applied in his moral thought and self-cultivation program.

II.2 Historical Context

II.2.1 Zhang Zai's biographical notes²⁵

Zhang Zai, also named Hengqu 橫渠, lived the most part of his life in the town named Hengqu²⁶, in the county of Mei 郿 in the Guangzhong 關中 region. He came from a family of government officials: the grandfather served as Reviewing Policy Advisor (*zhishizhong* 給事中) under the reign of Zhenzong 真宗 (968-1022); and his father, Zhang Di 張迪 (date unknown), served the emperor Renzong 仁宗 (1023-1063) as prefect of Fuzhou 涪州.

After the death of the father, Zhang and his family moved to Hengqu. Both in his childhood and youth, Zhang was considered a talented boy who gradually developed interest in military affairs. Around the 1040, during the military campaign against the Xixia conducted by Fan Zhongyan 範仲淹 (989-1052), the twenty years old Zhang Zai wrote a letter to him discussing the military situation. Fan Zhongyan was impressed by Zhang's skills recommending him to devote himself to Confucian *Classics*. Despite Fan's advice, at that time, Zhang was not interested in the *Classics*, but instead he was more attracted by heterodox doctrines such as Daoism, and especially Buddhism.

Unfortunately, there are no information about this period of Zhang's life, and the reason why he turned to heterodox doctrines is unknown. However, after several years, we know that he went back to Confucian *Classics* developing a particular appeal for the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 《易經》). In his late thirties, when he was lecturing in Kaifeng 開封 on the *Book of Changes*, he had a meeting with his nephews, Cheng Hao

²⁵ Zhang Zai's most detailed biography is from Lü Dalin's brief biography (*Lü Dalin Hengqu xiansheng xingzhuang* 《呂大臨橫渠先生行狀》) included in *Zhang Zai's Complete Collection* (*Zhang Zai ji* 《張載集》) (1978:381-385). Other sources are in the same volume: *Zhang Zai's Biography in the Histories of the Song Dynasty* (*Songshi Zhang Zai zhuan* 《宋史張載傳》) (1978:385-387), and Zhang Dainian's essay on Zhang Zai's thought: *About Zhang Zai's Thought and Works* (*Guanyu Zhang Zai de sixiang he zhuzuo* 《關於張載的思想和著作》) (1978:1-18). The most comprehensive English translation of Zhang Zai's biography is in Kasoff (1984:182-184). Other references are from Chan (1976) and Hon (2012:79-81).

²⁶ Zhang Zai was usually associated with Hengqu, basically for two reasons. The first is that Zhang's family lived in Hengqu after the death of his father. The second is that Zhang Zai spent the last years of his life in Hengqu to teach and write. Besides, Zhang Zai's school of thought is often named *guanxue* 關學 (the school of Guanzhong), especially when is compared to the Cheng brothers' school *luoxue* 洛學 (the school of Luoyang).

and Cheng Yi, discussing issues from the *Yijing*. Some biographies pinpoint that this was a turning point for Zhang Zai's thought, since it was there where he finally decided to devote himself to Confucian *Classics*. There are a few hypothesis about the date of this legendary meeting, but as Kasoff has pointed out, it happened probably around the 1057, when both Zhang and Cheng Hao were in Kaifeng for the metropolitan examination (jinshi 進士). After passing the examination, Zhang was assigned in small counties such as Jizhou 祁州 and Yunyan 雲巖 to deal with low ranking jobs, and as many of his contemporaries, he went through a period of deep frustration and disappointment toward government inability in finding proper assignment to successful examinees. After several years, in 1067, Zhang was assigned in the military prefecture of Weizhou 渭州 as Assistant Staff Author in charge of documents (zhuzuo zuolang 著作佐郎); and in the 1069 he was summoned by the young emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048-1085) to serve in the court. This was the time in which the Grand Councilor Wang Anshi was carrying out the "new policies", and the emperor asked Zhang to participate in the reforms. Zhang was thus appointed as a Collator in the Zhongwen library (Zhongwen yuanxiaoshu 崇文院校書), but his duty had a short-lived existence. When Wang Anshi asked him about the reforms, Zhang Zai criticized his plan by being too ambitious and by dealing with things beyond his expertise²⁷. Wang was displeased, and in the end, forced him to retire back to his village: Hengqu.

Despite the failure that he had never forgotten²⁸, the period of Hengqu was the most productive time of Zhang's life, he lived in retirement where he taught to his students the practice of the Way of the Three Dynasties, and finished his most important work: the *Zhengmeng*. In the *Thesaurus of Principles for the Study of the Classics (Jingxue liku 《經學理窟》)*, he himself describes this period of his life as such:

²⁷ Zhang Zai criticizes Wang Anshi quoting indirectly the *Mencius* 1B: "Suppose we have here a piece of uncut jade. Even if its value is equivalent to ten thousand yi of gold, you will still have to entrust its cutting to a jade-cutter. But when it comes to the government of your state, you say, 'Just put aside what you have learned and do as I tell you.' In what way is this different from teaching the jade-cutter his job?" (今有璞玉於此，雖萬鎰，必使玉人彫琢之。至於治國家，則曰：姑舍女所學而從我，則何以異於教玉人彫琢玉哉?) (Trans. by Lau 2003:24).

Zhang Zai states: "Is like teach a jade-cutter how to cut jade, he would not succeed" (如教玉人追琢，則人亦故有不能) (1978:382).

²⁸ Zhang Zai during the years of retirement often thought about the failure he had to face in the court. He describes those years as such: "For six years, poetry, calligraphy and music to my heart's content; what is hard to forget, though, is the court." (六年無限詩書樂，一種難忘是本朝) (1978:368) (Trans. by Kasoff 1984:184).

某既聞²⁹居橫渠說此義理，自有橫渠未嘗如此…今倡此道不知如何，自來元不曾有人說著（1978:290-291）“Since I have been living in retirement in Hengqu, I have been discoursing on these principles of morality. There has never before been such a thing in Hengqu... Now I preach the Way and do not know what will happen. No one has ever said these things before.” (Kasoff 1984:183)

In the 1076 Zhang Zai was recommended by Lü Tafang 呂大防 (1027-1097) to his old assignment in Kaifeng and he was made Co-administrator in the Board of Imperial Sacrifice (tongzhi taichang liyuan 同知太常禮院). But he was immediately disappointed and he grew unhappy about the officers loose attitude in ritual practice, and then resigned from the office. In the journey to home he felt ill and died in Lintong 臨潼. It was the 16th December of 1077³⁰.

II.2.2 Searching for the “Unique Way”

The historical context where the philosophy of Zhang Zai arises is one the most blooming period of the entire history of Chinese philosophy. This period can be paired only with the appearance of the “hundred schools” during the Warring State period (453-221 B.C.). In this highly productive and creative period, the philosophy of Master Hengqu 橫渠³¹ occurs to be one of the most influential and original.

Generally speaking, among several and sometimes sharp differences between eleventh century Confucian philosophers, a single guide line that synthesizes most of their positions is the effort to redefine the Way of Confucius that was threatened by the trivial influence of heterodox and foreign schools in last centuries. Much of the effort of what later will be defined Neo-Confucian philosophy was to outline a new and better way of learning that could establish a new order and a new empire stronger than the previous Han and Tang ones. This attempt had a very broad implication since to define the Way was primarily to decide which texts were considered the most important, and what lessons one could grasp from them; and moreover, how the principle drawn by the

²⁹ As Kasoff (1984:174 n. 88) has pointed out, in the *Zhang Zai ji* the character wen 聞(to retire) has been mistakenly replaced with the homophone 聞 (to hear).

³⁰ About the date of Zhang Zai’s death see note 1.

³¹ Zhang Zai lived the last years of his life in retirement on his old home in Hengqu (in Shaanxi province), it is for this reason that he often be called Hengqu. See biography.

Classics could be applied on the new society and political reforms; and how was the best way to learn and instruct future generation of intellectuals.

Many eleventh century's literati strongly believed in the idea of the existence of an underlying coherence that could unifies all Confucian *Classics*, and in the necessity to recover this coherence that had been lost after the teaching of Confucius³². Fifteen hundred centuries were passed since the death of Confucius and the interpretations of the *Classics* were numerous, and sometimes in opposition. The lack of coherence within the interpretations of the *Classics* had weakened the Way, and caused the emergence of heterodox thinking. Confucians thought that their mission was that to restore the ancient Way of the sages of the legendary Three Dynasties, and they could do so only by recovering the thread that could string all differences into the same whole. This mission had several implications beyond the mere ideological purpose:

First, it had political issues. With the large employment of the examination system, which by the eleventh century became the first way for the recruitment of government official, the attempt to define a single and coherent view of the world was crucial for the correct government³³. The eleventh century is thus the time of several political reforms that have the primal aim of defining the principles by which the empire could be governed and strengthened³⁴.

³² The idea that the single Way had been lost for a long time, dated back to Tang influential philosopher Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824). In order to attack Buddhism, Han Yu tried to retrieve the unique Way of Confucius, and thus proposed to transmit it himself (Daotong 道通). In his understanding, the Way was that of benevolence (ren 仁) which was passed from ancient sages to Confucius and Mencius. By the time of the eleventh century, this idea was kept alive.

³³ In the Song Dynasty, the examination system became the primary way for official recruitment, and most of the previous ways for recruitment during the Tang Dynasty disappeared in the Song. Peter Bol (1992: 149-150) locates the reason of this change in the socio-economic changes within the literati class and in the desire to centralize political authority. The examination system was inherited from the Five Dynasties and the Tang, but by the Song it was able to recruit a much more officials than before. For a complete investigation on Song Dynasty examination system see John Chaffey (1985).

³⁴ During the eleventh century Chinese government went through a period of political reforms: from the Fan Zhongyan 範仲淹 (989-1052) "Minor Reforms" (Qingli xinzheng 慶曆新政), to Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) "New Policies"(Xinfa 新法) and Sima Guang's 司馬光 (1019-1086) "Old Policies"(Jiutang 舊黨).

The *qingli* reforms were a short-lived political reforms that took place from the 1043 to the 1045. The core of these reforms was constituted by a series of ten policy proposals that contained measures for increasing agricultural production, strengthened military power, improve local administration and promote meritocracy in official recruitment. To see in details the *qingli* reforms see Liu (1957). The Wang Anshi's New Policies is considered one of the most important political event during the Song Dynasty. They last almost two decades under the control of the emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048-1085).

Second, ideological. The idea of a single and coherent thread increased the critique against heterodox doctrines, such as Buddhism and Daoism, and strengthen Confucian orthodoxy. We will see below that one of the primal aim of Confucians was to eradicate Buddhism, which was the most influent ideology in Song elite³⁵.

Third, philosophical. The effort to find a coherent view among different and sometimes conflictual position within the *Classics*, had the aim to redefine the process of learning and the program of self-cultivation in a way that could appeal those intellectuals attracted by the popularity of heterodox theories. Buddhism represented a serious threat to Confucian orthodoxy because it could provide coherent answers to questions that concern cosmologies, human nature and self-cultivation. This attracted many literati of the time³⁶.

For what concern this investigation, my focus here will be to show how this challenge was taken over by Zhang Zai. My concern here will focus on philosophical issues such as cosmology, human nature and self-cultivation. We will see how Zhang Zai adheres to the idea of the single coherence that could string all issues into the same whole. And moreover we will see how the idea behind this purpose was the attempt to respond on the challenge moved by heterodox schools, especially by Buddhism³⁷. This will be crucial for the understanding of Zhang Zai's philosophy of harmony since it is from these issues that he finds in harmony the best solution to overcome heterodox thinking finding the single thread of Confucianism.

Wang Anshi's reforms had large purposes and the revolutionary intent to alter the nature of the Northern Song government. See Bol (1992: 212-254.)

In opposition to the Wang Anshi's New Policies, Sima Guang guided a party that wanted to recover the ancient Way of the sages and block Wang Anshi's reforms. Sima Guang's conservative party include philosophers such as Shao Yong and the Cheng brothers.

³⁵ We will see below that one of the primal aim of Confucians was to eradicate Buddhism which was the most influent ideology in Song's elite. For a study on the influence of Buddhism in Song society see Peter N. Gregory, Daniel A. Getz (2002); and Douglas Skonicki (2007).

³⁶ See below.

³⁷ The idea of a unique coherent Way that could contrast Buddhist heterodoxy did not just concern Zhang Zai's philosophy, but it was shared by some of his contemporaries such as Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and others.

II.2.3 Buddhists threat

The idea that to restore the Confucian Way was necessary the eradication of heterodox beliefs such as that of Buddhism and Daoism was wide spread among Confucians literati. The reasons why eleventh century Confucians were so much concerned on heterodox thinking influence, and in particular Buddhist influence on society, are several and complex, and go from economic and political implications, to ideological and philosophical ones. The traditional historical view that emphasizes the decline of Buddhism after the Tang, and from the Huichang 會昌 persecution on (842-845), is now overcome with a more accurate analysis that attest the strong presence and influence of Buddhism in Song society³⁸. There are several examples among eleventh century literati that report the widespread influence of Buddhism in Chinese society. To quotes some examples, one of the great Northern Song Master Sun Fu 孫復 (992-1057) claims that Buddhists were everywhere in China; and the great influential artist and politician Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) denounces the trouble caused by Buddhist doctrine among the centuries³⁹. The general belief was that Buddhism largely replaced Confucianism after the fall of the Three Dynasties, and thus in order to restore the primacy of Confucianism and of the Confucian Way, literati needed to recall ancient principles and rituals. This was the position hold by the *guwen* 古文 (Ancient-style) movement which enumerate among others intellectuals such as Ouyang Xiu and Li Gou 李覲 (1009-1059)⁴⁰.

³⁸ The Huichang persecution was the largest persecution against Buddhism in the history of China. It was carried out by the Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (814-846) with the aim to eradicate Buddhism from Chinese soil. The reason behind the persecusion were primary economic and political. Bol (1992:22) pinpoints that the *Huichang* repression “aimed to reduce Buddhist activities to a token presence, after a phenomenal expansion of the clergy and monastic institutions—an expansion driven by sometimes lavish imperial patronage, the massive selling of ordination certificates by central and local authorities, and the incentive of tax and service exemptions for clergy.” During the repression hundreds of monasteries were destroyed and the large part of the wealth were confiscated by the authority. Even if the impact on Buddhist’s schools located on major cities was severe and they never recovered from that; on the contrary Buddhist schools that were located in mountains and countryside were able to survive and flourish in the Song era. See Robert E. Buswell ,Jr.Donald S. Lopez Jr. (2013:364).

³⁹ Kasoff 1984:15.

⁴⁰ The Ancient-style movement was an intellectual movement founded in the Tang dynasty by Han Yu. This movement achieved great importance in early Northern Song period. The aim was to recall the *wen* 文 (literature and style) of the antiquity in order to get the full access to the values and ideals of ancient sages. At the base of this idea there was the belief of a direct relationship between values and the style of one’s writing. As Peter Bol (2008:53) points out: “The logic of this proposition was straightforward: to the discerning eye, the way a person wrote inevitably revealed the values that guided him; thus one could infer the qualities of the person and how he would act from the style of his

Besides the *guwen* denounce against Buddhist negative influence on society, in the mid-eleventh century there were other thinkers that focused their analysis and critiques on philosophical issues. This kind of philosophical issues can be found primarily in the critique of Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhang Zai. As Peter Bol (2008:300) has pointed out, the way of thinking of these thinkers represented a radical break in literati thought. Their critique on Buddhism, and thus the basis of the philosophical system they wanted to promote, was totally grounded on the harmonic connection between the process of changes and transformations and man. As Douglas Skonicki's (2007:524) dissertation shows:

“Unlike his immediate forebears and contemporaries, Cheng (and I will claim Zhang Zai too) did not ground literati values in the cultural and literary tradition, but instead maintained that they were to be found in heaven and earth.”

Even if their philosophical positions were different and sometimes even conflictual, they were united in the attempt to reaffirm the unity of man and cosmos as a response to Buddhists challenges.

Below we can give a brief look to some of the critiques that can be found in major works of the three philosophers. We can group those critiques into cosmological/metaphysical critique, and ethical critique.

The metaphysical critique develops against the idea that Buddhists view of reality do not account for the real world, they consider the world as an illusion without recognizing the reality of changes and transformations⁴¹.

Cheng Hao states that:

佛氏不識陰陽晝夜死生古今，安得謂形而上者與聖人同乎？(*Ercheng yishu* 《二程遺書》)⁴² “The Buddhists do not understand yin and yang, day and night, life and

writing. So studying the "ancient wen" in functional terms we might say to study the "ideal culture" was really about learning the values of the sages and making them one's own.”

⁴¹ In this dissertation I will focus on the idea that Neo-Confucians (Zhang Zai in particular) have about Buddhism, I will not take into account the real view of the Buddhists' school in the Song period.

⁴² The Chinese text from *Ercheng yishu* is from SKQS. Retrieved from Sturgeon (ed.). 2011 Chinese Text Project. <http://ctext.org>.

death, or past and present. How can it be said that their metaphysics is the same as that of the Sage?” (Trans. by Chan 1963:542)

And moreover:

釋氏之學，正似用管窺天，一直便見道，他不是不得，只是却不見全體 (*Ercheng yishu*) “The learning of the Buddhists is exactly comparable to using a tube to peer at the sky. They directly perceive the *Dao*; it is not that they do not obtain it, it is just that they cannot perceive the complete substance.” (in Skonicki 2007:550)

Very similar is the position of both Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi. Zhang Zai states:

彼欲直語太虛，不以晝夜、陰陽累其心 (1978:65) “[Buddhists] desire is to talk directly about The Great Void, without bothering their heart/mind with day and night, yin and yang.”

And Cheng Yi:

釋氏言成住壞空，便是不知道。只有成壞，無住空。且如草木初生既成，生盡便枯壞也。他以謂如木之生，生長既足卻自住，然後卻漸漸毀壞。天下之物，無有住者。嬰兒一生，長一日便是減一日，何嘗得住? (*Ercheng yishu*) “The Buddhists talk about formation remaining in the same state, deterioration, and extinction. This indicates that they ignorant of the Way. There are only formation and deterioration but no remaining or extinction. Take plants, for example. When they are first produced, they are already formed. As they approach the highest point of growth, they immediately begin to decay. The Buddhists think that in the life of plants, they grow until they reach maturity remain in that state for some time, and then gradually deteriorate. But nothing in the world remains in the same state. Any day added to the life of an infant means a day spent. Since when can one stay in the same state?” (Trans. by Chan 2008:564)

Buddhists fail to recognize the world of changes and transformations, and therefore they do not grasp the foundation of the world. Without recognizing that the foundation of the

world lies in the same natural process, they cannot but set this foundation within human mind. This is the greatest mistake of Buddhist metaphysics.

Zhang Zai states:

釋氏不知天命而以心法起滅天地，以小緣大，以末緣本，其不能窮而謂之幻妄，真所謂疑冰者，與夏蟲疑冰，以其不識 (1978:26) “Buddhists do not recognize the heavenly mandate, thus the dharma of the heart-mind makes and destroys the world. They think that minute produces the greater, and the branch produces the roots. Since they cannot pursue [the heavenly mandate], they call [it] illusion. This is the same thing as the summer insect not knowing the ice. Since it does not know it, it thinks that does not exist.”

Cheng Yi:

書言天敘天秩，天有是理，聖人循而行之，所謂道也。聖人本天，釋氏本心 (*Ercheng yishu*) “The Book of Documents states: “heaven arranges, heaven orders.” Heaven has this principle; the sage according with and practicing it is what is called the *Dao*. The sage bases himself in heaven; the Buddhists base themselves in the mind.” (Trans. by Skonicki 2007:549)

Without recognizing the foundation of the world, Buddhists vision is partial: they are able to recognize the deepest part of reality, but they do not grasp its connection with the external world. Cheng Hao states:

彼釋氏之學，於「敬以直內」則有之矣，「義以方外」則未之有也，故滯固者入於枯槁，疏通者歸於肆恣，一作放肆。此佛之教所以為隘也 (*Ercheng yishu*) “In the learning of the Buddhists there is seriousness to straighten the internal life but no righteousness to square the external life. Therefore those who are rigid become like dry wood and those who are relaxed end up in recklessness. This is why Buddhism is narrow.” (Trans. by Chan 2008:536)

This metaphysical fallacy has important consequences on people’s attitude toward the world and toward society. Zhang Zai affirms:

以人生為妄見，可謂知人乎？天人一物，輒生取捨，可謂知天乎？...其語到實際，則以人生為幻妄，以有為為疣贅，以世界為蔭濁，遂厭而不有，遺而弗存 (1978: 65) “By seeing human life as illusion, can this be called realize man? Heaven and man are one thing. Hold to one side and abandon the other, can this be called realize heaven?... The way his theory ends in reality is through positing human life as an illusion and active participation as excrescence. They hates and thus deny the world since they consider it as filthy. Therefore they escape it and ignore it.”

Cheng Hao:

所以謂萬物一體者，皆有此理，只為從那裡來...釋氏以不知此，去佗身上起意思，奈何那身不得，故却厭惡；要得去盡根塵，為心源不定，故要得如枯木死灰 (*Ercheng yishu*) “The reason why it is said that all things form one body is that all have this principle, simply because they all have come from it...Buddhists do not know this, they think in term of the self. As they cannot cope with it, they become disgusted and want to get rid of sense-perception, and because the source of their mind is not calm, they want to become like dry wood and dead ashes.” (Trans. by Chan 2008:533)

Cheng Yi:

釋氏之學，又不可道他不知，亦盡極一作及。乎高深，然要之卒歸乎自私自利之規模 (*Ercheng yishu*) “You cannot say that the teachings of the Buddhists are ignorant, for actually they are quite lofty and profound. But, essentially speaking, they can finally be reduced to a pattern of selfishness.” (Ibid. 2008:555)

The three philosophers concord to link Buddhist vision of reality with people’s attitude and behavior in society. They claim that without rooting ethical values in the world, it is impossible to grow them in society. This erroneous vision of reality leads to escapism and egoism. Furthermore, being Buddhism very influent on Song society, they claim that this egoist attitude has already infected the large amount of literati and already caused the loss of the Way of the sages.

But at the same time, they recognize to Buddhism the credit of some intuition, and moreover, by engaging on this philosophical debate with them, they cannot but share some issues that were originally foreign (or at least not crucial) to Confucian concerns⁴³. For instance Zhang Zai does say that Buddhism grasps something important about reality:

釋氏語實際，乃知道者所謂誠也，天德也。其語到實際，則以人生為幻妄，以有為為疣贅，以世界為蔭濁，遂厭而不有，遺而弗存。就使得之，乃誠而惡明者也 (1978:65) “What Buddhists call reality is defined by the knower of the Way sincerity and heaven virtue. They speaks of reality, but at the same time, consider human life as an illusion and active participation as excrescence. They hates and thus deny the world since they consider it as filthy. Therefore they escape it and ignore it. What they get is just sincerity but rejecting what is manifest.”

And:

懵者略知體虛空為性，不知本天道為用，反以人見之小因緣天地 (1978:8) “The ignorant (Buddhists) roughly realizes that void is what form human nature, but they do not understand that its function is based on cosmic changes and transformations.”

Cheng Yi recognized these similarities and saw that as a great danger:

昨日之會大萃談禪夕使人情思不樂夕歸而悵悵者久之。此說天下已成風，其何能救！古亦有釋氏，盛時尚只是崇設像教，其害至小。今日之風，便先言性命道德，先驅了知者，才愈高明，則陷溺愈深。在某，則才卑德薄，無可奈何他。然據今日次第，便有數孟子，亦無如之何。(Ercheng yishu) “At the meeting yesterday, [people] by and large spoke of Chan. This caused my thoughts and emotions to become dispirited. I returned and felt bitterly disappointed for a longtime. This doctrine has already become a fashion throughout the empire; how can the situation be remedied?

⁴³ As we have seen before, Buddhism during the eleventh century was far from being in danger and their influence on Chinese literati was important. Even those scholars that strongly attacked Buddhism studied and shared some important issues crucial to the foreign doctrine. Philosophers such as Cheng Hao and Zhang Zai, for instance, dedicated their youth on learning Buddhism, and others such as the important politician Wang Anshi and even Ouyang Xiu turned on it in their later years.

Buddhism also existed in the past, but even when it flourished, it only preached image-worship, and the harm it did was very slight. But its present tendency is to speak first of all of the nature and the decree, the *Dao* and virtue, and to pursue first of all the intelligent; it is those with the loftiest talents who sink most deeply into it. As for me, I am a person of mediocre talent and virtue, and am incapable of dealing with it; but as things are going today, even if there were several men as great as Mencius, they would be helpless.” (Trans. by Skonicki 2007:547)

The preface of Zhang Zai’s main work *Zhengmeng* written by Fan Yu remarks:

自孔孟沒，學絕道喪千有餘年，處士橫議，異端間作，若浮屠老子之書，天下共傳，與六經並行。而其徒侈其說，以為大道精微之理，儒家之所不能談，必取吾書為正。世之儒者亦自許曰：“吾之六經未嘗語也，孔孟未嘗及也”，從而信其書，宗其道，天下靡然同風，無敢置疑於其間，況能奮一朝之辯，而與之較是非曲直乎哉！…閔乎道之不明，斯人之迷且病，天下之理泯然其將滅也，故為此言與浮屠老子辯，夫豈好異乎哉？蓋不得已也。浮屠以心為法，以空為真，故正蒙辟之以天理之大 (1978:4-5) “From the deaths of Confucius and Mencius, the learning has been cut off and the *Dao* lost for over a thousand years. The extreme views of recluses and heterodox teachings were produced in this interim, like the texts of Buddhism and Daoism, which the world together transmits along with the six classics. Yet their disciples aggrandize their doctrines and claim that the refined and subtle principles of the great *Dao* are not able to be discussed by Confucians, and so you must adopt our texts as correct. The Confucians of the age also accept [their claims], saying: ‘Our six classics have never spoken of this; Confucius and Mencius never reached this.’ Accordingly, they put their faith in their texts and believe their *Dao*; the people of the world are swept up together in this trend and do not dare doubt it. How could they be able to stir themselves to a morning debate and compare right and wrong and the straight and crooked with [the Daoists and Buddhists]! ... [Zhang Zai] was distressed by the *Dao* not being illuminated and the confusion and sickness of the people. The principle of the world had vanished and was about to be destroyed. Thus, for this reason he spoke out to refute Buddhists and Daoists. How could it have been because he was fond of being different? It was that he had no other alternative. The Buddhists take the

heart/mind as dharma and emptiness as true reality. Thus Correcting Youthful Ignorance refuted them with the greatness of heavenly principle⁴⁴.” (Trans. by Skonicki 2007:545)

The three philosophers claimed that due to the emerging influence of Buddhism, the Confucian Way had been polluted and now it was hard to distinguish Confucianism from Buddhism. The two schools shared some issues and this attracted many Confucians on their side. The only way to resolve this issue, it was to trace back the foundation of the ancient Way of the sages. But despite the harshly critique that the Neo-Confucian philosophers moved to Buddhism, their relationship with the foreign doctrine is controversial. On the one hand, since the similarities between the two doctrine during the Song were many, the border between one theory and the other were so subtle that many Confucians were accused of heresy⁴⁵. On the other, it is probably due to this unclear relation with Buddhism, that Confucians renew their thinking and could respond properly to the challenge of Buddhism.

Generally speaking there are three major tendencies on the relationship between Buddhism and what later will be called the Neo-Confucian tradition:

The first view emphasizes the syncretic tendency of Neo-Confucianism to absorb metaphysical issues belonged to Buddhism and Daoism. From this idea emerge what will be called “the three teachings (sanjiao 三教) synthesis”. Modern historians within Neo-Confucian tradition generally held this position⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ We will see below that Zhang Zai’s most violent critique is against Buddhism in general. Zhang Zai points Buddhists general attitude toward life and society without making distinction between different schools and traditions. As Feuillas (2004:92) has pointed out, Zhang Zai emphasizes Buddhists general influence on culture and society without trace a dividing line between the proselyte attitude on some schools, and the more speculative teaching of other schools. This because Zhang Zai insist “sur la continuité et la tendance sur la longue durée: la situation n'est qu'une suite naturelle - pour preuve les multiples mots marquant la transition et les étapes -, qu'un effet de l'enseignement du Bouddha historique. Il n'y a pas heu de distinguer entre écoles; toutes ramènent à l'illusion et à la souffrance, à la négation du désir et du monde. Le bouddhisme contemporain, affirme-t-il, doit, pour être d'établis être examiné pour ce qu'il est: contaminant et aliénant.”

⁴⁵ On the question of orthodoxy and heresy within Neo-Confucianism, and on the influence of heterodox doctrines on this tradition see Lidón (2011).

⁴⁶ Peter Bol (2008:103) affirms that this view traditionally derives from Qing philosophers critique against Song and Ming tradition. Discrediting those philosophers by being polluted from heterodoxy, they could claim to possess the correct interpretation of the *Classics*. He continue: “Modern historians who accept this view have accounted for it in various ways, for example, by positing that Neo-Confucianism was an outgrowth of an eleventh century desire to combine the “Three Teachings” of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism and by pointing to parallels between contemporary developments in Buddhism and Confucianism.”

The second view wants to over-emphasize the role of Buddhist theories in the teaching of those thinkers. This idea is primarily based on the fact that several thinkers were actually attracted by Buddhist theories and even spent some years studying it.

The third approach wants to contextualize Neo-Confucianism in the philosophical debate of the eleventh century within the Confucian orthodoxy and in the relationship with Buddhism⁴⁷.

Since my claim is based on the idea that Zhang Zai's philosophy of harmony is grounded on the attempt to respond to the erroneous view of Buddhism and heterodox schools in general, I will follow the third approach⁴⁸. My claim here is that since the ideal of harmony is one of the most important and comprehensive Confucian's concept, which structure encompass several layers of reality, Zhang Zai employs and develops it as the means for his critique against Buddhist partial view of reality. As we will see below, this idea clearly emerges from Zhang Zai's latest and most comprehensive work: the *Zhengmeng*. I will argue that the fact that *Zhengmeng*'s opening is dedicated to the concept of Great Harmony is neither coincidental nor the arbitrary choice of the later organization of the text, but it was a meaningful choice that pinpoints the primacy of this concept in Zhang Zai's system.

II.3 Zhang Zai's Works

II.3.1 The *Zhengmeng*

The *Zhengmeng* is Zhang Zai's most important and influential work, and it represents his most developed thought. According to his disciples Lü Dalin, Su Bing and Fan Yu,

⁴⁷ This third approach is attempted by Peter Bol that sees Neo-Confucian's philosophy as a radical break from literati's strand of thinking of the eleventh century; see Peter Bol (2008) But also by Yu Yingshi (2003: 27-251). Professor Yu sees within the Neo-Confucian's reasoning, the attempt to reconciling the division between the self-cultivation promoted by *guwen* movement and Wang Anshi's primacy of political order. Instead, Douglas Skonicki (2007) sees the development of Chang Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhang Zai's way of thinking as the attempt to respond against Buddhist's challenges on fundamental questions such as: cosmos, human nature and the role of the heart-mind in self-cultivation. Skonicki recognizes the influence of heterodox on the development of the *lixue* in two directions: as an obstacle for the success of the Confucian Way; and as an inspiration for the renovation of the same Way.

⁴⁸ This investigation will not analyze the philosophical thinking of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi.

Zhang Zai began to write the *Zhengmeng* in the 1070 and took seven year of hard work to accomplish his task⁴⁹.

Lü Dalin describes Zhang Zai's effort as such:

謁告西歸，居於橫渠故居…終日危坐一室，左右簡編，俯而讀，仰而思，有得則識之，或中夜起坐，取燭以書，其志道精思，未始須臾息，亦未嘗須臾忘也 (1978: 383) “He retired himself going back to the west, he lived in his former place in Hengqu... [from that moment] He sat down all day in one room surrounded by books. He bent down and read and look up and reflect. If there was something that could get, he would take notes. He could keep this to the middle of the night with the light of a candle. He had his mind on the essence of the Way, he reflected deeply on it all the time without leaving it even for a moment.”

Lü Dalin keeps telling that after several years of hard work, Zhang Zai had a strange dream where he presented his work to the disciple. He exclaimed:

此書予歷年致思之所得，其言殆於前聖合與！大要發端示人而已，其觸類廣之，則吾將有待于學者。(1978:384) “This work is the result of several years deep thinking, the words are in accord with the sages of antiquity! But this it is simply the beginning that need to be extended by scholar's effort.”

Zhang Zai clearly shows that the task he had undertaken was that to retrieve the ancient Way of the sages. The *Zhengmeng* was just the beginning that others needed to follow and develop.

The main purpose of Zhang Zai's great effort is clearly expressed in the title of the work: *Correcting the Ignorance*. Zhang Zai borrowed this title directly from the *Yijing*

⁴⁹ See Lü Dalin's biography of Mr. Zhang Zai (*Hengqu xiansheng xingzhuang* 《橫渠先生行狀》) (1978:381-385); Su Bing's introduction to *Zhengmeng* (*Su Bing xu* 《正蒙·蘇丙序》) (Ibid:3); Fan Yu's introduction to the *Zhengmeng* (*Zhengmeng Fan Yu xu* 《正蒙範育序》) (Ibid:4). All these works are in *Zhang Zai ji* (1978).

《易經》. Indeed, Meng 蒙 is the fourth hexagram and shows the ignorance and the confusion of who has lost the Way⁵⁰.

The *Book of Changes* states: “Youthful folly has success. It is not I who seek the young fool.” (蒙：亨。匪我求童蒙) (Trans. by Wilhelm and Baynes 2003:20)⁵¹

About *Zhengmeng*'s title and purpose, the Ming scholar Wang Fuzhi commented: “What it is called *Zhengmeng* is nothing than the cultivation of the ignorant through sage's correcting effort.” (謂之《正蒙》者，養蒙以聖功之正也⁵²) (Tang 2000:79)

As we have seen above, Zhang Zai's task is thus to undermine and correct those ideas and false believes responsible for the corruption of Song society. Zhang Zai locates the principle cause of Song decadence in the Daoists and Buddhists heterodox schools. But besides these heterodox schools, Zhang Zai's critique is also directed toward those Confucians that were attracted by Buddhism and thus could not follow anymore the Confucian Way.

Zhang himself affirms:

自其說熾傳中國，儒者未容窺聖學門牆，已為引取，淪胥其間，指為大道 (1978:64) “Since their doctrine [Buddhism] spread like wildfire throughout China, Confucians were no longer able to recognize the school of wisdom. They were seduced by the Buddhist theories that began to follow and to consider as the great *Dao*”.

Zhang Zai wants to show a unique and coherent view of reality that can respond properly to the particular requirement of his time. He thinks that the best and unique true teaching is that of the sage of antiquity, Confucius and Mencius. Buddhists and Daoists are not the answer to the problem of Song society and thus Zhang's teaching

⁵⁰ Zhang Zai is one of the most important eleventh century's *Yijing* exegete. Zhang's interpretation on *Yijing* are principally exposed on the *An explanation of the meaning of Yi from Hengqu (Hengqu yishuo 《橫渠易說》)*. In the text, Zhang Zai focuses his attention primarily on the *Xici 《繫辭》* commenting extensively each passage. Besides, Zhang Zai's comment on hexagram are short or even totally absent. For an exhaustive survey on Zhang Zai's interpretation of *Yijing* see Hon Tzeki.

⁵¹ All translations from the *Book of Changes* are taken from this volume unless otherwise noted.

⁵² All quotes of Wang Fuzhi's commentary are taken from Tang Qinfu 湯勤福 (2000).

needs to retrieve what it is lost. After seven years of deep thinking, Zhang Zai accomplishes his task and finally defines and shows the Way⁵³.

Wang Fuzhi himself, in his self-composed epitaph, defines Zhang Zai as his true master:

希張橫渠之正學，而力不能企，幸全歸於茲邱，固。銜恤以永世 (*Chuanshan gongnian pu* 《船山公年譜》) “I have sought after the true doctrines of Chang Hengch'u [ZhangZai], but not been strong enough to attain them. Fortunate as I am to have come safely to this grave, surely I shall carry my sorrow with me throughout the ages!” (Trans. by McMorran 1975:432)

In the introduction of the commentary of the *Zhengmeng*, Wang Fuzhi pinpoints that Zhang Zai's greatest accomplishment was to guide travelers onto a correct path⁵⁴:

是匠者之繩墨也，射者之彀率也，雖力之未逮，養之未熟，見為登天之難不可企及，而志於是則可至焉，不志於是未有能至者也，養蒙以是為聖功之所自定，而邪說之淫蠱不足以亂之矣，故曰《正蒙》也。衡陽王夫之論。(2000:82) “It is like the ink line for the carpenter or the full draw of the bow for the archer. Although one's strength has not reached its limit and one's cultivation has not yet matured, and one sees that ascending to heaven is difficult and cannot be reached, it is the case that if one's aim is set on it then it can be reached and if one's aim is not set on it, then it can never be reached! Cultivating away from ignorance is the self-determined goal of sages. The excessive poisons of perverse theory cannot distract them from it. This is known as rectifying ignorance.” (Trans. by Ding, Wang 2010:41)

Even if the *Zhengmeng* is considered his main representative work, Zhang Zai himself did not see the text completed. One of his disciple, Su Bing, undertook the task and organized the text into different categories on the style of the *Lunyu* 《論語》 and the

⁵³ Zhang Zai completed the *Zhengmeng* in the 1076 one year before his death. See Zhang Zai's biography.

⁵⁴ Wang Fuzhi even compared Zhang Zai's task to that of the Great Yu 大禹 (legendary ruler of ancient China) whose labors in irrigation overcame the floods and save the people from their depredations. “Chang's aim was to channel all the stream back into the course of the main river, (bring separatist sects back into orthodoxy) and enable the people to forsake the quagmire and tread the level way of security” (张子之功又岂非疏泽水之歧流，引萬派而歸墟，使斯人去昏墊而履平康之坦道哉) (Trans by McMorran 1975:433).

Mengzi 《孟子》. Su Bing organized the text into seventeenth chapter, and today this format is still widely accepted. Wang Fuzhi later groups the seventeenth chapters according to specific categories⁵⁵: the first six chapters can be categorized as cosmological, ontological and metaphysical. The seventh, the eight and the ninth focus on self-cultivation. From the tenth to the sixteenth Zhang Zai makes an exegesis of the *Classics*. And the last one, which is further divided into superior and inferior, synthesizes Zhang Zai's whole system⁵⁶.

Even if the most famous and commented passage of the *Zhengmeng* is clearly the first part of the seventeenth chapter (the *Ximing*), the skeleton of the entire work is traditionally considered the first chapter *Taihe pian*. Here Zhang Zai explains his specific view of reality which is based on the concept of harmony as we will see below⁵⁷.

On the centrality of this chapter Du Baorui 杜保瑞 states:

⁵⁵ Beside Wang Fuzhi, the other scholars that directly commented the structure of the *Zhengmeng* are the contemporary philosopher Cheng Yishan 程宜山 and Chen Junmin 陈俊民 that basically follow Wang's format. See Cheng (1989); Chen (1986).

⁵⁶ In the introduction of the seventh chapter, Wang Fuzhi gives his interpretation about the coherence of the *Zhengmeng*: "The six chapters above, ultimately discuss about the principle of heaven and man, about the spiritual (*shen*) transformation, and about the natural tendencies and dispositions. The three chapters below discuss about scholars' achievement about the investigation of the principle and utmost rightness." (此上六篇，极言天人神化性命之理；自此以下三篇，乃言学者穷理精义之功) (2000:143). Moreover, on the introduction of the tenth chapter he explains that: "the following four chapters are the explanation about the very meaning of the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* which is different from the one given by Chengs and Zhu." (此下四篇，皆释《论语》《孟子》之義，其說有與程、朱異者。) (Ibid:176). The fourteenth chapter is an extensive explanation of the *Zhou Yi* (廣釋《周易》之指); the fifteenth explains the real meaning of the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Documents* (釋《詩》《書》之義); the sixteenth are brief explanations of the three *Books of Rites* (略釋《三禮》之義); and finally, the last chapter is what clarifies Zhang Zai's whole work (以明張子學之全體) (Ibid:229).

⁵⁷ The Great Harmony's chapter is traditionally considered the skeleton of the *Zhengmeng* since it describes Zhang Zai's metaphysical thought. For instance, in the past century, the chapter was often considered Zhang Zai's fundamental writing since it showed Zhang Zai's dialectical and materialist view of reality. Among others, the Chinese scholar Zhu Changche 朱昌彻 (1985:74) considers this chapter one of the most important philosophical writings all along Chinese history: "Zhang Zai's Great Harmony's chapter of the *Zhengmeng* incisively proves that the world is made by one unique substance. He profoundly criticizes the idealistic duality of Buddhism and Daoism, and he drags Chinese proto-materialism and dialectics to a further new level of thought. This is an extremely important philosophical writing within Chinese philosophical history."

(张载的《正蒙·太和篇》精辟地论证了世界的物质统一性，深刻地批判了佛老唯心二非义，把中国古代朴素唯物主义、朴素辩证法相先神论思想提高到一个新的水平，是中国哲学史上十分重要的一篇哲学论文。)

The primacy of this chapter in the *Zhengmeng* is recognized by Chan Wingsit (1963:496) that states: "Among Chang's works, the most important are the short treatise *Ximing* (Western Inscription) and the longer one, *Zhengmeng* (Correcting Youthful Ignorance). The first in its entirety and the two most important chapters of the second (chapter one and chapter six) are translated below."

本篇是張載幾篇最重要的哲學創作篇章之一，是他的宇宙論及本體論的發言篇章…這也是張載為儒學建立形上體系的重要立論方式。(2005:45) “This is Zhang Zai’s most important philosophical writing, it shows his cosmological and ontological theories... with this work Zhang Zai provides an important contribute to Confucian metaphysical system.”

The general trend of scholarships that deal with the *Zhengmeng* share Du Baorui’s opinion. Besides, an important example of a different understanding is that of Tang Junyi that pinpoints the seventh chapter as the key to understand Zhang Zai’s system. Tang (2005) begins his analysis of the *Zhengmeng* from this key chapter that explains the relation between heaven and man⁵⁸. Chan Wing-cheuk (2011:89) justifies Tang’s choice as an attempt to reject a materialist interpretation of Zhang Zai:

“One can now understand the reason why Tang Junyi identifies *Daxin pian* as the skeleton of Zhang Zai’s philosophy. Basically, he tries to develop an absolute-idealist or spiritualist interpretation of Zhang Zai. This is why he rejects the identification of Zhang Zai as a materialist. As a consequence of such an absolute-idealist reading of Zhang Zai’s text, he translates the term *shen* into English as ‘spirituality’.”

In this dissertation I will follow the tradition that recognizes the Great Harmony’s chapter as the key to grasp Zhang Zai’s philosophy, but I will try to go a step forward by positing that the first term of the first chapter, *taihe* 太和, represents the lens through which we can grasp Zhang Zai’s entire philosophical system. In this sense Su Bing’s organization of the *Zhengmeng* might have a specific goal, which was to introduce first of all the general model of Zhang Zai’s view of reality.

The *Zhengmeng* was reviewed and commented several times within the Confucian tradition. Among the several commentaries, Wang Fuzhi’s *Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu* 《張子正蒙注》 is evaluated as the most important. Besides Wang Fuzhi’s commentary

⁵⁸ Tang (2014:pos173) states: “let’s begins [the investigation] from chapter seven, expanding the heart-mind, here he explains the meaning of the relationship between heaven and man.” (先由 第七篇《大心篇》开始,贯释其天与人相对之义).

I will occasionally refer to the commentary of Wang Zhi's 王植 *Zhengmeng chuyi* 《正蒙初義》 in order to clarify some controversial passages⁵⁹.

II.3.2 Other works employed in this investigation

Besides the *Zhengmeng*, Zhang Zai's most popular work is the *Western Inscription* (*Ximing* 《西銘》). This is a short essay that was originally written in the Western wall of Zhang's classroom. The *Western Inscription*, together with another essay originally written on the Eastern wall (*Dongming* 《東銘》), were included later in the *Zhengmeng* by Zhang Zai's disciple Su Bing. Western and Eastern Inscriptions are not the original names of the two essays, Zhang Zai called the two texts respectively *Rectifying the fool* (*Dingwan* 《訂頑》) and *Puncturing Ignorance* (*Bianyu* 《砭愚》). The names were re-given afterward by Cheng Yi. Besides its relative short length, the *Western Inscription* became one of the most influential text within the Neo-Confucian tradition. For instance, the Cheng brothers praised Zhang Zai's essay by posing it at the same level of Mencius. There is also a collection of commentaries of the *Western Inscription* dated around the thirteenth century that includes commentaries by Lü Dalin and Zhu Xi.

Besides the *Zhengmeng*, and the two *Inscriptions* (Western and Eastern) later included in it, there are other works important for this investigation. Among all Zhang Zai's extant works included in *Zhang Zai's Complete Collection* I will directly refer to three Zhang Zai's major work: the *An Explanation of the Meaning of Yi [by a reader] from Hengqu* (*Hengqu Yishuo* 《橫渠易說》); the *Thesaurus of Principles for the Study of*

⁵⁹ In the introduction of *Zhang Zaiji*, Zhang Dainian (1978:17) introduces the most important commentaries of the *Zhengmeng*: "The *Zhengmeng* is an obscure text very difficult to understand. At the beginning it better to look at commentaries and notes. The most famous commentary is Wang Fuzhi's *Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu*, but it is not easy to understand. Besides, it can be consulted the Wang Zhi's *Zhengmeng chuyi* (Qian Long edition) which is relatively easy and clear, and complete with everything. Moreover, we also have the Ming dynasty Liu Ji's *Zhengmeng Huigao* (Ming edition and Qing edition); Ming dynasty Gao Panlong and Xu Bida's *Zhengmeng shi* (Ming edition); Qing dynasty Li Guangdi's *Zhengmeng zhu* (Kang Xi edition); Yang Fangda's *Zhengmeng jishuo* (Yong Zheng edition and so on. But all these commentaries has several mistakes and misunderstandings that need to be carefully distinguished."

(《正蒙》艱深難懂，初學須看注解。王夫之的《張子正蒙注》最有名，但他的注也不易懂。比較淺顯易懂而且也比較完備的注解，有王植的《正蒙初義》（乾隆刊本），可以參閱。此外還有明劉璣的《正蒙會稿》（明刊本，清刊本），明高攀龍、徐必達的《正蒙釋》（明刊本），清李光地的《正蒙注》（康熙刊本），楊方達的《正蒙集說》（雍正刊本）等。但這些注解都有曲解誤釋之處，這也需要注意鑒別。)

the Classics (*Jingxue liku* 《經學理窟》) and the *Record of sayings of Master Zhang* (*Zhangzi yulu* 《張子語錄》).

The first essay, the *An Explanation of the meaning of Yi [by a reader] from Hengqu*, was probably written in Kaifeng around 1056-1057 when Zhang Zai was lecturing on the *Book of Changes*. As both Zhang Dainian (1978) and Ira Kasoff (1984) have pointed out, there is no doubt that this work was written directly by Zhang Zai and that this was earlier than the *Zhengmeng*⁶⁰. The only issue about this text is that in Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 *Zhiqi shulu jieti* 《直齋書錄解題》⁶¹ is presented in three volumes (*juan*) while in the majority of bibliographies in ten volumes⁶². The work presents Zhang Zai's specific reading of the *Book of Changes*, and it focuses primarily on the understanding of the *Great Commentary* (*Xici*). Here Zhang Zai offers lengthy interpretations and comments; on the contrary, he does not leave some much space for the sixty-four hexagrams⁶³.

The second work, the *Thesaurus of Principles for the Study of the Classics* (*Jingxue liku* 《經學理窟》) is more problematic. First, there is some controversies about the author of this text. The Southern Song *Records of Books Read in My Studio in the Province* (*Junzhai dushu zhi* 《郡齋讀書志》) attributes the text to Mr. Jin Hua 金華先生 which was probably a student of both Zhang Zai and one of the Chengs⁶⁴. Other bibliographies attributed the text to Zhang Zai.

Zhang Dainian thinks that one of the reason could be that probably there were two editions of the book, and Jin Hua was just the editor.

⁶⁰ The relationship between the two texts is really closed since they share several concepts. Toyosaburo O Kyo ekigaku ko, estimates that roughly one-fifth of the *Zhengmeng* is drawn from this work. In Kasoff (1984:202.).

⁶¹ The work is present in the collection of the Qing emperor Qian Long: *Qian Long yulan siku quanshu huiyao* 《乾隆御覽四庫全書薈要》.

⁶² See Ibidem:179 and Zhang Dainian (1978:15).

⁶³ Hon Tze-ki (2012) thinks that this approach to the Changes is important to grasp Zhang Zai's understanding of the book.

⁶⁴ See *Zhao De xiansheng junzhai du shuzhi* 《昭德先生郡齋讀書志》 in *Suguyi congshu* 《續古逸叢書》 Retrived from Sturgeon (ed.). 2011. Chinese Text Project. <http://ctext.org>.

疑宋代《理窟》有兩個本子，一題金華先生，一題橫渠先生。金華先生可能是編者。(1978:15) “Probably in the Song there were two edition of the *Liku*; one was edited by Mr Jin Hua, and the other by Mr Hengqu. Probably Mr. Jin Hua was just the editor.”

Moreover, Zhang Dainian thinks that this text collects both the doctrines of Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi. But the later attribution to Zhang Zai is due to the majority of Zhang Zai’s sayings in the text:

這本書當是張載程頤語錄的類編，後人因其中張載的話較多，所以算作張載的書(1978:15) “This book include the saying of both Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi. And since Zhang Zai’s saying were the most, later people attributed to him. Therefore count as Zhang Zai’s work.”

The work presents a collection of essays in which Zhang explains his interpretation of the *Classics*.

The third work, the *Record of Sayings of Master Zhang* (*Zhangzi yulu* 《張子語錄》), is a collection of sayings of the Master Zhang. Zhang Dainian pinpoints that the work is already present in the list of Zhu Xi’s *Jinsilu* 《近思錄》⁶⁵ among Zhang Zai’s works. The works is divided in three parts: the superior (*yulu shang* 《語錄上》), the middle (*yulu zhong* 《語錄中》) and the inferior (*yulu xia* 《語錄下》).

In addition to these three part, *Zhang Zai’s Complete Collection* add seven explanations, the *Yulu chao* 《語錄抄》, which do not appear in the Song edition⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ In *Qinding siku quanshu* 《欽定四庫全書》.Retrived from Sturgeon, Donald (ed.). 2011. Chinese Text Project. <http://ctext.org>..

⁶⁶ For a complete list of Zhang Zai’s works and editions, see Ira Kasoff (1984:178-181).

III. OBJECTIVES

I can briefly sketch the philosophical goals of this dissertation into three major points:

1. I will argue that even if Zhang Zai does not often directly speak about harmony *per se*, the paradigm of harmony represents the conceptual model of Zhang Zai's fundamental metaphysical theories such as qi 氣⁶⁷, human nature 性⁶⁸ and

⁶⁷ The concept of *qi* has several meanings in ancient and modern Chinese language. It encompass several fields such as physics, physiology, psychology and philosophy. Along the history of Western sinological studies there are several understanding and English translations. From last century Feng Youlan (1983), Tang Junyi (1956) and Angus Graham (1958) "ether"; to Cheng Chung-ying (2009), Shun Kwong-loi (1997) and others "vital energy" or "vital force" and so on. Generally speaking Chinese philosophers believed that *Qi* was present in all aspects of life and activity. Robing Wang (2010: 343) defines its broad meaning "a cluster of energy or life forces which are manifested in mental as well as in physical forms...The term *qi* can be used as a noun, a verb, or a modifier. Although *qi* is a common and integral part of the experience of living, *qi* is also an abstract idea. It is woven into language: the air one breathes, the force that drives the fusion of blood, the food one eats, the strength of one's heart-mind, the flow of one's thoughts, and the deepest urges of one's heart. *Qi* gives life: when *qi* declines one will become sick; when *qi* is lost, one will die. *Qi* is a complex of different energies, each animating and controlling various aspects of human life."

Due to this comprehensive meaning, here my choice is not to translate this concept and leave the *pinyin* transliteration.

⁶⁸ The character *xing* is usually translated into the English term "nature" in the sense expressed in the locution "the nature of something", which is different from the meaning of nature as cosmos or heaven expressed by the Chinese character *tian* 天. Besides, even if the understanding of *xing* as nature has reached a broader agreement among scholars, there is still a debate on what were the implications of the term nature in the locution human nature (*renxing*) for Chinese thinkers, and how this idea developed through the history of Chinese thought.

The character *xing* has a long history within the Chinese culture and traditionally has its roots in the character *sheng* 生, life. In ancient text the two characters seemed to be interchangeable, they both pinpoint life and birth. As Liang Tao (2009:181) has pointed out in his analysis on *xing*: "In the oracle bones and in early bronze inscriptions only the character *sheng* is found. The character for *xing* is an offshoot of the character *sheng*." Moreover, Shun Kwong-loi (1997:1-2) shows that there are several passages from the *Guoyu* 國語 and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, two early Confucian text, where the two character are interchangeable. By a later development of Chinese language and thought, the two characters develop differently, and by the time of Classical pre-Han texts, they were already distinguished. The most important and influential theory on human nature was formulated by Mencius. First Mencius accounted two important feature of human nature: first, all humans share the inborn capacity of doing good, in other words, human beings are by nature potentially good; second, to become "truly" human, man ought to develop this potentiality. Mencius employed *xing* (in particular *renxing*) to pinpoint what can be translated human nature. But what does *xing* (*renxing*) basically mean? Is equivalent to what we recognize as human nature? Nowadays there is a little consensus among scholars about what ancient Chinese meant by *xing*. The traditional Western understanding of nature tends to see it as an unchangeable characteristic: what we are born with and we always have. This understanding of human nature as an "essential" and universal intrinsic characteristic shared by humanity imply a teleological and transcendent conception of nature. A different and probably better approach is to overcome the idea of human nature as essential category, and instead follow the process orientation of Confucian philosophy. Angus Graham (1991:289-290) was one of the first scholar that tried to undermine the essentialist understanding of nature. He states: "*xing* is conceived in terms of spontaneous development in a certain direction rather than of its origin or goal" and, further, that "*xing* will be spontaneous process with a direction continually modified by the effects on it of deliberate."

heart/mind xin 心⁶⁹. This will be entirely coherent with the Confucian traditional evaluation of harmony as one of the most important and comprehensive concept.

2. Zhang Zai's usage of the ideal of harmony is the philosophical tool he employs in his critique against heterodox schools. And this emerges in Zhang Zai's latest and main work: the *Zhengmeng*, "Rectifying the Ignorance."
3. Even if Zhang Zai's most original and important contribution to the later development of the Confucian thought comes from his metaphysical system, his primal goal is still pedagogical. I will show that the metaphysics of harmony that emerge from the *Zhengmeng*, is nothing but the ground where the cultivation of the Confucian Way needs to take place.

These claims draw some related issues that need to be analyzed before proceeding with Zhang Zai's philosophical system.

First. I need to clarify and outline the concept of harmony and its role in the Confucian tradition. The questions I need to answer are: What is Confucian's idea of harmony? Why is that important? What does the ideal of harmony describe? In which field does Confucians employ it?

Second. Since previous scholarships tend to focus almost exclusively on Zhang Zai's idea of *qi* and generally discard the ideal of harmony as the main theme of his system, I need to clarify in which way the paradigm of harmony can be related to *qi*. In other words, my aim is not to generally discard the previous understanding of Zhang Zai as philosopher of *qi* by emphasizing harmony as the ruling category; in my view, Zhang Zai is still a philosopher of *qi*, but *qi* itself (at least in Zhang Zai's thought) needs to be reviewed within the paradigm of harmony. Besides, since all other Zhang Zai's theories

Roger Ames (2002:72-91) develops Graham's logic trying to understand the concept of nature and human nature within a process ontology rather than a substance ontology through the lens of the American process philosopher John Dewey.

My claim is that Zhang Zai's theory of human nature adheres completely with his metaphysical system based on the concept of harmony. We will see that Zhang Zai defines nature, and human nature, in term of ongoing process of harmonization. See ch. 3.

⁶⁹ The Chinese character *xin* is often translated with two concepts such heart and mind. This because Chinese generally did not see any separation between the cognitive organ and the body. *Xin* is broadly recognizes as the organ for perception, reflection, but also the organ for emotions and also heart as biological organ. Here I will follow this idea of *xin* as a broad concept translating it into heart-mind.

are strictly linked to *qi*, the paradigm of harmony will be extended to human nature and self-cultivation (theory of heart-mind).

Third. Being harmony the ideal that Zhang Zai employs in his critique against heterodox thinkers, I need to clarify: Why does Zhang Zai employ this paradigm as the main theme of his system? In which sense does it go against heterodox thinkers?

Along the development of this dissertation, I will try to answer to these questions. In the first chapter I will analyze the first problematic, which is to define the very structure of harmony and see its development in the Confucian school. We will see that in the former Confucianism, the concept of harmony depicted the ideal model of human activities, and how this model was later applied in several other fields such as ethics, politics and cosmology⁷⁰.

In the following chapters, from the second to the fifth, I will turn to Zhang Zai's philosophy dividing my analysis into two main philosophical categories: metaphysics (chapter 2 and chapter 3) and ethics (chapter 4 and chapter 5). Within the analysis of Zhang Zai's metaphysical system I focus primarily on the concept of *qi*, human nature and the nature of heart-mind. I will claim that all these concepts follow the paradigm of harmony in the way they are perceived and in their function. About Zhang Zai's ethical program, I will first claim that the same idea of goodness is grounded on the paradigm of harmony, and thus humans program of self-cultivation aims on the harmonization of the self and of the others. In all these chapters (from chapter 2 to chapter 5), along the metaphysical and ethical investigation, I will show that Zhang Zai's primal philosophical purpose is to define the Confucian Way against the misinterpretation given by heterodox doctrines. We will see that Zhang Zai employs directly and sometimes indirectly the Confucian ideal and paradigm of harmony to confute Buddhist and Daoist doctrines. I will claim that harmony is not just the paradigm of reality, but first of all is the Confucian hermeneutic device employed to reject heterodoxies. By refusing Buddhism and Daoism's teaching through the idea of harmony, on the one hand Zhang Zai links his philosophy with Confucian orthodoxy recalling a classical key Confucian concept; on the other hand, he sets a new comprehensive paradigm by linking this classical concept with other metaphysical concepts such as *qi*, *Dao* and so

⁷⁰ By the time of Han Confucianism, it can be affirmed that harmony occupy a central role in Confucian philosophical system.

on. All these concepts can be grasped by the paradigm of harmony that it is elevated to be the one single thread that encompass the whole reality. And being harmony the one single coherence of reality, Confucian pedagogy ought to follow this paradigm, therefore harmony becomes the reference for self-cultivation and self-preservation.

1. THE CONCEPT OF HARMONY

1.1 The Confucian idea of Harmony

Harmony and its idealization is one of the most important concepts of Chinese cultures. Harmony, along Chinese history, represented most of the time the supreme ideal that man need to pursue; harmony and its pursuit employs not merely political issues, but even ethical, aesthetical and so on. It can be said that without a proper understanding of harmony, it is not possible to entirely grasp Chinese cultures and traditions. If we are forced to find a single concept that can synthesize Chinese (especially Confucian) thought, this concept will be probably harmony⁷¹.

In his last comprehensive work on Confucian concept of harmony, the Chinese scholar Li Chenyang raises the question:

“Given the comprehensive and penetrating role of harmony in Confucianism, isn’t it appropriate to claim that harmony is one of the most important concept?⁷²”

My claim here is not to directly answer to this question, but it is rather to outline a general feature of this concept applying it to the philosophy of Zhang Zai. My answer to this question will be rather that harmony is the very and comprehensive concept of the Song philosopher.

Setting harmony as the main object of this investigation, we need first to outline what do we mean with the term harmony; and second, how it is employed within the Confucian tradition. Starting from the character, Chinese language expresses something similar to our idea of harmony by the ideograph *he* 和⁷³. The character is composed by two radicals: the grain (*he* 禾) and the mouth (*kou* 口); both suggest an intimate link

⁷¹ Here for Chinese cultures I generally refer to Confucian tradition. Even if the philosophy of harmony can be probably extended to the entire Chinese philosophy, my analysis is confined mainly in Confucian and Neo-Confucian tradition.

⁷² Li Chengyang (2014:18) has pointed out that even if *ren* 仁, humaneness, is probably the most important concept within the philosophy of Confucius, harmony is probably the most important within the Confucianism.

⁷³ Besides, *he* 和, there are other Chinese characters that could be translated into harmony. The most employed terms are *xie* 協, *mu* 睦, *xie* 諧. In this study I will primarily refer to *he* since is the most employed one.

with the gustatory experience. This link is strengthened by the etymology: *he* is probably connected with two other ancient words, 龠 and 盃, with the same pronunciation. The first homophone, 龠, seems to pinpoint the mixing or the harmonizing of sounds; while the second, 盃, seems to represent an utensil used to mix wine with water⁷⁴. Ancient Chinese seem to associate the concept of harmony with two different kinds of experience: food and music⁷⁵. This association is also described by the pre-Confucian scholar and minister of Qi 齊, Yan Ying 宴嬰 (?–500 BCE):

和如羹焉，水火醯醢鹽梅以烹魚肉，燂之以薪，宰夫和之，齊之以味，濟其不及，以洩其過。君子食之，以平其心 (...) 聲亦如味，一氣，二體，三類，四物，五聲，六律，七音，八風，九歌，以相成也。清濁大小短長疾徐，哀樂剛柔，遲速高下，出入周疏，以相濟也。君子聽之，以平其心。(Zuozhuan) “Harmony is like making soup. One needs water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plum in order to cook fish and meat. One needs to cook them with firewood. The cook needs to mingle (*he*) ingredients together in order to balance the taste. He needs to compensate for deficiencies and to reduce excessiveness. In eating [such balanced food], the good person achieves a balanced heart mind.(...) Sounds are like flavors. Different elements complete each other: one breath, two styles, three types, four instruments, five sounds, six measures, seven notes, eight winds, and nine songs. Different sounds complement each other: the pure and the impure, the big and the small, the short and the long, the fast and the slow, the sorrowful

⁷⁴ An interpretation of the character *he* 龠 is given by Chinese scholar Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) who makes no distinction between *he* 和 and *he* 龠. Guo (2002:93-106) bases his theory primarily on the ancient Chinese lexicon *Shuowen* 《說文解字》 that interprets *he* 和 as “corresponsiveness of sounds”, and *he* 龠 as “to mix”. The identification of the two characters stand of their reference to music/sound: while the first *he* is understood as sounds relation; the second *he* has in its roots the radical *yue* 龠 that probably represents a musical instrument made of bamboo pipes. The other etymological reference is *he* 盃; in the study of the Chinese scholar Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), *he* 盃 refers to a wooden utensil used to mix water with wine. The *Shuowen jiezi* seems to support this interpretation understanding *he* as a verb with the meaning “to mix flavor”. (In Li 2014:23) For a deeper analysis of *he*’s etymological roots, see Ibidem (2014:23-25).

⁷⁵ Among these human activities, music again seems to be one of the most important because it reveals harmony in its intrinsic structure: music system is based on a cooperative relation between different sounds and different instruments; each sound (or instrument) gains its proper value through mutual relationship and by the connection with the whole structure in space and time. About the intimate relation between music and the concept of harmony Li Chenyang (2014:47) states that there are probably historic reasons may have made music an important model of the Confucian ideal of harmony. He refers to the great Chinese philosopher Hu Shi’s 胡适 (1891–1962) idea about the origin of Confucianism (*rujia* 儒家) from an early profession bearing the same name. They were teachers and experts of religious rituals and music. “It is therefore not implausible to think that the professional characteristics of early Ruists may have contributed to grounding the ideal of harmony on music.”

and the joyful, the strong and the tender, the late and the quick, the high and the low, the in and the out, and the inclusive and the non-inclusive. The good person listens to this kind of music in order to balance his mind⁷⁶.” (Trans. by Legge 1861:684)

Yan Ying gives us the general features of harmony, and outlines the kind of experience it conveys.

First. From both food and music examples, we can infer a similar model: we have different elements that are not only connected, but they somehow complete each other producing something which is greater than the sum of its constituents. A soup is something more than the sum of its ingredients; and a piece of music is clearly something more than the sum of its parts (notes, tune, rhythm and so on). Moreover, the experience we can get from it, is that of a coherent and balanced whole, an internal togetherness where all parts contribute to the formation of the totality⁷⁷.

Second. The other important aspect is that *he* does not just describe a result, but it primarily describes a process⁷⁸. The cook goes through a process of harmonization of

⁷⁶ Alan Chan (2011:37-62) argues that these two sources (music and food) have different implications. The employment of the term *he* in musical metaphors expresses a sense of hierarchy: the model is that of a ruling and leading tone which harmonize the other notes. While the food metaphor offer a pluralistic connotation of different elements that contribute equally to the whole. Besides, we will see below how these two metaphors seemed to be used without different implications in Confucian texts such as the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan* 《左傳》) and the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 《國語》).

⁷⁷ In archaic China, the word for music, *yue* 樂, was used in a broad sense: *yue* included different activities such as dance, singing lyrics poems, instrumental music; it was an integrated activity that involved man’s different abilities. Following the logic of harmony we can say that *yue* was an integrated oneness of different performances. The *Record of Music* (*Yueji* 《樂記》) shows: “Hence the bell, the drum, the flute, and the sounding-stone; the plume, the pipe, the shield, and the axe are the instruments of music.” (故鐘鼓管磬，羽龠干戚，樂之器也。屈伸俯仰，綴兆舒疾，樂之文也). (Trans. by Legge 1990:100).

Very similarly, in the *Xunzi* 《荀子》: “Hence, when we listen to the sounds of the Odes and Hymns, our aspirations and sense of purpose gain breadth from the experience. When we observe the way the shields and battle-axes *are brandished and* the repetitive episodes of the dancers gazing down and lifting their faces up, bending and straightening their bodies, our demeanor and bearing acquire dignity from it.” (故聽其《雅》、《頌》之聲，而志意得廣焉；執其幹戚，習其俯仰屈伸，而容貌得莊焉). (Trans by Knoblock 1994:81).

Moreover, the etymological root of *yue* is worth noting. The *Shouwen* affirms: *Yue* corresponds to the five sheng (tones/sounds) and the eight yin (timbres/voices) (五聲八音總名。象鼓鞀). *Yue* resembles a drum post. In the Oracle Bone Scripts it is probably represented as two strings on the top of a wooden sounding board. In the Bronze Scripts the character resembles a dancer. Another interpretation is that *yue* represents an ancient instrument predating the *se* 瑟 and the *qin* 琴. For etymological interpretations of *yue* see DeWoskin (1983:58); and Li (2014:40).

⁷⁸ It has to be noticed that in archaic Chinese nouns and verbs are most of the time interchangeable. It is common for a noun to indicate the function, and thus becomes a verb. Here we can understand

the ingredients to get an harmonic/tasty soup. Moreover, in order to harmonize them, the cook employs opposite elements such as water and fire⁷⁹. Very similarly in music, different sounds respond to each other and cooperate⁸⁰.

Third. These experiences go beyond pure aesthetic pleasure, but are important means for self-cultivation. Harmonic experience seems to have the power to balance the heart-mind. For instance, music not only can manifest harmony due to its intrinsic harmonic structure, but even have the power to harmonize people's heart-mind through sound⁸¹.

Music has a direct influence on heart-mind because sound arises from humans' feelings⁸². The author(s) of the *Record of Music* (*Yueji* 《樂記》) remarks this idea:

harmony as both the ideal state or the ideal result of some process, and also as the process itself, thus with the verb to harmonize. In this work we will interpret harmony in this broad meaning.

⁷⁹ Li Chenyang (2014:26) has pointed out that the word *geng* 羹 does not mean just any kind of soup. It is rather an elegant soup that includes meat or fish, and vegetables. Since it contains meat or fish, the flavor can be strong and needs to be balanced out. Hence, *geng* is an excellent analogy for harmonization.

⁸⁰ In several Chinese ancient classics there are many examples of harmony as sounds' cooperation. The *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) states: "When sounds correspond and mutually *bao* one another it is called harmony" (聲應相保曰和). Here Li Chengyang (2006:584) explains that *bao* 保 has a large number of interrelated meaning such as: protect, nurture, rely on. In the *Zuo Commentary*: "The male and female phoenixes fly together and their sounds harmonize with vigor" (鳳凰于飛，和鳴鏘鏘).

⁸¹ The Chinese character for music, *yue*, is homograph with the word *le*, also pronounced *luo*. The meaning of *le* is close to our idea of joy, happiness, this suggests a close connection between music and emotions. Xunzi expressed this idea: "Music is joy. Being an essential part of man's emotional nature, the expression of joy is, by necessity, inescapable. This is way man cannot do without music. Where there is joy, it will issue forth in the sounds of the voice and be manifest in the movement of the body. And it is the Way of Man that singing and movement, which are excitations of man's emotional states according to the rules of inborn nature, are fully expressed in music." (夫樂者、樂也，人情之所必不免也。故人不能無樂，樂則必發於聲音，形於動靜；而人之道，聲音動靜，性術之變盡是矣). (Trans. by Knoblock 1994:80).

In the Guodian 郭店 excavated text *Xingzi mingchu* 《性自命出》, which is probably a text belong to Confucian tradition, is reported the belief of a direct correlation between musician's inner feelings and listener's response through music: "It is generally the case that sounds, when they exit sincerely via the emotions, they enter and take profound hold of one's heart-mind. When you hear sounds of laughter, you will feel freshness. This is happiness. When you hear singing and chanting, you will feel jovial. This is excitement. When you listen to the sounds of the lute and zither, you will feel stirred. This is distress." (凡声，其出于情也信，然后其入拨人之心也厚。闻笑声，则鲜如也斯喜。闻歌谣，则陶如也斯奋。听琴瑟之声，则悸如也斯叹。) (Trans. by Brindley 2006:251).

⁸² The idea of an intimate link between music and emotions is not exclusively a Chinese idea, and it is not merely an ancient belief. Today several scholarships on this topic are accomplished in the field of both aesthetical and analytical philosophy. There are mainly three explanations in Western philosophy linking music with emotion: the first is that music imitates or represents emotion; the second is that music arouses emotion; the third is that music expresses emotion. The idea that music represents emotion goes back to Plato and Aristotle. Music imitates a particular state of mind and thus arouses the same state in the listener. In the medieval period the "arousal theory" replaced the "imitational" one. Music was understood to have the ability to arouse emotion due to its imitative power. One the earliest and most important exponent was Saint Augustine. The theory that music could express emotions emerged during the Enlightenment. The "expression theory" located the emotional meaning of music in the individuality of the musician, but this meaning is universally accessible. Each of these

故樂也者，動於內者也；禮也者，動於外者也。樂極和 禮極順，內和而外順，則民瞻其顏色而弗與爭也 (*Yueji*) “Therefore the sphere in which music acts is the interior of man, and that of ceremonies is his exterior. The result of music is a perfect harmony, and that of ceremonies a perfect observance (of propriety). When one's inner man is (thus) harmonious, and his outer man thus docile, the people behold his countenance and do not strive with him.” (Trans. by Legge 1990:225)

The Chinese Confucian philosopher Xunzi 荀子(312 B.C.-130 B.C.) also affirms that power of music is to harmonize people's heart-mind, that's why it was chosen by ancient kings as one of the most powerful political means.

聖王之所樂也，而可以善民心，其感人深，其移風易俗。故先王導之以禮樂而民和睦。 (*Xunzi*) “Music was enjoyed by the sage kings; it can make the hearts of the people good; it deeply stirs men; and it alters their manners and changes their customs. Thus the Ancient Kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and friendly.” (Trans. by Knoblock 1994:83)

The above examples show how the model of harmony was extended to different kinds of human activity and experience. Moreover, Confucians associate the concept of harmony with rituals as the most important means for the cultivation of morality⁸³.

three theories has been recovered in twentieth-century theory of music and emotion principally proposed by philosophers such as: Susanne Langer, Leonard Meyer and Peter Kivy. See in Higgins (2011:79).

⁸³ Besides Confucius, several ancient Classics show the association between music and rituals. The Chinese philosopher Li Zehou 李泽厚 (2010:19) affirms that this relationship can be understood on three different levels: the first level is understanding music and rites as basically the same things. In the second level of understanding we have an important division: music is an internal guide; music can communicate, coordinate and harmonize emotions. Rituals are outward manifestation and work through difference and distinction.

The *Record of Music* states: “Music embraces what all equally share; ceremony distinguishes the things in which men differ.” (樂統同，禮辨異) (trans. by Legge 1990:114); and: “So it is, when one by his mastering of music regulates his mind and heart. When one has mastered completely (the principle of) ceremonies so as to regulate his person accordingly, he becomes grave and reverential.” (致樂以治心者也。致禮以治躬則莊敬). (Ibid:224).

Music refers to the intimacy, the human inner soul, while the rites guide external actions. In the third level, music not only seeks the harmony between individuals and society, but within the entire cosmos, within heaven and earth. In Li Zehou's interpretation this happens because: “since music originated with the sacrifices, and also has an effect on human relationships, it follows that its goals would include this harmonious unity between heaven and humankind as well as that among humans themselves. See Ibidem.

禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也 (*Lunyu* 1.12) “In the practice of the rites harmony is regarded as the most valuable thing, and in the ways of the ancient kings this is regarded as the most beautiful thing. It is adopted in all matters, both small and great. But sometimes it does not work. If you behave harmoniously because you understand harmony, but do not regulate your conduct with ritual, surely that cannot be made to work.” (Trans. by Dawson 2008:4) ⁸⁴

In the *Analects*, the idea of harmony describes also the ideal State:

蓋均無貧，和無寡，安無傾 (*Lunyu* 16.1) “For when there is even distribution there is no poverty, and when there is harmony there is no under population, and where there is contentment, there will be no upheavals.” (Ibid:65)

Harmony was considered also a moral quality by the Confucian philosopher Mencius (Mengzi 孟子) (372 B.C-289 B.C.). He indicates Liu Xiahui 柳下惠 as “the sage able to harmonize” (聖之和者也)⁸⁵. Hence we can affirm that Confucians consider harmony in a very broad meaning: it was firstly a political and individual moral goal; but it was even an ability that man could achieve; and it was also an intrinsic quality of some human activities such as cooking, music and rituals. Moreover, in several texts dating by the end of the fourth century B.C. and the beginning of third century B.C., harmony begins to be often correlated to the ideal feature of the cosmos.

The American scholar Erica Brindley (2006:16) dates this expansion of the concept of harmony around 325 B.C.:

“Harmony no longer referred primarily to that which individuals could achieve through music, ritual, their behavior, or good rule. It was no longer more exclusively used to describe a goal of human attainment; rather, it became more universally regarded as a

⁸⁴ All translations from the *Analects* are taken by Dawson (2008) unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁵ In the *Mencius* 5B it is stated: “Mencius added, Po Yi was the sage who was unsullied; Yi Yin was the sage who accepted responsibility; Liu Xiahui was the sage able to harmonize; Confucius was the sage whose actions were timely” (孟子曰：伯夷，聖之清者也；伊尹，聖之任者也；柳下惠，聖之和者也；孔子，聖之時者也). (Trans. by Lau 2004:112-113 slightly modified).

fundamental characteristic, pattern, and even structure of the cosmos. This new articulation of harmony appears more prevalently in text that can be dated within a period starting from around 325 BCE.”

Several texts, dated around the third century, express cosmic feature and functionality in term of harmony and harmonization

The *Commentary on the Words of the Text* (*Wenyan* 《文言》) of the *Yijing*⁸⁶ :

乾道變化，各正性命，保合大和，乃利貞。首出庶物，萬國咸 (Book of Changes)
“The Way of *qian* works through change and transformation so every thing follow its own rightful nature and destiny. It safeguards things in their grand harmony. It is harmonious and upright⁸⁷. It generates everything and brings peace to all nations.”
(Modified from Wilhelm/Baynes 2003:371)

In the *Lishi Chunqiu* 《呂氏春秋》⁸⁸ :

天地有始。天微以成，地塞以形。天地合和，生之大經也 (*Lishi Chunqiu*)
“Heaven and earth had a beginning. Heaven was subtle so as to complete, and earth

⁸⁶ The *Commentary on the Words of the Text* is one of the *Ten Wings* (shiyi 十翼) of the *Yijing*. The *Ten Wings* are seven pieces of commentarial material divided into ten documents: the *Commentary on the Decision* (*Tuanzhuàn* 《象傳》) divided into first and second part; the *Commentary on the Images* (*Xiangzhuàn* 《象傳》) divided into great (*daxiang* 大象) and small (*xiaoxiang* 小象); *The Great Commentary* (*Xici* 《繫辭》) divided into first and second part; *The Commentary on the Words of the Text* (*Wenyan* 《文言》); the *Discussion of the Trigrams* (*Shuogua* 《說卦》); the *Order of the Hexagrams* (*Xugua* 《序卦》) and the *Miscellaneous Notes on the Hexagrams* (*Zagua* 《雜卦》). The *Wenyan*, attributed directly to Confucius, offers additional explanation to the first two hexagrams, *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤.

⁸⁷ The Tang dynasty philosopher Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) interprets the third characteristic of *qian*, *li* 利, in term of harmony: “The Book of Zixia states that *yuan* means beginning; *heng* means moving forward; *li* means harmony; *zhen* means upright” (《子夏傳》說：元，始也；亨，通也；利，和也；貞，正也). In Li (2014:66). As Li Chenyang (ibidem:76-77) has pointed out: “This interpretation of *li* is consistent with the *Shuowen*, where *Xu Shen* explains, ‘when the knife is harmonious’, it is *li*. *Li* literally means sharpness. Presumably, when the knife can move smoothly (harmoniously, that is, without becoming stuck halfway), it is sharp. Derivatively, *li* also means enabling things or people to move smoothly. It thus acquires a meaning in close connection to harmony.”

⁸⁸ The *Lishi Chunqiu* 《呂氏春秋》 is a comprehensive work written just before the establishment of China's first imperial dynasty. The author was *Lü Buwei* 呂不韋 (290 B.C-236 B.C.) probably along with a group of scholars. The text is an eclectic philosophical work that contains several ideas and theories from a numbers of thinkers and schools of the past three centuries. About the purpose and the structure of the texts see Cook (2002).

blocked so as to give form. Heaven and earth combining and harmonizing is the great alignment (*jing*) of generation (*sheng*).” (Trans. by Puett 2002:145)

In both examples above, *he* describes the feature and the functionality of the cosmos. Here *he* can be translated as verb (harmonize) or as noun (harmony). Heaven and earth (cosmos) are in the state of harmony and therefore each thing is in the right position, can develop and achieve its completion. In the *Wenyan* the Supreme Harmony is the ideal state that ought to be preserved, in the *Lishi*, *he* describes the dynamic action emerged from heaven and earth’s cooperation: the natural pattern. And, even more importantly, this action is generative: harmony produces all things.

In the *Discourses of the States (Guoyu)*, the scholar Shi Bo 史伯 (date unknown) of the Western Zhou period, remarks the idea of the generative power of harmony:

夫和實生物，同則不繼。以他平他謂之和，故能豐長而物歸之；若以同裨同，盡乃棄矣 (*Guoyu*) “Harmony is what bring fruition and life to things, while sameness leads to no progeny or continuance. To balance the different with the different is called harmony; this is why it can flourish and grow, and why things all return and converge around what has this harmony. But if you take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:66)

The *Huainanzi* also shows harmony generative capacity: “From the harmonious union of yin and yang, the myriads thing were produced.” (陰陽合和而萬物生) (Trans. by Liu 2012 :46) On the one hand, cosmic harmony is the ideal state where things can be generated and naturally develop; but on the other, harmony constitutes the generative process itself. To harmonize is to let things grow and complete their lives⁸⁹. Therefore, around the third century harmony expresses the Way of the cosmos that have full correspondence to the ideal Way of man.

⁸⁹ Chinese general tendency to see generation in term of change and growth it is shown by the character *shi* 始 (beginning). The character *shi* is constituted by the radical *nü* 女, woman, and *tai* 台, fetus. Kim Junyuep (2008:47) points out that: “In Chinese thought, as a baby is not created from nothing, but grows from a fetus, all creations are nascent in and emerge from a prior ongoing process... this process conveys the image of a new relation growing from a prior relation, that is, the relation between mother and daughter (or son) emerging from the relation between mother and fetus.”

The Confucian text the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 《中庸》) shows this direct connection between human being and cosmos through the concept of harmony:

喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和；中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。 (*Zhongyong*) “The moment at which joy and anger, grief and pleasure have yet to arise is called a nascent equilibrium (*zhong*); once the emotions have arisen that they are all brought into proper focus (*zhong*) is called harmony (*he*). This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong*) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way in the world. When equilibrium and focus are sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earth maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world.” (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:89-90)

By the time of the *Zhongyong*, the idea of harmonic continuity between different realms was attested⁹⁰. The *Zhongyong* understands harmony in two different but interconnected levels: the individual human subjective world, and the cosmic objective world. In the first, harmony shows the harmonization of feelings; feelings that are in a state of total equilibrium before being stirred outward. On a pre-shaped state, feelings are in a state of full-potentiality, without contrasts or conflicts. This state of balance is called *zhong* 中. Afterwards, forced by external stimulus, joy and anger, grief and pleasure emerge and conflicts arise. The sage is the one who is able to handle his inner emotional experience, without discarding his connection and implication with the world. Here harmony indicates the balanced completion of those potentialities, and the sage exploits these potentialities to create novel patterns.

⁹⁰ Several texts dated around the third century show the tendencies to see the whole reality as a web of interconnections where each part is somehow related to others. Western sinologists call this kind of thinking “correlative thinking”. But as John Henderson (1984) has pointed out, “correlative thinking” is not a single and united system, homologies by which those systems were built were different in kinds: from the simple one to the complex one, from a simple human-cosmos relationship to complex number systems, and so on. One of the most important and most implied homologies was the human-cosmos relationship. Before the third century B.C. some Classics occasionally linked humans with natural objects. In the *Analects*, Confucius compare the ruler ideal act to the polar star (*Lunyu* 2.1); in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 《詩經》) a bride is compared to a blooming peach-tree (the peach-tree 桃夭). But these analogies seem to be far from being systematic, they probably represents simply poetical analogy. For an interesting survey on Han correlative cosmologies see Henderson (1984).

The second part shows the implication of harmony in the natural world. Here *zhong* is the world's foundation, in other words, the same state of full-potentiality showed before. *He* is equivalent to *Dao*: the natural pattern, or the structure of reality, *modus operandi* of the cosmos. From the *Zhongyong* we can grasp the twofold relationship between *zhong* and *he*: on the one hand, *zhong* is the foundation of *he* since it describes the potentiality of reality and thus of harmony. On the other, *zhong* expresses the ideal result of *he*, since it describes the proper result of the harmonizing process⁹¹.

From the above examples we have some important accounts about the meaning and the structure of harmony: First. we can talk about harmony when we have a relationship between different elements (different sounds, different ingredients or different feelings). These relationships need to form a coherent and unified whole in the sense that we primarily perceive the whole (the relationship) over the differences. We taste primarily the soup as a whole, we listen to the whole song (the relationship between all notes) over each single note, and we feel in balance when no single feeling prevail over the others. Second. This unity is made by differences that have some degree of conflict or at least some degrees of tension. The examples show that the harmonizing process is principally made by opposite parts such as water and fire in the food example, fast and slow in the music examples, pleasure and sorrow, and even yin 陰 and yang 陽⁹² just to quote some of them. The difference between a state of total equilibrium (*zhong*), and harmony (*he*) seems to stand in the tension between differences. Third. In the former there is no tension and thus the model structure is static, while the second model implies dynamicity. Harmony focuses primarily on the process of harmonization. Above we had a similar example in the process of making food, or in music spatial and temporal relationship. The *Zhongyong* expresses the association between harmony and process

⁹¹ We can also understand *zhong* 中 as the necessary unity among differences. In this case, we can understand *zhong* and *he* as polar categories of *ti* and *yong*. (see below note 42). Li (2014:79) interprets *zhong* and *he* in the *Zhongyong* as the same notion, impossible to separate: “the cosmic order is actualized through centrality and harmony. Here, centrality and harmony are promoted together as one integrated ideal. They should not be treated as two separate notions, nor can they be defined as independent of each other. We may call this joint conception “centrality-harmony.”

⁹² Yin and yang are two of the most well-known Chinese philosophical terms in the Western world. Today there is no exhaustive translation of these terms and it is usually employed the pinyin transliteration. Yin and yang are broad concepts that have a long history in Chinese philosophy since ancient times and became central during the Han period. About the meaning of the terms, as Robin Wang among others has pointed out, the idea that they express specific entities with specific essential characteristic such as masculine, hot, strength and so on for the yang; and feminine, cold, weak and so on for yin is not correct and it is now overcome. Yin and yang express a paradigm of relationship which is always contextually related. See Robin Wang (2012). I will analyze these concepts in more details in the next chapter.

directly by referring *he* to Dao 道, the Way⁹³; the *Huainanzi* by referring to yinyang's cooperation⁹⁴. The fourth aspect implicit in the structure is creativity. By creativity I mean that to be harmonic the result of relationships needs to create/produce a unity which is qualitatively better than the simply sum of the parts. When ingredients are harmonized produce a tasty soup, when sounds are harmonized produce a great music, and when feelings are balanced the cultivation of the person will be fulfilled. This creative model was applied on the level of cosmos where harmony expressed the generative power of cosmic forces. Fifth. harmony is a comprehensive idea. We have seen that Confucians had the tendency to extend the model of harmony from human activities to human feelings up to cosmos itself. We can say that Confucians believed in some kind of continuity underlying the world. Harmony is thus a comprehensive concept. Within these broad meanings, harmony represents the ideal state of cosmos that human beings ought to achieve, and at the same time, it describes the process through which one can reach this ideal state: cosmos harmonize and therefore all things will be nourished and can flourish; human beings, balancing the heart-minds, can harmonize the self, the others and the whole society⁹⁵.

⁹³ The other term which is broadly known in the West is dao 道 which is usually translated as the Way. as it was for yin and yang, even *dao* has a long history in Chinese philosophy and represents a broad concept. Robin Wang (2012:44-45) synthesize its original usage into two basic meanings: first indicates the path upon which one walks; second *dao* is guidance, to follow a path with mindfulness. Later the concept of *dao* developed into a broader and more complicated term acquiring cosmological, metaphysical and even ethical aspect. See the following chapters.

⁹⁴ The close relationship between dao and yinyang is thus expressed in the *Great Commentary (Xici)* of the *Book of Changes*: "One yin and one yang are called Dao" (一陰一陽之謂道).

⁹⁵ Harmony will be understood here as the source, the process and the result of the process of reality which include human activities. Employing a Neo-Confucian's couple of terms we can say that harmony is the inseparability of *ti* 體, usually translated with substance, and *yong* 用 translated into function. *Ti* represents the ultimate reality of harmony, the process of creative formation and transformation (to use Cheng definition of *benti* 本體); *Yong* is the purpose of this process, the way entities respond (or should respond) to it. *Ti* and *yong* form both an inseparable unity and even interchangeable couple. Quoting Cheng Chung-ying (2002:154) example, in the *Commentary on the Book of Changes, Yizhuan* 《易傳》, *taiji* 太極, yinyang, the four seasons and the eight trigrams and so on are considered as the substance (*ti*) of different levels of reality. But at the same time each one will be considered the function of the previous level. Yin and yang are the functions of *taiji* but are also the *substance* of the four seasons, but the four seasons can be thought as the *substance* of the eight trigrams and so on. Here *taiji* represents the oneness, the way things change, the inseparability of *ti* and *yong*.

Within the logic of correlative thinking the cosmic realm is strictly connected to the human one, they cannot be thought separately and they thus influence each other. The unity between *ti* and *yong* is applied in the human world, for instance in the theory of knowledge and practice: to know the substance of a situation is to know how to respond (*yong*) in order to achieve the desired goal. The situation already includes the way to respond to it, but the way someone will act lies on his/her understanding and his/her free choice.

We can synthesize the general structure of harmony within these five aspects: unity, differences, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. Below I will try to further explain these aspects.

1.2 The Paradigm of Harmony

The first two aspects listed above (unity and differences) seem to be the very constituents of the structure of harmony. But what kind of unity do we need in order to have an harmonic system? And why are differences necessary to create harmony?

When we talk about harmony we are often inclined to think harmony as agreement. When we agree with something or someone, we are in harmony with it or him/her. In this state of total agreement or accord there is no space for tensions or conflicts, and we can easily say that the result will be a mere replication of the former idea, maybe stronger than before, but essentially the same. However, this does not seem the case we have showed above. We have seen that harmony imply some degree of differences⁹⁶.

In the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 《論語》), Confucius (Kongzi 孔子) (551 B.C.-479 B.C.) underlines the fundamental diversity between simple agreement (tong 同) and harmony (*he*):

君子和而不同，小人同而不和 (*Lunyu* 13.23). “The moral person harmonizes and does not seek conformity; the small man seeks conformity and does not harmonize”⁹⁷

Confucius is saying that the moral person does not simply receive and repeat the previous model, but creates something more, he/she gives his/her contribution to a new development.

⁹⁶ Li Chengyang (2014:7-8) outlines the difference between harmony achieved through total accord (sameness), and harmony achieved through differences. He called the second kind “deep harmony” such as an “harmony with difference and creative tension, and without a pre-set order.” He describes “deep harmony” as a comprehensive process of harmonization, encompasses spatial as well as temporal and metaphysical as well as moral and aesthetic dimensions. This is in contrast to the first kind of harmony which is based on pure accord. To define this kind of harmony, Li employs Martha Nussbaum definition of “innocent harmony” or “consistent harmony”. In Li’s words, the concept of innocent harmony is traceable to Plato’s forms and it has been used as paradigm of harmony in most of Western philosophical discourse.

⁹⁷ The translation of this passage from the *Analects* is mine.

In the *Discourses of the States (Guoyu)* Shi Bo unravels the differences between *he* and *tong*:

夫和實生物，同則不繼。以他平他謂之和，故能豐長而物歸之；若以同裨同，盡乃棄矣。故先王以土與金木水火雜，以成百物。是以和五味以調口，更四支以衛體，和六律以聽耳...聲一無聽，物一無文，味一無果，物一不講 (Guoyu)
“Harmony is what bring fruition and life to things, while sameness leads to no progeny or continuance. To balance the different with the different is called harmony; this is why it can flourish and grow, and why things all return and converge around what has this harmony. But if you take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction. Thus the former kings used soil to mix together minerals, plants, water, and fire so as to produce various types of things. Hence they blended the five flavors to provide fitness for the mouth, strengthened each of the four limbs to protect the body, harmonized the six tones to sharpen the ear’s hearing...Sound that is monolithic is unlistenable; objects that are monolithic make no pattern; flavor that are monolithic bring no satisfaction; things that are monolithic bear no discussion.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:66)

The *Discourses of the States (Guoyu)* shows that the main difference between harmony and sameness is the capacity of the former to create, to bring life and increase pleasure. On the contrary, sameness not only leads to extinction, it gives no pleasure at all. We can notice that the character used with the meaning of sameness is *tong* 同. *Tong* is usually translated with sameness or accord. Contemporary Chinese easily shows this meaning of *tong* in the expression “*tongyi*” (同意): to be in accord with. Confucians here are saying that harmony is not only something different than accord, but even opposite to this idea. *Tong* needs to be rejected.

Is this correct? Are *he* and *tong* radical opposites? Can *tong* be totally rejected to achieve harmony?

Li Chenyang (2014:11-12) has insightfully showed that the term *tong* has also a second meaning: beside the first meaning as opposite of difference, *tong* can also express togetherness and unity⁹⁸. Following this interpretation, *tong* cannot be rejected in the

⁹⁸ The *Shuowen* lexicon is in line with this interpretation: “*tong* is to gather” (同:合會也).

paradigm of harmony, on the contrary it seems to represent a key element for harmony⁹⁹: there is no possibility of harmony without some degrees of identity, without some common features we cannot form a whole. We do need to share something or have something in common to form a whole. Harmony is thus directly connected with oneness, harmony is the integration of parts into a single whole. But on the other hand, Confucians are saying that things cannot be in a relation of total identity, this is mere conformity, a state that leads to extinction. Conformity is not creative, does not lead to something new. Total conformity leads to a replication of a single pattern¹⁰⁰.

Conformity does not imply any development and dynamicity, as Shi Bo has pointed out: “Take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction.” (若以同裨同，盡乃棄矣) (see above). Hence, Confucians do not mean to totally refuse sameness, they want to show that harmony is something more than mere conformity, but they do not deny that harmony implies a level of sameness on the first place.

As the American scholar Brook Ziporyn (2012:69) has pointed out: “When Confucian thinkers emphasize harmony, they do not mean to exclude any possible form of sameness, which would make now sense, but just the “over-presence” of sameness¹⁰¹.”

Therefore, on the one hand, a level of sameness is required to form a coherent and harmonic whole; on the other, this cannot be a relation of total sameness but we need differences in order to have dynamicity and creativity.

⁹⁹ The excavated Guodian text *Wuxing* 《五行》 shows the direct and positive association between *tong* and *he*: “with harmony there is *tong*, with *tong* there is goodness” (和則同,同則善). For a more comprehensive survey on this second meaning of *tong*, see Li (2014:10-11).

¹⁰⁰ The Chinese philosopher Mozi 墨子(470 B.C.-391 B.C.) understands harmony in term of conformity. The idea of Mozi is that through conformity one can achieve order in society. But Mozi’s idea of *tong* is not that of mere and simple conformity. In the *Mohist Canon* (*Mojing* 《墨經》) there are four kinds of identity: the identity of names (*zhongtong* 重同); the identity of body (*titong* 體同); the identity of space (to be part of the same group) (*hetong* 合同); the identity of type (*leitong* 類同). Accounting these distinctions, we can easily grasp that to be *tong* is not to exclude differences to all levels. We can form an harmonious body by forming an organic unity where differences are required. In the chapter four of this investigation we will see several kinds of unity.

¹⁰¹ Ziporyn (2012:67) explains that instead of thinking harmony as a subset of sameness, Chinese idea of harmony seems to imply a reversed relationship: “We tend to think of harmonizing as implicitly appealing to a second-order requirement for conformity...this would be a sameness governing the realm of harmonizing. My suggestion here is that the second order of sameness-oriented laws and rules is precisely what we do not seem to find in most Chinese conceptions of harmony. Rather, the relations are reversed: instead of harmony being a subset, a special case, of sameness (precise instantiation of a rule), apparent sameness are subset of the broader demand for harmony, a special case of harmony.”

How can we integrate differences into unity and achieve creativity and dynamicity?

Shi Bo is saying that harmony is to balance the different with the different, this let things grow. Hence, differences are the principle for dynamicity and creativity within harmony. But mere differences are not enough to be part of harmony, differences need to be related. They need to become part of the same system. When differences begin to interact (by being placed in the same whole), tensions and oppositions naturally arise, and without control, tensions can even become conflicts. But interactions can even produce common fields/goals where differences can cooperate. Within this common goals, tensions can change into mutual support and mutual promotion, a relationship where each part achieve its proper value and goal through interaction. Harmonization is thus conceived as the process that changes tensions and oppositions into cooperation and mutual support. Tensions and oppositions, through transformation, give new life and dynamicity to the whole system. Oppositive forces become lively forces rather than destructive¹⁰².

Is this the case in the above examples?

Taking the food example, we can taste opposite flavours such as acid and sweet, and feel the contrast between them. But when we integrate the ingredient into a common goal (a soup), we can harmonize them to achieve something new. The contrast between

¹⁰² When conflicts arise the possible choices are to get rid of them or employ them to evolve the system. We can again employ the music example to explain this difference. Think about a song that imply dissonances within is melodic structure. Dissonances do not naturally please the ear and thus one needs to solve the problem. The first obvious solution will be to get rid of all dissonances and thus create a simple and quite boring music, where the structure is highly predictable since all tensions has been deleted. The second solution will be to employ dissonances and harmonize them (by letting them be functional to) within song's structure. This will give to the song a new prospective and energy, and creative tension. The former solution (getting rid of dissonances) will be categorized on the level of total sameness and will not lead to any further development of the system, while the second solution seems to be coherent with the above understanding of harmony that can be highly generative. Here I do not mean that Confucians never consider suppression as a possible solution, but at least this is not part of the paradigm of harmony. For instance, Confucius never supported the execution of criminals as a means of harmonious society. (see *Lunyu* 2.3). However there are cases where some level of destruction is unavoidable in order to achieve a larger harmony. Li Chengyang (2014:13) provides an insightful example: "Wolves eat sheep. Their relationship is not only one of difference or tension, but conflict. Even this kind of conflict is not completely disconnected with harmony, however. Whereas a large population of sheep tends to increase the population of wolves, the population of wolves will fall when they overeat the sheep, causing a shortage in food supply. Eventually, the wolves and the sheep have to strike a balance through some kind of natural "negotiation." When harmony is achieved, the sheep provide food for the wolves, while the wolves weed out the unhealthy individuals and keep the sheep population in check... While harmony is achieved and maintained on the population level, destruction on the individual level is inevitable. Wolves have to eat sheep in order to survive, and sometimes they starve when food is not available."

parts can create a new development of the whole soup (if they are rightly harmonized). But harmonization is not necessarily the right balance between them (there is not such a thing as objective harmony), it is not a matter of quantity, instead is primarily a matter of quality: for instance in a specific context could be required a soup the tends more to acid or to sweet. Here the context¹⁰³ and the whole interact fully with the parts, the whole is not just the result of parts interaction, but it is rather an active aspect of the process itself.

Professor Cheng Chung-ying (2009:27) insightfully recognizes that the deepest level of harmony is the results from a full interpenetration of parts and whole. This kind of full harmony can be called creative and dynamic.

“When the interdependence becomes interpenetration in the sense that the parts of a whole are interfused and the whole becomes also actively participating in the parts as the parts in the whole, the relation of harmony will become productive and creative in the sense that a new order of differentiation resulting unity takes place, without, at the same time, losing the ground of the unity governing the parts of the original whole...This state of harmony is creative because it is dynamic: It always involves change and transformation in a process of time as illustrated in the production of life.”

This kind of unity made by the interpenetration between parts and whole is called by Robin Wang (2012:84) “holographic unity”, in the sense that “hologram is a multidimensional entity where even the smallest part of entity contains, in condensed form, all of the information necessary for a detailed and complete expression”¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ Here context has a broad meaning: can be though as the soup we have in mind on that precise moment; or the requirement of that precise occasion and so on.

¹⁰⁴ The term “hologram” or “holographic unity” is employed also by Cheng Chung-ying (2009). Cheng Chung-ying has insightfully synthesize three main ways to form one within a totality: “Unity can be thought a prevailing thread linking all parts, a kind of unity that can be found in hierarchical structure. Unity could be an interrelatedness among all parts, as a single organic system. And Unity could be as a kind of holographic unity. A state of interpenetration among parts and whole, in which wholeness of parts and partiality of whole are equally present.” (Ibid:23). Ames and Hall (1987:16-17) outlines Chinese (primarily Confucian) distinctive world’s view within this last interpretation. They define this kind of unity as aesthetic: “Aesthetic order is achieved by the creation of novel patterns. Logical order involves the act of closure; aesthetic order is grounded in disclosure. Logical order may be realized by the imposition or instantiation of principles derived from the Mind of God, or the transcendent laws of nature, or the positive laws of a given society, or from a categorial imperative resident in one’s conscience. Aesthetic order is a consequence of the contribution to a given context of a particular aspect, element, or event which both determines and is determined by the context (...) In the Western philosophic tradition, informed by the Judaeo-Christian notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, creativity is often understood as the imitation of a transcendent creative

Unity is not conceived as something independent from its parts, it is not the mere products that can be cut off from the generative process. Unity is an ongoing process that expresses the relationship between parts within a specific evolving context. Each part contains and it is contained by the whole. If we lose a part we can lose the all whole either. Again we can further explain this with the example of music. A piece of music is a totality of different parts; each part is related to other parts and to the whole. Each part acquires its proper value from this relationship (the single note does not have value itself outside its relationships); the relationship between parts must be of mutual support in order to create a totality. If we just simply change one aspect of this relationship, the whole will suddenly change.

The contemporary Chinese philosopher Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) suggests an insightful analogy that depicts the Confucians idea of harmonious interpenetration between parts and whole. Qian Mu (2000:36-37) affirms that this view of reality resembles a pendulum:

凡属圆周的，或是摆幅的，必有一个所谓中。这一个中，不在两边，不在四外，而在内里。一个摆动，或一个圆周的进行，并没有停止在那中之上，但那中则老是存在，而且老是停停当地是个中。好像那个中在主宰着那个动。那个无终无始不息不已的动，好像永远在那中的控制下，全部受此中之支配。所以说至动即是至静，至变即是至常...于是我们称此变异中之恒常，在此不息不已的变动之中，这一个较可把握较易认识的性向而谓之曰善。善只是这个动势中一种恒常的倾向。既是一个恒常的倾向...离他远远的便认为只是恶。善是此一动之中，恶只是过之与不及。...人事界虽亦千变万化，不居故常，但亦有个恒态，有个中。若要脱离此恒态与中而直向前，到底不可能。举一例言之，和平与斗争，是人事中更互迭起的两形态。常常循环往复，从和平转入斗争，又从斗争回归和平。这里面便有一个中势与恒态。斗争须能觅取和平，和平须能抵挡斗争（即不怕斗争）。所以接近斗争的和平，与接近和平的斗争，都是可继续的，都可称为善。若远离了和平的斗争，和远离了斗争的和平，则距中势皆远，皆将不可成为一种恒态而取得其继续性。如是则过犹不及，皆得称为恶，恶只是不可常的。

act. In Confucian terms, creative actions exist *ab initio* within the world of natural events and are to be assessed in terms of their contributions to the order of specific social circumstances.

“Wherever there is a circle or a pendulum range, there will be what can be called a center. This center is not on the two sides, nor anywhere outside, but rather lies within [the range of the swing of the pendulum]. A pendulum swing or a cyclic process never actually comes to rest at that center, but the center is always there, and is always still and solid as a center. It is as if the center were controlling the motion. The ceaseless and infinite motion seems eternally to be under the command of the center, completely controlled by the center, and thus we can say that it is perfectly moving and perfectly still, perfectly changing and perfectly constant... “The Good” is what we call the constancy in this eternal change, the center in this unceasing motion, this relatively easily grasped and known nature. Good is just the constant tendency of this motion. Since it is the constant tendency, it emerges in the constantly movement of changes, going on constantly, that no movement can be go too far from it. No matter what change, no matter what move, in the end ought to go back to it and be close to it... Whatever is separated from it by a great distance is called bad. Good is just the center of this motion, evil is nothing but going beyond it or not coming up to it... Although human affairs also go through endless transformations and never stay the same, there is a constancy or a center to them. If you try to separate yourself from this constancy or center and just move straight forward, you will find that it is impossible. For example, peace and struggle are phenomena that arise alternately in human life; they usually form a cycle, a back and forth, moving from peace to struggle and then from struggle back to peace. Within this process too there is a center or a constancy. Struggle must search for peace, and peace must resist struggle (that is, must not to be afraid of struggle). So peace which is close to struggle and struggle that is close to peace are both capable of continuing, and both can be called good. But struggle that is far removed from peace and peace that is far removed from struggle are both far removed from the center, and so neither can form a constancy or attain any continuity. Going too far and not coming up to it are equally bad, and both of these can be called evil. Evil is just whatever cannot be constant.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:77-78)

Qian Mu’s analogy gives us insightful ideas:

First. He depicts reality as an ongoing process made by the interaction between opposite forces. Interaction here must be understood also as mutual interpenetrations between the center and the parts (parts and whole). In this system both unity and

differences are necessary: on the one hand, unity is the continuity of the “swinging” back and forth movement. There is unity not by sharing a certain characteristic, but by the non-exclusion of the other, by their complementarity. On the other, differences are necessary and ontologically required since with total sameness there cannot be neither the swinging nor the center. The center is defined by the two extremes. Recalling Robin Wang’s (2012) idea, we can say that this system expresses the idea of holographic unity: each element is linked to others through a mutual inclusion on different levels¹⁰⁵. Each notion, event and/or action is relational dependent. Its value and its direction depend on a larger context in/by which emerges (or acquire value)¹⁰⁶. Unity is what connect each different levels and the all whole, and becomes the single and unique intelligibility of the entire system¹⁰⁷.

Second. The pendulum analogy suggests another important aspect about the process of harmonization: harmonization is a process of integration where differences must be integrated into a unity. Qian Mu calls this process of integration “the Good”. Things that cannot be integrated are evil since they will lead to radical and unsolvable conflicts. The Good will be the integration of differences into a coherent whole by giving them a contextual reference. Within this common reference, differences can become polar forces and cooperate for a common goal¹⁰⁸.

Cheng Chung-ying (2009:30) insightfully affirms that this kind of unity of opposites is the essential requirement for the full development of harmony:

¹⁰⁵ Brook Ziporyn (2012:82) defines this system of interactions “nested identities”. He further clarifies this definition employing the atomic structure: “the cloud of vibrating electrons is knowable only as a unit, which is located at and as the nucleus. But if we focus on trying to identify any further component, say an electron, on this model we will find another swarm of vibrations grouped around a virtual center, as which this swarm is identified. Expanding outward, we will find that the entire “atom” is an electron—in this case, one of two extremes of a pendulum swing—in a larger “atom”. Each element is a vortex. Its center is the vertex by which it is grasped and known.” Here sameness will always be on the level of single reference the vertex, each component acquire value (thus knowable unity) only through the relationships with others and thus with the center. Differences cannot but be referential to the center as the two extremes and keep the eternal motion of the system. One of the two extreme will be always another center of two other extremes and so on.

¹⁰⁶ Qian Mu (2000:38) affirms: “to rest so much you can no longer work is evil and not good, and to work so much you can no longer rest is equally evil and not good.” (休息过分不能工作，是恶不是善，工作过分不能休息，同样是恶不是善). Therefore both rest and work acquire their value only through the balance in their relationship; outside this relationship no absolute value can be thought as good.

¹⁰⁷ We can understand a piece of music only by its whole rather than by each single notes.

¹⁰⁸ We will see in the fourth chapter how the idea of goodness in term of harmonization process is shared by Zhang Zai.

“The reason why unity of opposites is essential for harmony is that differences must be integrated into a system of mutual support and mutual complementation. But there is no better integration in this sense than integration of opposites into a unity, where differences become opposites and complement each other.¹⁰⁹”

1.3 Chapter Conclusions

Harmony as unity of opposites seems to include all five aspects depicted before: differences, unity, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. Besides the first two that are implicit in the definition, the other three require a clarification.

First. Unity of opposites system implies dynamicity since it requires constant integration of opposite forces, and alternation as its natural development. Integration imply transformation and growth: unity will be always something more than the sum of its parts¹¹⁰. Dynamicity is clearly showed in all examples above. In the Qian Mu’s (2000) model dynamicity is the very essence of the interaction between opposites and the center.

Second. Unity of opposites implies creativity in the sense that the process of integration will produce always something new. Since the process is also dynamic and contextually dependent, it will involve always new oppositions and thus creates novel unities¹¹¹.

Third. Comprehensiveness. Within the holographic view of reality, harmony is comprehensive since it represents the paradigm, the lens through which we can grasp the coherence of reality. This model of harmony is thus extended to every realms: from human activities to cosmic feature and functionality.

¹⁰⁹ Cheng (2009:33-34) further recognizes two principles within unity of opposites: the first is the creative principle, which the integration of opposites into a unity. The second is the creative process, which is the process of differentiation of unity dividing in opposites, and further forming other type of unities.

¹¹⁰ Robin Wang (2012:52) pinpoints two kinds of transformation in the natural process: “one kind of change or transformation is growth, which is a movement toward increasing complexity. Things grow up from seeds, and sexual intercourse generates offspring who grow into adults... The other kind of change is a cyclical alternation. Summer follow spring, and fall follows from summer in an endless cycle. These two kinds of change are closely related – the progression of the seasons is a pattern of growth (and death) for living things, and the reproduction of things creates recurring cycles that form generations.”

¹¹¹ In this understanding, unity does not only express the potentiality of the process of changes and transformations, but also the new result of each temporal process.

The above definitions will fit into my understanding of Zhang Zai's thought. We will see that Zhang Zai builds a systematic thinking based on a multilevel connection between opposites and unity. This triadic connection will be the comprehensive model that can be extended to Zhang Zai's concept of *qi* and thus to his entire thought: from cosmology to human nature and the theory of the heart-mind. We will further see how Zhang Zai's *qi* express all aspects of harmony conceived before such as: unity, differences/opposites, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness.

2. THE HARMONY OF THE COSMOS

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have outlined the concept of harmony as the main philosophical theme of this investigation. We have also seen how harmony is conceived as one of the most important concept within Confucian philosophy. We have seen how Confucians understood harmony in term of both source/result and process of harmonization, and how this concept was applied to several fields such as: cosmology, politics, ethics and other human activities. Besides the differences among these fields, we have seen that harmony reflects a similar pattern that we have synthesized into five fundamental aspects: differences, unity, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. These aspects are finally synthesized within the notion of unity of opposites.

From this chapter on, I will analyze the paradigm of harmony and harmonization in the philosophy of Zhang Zai 張載. We will see how harmony in term of unity of opposites represents the general paradigm of Zhang Zai's whole system, and the coherence through which his works can be understood.

Since this chapter will focus on cosmology, one of the key to grasp Zhang Zai's system will be the concept of *qi* 氣. We have seen before that the majority of previous scholarships on Zhang Zai tend to interpret *qi* in term of 'substance monism'; differently I will understand *qi* within the paradigm of harmony as unity of opposites. I argue that *qi* is not a self-standing substance, but it expresses the dynamic, creative and comprehensive relationship of oppositive forces. Zhang Zai understands *qi* as an endless process of harmonization that encompass the whole reality. Affirming that "all unities are simply *qi*" (一於氣而已) (1978:15), Zhang Zai wants to unify all reality within the same paradigm, in order to restore the unique Confucian Way. Since Zhang sees a corrupted China where the lascivious thought of heterodox schools have threatened the entire Song society, he sees the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of reality where no external and absolute realm is required. Zhang Zai understands reality in term of *qi*'s changes and transformations, this reality include both what is graspable by the senses (the manifest shaped world), and the world of principles and possibilities (the not yet shaped world). But this unity cannot be thought as the multiple manifestations of the one-substance *qi* (monistic interpretation); as Kim Jungyeup (2008:77) has pointed out,

this interpretation cannot but lead to a “one-sided and mechanical”¹¹² view of the world since “there is no room for creative potential in this world. In this kind of world there is no possibility for creative endeavor for reality is already absolutely actualized” (Ibidem). Instead, if we understand Zhang Zai’s view of reality as a process of harmonization where *qi* accounts for the coherent unity of opposite forces, heterogeneity, unity, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness become the ontological requisite of reality. In the logic of harmony there cannot be any singular substance beyond the process, harmony requires to be relational. Therefore, *qi* in terms of harmony is not the substance that can stand by itself, but it expresses polar relationships. *Qi* express yinyang’s (opposite forces)¹¹³ modes of interaction, alternation and generation.

In my opinion a good example to exemplify my position is the before showed Qian Mu’s 錢穆 (2000) pendulum analogy.¹¹⁴ Within this analogy, *qi* can be considered the all-pervasive center that is necessary for the continuity of the process of alternation and transformation. *Qi*, as the center, is not here the monistic substance of reality, but expresses the relationship between opposite forces. Each opposite (polarity) refers to *qi* in order to be integrated into the same system. In other words, Zhang Zai’s *qi* is the practical unity which is ontologically doubleness. Moreover, this relationship between oppositions and their reference are all part of a single and interrelated structure which can be called harmony.

Qian Mu (2000:42) explains that his model can be applied to Confucian and Neo-Confucian’s view of reality. The first recognizes the concept of human nature as the center of the process, while the later employs the concept of *li* 理.

儒家则要在此不息不已无终无始的一动中指出其循环往复之定性的中来，说此中始是性。宋明儒喜欢说未发之中，说知止，说静，说主宰，说恒，都为此。宋儒

¹¹² Kim refers to Chan Wingsit’s (1963:504) understanding of Zhang Zai’s *qi*. Chan Wingsit support the critique of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi against Zhang Zai’s cosmology: “Cheng Yi thought that reality should not be described simply as clear and vacuous, but should also be considered turbid and substantial. Chu Hsi thought that to describe reality purely as integration and disintegration of material force would be to view it as a great process of transmigration. This criticism are by no means unfair. There is no doubt that Chang’s materialistic philosophy tends to be one-sided and mechanical”.

¹¹³ Here I will understand yinyang in term of paradigm that represents all kinds of polar relationships. Besides yinyang, we will see that Zhang Zai often employs several other polarities along his works.

¹¹⁴ See ch. 1.

又说性即理，不肯说性即气，因气只是动，理则是那动之中。若果纯气无理，则将如脱缰之马，不知他将跑到哪里去。天地将不成为天地，人物也不成为人物，一切样子，千异万变，全没交代。现在所以有此天地并此人物，则只是气中有理之故。“Confucians want to point out a fixed center in this infinite cyclical back and forth, and they call this center ‘human nature’. This is also what the Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties liked to call this center as ‘the Center which has not yet become manifest’ ‘knowing the resting place’, ‘stillness’, ‘the master’ ‘the constant’. The Song Neo-Confucians said that this human nature is precisely *li* [coherence], but were unwilling to say that the Nature is *qi* [vital energy] because *qi* is just the motion, whereas *li* is the Center of the motion. If there were truly pure *qi* with no *li*, it would be like an unbridled horse - no one knows where it will run to. Heaven and earth would not be able to become heaven and earth, humans and things would not be able to become humans and things. There would be absolutely no way of handling or explaining the myriad different types and forms of things. The reason we now have this ‘heaven and earth’, and these ‘humans’ and these ‘things’, is because within the *qi* there is this *li*.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:72)

Since Zhang Zai’s cosmology does not emphasize the concept of *li* focusing primarily on the concept of *qi*¹¹⁵, here *qi* will be understood as the center of his cosmology and metaphysics, therefore as the center of the pendulum. *Qi* as the center, will account for

¹¹⁵ As we will see below, Zhang Zai does not recognize any principle outside *qi*’s process of changes and transformations. *Qi* and its cosmic principle are totally connected, the principle is thus within the Way which is nothing but yinyang’s interaction: “Although the *qi* of the cosmos aggregates and disperses, reject and attack in hundred different ways, it follows its principle without mistake.” (天地之氣，雖聚散、攻取百塗，然其為理也順而不妄) (1978:7). This interpretation was criticized by the Chengs since they recognize the Way as something beyond yinyang’s interaction: “The Way is not yin and yang, therefore [to say] one yin and one yang are the Way is like saying closing and opening are transformations” (道非陰陽也，所以一陰一陽道也，如一闔一闢謂之變) (*Henan Chengshi yishu volume three* 《河南程氏遺書卷第三》). Zhang Zai’s *li* were criticized also by Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi refused Zhang Zai’s understanding of *li* because it was not comprehensive: “The *li* of the Way is originally spread out evenly. In the clear there is *li* and in the turbid there is *li*. There is *li* in the empty and *li* in the full. All are effected by *li*. Zhang Zai only has one side but not the other.” (這道理本平正，清也有是理，濁也有是理，虛也有是理，實也有是理：皆此理之所為也他說成這一邊無) (*Zhuzi yulei* 《朱子語類》 cit. in Kim 2008:17).

Jeeloo Liu (2005) calls these two different view about the relationship between *li* and *qi* as the *law of qi* and the *law for qi*. Zhang Zai’s *li* can be understood as the *law of qi*, which is different from the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi’s interpretation of *li* that can be defined *law for qi*. In the first case the principle cannot be thought a part from *qi* itself, while in the second, the principle constitutes the nature of one thing that enable its actual existence and future development. While *qi* is just the form of that thing. In this investigation I will not analyze in details Zhang Zai’s idea of *li* since is not a key concept in his system.

all changes and transformations, alternation and growth within the cosmos. *Qi* is the reference of the latent dimension, which is full possibility and full creativity, and of the manifest dimension which is what we can grasp and know.

Before analyzing Zhang Zai's concept of *qi*, I will outline Zhang Zai's idea of harmony, and later I will apply this idea on *qi*.

2.2 Zhang Zai's paradigm of the Great Harmony

Despite the centrality of the concept of harmony in Zhang Zai's cosmology, he does not often employ directly the word *he*. But besides the limited direct usage of the term harmony, the intrinsic characteristic of this concept are largely applied on other concepts. However, Zhang Zai does directly use the term harmony in a broad sense, especially when he talks of cosmology. Zhang Zai's comprehensive idea of harmony is expressed primarily by the term Great Harmony (*taihe* 太和). The centrality of this concept is also given by the structure of the *Zhengmeng* 《正蒙》 organized by his disciple Su Bing 蘇丙. Su Bing placed the Great Harmony's chapter as the opening chapter of *Zhengmeng* probably due to the centrality of this concept in Zhang Zai's thought¹¹⁶.

About the term, *taihe* is not a neologism, its origin traces back to several ancient texts such as the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan* 《左傳》), the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 and the *Huainanzi* 《淮南子》¹¹⁷. Besides these works, Zhang Zai develops his idea of Great

¹¹⁶ See introduction.

¹¹⁷ In the *Zhuangzi*: "The Di said, 'It was likely that it should so affect you! It was performed with (the instruments of) men, and all attuned according to (the influences of) Heaven. It proceeded according to (the principles of) propriety and righteousness, and was pervaded by (the idea of) the Grand Purity. The Perfect Music first had its response in the affairs of men, and was conformed to the principles of Heaven; it indicated the action of the five virtues, and corresponded to the spontaneity (apparent in nature). After this it showed the blended distinctions of the four seasons, and the Grand Harmony of all things - the succession of those seasons one after another, and the production of things in their proper order.'" (女殆其然哉！吾奏之以人，徵之以天，行之以禮義，建之以太清。夫至樂者，先應之以人事，順之以天理，行之以五德，應之以自然，然後調理四時，太和萬物。四時迭起，萬物循生) (Trans. by Legge 1962:348).

And in the *Huainanzi*: "Only he who penetrates to Great Harmony and who grasps the responses of the natural will be able to possess it [i.e., his state]." (唯通於太和，而持自然之應者，為能有之). (Trans. by Major, Queen, Meyer, Roth 2010:219).

Harmony mainly from the *Commentary on the Decision* (*Tuanzhuan* 《彖傳》) of the hexagram qian 乾 of the *Book of Change*:

乾道變化，各正性命，保合大和，乃利貞。“The Way of *qian* works through changes and transformations, so that each things received their nature and destiny, and preserve the Great Harmony. This is what furthers and what perseveres¹¹⁸.” (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:371)

The *Book of Changes* shows that the Great Harmony is the cosmic ideal state where everything finds its proper place and direction. Harmony is the natural intrinsic property of the Way that one needs to protect. Zhang Zai seems to support this idea when he is saying: “Without losing the Great Harmony, [everything] will be furthered and will get its correctness¹¹⁹.” (不失太和而利且貞也) (1978:80)

Harmony is not an everlasting state that cannot be lost, therefore human efforts will be that on preserve it. But on the other hand, Zhang Zai specifies that the Great Harmony is not a property of the Way, is the Way itself. The opening of the *taihe*'s chapter and thus of the *Zhengmeng* states:

¹¹⁸ The Tang dynasty commentator Kong Yingda explains that cosmic harmony is a state that ought to be preserved by correcting and supporting the ten thousands beings: “Preserving the Great Harmony , thus the function of qian. The pure yang is strong and reveal. Without harmony to follow, things would not get achievement, and then will lose their rightness. By preserving harmony and unity, the Way of the Great Harmony will be everlasting and firm, everything will get its correct nature, and last for long.” (保合太和，乾之為用，純陽剛暴。若無和順，則物不得利，又失其正。若能保安合會，太和之道乃能永固，使物各正性命而久長也。) (*Zhouyi zhengyi*).

¹¹⁹ Similarly to the *Book of Changes*, Zhang Zai emphasizes harmony as the ideal state where everything get proper completion. Zhang Zai comments of the previous statement affirms that the Changes' “six lines shows that each things receive their nature and destiny, thus *qian*'s virtue is pervasive connection” (六爻擬議，各正性命，故乾德旁通) (1978:80). Harmony is a state of pervasive communication where each part find its proper place.

Zhang Zai expresses this idea of preserving the Great Harmony elsewhere. For instance in the commentary of the hexagram *qian* he compares the Great Harmony with the Mencian's notion of *tiaoli* 條理, organizing the principle: “By perfect appropriateness and timely and proper action, the great harmony can be preserved, firmness will be furthered and [everything] will get its correctness; Mencius called this “organizing the principle at the end and at the beginning” (精義時措，故能保合大和，健利且貞，孟子所謂終始條理，集大成于聖智者歟) (1978:70). Mencius uses this term through the example of the correct performance of ritual music: “Confucius was the one who gathered together all that was good. To do this is to open with bells and conclude with jade tubes. To open with bells is to begin in an orderly fashion; to conclude with jade tubes is to end in an orderly fashion. To begin in an orderly fashion pertains to wisdom while to end in an orderly fashion pertains to sagemess.” (孔子之謂集大成。集大成也者，金聲而玉振之也。金聲也者，始條理也；玉振之也者，終條理也。始條理者，智之事也；終條理者，聖之事也) (Trans. by Lau 2004:113).

太和所謂道，中涵浮沈、升降、動靜、相感之性，是生綱縕、相盪、勝負、屈伸之始 其來也幾微易簡，其究也廣大堅固。起知於易者乾乎！效法於簡者坤乎！散殊而可象為氣，清通而不可象為神。不如野馬、綱縕，不足謂之太和。(1978:7)

“The Great Harmony is what is called Dao, it contains within itself the nature of floating and sinking, rising and falling, of the motion, the rest and the mutually resonance. It produces the harmonic changes, the intermingling, the success and the failure, the expansion and contraction. Subtle and minute, easy and simple are its progression; firm and resolute, wide and great its completeness. *Qian* is what know through the easy, *kun* is what realize through the simple¹²⁰. The dispersion of particularities that possess images¹²¹, is *qi*; what is the pure connection without images, is the spiritual dimension (*shen*). If it was not motion (wandering energy), and harmonic intercourse (*qian/kun*, *qi/shen*), it could not be called Great Harmony.”

Here Zhang Zai’s position seems to go beyond the *Book of Changes*: harmony is not anymore a mere characteristic of the cosmos that needs to be preserved. Harmony is the Way with its broad meaning: it is the source, the structure and the result of the natural process¹²². *Taihe* possesses and expresses the nature/natural disposition (*xing* 性) of all things/events, and it generates all things and events.

The Ming philosopher Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 in the *Commentary of the Zhengmeng of the Master Zhang* (*Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu* 《張子正蒙注》) explains:

太和，和之至也。道者，天地人物之通理，即所謂太極也。陰陽異撰，而其綱縕於太虛之中，合同而悖害，渾論無間，和之至矣。未有形器之先，本無不和，既有形器之先，本無不和，既有形器之後，其和不失，故曰太和。(Tang 2000:85)

“The Great Harmony is the all-pervading harmony. The Way is the coherence by which heaven and earth, human and things can communicate, this is what is called the Great

¹²¹ Here I follow Brook Ziporyn’s (2015:180) interpretation of *xiang* 象, images as “concrete mental conception, the immediate fixed notions of apprehended objects”.

¹²² When Zhang Zai speaks about *Dao* in a broad sense, he generally outlines the heaven’s Way. In Zhang Zai understanding the heaven’s Way is both the reason behind and the same natural process. On the one hand, *Dao* is the coherence between opposites relationship: “yinyang unifying process is preserved in dao” (陰陽合一存乎道) (1978:7), “*Dao* is simply the process of unification” (道一而已) (Ibid:65). On the other, *Dao* outlines the ongoing process of changes and transformations: “from *qi*’s transformations we have the name of *Dao*.” (由氣化，有道之名). (Ibid.9).

Ultimate. Yin and yang differ in their abilities, but in their intercourse in the Great Void, are joined in agreement without opposition or injury, and their confused mingling leaves no chink between them. This is the all-pervading harmony. Before the existence of forms and concrete things, all is originally harmonious, and when forms and concrete things come into existence this harmony is not lost. Therefore one calls it Great Harmony.” (Trans. by McMorran 1975:438)

Wang Fuzhi is saying that the Great Harmony is on the one hand, the same as the Great Ultimate (taiji 太極)¹²³ which is the ultimate source of reality. But on the other, the Great Harmony is also the manifest reality itself. *Taihe* expresses the ongoing relationship (unity) between oppositive forces, that is dynamic, creative and comprehensive. Without the above characteristic, is saying Zhang Zai, it would not be called Great Harmony. *Taihe*, as *Dao*, is the unity of opposite forces¹²⁴; and as unity of opposites cannot but be creative, it produces changes and transformations through opposites relationship¹²⁵. Wang Fuzhi is saying that this harmonious state is the original and endless state of the process that cannot be lost, it is the same *Dao* that cannot be left even for a moment¹²⁶.

¹²³ The term the Great Ultimate (Taiji 太極) first appears in the *Great Commentary of the Book of Changes* pinpointing the creative principle within the universe: “Therefore there is in the Changes the Great Ultimate. This generates the two primary forces.” (易有太極，是生兩儀). (Trans by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:318 slightly modified).

In the eleventh century, the term was employed and developed by Zhou Dunyi. In the *Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate (Taiji tushuo 《太極圖說》)* Zhou Dunyi compares the term with *Dao*: “Ultimate void is the supreme ultimate. The supreme ultimate moves (dong) therefore generates yang, when movement reaches its extreme, it generates rest (*jing*). Rest generates yin. When rest reaches its extreme, it will return to motion. Zhou Dunyi is here affirming the identification of *taiji* with yinyang changes and transformations.” (無極而太極。太極動而生陽，動極而靜，靜而生陰). (Trans. by Wang 2005:314).

Taiji is thus a “self-contained notion”, the source/unity that is unlimited (wuji 無極) and beyond the process of changes and transformations that appear in the myriad things and human beings. (Wang 2012:77-78). Later, in the thirteen century, *Taiji* will be identified with the concept of *li* in the philosophy of Zhu Xi.

¹²⁴ “The Great Harmony is what is called *Dao*, it contains within itself the nature of floating and sinking, rising and falling, of the motion, the rest and the mutually resonance.” (太和所謂道，中涵浮沈、升降、動靜、相感之性) (1978:7).

¹²⁵ “It produces the harmonic changes, the intermingling, the success and the failure, the expansion and contraction.” (是生網緼、相盪、勝負、屈伸之始) (Ibidem).

¹²⁶ When Wang Fuzhi speaks about original state, does not intend a state before time by which things are generate. The original state of harmony is harmony in its full potentiality. This state of full potentiality is always there and cannot be lost. Harmony is the *Dao* that cannot be left as the *Zhongyong* shows: “As for this proper Way, we cannot quit it even for an instant. Were it even possible to quit it, it would not be the proper Way.” (道也者，不可須臾離也，可離非道也). (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:89).

The Great Harmony includes both polar dimensions of reality: the primordial macro-opposition *qian* and *kun*, the world of manifest images (kexiang 可象), and the latent world that cannot be perceived (bukexiang 不可象)¹²⁷. It is dynamic since it represents the whole natural process: “if it was not motion (wandering energy), and harmonic intercourse, it cannot be called Great Harmony.” (不如野馬、網緼，不足謂之太和)¹²⁸.

Zhang Zai employs the already broadly known concept of harmony to outline both cosmic principle/s and functionality. The concept of *taihe* goes a step forward from the idea of harmony showed in the *Classics*. Both the *Book of Changes* and the *Zhongyong* 《中庸》 show that harmony is the best result that we can get, it is the ideal result of things interaction. The *Book of Changes* shows that Great Harmony is the cosmic state that need to be preserved; besides, in the previous chapter we have also seen then the author of *Zhongyong* expresses a similar idea of harmony when he is saying: “The moment at which joy and anger, grief and pleasure have yet to arise is called a nascent equilibrium (*zhong*); once the emotions have arisen that they are all brought into proper focus (*zhong*) is called harmony (*he*).” (喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和). (*Zhongyong*) And he continues saying: “harmony then is the advancing of the proper way in the world” (和也者，天下之達道也) (*ibidem*).

Harmony is the best and ideal relationship between our different emotions¹²⁹, and the same result can be grasped in the cosmos. This idea of harmony was widely accepted. For instance for Zhou Dunyi, harmony is nothing but the right balance of things

¹²⁷ Here it is worth noting that Zhang Zai’s notion of Great Harmony differs from Zhou Dunyi concept of Great Ultimate, and the Cheng Brothers’ concept of *li* (principle/coherence). The Great Harmony includes opposites forces, it is not beyond them. Polarities is what harmony is made of, we will see that for Zhang Zai without polarities there cannot be harmony at all. Differently, both the Cheng Brothers’ understanding of principle/coherence, and the Zhou Dunyi’s notion of the Great Ultimate express the principle which is ontologically prior to polarities.

¹²⁸ Zhang Zai shows the dynamicity of the process using images belonging to Chinese tradition. For example, the image of the “wild horses” (*yema* 野馬) was presented by Zhuangzi, it refers to the unceasing and all-embracing motion of *qi*. “The horses of the fields, of the dust, and of living things as they are blown against one another by the air” (野馬也、塵埃也、生物之以息相吹也) (Trans.by Legge 1962:165).

In the above showed quotation, the Chinese philosopher Qian Mu (2000:42) employs the term “unbridled horse”(tuojiang zhi ma 脱缰之马) to shows the chaotic motion of *qi* without coherence. See above.

Here Zhang Zai seems to have a different idea: by comparing *yema* to the Great Harmony, he emphasizes the dynamic aspect of harmony (horses) but at the same time harmony cannot be without coherence and order. Here *yema* can be understood as unbridled horses which is free to run in a defined and well-ordered herd.

¹²⁹ This theme will be analyzed in ch. 5.

relationship. In the *Tongshu* 《通書》 he affirms: “When all things get their principle, there is harmony” (萬物各得其理，然後和) (*Tongshu*); “When the *qi* of heaven and earth interact, there is the Great Harmony. With the harmony of heaven and earth, all things can thus follow [their completion]” (天地之氣，感而太和焉。天地和，則萬物順). (*Ibidem*)

But what Zhang Zai is saying in the *Zhengmeng* seems to be something different. Harmony is not just the due degree of things relationship, as we have seen before, harmony is all we have in reality, from the source, to the process itself. Zhang Zai understands harmony in its most comprehensive meaning. Harmony is both the reason behind reality, and the reality as such. In the *Commentary of the Zhengmeng's introductory meaning* (*Zhengmeng chuyi* 《正蒙初義》), the Ming philosopher Wang Zhi 王植 points out:

太和謂道與一陰一陽之謂道大意相似亦精於狀道之詞但只就氣言而未及理之不雜乎氣者故朱子謂與發而中節之和無異玩語意正以太和為道補注謂太和是氣所以然者 (*Zhengmeng chuyi*) “The great meaning of ‘the Great Harmony is what is called the Way’ is very similar with the meaning of ‘the one yin and one yang is what is called *Dao*’; the essence lies on the word the Way. But if we speak only of *qi* without mixing it with the principle, it will not be different from master Zhu’s revision and derision that calls harmony nothing but acting in due degree. If we want to give a complete understanding of ‘the Great Harmony is the Way’, the Great Harmony needs to be understood as the principle of *qi*.”

Wang Zhi grasps Zhang Zai’s original idea of comprehensive harmony. In Wang Zhi’s words, even Zhu Xi did not understand the originality of Zhang Zai. Zhu Xi interpreted harmony sharing the same idea of Zhou Dunyi and the standard interpretation of the *Classics*. By interpreting harmony in term of due degree between polarities, they grasp just a part of the concept. Differently, Zhang Zai’s view is broader, harmony is not just the correct relationship between polarities, it is the reason/substance behind this relationship.

Wang Zhi continues:

所謂太和者蓋中涵夫浮沉升降動靜相感之性以為之體於是生夫二氣網緼相盪勝負屈伸之端以為之用 (*Zhengmeng chuyi*) “What is called the Great Harmony contains within itself the nature of floating and sinking, rising and falling, of the motion, the rest and the mutually resonance. This is what it is called polarities interaction, which produces the sprout of the two *qi*’s intercourse, their mutual intermingling, their success and the failure, their expansion and contraction. This is its function.”

As both Wang Fuzhi and Wang Zhi has pointed out, Zhang Zai’s harmony represents the ultimate paradigm of reality, the reason why things interact and generate, the source, the function and the result of the natural process.

Below, we will see that Zhang Zai’s concept of harmony is nothing but *qi* itself. *Qi* is nothing but that unity of opposites which include and express the structure and the principle of all reality.

2.3 Unity of opposites as the paradigm of reality

Although Zhang Zai does not often employs directly the term *taihe*, the model of harmony is extended comprehensively in his view of reality. Drawing from the *Book of Changes*, Zhang Zai sees the world as a web of infinite interaction that follows a unique paradigm which is basically triadic¹³⁰. He basically employs two kinds of triads directly interrelated: first, he describes reality as the interrelation between the triadic powers: heaven, earth and man¹³¹; second each power is itself a unity of opposite forces.

Zhang Zai states:

¹³⁰ We have seen before that harmony is basically conceived as a triadic system since its ontological elements are opposites in unity. See ch. 1.

¹³¹ The ancient idea of the triadic powers (or realms) harmonious relationship is widely discussed in the *Book of Changes* and particularly in the *Ten Wings*. For instance, in the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*: “The movements of the six lines contains the ways of the three primal powers” (六爻之動，三極之道也). (trans by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:289) Very similarly in the *Discussion of the Trigrams*: “the yin and yang are the foundations of the Way of heaven, the soft and hard [of the hexagram lines] are the foundation of the Way of earth, and the humaneness and appropriateness [among human beings] are the foundation of the Way of humankind. (是以立天之道曰陰與陽，立地之道曰柔與剛，立人之道曰仁與義。) (Ibid:264 slightly modified).

As Hon Tze-ki (2012:4) has pointed out, the heaven and earth powers pinpoints the forces of change in the natural world, while human’s power symbolizes what one can do in life.

易一物而合三才：陰陽氣也，而謂之天；剛柔質也，而謂之地；仁義德也，而謂之人 (1978:48) “The process of unification [outlined in the] *Changes* is the unity of the triadic powers: the yinyang’s *qi* are called [the power] of heaven; firm and soft qualities are [the power] of earth; the virtues of humaneness and appropriateness are called [the power] of man.”

Here we can see that first, all powers interact to each other and thus form a single process; second, each power is a unity of opposite forces. Heaven depicts the process of interrelation between *yin qi* and *yang qi*; earth between soft and hard qualities; and man between the virtues of humaneness and appropriateness. Furthermore, Zhang Zai employs this model as the general paradigm of the world.

兩不立則一不可見，一不可見則兩之用息。兩體者，虛實也，動靜也，聚散也，清濁也，其究一而已。(1978:9) “Without the two modes of existence no unity can be seen, if unity cannot be seen, the function of polarities will cease. The two polarities interaction are emptiness and fullness, movement and stillness, aggregation and dispersion, purity and impurity, but in the end they are just unity.”

Zhang Zai basically understands reality as a process of interaction between opposite forces. Although the world appears to be multiple and various, the paradigm of reality seems to be the same for everything.

造化所成，無一物相肖者，以是知萬物雖多，其實一物；無無陰陽者，以是知天地變化，二端而已 (1978:10) “Among the things achieved through the creative process no one resemble the other. Although the knowable things are many, in reality they are simply one. Since nothing is without yinyang, cosmic changes and transformations can be known as simply the two sprouts.”

Zhang Zai is saying that beyond the multiplicity of reality there is a single oneness. “Unity is the original foundation of all things, therefore is [the reason why] all differences are unified.” (以萬物本一，故一能合異) (1978:63) But this oneness is not a single substance that can stand by itself, the one is the unity of polarities interactions.

Things are many and one at the same time because they ultimately refer to polarities. Zhang Zai expresses this meaning by defining this model “*yiwu liangti*” (一物而兩體), “the process of unification constituted by the two polarities interaction”. This can be synthesized with the above paradigm the “unity of opposites” (or polarities process of unification).

一物而兩體，其太極之謂與！陰陽天道，象之成也；剛柔地道，法之效也；仁義人道，性之立也。三才兩之，莫不有乾坤之道。(1978:48) “Does the Great Ultimate is what is called the process of unification constituted by the two polarities interaction (unity of opposites)? Due to yin and yang’s interaction within the heaven’s way, all images get their completion. Due to soft and hard interaction within the earth’s way, all natural laws become effective. Due to humaneness and appropriateness interaction within the human’s way, human’s nature can be set. The three primordial powers are [made by] opposites. Everything have the way of *qian* and *kun*.”

一物兩體者，氣也。一故神，兩在故不測。兩故化，推行於一。此天之所以參也(1978:10) “*Qi* is the process of unification of the two polarities interaction; because it is unifying, it is spiritual; because polarities are within it, it is unfathomable. Because of polarities, can transform by pushing one another along into unity. This is why heaven is constituted by the harmonious threefold unities.”

Unity of opposites (“*yiwu liangti*”) is Zhang Zai’s way to outline the paradigm of reality, and therefore is the key to understand his entire philosophy¹³². Zhang Zai employs the term *ti* 體, usually translated as substance or constitution, to express what things and man cannot but possess: “*ti* is what one is never without” (未嘗無之謂體). (1078:21)

What one is never without, is the nature, remarks Zhang Zai: “*ti* is what is called nature” (體之謂性) (*Ibidem*). But nature is nothing but polarities, and more precisely, polarities

¹³² Tang Junyi seems to concord to this idea: “Contrasting the dual in revealing the One” defines the unique style of Zhang Zai’s writing. This being so, he warns us that “in expounding Zhang Zai’s thought, if one biases toward either One or the dual, or loses the balance between the One and the dual, then one would miss the point of his doctrine of the proper Way (*Dao*), and hence fail to grasp his conception of harmony” (in Chan 2011:90).

interactions¹³³: “Nature is what unifies being and non being, voidness and fullness through interpenetration.” (有無虛實通為一物者，性也) (1978:63)

But as we have seen before, Zhang Zai does not understand reality in term of duality, polarities primarily express a relationship: polarities show the capacity to become one, therefore what we are never without is primarily the capacity to interact with others and generate things. Zhang Zai expresses the ongoing result and the process of polar relationship with the term “*yiwu*”(一物), one thing or one event/situation. *Wu* here does not only express the mere product of polar intercourse, but the paradigm of relationship. The focus is not on the product but on the relationship¹³⁴. From the constant alternation

¹³³ Zhang Zai further explains this idea by saying that this is simply the process (*Dao*) itself: “*Dao* therefore the polarities’ interaction is tireless. Since it is polar interaction, it can be called one yin and one yang; and even called the unfathomable yinyang; or closing and entering; or connecting the day with the night.” (若道則兼體而無累也。以其兼體，故曰“一陰一陽”，又曰“陰陽不測”，又曰“一闔一辟”，又曰“通乎晝夜”。) (1978:65).

The Chinese philosopher Mou Zongsan (2000:448) interprets the term *jianti* 兼體 as triadic harmony: “In the *Chengming* chapter [Zhang Zai] affirms: ‘heaven fundamental constitution is the all-pervading triadic harmony’. Here the ‘double’ of the compound ‘double substance’ has the same meaning. The constitution of the triadic harmony is equivalent to all mutual polarities and events such as day night, yin yang, motion and stillness, aggregation dispersion and so on. (〈誠明篇第六〉有云「天本參和不偏。」此「兼體」之兼即「參和不偏」之意也。所參和之體即晝夜、陰陽、動靜、聚散等之相體或事體).

Yang Lihua (2008:44) affirms that here the term *ti* can be easily understood as the dynamicity within the process: “here we can understand *ti* reading it as a verb, in this passage the compound *jianti* (dynamicity) is opposite to partially stagnancy. Thus universal becomes opposites to partial, dynamicity to stagnancy” (我们也可以确知这里的“体”应当读为动词，在这段文字中，与“兼体”相对的是“偏滞”，其中“兼”与“偏”相对，“体”与“滞”相对。).

My interpretation follows these understanding. I will understand *ti* mostly as polarities interaction that form unities. In this sense *ti* is the *substance* of an entity, since it refers to the very basic structure of that entities. However, how Brook Ziporyn (2015:171) has pointed out, the term substance is problematic. Since in the Western thought substance is usually understood as “what cannot be ‘of’ anything: what is always a subject, but never a predicate of something else”; therefore polarities and thus harmony cannot be a substance of anything because cannot be isolated by definition. Ziporyn in his essay on “harmony as substance” attempts for an emancipation of Chinese philosophical category from the Western tradition, and a re-definition of them. For instance, the term substance can be thus employed to define the fundamental aspect of a thing without necessarily implies “isolation” (stand by itself) as the necessary condition.

¹³⁴ Robin Wang (2012:49) affirms that the concept of *wu* 物 in Chinese language ought to be understood in a broader sense than the simple word “thing”. Since the logic underlying Chinese world view is oriented toward process and not toward static element, *wu* could be better understand as temporal unification of a determinate process. *Wu* does not pinpoint to entities in isolation, but rather phenomena or events in becoming.

Franklin Perkins (2015:62-63) compares the Chinese term *wu* with the Western idea of substance. He outlines two basic differences between the two concepts: first *wu* has a broader implication since it can also refer to event and categories, and thus is closer to the English word *thing*. Thing can mean material object, but also affair or event and type of things.

Second the difference is ontological. He states: “when Western philosopher wanted to account for things, they went deep, to what literally ‘stands under’ (substance/sub-stantia) or is ‘thrown under’ (subject/sub-jectus) the appearances, a view that was theorized through the distinction of substances and their modes or modifications. Chinese philosophers went the opposite direction, toward the

and interrelation of opposite forces, things constantly change and develop. “*Yiwu*” thus cannot describe a thing in itself, but a process of connections and interpenetrations. Furthermore, he explains that the substance (*ti*) behind this relationship is nothing but polar interaction (*liangti*).

Coherently with his peculiar way of seeing reality, Zhang Zai employs different terms to describe the process of interaction and generation. We have seen that he employs the term *taihe* and *Dao* to describe reality in a broad sense. But he also employs different terms depending on the context: heaven’s way (*tiandao* 天道) to describe the way of cosmos and the natural world; human’s way (*rendao* 人道) to describe the ideal way of human. Besides these direct contextualization, Zhang Zai outlines the general structure of reality also with the model “unity of opposites”.

But as Zhang Zai has also showed, the unity of opposites model is nothing but the Great Ultimate (*taiji*) and *qi*, he is saying.

While the Great Ultimate is a direct quote of the *Book of Changes*, and it is far from being a central concept in the *Zhengmeng*; Zhang Zai employs *qi* as one of his key concept.

2.4 *Qi* as unity of opposites

Zhang Zai chooses *qi*, one of the most comprehensive concept of Chinese philosophy, to describe the paradigm of reality. Zhang Zai affirms that *qi* is basically all we have in nature:

天地之氣，雖聚散、攻取百塗，然其為理也順而不妄。氣之為物，散入無形 (1978:7) “Although the *qi* of the cosmos aggregate and disperse, reject and attack in hundred different ways, it follows its principle without mistake. *Qi* can forms either a thing/process, or disperse into the shapeless world.”

Qi accounts for all images:

surface, so that to be a *wu* is just to be a certain distinct appearance, not an underlying entity which possesses that appearance.”

凡可狀，皆有也；凡有，皆象也；凡象，皆氣也。(1978:63) “Whatever can be in any describable condition¹³⁵ whatsoever is Being. All beings are images. All images are *qi*.”

所謂氣也者，非待其蒸鬱凝聚，接於目而後知之；苟健、順、動、止、浩然、湛然之得言，皆可名之象爾。然則象若非氣，指何為象？時若非象，指何為時？(1978:16) “What one calls *qi* does not refer only to what can be known after meeting the eye in the form of rising steam or vapor, or condensation or consolidations. One can describe it as vigorous, compliant, moving, stopping, vastly flowing and translucent; these are merely all namable images. But if images are not *qi*, what is it that is referred to as images? If time is not an image, what is it that is referred to as time?”

But *qi* does not only account for what we can perceive or think (image), *qi* accounts also for what is not yet manifested, the latent shapeless world.

氣聚則離明得施而有形，氣不聚則離明不得施而無形(1978:8) “When *qi* aggregates separated manifestations come into effect and thus acquire forms. When *qi* does not aggregate separated manifestations do not come into effect and there are no forms.”

Reality is nothing but simply *qi*. *Qi* here is thought as the fundamental category of Zhang Zai’s world. But in the very end, *qi* is nothing but unity of opposites. There will be no *qi* outside *qian/kun* or *yin/yang*: “*Qi* is yinyang interaction, they push one another and gradually produce transformations.” (氣有陰陽，推行有漸為化) (1978:16) Yin and yang, and all polar forces interact and mutually interpenetrate due to their single reference (unity) that is *qi*.

陰陽之精互藏其宅，則各得其所安，故日月之形，萬古不變。若陰陽之氣，則迴圈迭至，聚散相湯，升降相求，綱縕相揉，蓋相兼相制，欲一之而不能，此其所

¹³⁵ Here I follow Brook Ziporyn’s (2015:180) understanding of *zhuang* 狀 as anything that can be predicted, anything that can be spoken of.

以屈伸無方，運行不息，莫或使之，不曰性命之理 (1978:13) “The essence of yin and yang each conceals within itself the dwelling place of the other, and thus each acquire its proper arrange. Sun and moon have their shape that have never changed throughout time. Since *yin qi* and *yang qi* repeatedly alternate and change endlessly, they intermingle each other and thus aggregate and disperse; they seek for each other and thus rise and fall; they rub against each other and thus interpenetrate harmoniously; they possess each other, and overcome each other. Try to make them one is impossible. This is why it contracts and expands without limit, revolves and moves without rest. There is nothing that causes it to be so¹³⁶.”

Polarities mutually interpenetrate and mutually support because they both refer to the same whole, which is not a third reality outside them, but it expresses their dynamic relationship¹³⁷. It is through this understanding that we can grasp Zhang Zai’s emphasis on *qi* (unity) over duality: “only if we can understand [the alternation] of night and day through the interpenetration of yinyang, we will experience¹³⁸ that there is no duality” (惟知晝夜通陰陽，體之不二) (1978:64). There is no duality in Zhang Zai’s thought, no opposite force can stand alone by itself. Reality is double-sided, it is made by polar interaction, which is the process of harmonizing opposites into unities.

But understanding Zhang Zai’s *qi* as a process of polarities relationship is not enough to define *qi* in term of harmony. We have seen that harmony also requires dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. *Qi* as a process implies obviously dynamicity as intrinsic quality, but what about creativity and comprehensiveness?

¹³⁶ I have employed part of Ira Kasoff (1984:49) translation.

¹³⁷ Robin Wang (2012:8-11) insightfully recognizes six forms of yinyang relationship: the first is “contradiction and opposition (maodun 矛盾)” which is the basis of their constitution; the second is “interdependence (xiangyi 相依)” since neither of the two sides can exist without the other; the third is “mutual inclusion (huan 互含)”, as Zhang Zai affirms “The essence of yin and yang each conceals within itself the dwelling place of the other”. The forth is “interaction or resonance (jiaogan 交感)” where each element influences and shapes the other; the fifth is “complementarity or mutual support (hubu 互補)” where each side supplies what the other lack. And the last is “change and transformation (zhuanhua 转化)” where one side becomes the other in an endless cycle.

¹³⁸ Here I have translated *ti* with the English verb experience. This translation is coherent with one of the multiple meaning of *ti* in Chinese language. For instance in modern Chinese language the compound *tian* 體驗 means to experience something intimately, and *yan* here means “confirmed”. Therefore *tianyan* is to confirm by the direct experience of the subject. For a study on *ti* and its several meanings see Cheng (2002).

If we think of *qi* as yinyang's alternation, the world will be limited by what is already here, and thus the system will be mechanical and one-sided. In order to complete his system and gives to *qi* a full comprehensivity and creativity, Zhang Zai enriches *qi* and his cosmology with other key terms: the Great Void (taixu 太虛) and the spiritual dimension (shen 神).

2.5 Zhang Zai's concept of void and the critique against heterodoxies

Zhang Zai is one of the first Confucian to employ the concept of void (a basically Daoist and Buddhist notion) as one of the key concept of his philosophy. But Zhang Zai's usage of void is different from the heterodox schools previous understanding, he gives to void an original meaning, which is intrinsically related to his theory of *qi*¹³⁹.

Zhang Zai first explains that *qi* and void are intrinsically related:

太虛不能無氣，氣不能不聚而為萬物，萬物不能不散而為太虛。循是出入，是皆不得已而然也 (1978:7) “The Great Void cannot be without *qi*, *qi* cannot but aggregate and become the myriad things, and the myriad things cannot but disperse and become

¹³⁹ Despite its relative relevance within the Confucian school, void is one of the most important concept in Chinese thought. We can recognize three different characters that express the idea of void in Chinese thought: 無 *wu*, 虛 *xu* e 空 *kong*. For what concern the first character, *wu*, the *Laozi* 《老子》 (also called *Dao Dejing* 《道德經》) is one of the earliest and most important text that develops this concept. Here *wu* is usually coupled with its opposites: you 有. The author/s of the *Laozi* confer/s to *wu* the ontological significance of creative principle, the condition from which everything takes shape. In *Laozi* 40: “All things under heaven sprang from It as existing (and named); that existence sprang from It as non-existent (and not named).” (天下萬物生於有，有生於無). (Trans by James Legge). The debate on the metaphysical aspect of *wu* arises preeminently during the Wei-Jin period with the so called Neo-Daoist philosophers Heyan 何晏(193-249), Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) and Guo Xiang 郭象(?-312). While the first two philosophers elevate *wu* as the utmost creative principle by which all beings are generated, Guo Xiang affirms that emptiness and being (*you*) cannot be connected in a well-ordered sequence of generation (the one presented in the *Laozi* 42 for example), rather they are intertwined in all beings from the beginning. Chinese Buddhism employs mainly the second term, *kong* as the translation of the Sanskrit term *sūnyatā*: emptiness. In Buddhism, the doctrine of emptiness takes different characteristics depending on the school. Zhang Zai will refer to a general (probably shallow) view of Buddhist emptiness, the vacuity of the phenomenal world: each event is basically empty as necessarily dependent on others. If no event can be analyzed by itself separately, the result is the non-existence of independent phenomenon. The third term, *xu* is mainly used in Daoist texts such as in the *Zhuangzi*. It means both the infinite immensity of heaven, and the state of mind prior to any judgment. In the *Guanzi* 《管子》, *xu* is equivalent to heaven (cosmos). Buddhists rarely employed the term *xu*, and when they did, it keeps basically the Daoist meaning.

the Great Void. This process of exiting and entering will inevitably go on spontaneously.”

The Great Void¹⁴⁰ cannot be thought apart from *qi*. It is part of the same process of changes and transformations. Furthermore he states that “the Great Void is the polarities interaction within *qi*” (太虛者，氣之體) (1978:66), and thus the *substance* of the whole cosmos: “from the Great Void we have the name of heaven” (由太虛，有天之名) (1978:9).

And moreover:

太虛無形，氣之本體，其聚其散，變化之客形爾 (1978:7). “The Great Void is without shape, it is the fundamental substance of *qi*. The aggregations and dispersions are the hosting form of changes and transformations.”

The substance of the cosmos, and thus of *qi*, is without shape and therefore is void. But at the same time it is at the base of all changes and transformations within the cosmos. But how can the *substance* of the world be void? Setting the reality on voidness, one will fall in the mistake of Buddhism that understands the world as an illusion.

Zhang Zai makes an analogy to clarify the relationship between *qi* and void¹⁴¹.

¹⁴⁰ *Taixu*, the Great Void, is basically a Daoist concept. It indicates the universe full of *qi* without limitation. It first appears in the *Zhuangzi*: “When people without such internal knowledge wait to be questioned by others in dire extremity, they show that externally they see nothing of space and time, and internally know nothing of the Grand Commencement. Therefore they cannot cross over the Kunlun, nor roam in the Grand Void.” (以無內待問窮，若是者，外不觀乎宇宙，內不知乎太初，是以不過乎崑崙，不遊乎太虛). (Trans. by Legge 1962:70).

¹⁴¹ Zhang Zai’s idea of the Great Void and its relationship with *qi* is controversial. For instance Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang (2010:46) affirm that the term *taixu* is ambiguous: “*taixu* is a specialized expression in Zhang Zai’s works. It operates in multiple ways hence its meaning has generated a complex debate in current scholarly research in China.”

As we have previously seen, contemporary scholarships on Zhang Zai’s philosophy give different interpretations on this topic. Some scholars understand *taixu* as a superior ontological status in some way different from *qi*. For instance Tu Weiming (1989:70-72) affirms: “Ch’i [Qi] the psycho-physiological stuff, is everywhere. It suffuses even the “great void” (tai-hsu) which is the source of all beings in Chang Tsai’s [Zhang Zai’s] philosophy (...) Mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, animals and human beings are all modalities of energy-matter.

For Professor Chen Lai (1991:59): “The *qi* of the Great Void aggregates and becomes *qi*, from the aggregations of *qi* we have the myriad beings. When it disperses, it becomes *qi*; from this dispersion it becomes the Great Void.” (太虛之氣聚而為氣，氣聚而為萬物；萬物散而為氣，氣散而為太虛). And Ira Kasoff (1984:37) “the Great Void (...) refers to the same intangible, above form state as the Great Harmony. But, in contrast to the term Great Harmony, which emphasizes the coexistence of the polar forces in a harmonious unity, Great Void emphasizes the invisibility of this state. Chang chose

氣之聚散於太虛，猶冰凝釋於水，知太虛即氣，則無無 (1978:8). “The aggregation and dispersion of qi from the vast emptiness, is like the freezing and melting of ice from water. Knowing that the Great Void is qi, it is realizing that there is no nothingness.”

On the first sight, Zhang Zai seems to point out that the Great Void is to qi, what water is to freezing and melting ice. Thus qi is void in the same sense that ice is basically water (taixu ji qi 太虛即¹⁴²氣) (1978:8). There is the continuity of waterness in the melting or freezing changes of ice¹⁴³; as there is the continuity of voidness in all

this term to undercut Buddhist and Taoist notions of void and non-being. Chang said the Great Void made up of ch'i [qi]. This refers to the original, undifferentiated ch'i [qi], before it has condensed to become objects.”

The Chinese scholar Yang Lihua (2008:38) interprets void as a state full of *qi* but impossible to perceive with man's ordinary senses: “What [Zhang Zai] indicates with the Great Void seems to have a similar meaning to the today understanding of empty space (...) [in saying] the Great Void has no constitution, therefore it does not have an external cause for its movement that can be experienced. In other words, the Great Void produces its movement by itself, and those motions cannot be perceived and verified. The absolute space, as understood by the classical physics, is that where motions are possible, and which cannot be in motion by itself. This kind of void is not that one inferred by ordinary people; it is not an absolute emptiness, and it is not the empty space of a big cupboard. Its space is full of a kind of subtle *qi* that cannot be directly inferred” (其中所说的太虚似乎有我们今天所说的空间的意思 (...) 太虚无体，则无以验其迁动于外也，这就是说，太虚是有其自身的迁动的，只是这一迁动无法察知验证而已。而经典物理学意义上的绝对空间，则是使运动成为可能，而自身无所谓运动的。因此，虚空并非像普通人所了解的那样，它并不是一个绝对的空间，不是一个中间一无所有的大柜子，而是在它中间充满着一种无法直接感知的极为稀薄的气.)

The Chinese philosopher Tang Junyi (1956:124) insightfully interprets Zhang Zai's void as that “property” allow things to communicate and let the process to keep eternally: “Zhang Zai was the first to point out clearly and definitely that what makes the intercourse and prehension between things possible is the intrinsic void of the ether [qi], and that it is this void nature of the ether [qi] that is the basis of the intercourse and prehension among things.”

Kim Junyeup (2008) follows the idea expressed by Tang Junyi, understanding void as the capacity for resonance of things within the process of unification (*qi*). Things can be mutually linked due to their intrinsic void. Void which is both stimulus (*gan*) and response (*ying*).

¹⁴² In Classical Chinese, the character ji 卽 is often used as a copula expressing immediacy or even mutual immediacy. As Chan Lee (2008:72) has pointed out *ji* is similar to contemporary Chinese *jiushi* 就是, just like, precisely. By using this character, one might effectively express that two things are mutually penetrating with each other.

¹⁴³ This tend toward a monistic understanding of *qi*: ice and water are different manifestation of the same substance-like water, therefore *taixu* and *qi* are the same manifestation of the same substance-like *taixu* which is synonymous of *qi*. Huang Siuchi (1971) has this interpretation.

Brook Ziporyn (2015:177) pinpoints that this analogy is the key to understand Zhang Zai's concept of harmony: “The ice cubes are water; all concrete separate finite entities are the Great Void which is qi which is the Great Harmony, i.e. the Harmony between this ice cube and (1) its dispersion into formless water and (2) every other ice cube. Even ice cube are water; even concrete things are voidness, are qi, are Harmony. Ice cubes both expresses the nature of water and, if viewed just as cube and as ice but not simultaneously as water, distorts and obstructs the expression of that nature: that nature is harmony, which is not seen if only one extreme, this particular chunk of ice, is viewed in isolation.”

changes and transformations of *qi*. But on the other hand, if we reject the idea of universal substance as *waterness* refers to, and we embrace the notion of *qi* as unity of opposites, we can understand the passage in such a way:

“Shapeless water and shaped ice are the two polarities that refers to the single process that we can call the process of water. But in the end there is no water as such, there is only either formless or formed water. But what is water in its ultimate meaning? Water is the harmonious process of changes and transformations, which is the continuity between the two polar dimensions. This continuity is nothing but the holographic center that allow the process of alternation between the two particular and opposed states¹⁴⁴.”

What about *taixu* and *qi*? *Qi*'s aggregations and dispersions are basically the Great Void, in the sense that the Great Void is the continuity that underlies *qi*'s process of aggregations and dispersions. But in the very end, what is this continuity? In other words, what is the Great Void?

Zhang Zai is saying that it is the same as *qi*, which is the paradigmatic category for polar relationships¹⁴⁵.

But in what sense are they identical?

Zhang Zai states:

氣之性本虛而神，則神與性乃氣所固有，此鬼神所以體物而不可遺也。(1978:16)

“The nature of *qi* is rooted in voidness and spirituality; thus spirit and nature are

Another interpretation is given by Kim Junyeup (2008:76) who sees formless water and formed ice, and formless *xu* and formed *qi* as transactional polarities: “It can be argued from this that the point of positing the vast emptiness (the capacity for resonance, creative indeterminacy) as *qi* and the myriad things (the patterns of nature, the actual transformation) as *qi* is to view them as transactional polarities. That is, to say that 'x is *qi* and y is *qi* is to say that 'x and y are transactional polarities continuously affecting and creatively transforming one another.' It is not to say that 'x and y are different manifestations of a singular *qi* which they both ultimately are.

¹⁴⁴ Waterness is the practical scheme one uses to create a coherence within the process of water. This interpretation is mine.

¹⁴⁵ Here my statement can be interpreted as a synthesis of Ziporyn (2015) and Kim Junyeup's (2008) position. On the one hand, I follow Kim's interpretation of *qi* as transactional polarities (there is no substance *qi*); but on the other being *qi* nothing but polar relationship is the same as harmony. Water and Ice cube are thus different polar dimensions that affect and support each other. They are both doubleness since are different, and oneness since they are part of the same process of generation.

inherent in *qi*. This is why the ghosts and spirits embody things and leave none out.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2015:179 slightly modified)

Void is the same as *qi* in the same way that yin and yang are. Zhang Zai understands void as one of *qi*'s polar dimensions. Void is part of *qi*'s nature, one of *qi*'s fundamental nature. But what kind of dimension is void? And why Zhang Zai develops this original understanding?

The main concern of Zhang Zai's theory of void is to affirm that no absolute void can subsist independently, this provides his critique against Buddhists view of void as ontological realms, and Daoists metaphysical emptiness.

Zhang Zai's critique on Daoism is based on Laozi's understanding of “creative void¹⁴⁶.”

若謂虛能生氣，則虛無窮，氣有限，體用殊絕，入老氏「有生於無」自然之論，不識所謂有無混一之常 (1978:8) “If we say that the void produces *qi*, the void will be endless, and the *qi* will have limitations. The natural/polar dimension (*ti*) and its function (*yong*) will become separated. This is because one enters into Laozi's theory of nature that asserts ‘something is born from nothingness’, and does not acknowledge that cosmologically what is said to be determinate and indeterminate is constantly mixed as one.”

In Zhang Zai's understanding, if one understands void as the principle of reality and *qi* as the product of this principle, one will lose the unique coherence of reality which is the coherence between the source, the process and the result.

Zhang Zai's critique against Buddhism is even more radical:

若謂萬象為太虛中所見之物，則物與虛不相資，形自形，性自性，形性、天人不相待而有，陷放浮屠以山河大地為見病之說 (1978:8) “If it is said that the myriad images are all things that can be seen within the Great Void, then things and emptiness will not resource one another. Shape will be shape, and nature will be nature. Thus

¹⁴⁶ This idea of a creative void is against the classical Confucian view. Roger Ames (2005:70-71) asserts: “[E]x nihilo creativity appeals to a void beyond the wholeness of experience, whereas *in situ* creativity entails the indeterminate ‘nothing (*wu*)’, the constant correlate of determinate ‘something (you)’ that together constitute the ongoing process of experience. There is no notion of ‘void’ but only a fecund receptivity in a tradition in which all beginnings are natal beginnings.”

nature and shape, heaven and humans will not exist correlatively and one will fall into the Buddhist position of viewing the mountains, rivers and the vast earth as illusions.” (Trans. by Kim 2008:46)

Zhang Zai thinks that Buddhists and Daoists see emptiness and fullness, and all polarities, as two distinct and detached realms. They fail to see the real connection among things: among visible things, among invisible things, among both states and finally among human nature and heaven nature. The problem is that they fail to see the world as it is, both Buddhists and Daoists do not grasp polarities: “Their desire is to talk directly about The Great Void, without bothering their heart-mind with day and night, yin and yang” (彼欲直語太虛，不以晝夜、陰陽累其心) (1978:65). By referring to void as the ultimate source beyond the world, they have a limited view of the world. They see the world, and thus human beings within it, as something superfluous¹⁴⁷.

Zhang Zai chooses the term void to undermine Buddhist and Daoist theories by employing their traditional concept with a completely new understanding. Saying that “the Great Void cannot be without *qi*” (太虛不能無氣) (1978:7) he means that void cannot exist as a separate entity opposed to reality. The Great Void is the fundamental part of the same natural process which is both manifest and latent and include all polarities.

知虛空即氣，則有無、隱顯、神化、性命通一無二，顧聚散、出入、形不形，能推本所從來，則深于易者也。(1978:8) “Recognizing that void is the same thing as *qi*, [it follows that] the existence and non-being, the latent and the manifest, the spiritual dimension and transformations, the natural dispositions and destiny, are not separate entities but interpenetrate within unity. There is only the process of aggregation and dispersion, exiting and entering, assuming and losing forms. By tracing the origin, the depth of the *Changes* is grasped.”

¹⁴⁷ What heterodox schools did not understand, in Zhang Zai’s opinion, is that reality is an harmonious process made by opposite forces. They view the world as one-sided: “Since void and fullness are both nature, how can nature be ‘without polarities’? For a long time, Zhuangzi, Laozi, and the Buddha support this theory [of not duality], but does it really express the true principle?” (然則有無皆性也，是豈無對？莊、老、浮屠為此說久矣，果暢真理乎？) (1978:63).

Buddhists do not understand reality since they recognize the principle outside and beyond reality; Buddhists logic is not that of relational opposites, but is based on total oppositions¹⁴⁸. On the contrary, Zhang Zai's effort is that of harmonizing differences transforming them into relational oppositions. In Zhang Zai's understanding, Buddhists approach to reality is escapist and dangerous¹⁴⁹; in contrast, man should restore the intimate link with heaven and bring harmony to the cosmos¹⁵⁰.

Zhang Zai employs void as one of *qi*'s polarities; but what is void very meaning? And why does depict *qi*'s metaphysical source?

無所不感者虛也，感即合也，鹹也。以萬物本一，故一能合異；以其能合異，故謂之感。(1978:63) “That which cannot but resonate is void. Resonance is conjunction, is [the hexagram] *xian*¹⁵¹. [Void] is the basic unity of all things, because there is oneness, unities and differences exist. [What] can have unities and differences is called resonance.”

Zhang Zai understands void as *qi*'s fundamental nature, which is the capacity of interaction and interpenetration within polarities. Void is the principle of unity of things, the principle that allows *qi*'s process of changes and transformations goes on and renew. Following this meaning, we can explain why void is *qi*'s fundamental nature, without interaction we cannot have neither polarities nor unities or *qi*.

¹⁴⁸ This Buddhist's view is somehow similar to the materialistic interpretation of reality. Ann Plamondon (1979:65) affirms: “A doctrine of materialism entails that all relationships are external. This is to say that what a thing (bit of material) is does not depend on its relationships to other things (bits of material); the relationships of a thing are not constitutive of it.”

If we understand Zhang Zai's idea of *qi* through a materialist lens, his cosmology inevitably lose its basic feature: ontological relationality.

¹⁴⁹ In Zhang Zai's view Buddhists have a negative influence on society since their primarily concern is set outside the world: “[Buddhists] hates and thus deny the world since they consider it as filthy. Therefore they escape it and ignore it.” (以世界為蔭濁，遂厭而不有，遺而弗存) (1978:65).

¹⁵⁰ At the core of the thought of Zhang Zai, and of most of Confucian philosophers, there is the conviction of a perfect consonance/relationship between Heaven and man (*tianrenheyi* 天人合一). It was thus believed that the main task of the sage was of rediscovering the conjunction between the self and the cosmos. Zhang Zai's concern is to reaffirm the reality of the world against Buddhists illusion, in order to keep the unbreakable bond between man and cosmos, and consequently, promote the very meaning of the Confucian's Way.

¹⁵¹ *Xian* 鹹 is the thirty-first hexagram of the *Book of Changes*. The *Commentary on the Decision (Tuanzhuan 《象傳》)* states: “Influence means stimulation. The weak is above, the strong below. The two *qi* stimulate and respond to each other (...) heaven and earth stimulate each other, and all things take shape and come into being.” (咸，感也。柔上而剛下，二氣感應以相與 (...) 天地感而萬物化生.) (Trans by Wilhelm and Baynes 2003:541 slightly modified).

Zhang Zai's definition of void somehow retrieves Han cosmological theory of ganying 感應, resonance, which is directly related to *qi*¹⁵². Void is *qi*'s principle that allows things to influence (gan 感), penetrate (tong 通) and respond (ying 應) to each other.

氣本之虛則湛無形，感而生則聚而有象。有象斯有對，對必反其為；有反斯有仇，仇必和而解。(1978:10) “Void is *qi* fundamental [ability] that is pure and without form. It resonates and thus generates, it aggregates and thus achieves images. Where there are images there are dualities; where there are dualities, there must be oppositions; where there are oppositions there are conflicts; conflicts must be harmonized and thus be resolved.”

¹⁵² The *ganying* theory is one of the most important and used theory within what Western sinologist calls the “correlative thinking”. The theory is based on the idea that two items can relate and interact to each other even at a great distance, by virtue of mutual sympathy. This theory was employed as the foundation of several homologies such as: human-cosmos, state-cosmos; but perhaps the most obvious application of *ganying* theory was on music. There are numerous examples in texts dating around the third century B.C. that shows how *ganying* was employed primarily to explain physical interaction between sounds and other elements; later with the introduction of the concept of *qi*, *ganying* was broadened to all interactions in both detectable and undetectable world.

The term “resonance” is the most employed translation; this is due to *ganying* recurrent application on acoustic-music field. This use of *ganying* can be found in several texts such as: the *Zhuangzi*, *Lishi Chunqiu*, the *Chuci* 《楚辭》 and the *Huainanzi*.

For example in the *Zhuangzi*: “So he tuned two *se*, placing one of them in the hall, and the other in one of the inner apartments. Striking the note Gong in the one, the same note vibrated in the other, and so it was with the note Jiao; the two instruments being tuned in the same way. But if he had differently tuned them on other strings different from the normal arrangement of the five notes, the five-and-twenty strings would all have vibrated, without any difference of their notes, the note to which he had tuned them ruling and guiding all the others.” (於是為之調瑟，廢一於堂，廢一於室，鼓宮宮動，鼓角角動，音律同矣。夫或改調一弦，於五音無當也，鼓之二十五弦皆動，未始異於聲，而音之君已。)。 (Trans by Legge 1962:99)

Very similarly in the *Chuci* “Sounds which are the same harmonize one another, so things of the same kind do the same. Birds fly together and deers call for friends. So when the note gong is played, another string gong will respond; when the note jue is plucked, another jue will resonate. The east wind comes from the tiger roaring, when the dragon raises the clouds go away. Sounds harmonize one another, so things similar in kind resonate each other.” (同音者相和兮，同類者相似。飛鳥號其群兮，鹿鳴求其友。故叩宮而宮應兮，彈角而角動。虎嘯而谷風至今，龍舉而景雲往。音聲之相和兮，言物類之相感也。)

And in the *Huainanzi*: “When a person who tunes a *se* plays the note gong, another string gong responds; when he plucks jue, another jue responds. This is the harmony of two notes that are the same.” (今失調弦者，叩宮宮應，彈角角動，此同聲相和者也) (Trans. by Major, Queen, Meyer, Roth 2010:220).

It is worth to notice how a very similar example is employed by the Western philosopher, encyclopedist and writer Denis Diderot. He states: “the sensitive vibrating string oscillates and resonates a long time after one has plucked it. It's this oscillation, third sort of inevitable resonance, that holds the present object, while our understanding is busy with the quality which is appropriate to it. But vibrating strings have yet another property-to make other strings quiver.” In Veit Erlmann (2014:9).

Since void is what makes connections among polarities, it also accounts as creative principle. Polarities interactions generate images, images are different and thus there are oppositions and conflicts. But in the end, conflicts need to be harmonized and this creates novel unities. Void, in Zhang Zai's cosmology, acquires a positive value dismissing the transcendental meaning that it had in Buddhism; void becomes the creative principle of the cosmos, which is its virtue: "In general [what is defined] the virtue of heaven is voidness, which is to respond efficaciously [to everything]" (大率天之為德，虛而善應) (1978:66)

Cosmic virtue is nothing but its inherent ability to let things interact and mutually resonate without excluding even the smallest entity within itself¹⁵³. Voidness is the principle behind these interactions. But being the reason why things change and transform, it cannot have definite and fixed shape, therefore is void. "The reality of extreme voidness is a reality that is not fixed" (至虛之實，實而不固) (1978:64).

In my opinion, what Zhang Zai had in mind here resembles the Han's theory of "resonance" that he extends to the broadest meaning. This idea of comprehensive resonance it is called by the Canadian scholar Charles LeBlanc, "total resonance" that he defines as "the persistent affinity and attraction of things that were originally one, but that became scattered when the world began. Through the True Man recreates the original unity"¹⁵⁴. Here Zhang Zai does not speak of any original unity (if we understand original as source), Zhang Zai speaks of unity in the sense of being part of the same harmonious process that creates temporal unities. Being void, and therefore not fixed, the process is able to form unities with potentially everything¹⁵⁵. *Taixu*, as the

¹⁵³ Zhang Zai affirms that the Way of heaven is the whole natural process of changes and transformations. Its nature is to support and develop everything, and thus this is its greatest virtue: "heaven's Way proceeds through the four seasons and generate the hundred things" (天道四時行，百物生) (1978:13). We will see below that heaven's virtue will be spontaneous since it does not share man's concerns.

¹⁵⁴ Charles LeBlanc (1994:67-69) compares the idea of total resonance with the one of relative resonance. He affirms that relative resonance results from the simple interaction among elements of the natural world, as the example of the strings that influence one another through their vibrating movement shows.

¹⁵⁵ We can find a good example of total resonance in several texts dated around the third century. The *Huainanzi*: "If he tunes the string eccentrically, so that it does not accord with any of the five notes and then strikes it, and all twenty-five strings respond ; this is the case of the sounds not yet having begun to differentiate but the ruler of all notes having already achieved its form. Thus one who penetrates to Supreme Harmony is as confused as [a person who] is stupefied by drink, who wanders about in a sweet daze without knowing where he has come from or where he is going. (夫有改調一弦，其於五音無所比，鼓之而二十五弦皆應，此未始異於聲，而音之君已形也。故通於太和

Great Void, is the full possibility to create infinite novel unities. In this sense *taixu* is the dimension of the not yet manifested, different from the realm of forms that is limited. Besides voidness, above we have seen that Zhang Zai defines the nature of *qi* rooted to another aspect: shen 神.

2.6 The spiritual dimension

The concept of *shen* has a wide range of meanings in Chinese history. It can be translated as spirit or spiritual, as it was understood by Confucius, and extend this meaning to what cannot be experienced by human perception¹⁵⁶. Besides, the word *shen* was also largely employed in the *Great Commentary (Xici)* of the *Book of Changes* with the meaning of what is inscrutable and unfathomable (bu ce 不測)¹⁵⁷. The text states: “Being unfathomable with yin and yang is what is meant by the spirit”. (陰陽不測謂之神)(*Xici*)

者，昏若純醉而甘臥以遊其中，而不知其所由至也) (trans. by Major, Queen, Meyer, Roth 2010:220). It is worth noting that basically the same examples are quoted in the *Zhuangzi* and in the *Lishi Chunqiu*.

A string which is not yet limited or defined by any tune, can potentially resonate to all twenty-five strings of the musical instrument. This is the unity between and within all sounds. In LeBlanc's (1994:57) interpretation, untuned is equivalent to silence, the oneness behind all sounds: “Silence does not belong to any category of sound: it can therefore evoke all sounds and all musical notes.”

This interpretation seemed to be satisfactory if we think on the examples showed in Daoist texts such as *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi*. In *Laozi* 41: “utmost sound is the soundless sound” (daxi xisheng 大音希聲). Wang Bi interprets the soundless sound as the supreme oneness that link every sound: “When one listens but does not hear the sound, this is called *xi*, which refers to a sound that cannot be heard. From sound comes distinctive notes. The notes are either the *gong* note or *shang* note. A distinctive note cannot represent all notes. Therefore, an audible sound is not the supreme sound” (聽之不聞名曰希，不可得聞之音也。有聲則有分，有分則不宮而商矣，分則不能統眾，故有聲者非大音也). In Ming (2005:50).

¹⁵⁶ The most common translation of *shen* is spirit. Spirit certainly grasp some aspects of the broad semantic of *shen* (especially when is paired with *gui* 鬼, ghost), but do not totally grasp its full significance in Zhang Zai's philosophical system. Stephane Feuillas (2007:127) chooses to translate *shen* into “âme” making a comparison with Giordano Bruno's *anima mundi*. But as he is also noted, the term have a vast range of meanings in Zhang Zai's system: “Zhang Zai, le même mot (*shen*), «âme», est employé différemment selon qu'il est couplé avec le changement (*hua*), l'énergie (*qi*), le sage (*shengren*) ou les revenants (*gui*), sans que la réalité désignée ne varie.”

Kim Junyuep (2008) translates it as “creative indeterminacy” since *shen* is that which is indeterminate (bu ce 不測), it is without fixed directionality (*wufang* 無方) and no fixed body (*wuti* 無體).

Kasoff (1984:60-61) recognizes two different meanings of *shen*: “When Chang paired the words *shen*, and *gui*, he glossed *shen*, the expanding, yang aspect of Ch'i. When he used the term alone, however, it had a different meaning. Zhang Zai derived his use of the term *shen* ... from the book of changes' description of this concept. *Shen* is unfathomable ... *shen* is used to describe the inscrutable, they are the principles governing the processes of production and transformation.”

Sandor Szabo (2003:263) shows that the word in the Warring State period pinpoints to entities which could not be perceived by human beings.

¹⁵⁷ Robin Wang (2012:72) calls it “what our measurements cannot quite reach.”

Zhang Zai's usage of this term is double. First he understands *shen* coherently with the *Great Commentary*: "That which flows along with heaven and earth and it is unfathomable of yinyang is called the spiritual dimension." (天地同流、陰陽不測之謂神) (1978:27) *Shen* is what we cannot grasp about yinyang's interaction and generation: "Because it is unifying, it is *shen*, because polarities are simultaneously present in it, it is unpredictable¹⁵⁸." (一故神，兩在故不測) (1978:10)

Zhang Zai understands the spiritual dimension in term of yinyang's interaction, therefore similarly to the idea of void:

太虛為清，清則無礙，無礙故神 (1978:9) "The Great Void is pure; being pure, it does not have any obstructions. Because it is without obstruction, it is *shen*."

Since the Great Void describes the state of full possibility, the result of yinyang interaction cannot be but unfathomable, *shen*. Both terms thus explain polar interaction. Zhang Zai employs void to emphasize *qi*'s capacity for total resonance which have no limitation. And with *shen* he wants to emphasize that this principle is not graspable¹⁵⁹. But in the end, both terms seem to outline the same *qi*'s inherent ability. "The spiritual dimension describes the marvelous response within the Great Void." (神者，太虛妙應之目) (1978:9).

Second, Zhang Zai depicts *shen* as one of *qi*'s polarities coupling it with the term *gui* 鬼, usually translated into ghosts: "Ghosts and spirits are the natural capacities of the two *qi*" (鬼神者，二氣之良能也) (1978:16); "The very meaning of ghosts and spirits are what comes and goes, what expands and pull back." (鬼神，往來、屈伸之義) (1978:16)

This second usage of *shen* as polar dimension, even if limited, enable us to understand the relationship between the spiritual dimension and *qi*: *shen* represents the natural polar

¹⁵⁸ Zhang Zai often describes the spiritual dimension as the unifying principle: "That which is fusing into unity and thus is indeterminate is the spiritual dimension" (合一不測為神) (1978:16). "Motion and stillness are united and preserved in the spiritual dimension" (動靜合一存乎神) (1978:20).

¹⁵⁹ We will see later that *shen* is what cannot be grasped by knowledge, but it is the natural ability that need to be preserved: Preserving *shen* one can marvelously resonate with things (存神然後妙應物之感) (1978:18).

ability of *qi* that penetrates and connects all entities in the world. “The spiritual dimension is subtle but is able to fill all interstices.” (神之充塞無間也)(1978:16)

Being the principle behind entities relationship, *shen* is also defined the virtue of heaven: “The spiritual dimension in the virtue of heaven; transformations are the way of heaven” (神，天德，化，天道)(1978:15)

In sum, Zhang Zai’s definition of *shen* is intrinsically related to the idea of void. Both concepts describe *qi*’s polar capacity of resonance that allows connections between opposites forces. Connections that result in further generations. In this sense Zhang Zai understands them in term of virtue¹⁶⁰.

2.7 Chapter Conclusions

I have tried to outline Zhang Zai’s basic cosmology in order to see if his system can be framed on the concept of harmony and harmonization as ultimate paradigmatic category. We have seen that Zhang Zai tends to see reality in term of on-going process of polarities interactions and interpenetrations. Zhang Zai outlines this view employing different concepts. The first concept he introduces in the *Zhengmeng* is the Great Harmony. Even if we are not sure that Zhang Zai would have agreed with Su Bing’s organization of the *Zhengmeng*, the choice of setting the Great Harmony’s chapter and concept at the opening of his most important text, is a good clue about the centrality of this term in his system. I have claimed that the term Great Harmony opens the *Zhengmeng* since it synthesizes Zhang Zai’s entire system of thought.

Despite its centrality, we have also seen that Zhang Zai employs this term just a few times in the *Zhengmeng* preferring other concepts to express the structure of harmony. In particular, the most comprehensive concept that Zhang Zai uses to depict the structure of harmony is *qi*. Zhang Zai understands *qi* in term of relationship between opposite forces that embraces all we can perceive about the world, and also what cannot be perceived. The paradigm of *qi* accounts for the world of shapes and the world of not yet shaped, the dimension of fullness and emptiness.

¹⁶⁰ As I will show in ch. 4, the virtue of the cosmos is that of generates and sustains the process of changes and transformations.

Recalling the above showed five characteristic of harmony, we can see that *qi* completely adhere with them:

First. *Qi* does not seem to express a substance, but primarily expresses a relationship between polarities. Zhang Zai understands *qi* as “the process of unification constituted by the two polarities interaction.” (*yiwu liangti*)

Second. This unity is not static and unchangeable, but it is better expressed through changes and transformations, and thus polarities alternation.

Third. Due to its nature that forms limitless (*xu*) and unfathomable (*shen*) unities, *qi* is fundamentally creative.

Fourth. Since *qi* includes each level of reality (which is made by opposite forces) such as the manifest world and the latent world, the graspable and the no-graspable and so on, *qi* is Zhang Zai’s most comprehensive concept.

Understanding *qi* within the paradigm of harmony, help us to overcome the previous understanding of Zhang Zai’s philosophy as *qi*’s substance monism. I do not see in Zhang Zai’s system any ultimate substance beyond reality, everything lies under the process of harmonization which includes both the perceiving world and its opposite.

Qi, as the paradigm of the cosmos, does not just account for the process of changes and transformations, but it also includes the realm of principles (the reason why the process goes on forever). Zhang Zai explains that the reason behind the process of changes and transformations is the intrinsic capacity of interconnection and generation of the opposite forces. Zhang Zai employs the term Great Void to express this capacity. We have seen that the relationship between *qi* and the Great Void is controversial since on the one hand, Great Void is identical or even metaphysically prior to *qi*; on the other, it is a polar dimension of the same *qi*. We have tried to solve this problem through the logic of harmony and harmonization. If we understand *qi* in term of polar relationship, *taixu* can be both *qi*’s fundamental nature and *qi*’s polar dimension. It is the fundamental nature since it represents the principle by which opposite forces can relate and thus generates unity, therefore it is the reason why the process of changes and transformations, in other words *qi*, exist. But in the very end *taixu* is still a property of the polar process and cannot be thought as the ultimate principle beyond that.

Besides the Great Void, Zhang Zai employs the term spiritual dimension, on the one hand to emphasize the identity between polarities and this creative principle; and on the other, to outline the unpredictability of polar interaction.

Finally, Zhang Zai's choice to select a specific vocabulary needs to be contextualized with *Zhengmeng* principal goal, and thus his philosophical purpose. We cannot forget that *Zhengmeng*'s purpose is to primarily undermine heterodox school and corrupted Confucians that tend to see the world as filthy and as an illusion. Zhang Zai's metaphysics originally gives to well-known and extensively employed concept, such as *qi* and void, a new and broader understanding. To see *qi* and thus the world as a process of harmonization is to extend reality to the utmost. Reality is not only what we can perceive, this is just one side of the coin, reality is also unperceivable and limitless (void), only in this way we can see reality in its broader sense.

Below in the next chapter, our attention will be focused on Zhang Zai's theory of human nature. We will see how Zhang Zai's understanding of human nature totally ground on his metaphysics, and thus directly relates to *qi* and harmony. Zhang Zai understands human nature in term of process of harmonization in the sense that human beings are able to embrace reality as a whole. This understanding will be crucial for the development of his moral theory.

3. ZHANG ZAI'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on Zhang Zai's original theory of human nature. This theory is central in this investigation since it forms the bridge that connect Zhang Zai's cosmology and metaphysics with ethical and epistemological thought. We will see that Zhang Zai's idea of human nature is totally grounded in his cosmological system, hence in the paradigm of harmony. And this understanding is totally coherent with Zhang Zai's critique toward Buddhism and Daoism, and toward the indolent attitude of average people. Finally, human nature in term of harmony constitutes the foundation for a solid ethical theory based on proper relationship and harmonization.

As we have seen before, Zhang Zai's concept of harmony is based on the original understanding of *qi* conceived through the paradigm of unity of opposites; here this theory will be applied on human nature in the sense that human beings, likewise other cosmological entities, are made of *qi* and thus polarities interaction. Human nature includes both of *qi* polar dimensions such as: shape with its physical tendencies, and void with its capacity of connection (resonance) and creativity. To be human is to fully develop both dimensions and let them mutually communicate. In this sense, Zhang Zai understands human nature in term of the process of harmony and harmonization, in other words, the Way of heaven. Heaven and human are part of the same process that includes everything without leaving a single entity out. As it is heaven, human nature expresses harmony since possesses the capacity of integrating differences and oppositions into the same system. This will be Zhang Zai's ground for the development of his ethical and epistemological thought¹⁶¹.

3.2 Previous understanding of Zhang Zai's theory of human nature

The majority of scholarships that focus on Zhang Zai's theory of human nature tend toward a dualistic interpretation. Human beings possess two natures: the universal

¹⁶¹ See ch 4 and 5 of this investigation.

nature inherit from heaven “the heaven nature” (tianxing 天性), and the individual physical nature “the nature of the quality of *qi*” (qizhizhixing 氣質之性)¹⁶². The relationship among these two natures is apparently conflictual: while the first nature is everlasting and pure goodness; the second is temporary and it is the source of evil. The first moves toward empathy and integration, while the second toward egoism and evilness. The effort of the moral person will thus be to overcome the second nature and develop the first.

Generally speaking, Zhang Zai’s theory of human nature has been considered an important and influent theory within the lixue 理學 tradition. The key and original part of this theory is the idea of the “nature of the quality of *qi*”. The great Song philosopher Zhu Xi recognizes it as the turning point on the theory of human nature:

此起於張程。某以為極有功於聖門，有補於後學，讀之使人深有感於張程，前此未曾有人說到此。(Zhuzi yulei) “The doctrine of physical nature originated with Chang and Ch'eng (Ch'eng I). It made a tremendous contribution to the Confucian School and is a great help to us students. None before them had enunciated such a doctrine. Hence with the establishment of the doctrine of Chang and Ch'eng, the theories [of human nature] of all previous philosophers collapse.” (Trans. by Chan 1963:511)

But despite of the great influence of this doctrine, Zhang Zai directly speaks of the “nature of the quality of *qi*” only ones in the *Zhengmeng*. In the sixth chapter he states:

形而後有氣質之性，善反之則天地之性存。焉故氣質之性，君子有弗性者焉。(1978:23) “With the existence of physical form, there exists physical nature. If one skillfully returns to the original nature endowed by Heaven and Earth, then it will be preserved. Therefore in physical nature there is that which the superior man denies to be his original nature.” (Ibidem)

¹⁶² Angus Graham affirms that both the term and the concept of the “nature of the quality of *qi*” originated with Zhang Zai. See Graham p.49. But how the Chinese scholar Hou Wailu 侯外廬 has clearly showed, the term might have been first coined by the Daoist alchemist master Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987 - 1082).

Here I have employed Chan Wingsit's translation that clearly shows a dichotomous approach: the original nature against the one embodied in physical forms. The first nature is somehow related to goodness and it must be preserved (to become a moral person); the second needs to be discarded if one wants to find his/her true nature. This kind of (or similar) reading is broadly accepted by the majority of scholarships on Zhang Zai. To quote some examples, Huang Siuchi (1971:151) emphasizes this dualism between the original good nature and the temporary evil one as such:

“The two kinds of nature¹⁶³ of man are the heavenly nature, which is the ch'i in its original state of dispersion and which is said to be originally good, and the physical nature, which is the ch'i in its state of condensation and which is regarded as the metaphysical source of evil¹⁶⁴.”

Ira Kasoff (1984:73-77) defines the heaven nature as the substance, the essential property which a thing “is never without”, it is unaffected by actions of the thing or person, and exists before and after the existence of individual things. While the second nature is what accounts for individuality in the world, this nature consists of the needs and desires of physical nature, and it is the source of evil in the world. Unlike the first, this nature is temporary: “it comes into existence only with the appearance of each

¹⁶³ Huang Siuchi (1971:147) indicates three possible sources might have influenced Zhang Zai dualistic concept of nature: Mencius, Dong Zhongshu and Buddhism. In Huang's understanding, Mencius regards *qi* in term of feelings or passions (similar to the physical nature), and this is inferior to the concept of heart-mind which is originally good. Dong Zhongshu considers nature and feelings as oppositional terms. And Buddhist's *Lankāvatārasūtra* speaks about two different nature: the nature of Harmonious Union (hehe 和合) and the nature of Original Condition (benran 本然).

Differently, Hou Wailu, Qiu Hansheng and Zhang Qizhi (2005:112) have noticed that Zhang Zai's dual concept of nature might have been influenced by one of the master of the southern lineage of Daoist alchemist school: Zhang Boduan. Zhang Boduan's idea of human nature seems to be very similar to the Zhang Zai's one. Moreover, the before showed Zhang Zai's passage on *qi*'s nature totally resembles the one depicted by Zhang Boduan as we can clearly see. Zhang Boduan wrote: “With the existence of physical form, there exists physical nature. If one skillfully returns to the origin, the heaven and earth's nature will be preserved.” (形而後有氣質之性,善反之,則天地之性存焉).

¹⁶⁴ But how Huang (1971:151) himself has pointed out, this interpretation implies a contradiction: “if the ch'i permeates everything, including man, and man is born with the ch'i, which in physical form is the source of evil, how can this be consistent with the assertion that the original nature of man is good?”. Huang tries to solve the problem with two possible solutions. The first implies that evil is something human receives from heaven's decree or destiny (ming 命): “is entirely beyond human power, and that limitation of human power is not to be conceived as something bad in and by itself”. The second implies morality: “man is endowed with virtuous qualities, but is also born with the ch'i which, though amoral, is potentially good or bad...thus evil doings, according to Chang, are entirely man's own voluntary choices from his ignorance and/or his self-centered and undisciplined desires during the process of his intercourse with other men and corporeal things.”

I will explain Zhang Zai's moral-metaphysics in the next chapter.

individual” and thus can be changed by man’s effort. The conflict between the two lies in the tendency of the secondary nature to obstruct the first, and thus the effort of man will be to overcome the physical nature¹⁶⁵.

Kasoff (1984:169 n. 27) further explains that this kind of distinction completely fits with Cheng-Zhu (*lixue*) tradition which is based on the dichotomy between the concept of *li* and *qi*. Kasoff affirms that Cheng-Zhu school “equated heaven-nature with above-form *li*, and physical nature with below-form *ch’i*.”

This kind of understanding surely fit with Cheng brothers dual theory of human nature. Human beings possess two natures, the first is the nature of principle which is good, and the second is the individual nature of *qi* which can tend to evil¹⁶⁶. But here the main problem is that of framing a philosophical system within a specific tradition, the Cheng-Zhu school, that had the tendency to synthesize the thought of different thinkers¹⁶⁷. The question is: can we read Zhang Zai’s philosophy exclusively through the lens of Cheng-Zhu school?

Kim Jungyuep (2008) has answered to this question negatively because the *lixue* 理学 tradition (Cheng-Zhu school) is grounded to the interpretation of the concept of *li* which

¹⁶⁵ Other examples that goes along a dualistic interpretation of Zhang Zai’s human nature are that of Chow Kaiwing (1993:205). He defines the relationship between the two natures as a “partial rupture between humanity and cosmos.”

The Chinese scholar, Xiang Shiling (2008:512) explains them as a partial-whole relationship. The heaven nature represents the “pure and quite nature”, while the “physical nature” represents the human physical demand. “Zhang Zai advocates to ‘be good at returning’ in order to move toward the whole pure and quiet ‘nature of heaven-and-earth.” Thus “Transforming the physical nature can be expressed as the process of restoring the part to the whole.” Human being have to “return to the original” which means that “this is not only a change of quality from the physical nature to the nature of heaven-and-earth, but also the growth and decline of the quantity between the physical nature and the nature of heaven-and-earth.” It is quite interesting to note how Kasoff and Xiang give different interpretations on what is the direction of nature fulfillment. Kasoff (1984) indicates a growing approach of refinement following more directly the traditional Confucian view. On the contrary, Xiang prefers a reversal process of “returning to the original” preferring to emphasizes Daoist and Buddhist influence on Zhang Zai’s thought. We will see that within the logic of the harmonization process both tendency are necessary. There is no conflictual position between the two, their relationship is inclusive and bilateral.

¹⁶⁶ Cheng Yi affirms: “Nature comes from heaven, whereas capacity comes from material force. When material force is clear, capacity is clear. When material force is turbid, capacity is turbid...capacity may be good or evil, but the nature is always good.” (性出於天，才出於氣，氣清則才清，氣濁則才濁...才則有善與不善，性則無不善). And moreover: “the nature is the same as principle. This is what we call rational nature. Traced to their source, none of the principles in the world is not good.” (性即理也，所謂理，性是也。天下之理，原其所自，未有不善). *Ercheng yishu* 《二程遺書》. (Trans. by Chan 1963:569).

¹⁶⁷ The most important example is the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi who synthesized the most important ideas of the previous Northern Song Masters creating a novel original system.

is almost totally absent in Zhang Zai's system¹⁶⁸. We have seen that Zhang Zai's philosophy is based primarily on *qi*, and thus we can read his system through this concept. Since no real and absolute dichotomy is present in Zhang Zai's cosmology, the best way to read his theory of human nature is through the very concept of *qi*.

For instance, the late Ming philosopher Wang Fuzhi fiercely criticizes Cheng Yi and Zhuxi's "old theory" that considered the physical nature as opposed to the "true (heavenly) nature". Wang Fuzhi reads Zhang Zai's theory of human nature as an "apparent duality" not a real one. In his view, Zhang speaks about two aspects of the same thing:

所謂「氣質之性」者，猶言氣質中之性也。質是人之形質，範圍著者生理在內；形質之內，則氣充之。而盈天地間，人身以內人身以外，無非氣者，故亦無非理者 (*Chuanshan quanshu* 《船山全書》) "When one speaks of the nature of the quality of *qi*, this is like saying that the nature lies within the quality of *qi*. This quality is man's form, within the confines of which the principles of life are manifest. Since they (the principles of life) lie within this quality the *qi* permeates them, and what fills the universe both inside and outside the human body is nothing but *qi*, so too it is nothing but principle." (Trans. by McMorran 1975:443)

In modern times, the Chinese philosopher Tang Junyi (1956:131-132) follows in a way Wang Fuzhi's insight overcoming the dichotomous view of human nature. He defines Zhang's theory an apparent dualism. In Tang's view Zhang Zai's theory of human nature is not dualistic since the two nature are not in opposition:

"In speaking of the nature of the universe and the nature of the ether-matter, Chang Tsai does not place the two natures in opposition to each other on the same level of

¹⁶⁸ See previous chapter. There are several scholars that follow this understanding. For instance Mou Zongsan's (2000) reading of Zhang Zai is totally framed on the clear division between the nature of principle and the nature of *qi*. As Kasoff (1984:169 n. 36) has pointed out this is because "Mou takes the same position that Ch'eng Yi did, that *qi* can only be below form. Mou argues that Chang kept the above-form and the below-form realms distinct."

Even if Kasoff position differs to the Mou's one by trying to mild the conflict between the two distinct natures referring to the single *qi*, she does not clarify the relationship between the two and thus the natures still abide in conflictual position. If we frame the two nature's concept within the harmony model, conflictuality becomes functional to the system. Conflict will be transformed into opposites and polarities that will produce novel unities.

existence. Fundamentally, the nature of man is just the nature of the universe. And this nature is in direct communication with the ether or the Way of the universe. The nature of the ether-matter is generated when the nature of the universe is concealed by ether-matter, and is therefore the nature that appears after the ether of the universe has by condensation become the material body of man.”

Tang (Ibid:133) is saying that the two natures are not in opposition since from the standpoint of the cosmos (or Great Harmony) “man has no such a thing as a nature of the so-called ether-matter”. The ether-matter nature (the nature of the quality of *qi*) is a “secondary nature” that cannot be part of the first objective nature. Therefore “From the standpoint of the beginning, man has only the nature of the universe; and from the standpoint of the end man has come to have the nature of the ether-matter.” (Ibidem)

The opposition by the two natures, in Tang’s word are just temporary since the ether-matter cannot but dissolve into the original Great Void. Therefore we cannot speak of absolute opposition between the two natures.

Even if Tang is right in getting rid of the conflict within the two natures, this interpretation does not adhere with Zhang Zai’s cosmology and metaphysics. By positing the two natures on different level of existence, Tang seems to recognize a transcendent source. Great Harmony here is seen as the transcendent source of human nature which is beyond the world of changes and transformations. We will see that this understanding does not cohere with Zhang Zai’s critique on Buddhism and do not follow the logic of harmony¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁹ However Tang’s interpretation of Zhang Zai is insightful. He recognizes the crucial role of harmony. He states: “Contrasting the dual in revealing the One’ defines the unique style of Zhang Zai’s writing.” This being so, he warns us that “in expounding Zhang Zai’s thought, if one biases toward either One or the dual, or loses the balance between the One and the dual, then one would miss the point of his doctrine of the proper Way (*Dao*), and hence fail to grasp his conception of harmony.” (see ch. 2 n. 21).

But on the other hand, he seems to posit the source (or can be called the pivot) for harmonization somewhere in the transcendental world. For instance, in trying to solve the ontological problem of evil in Zhang Zai’s system, he makes a parallel with Christianity. Briefly speaking, Tang (1956:133) explains that Zhang Zai’s view of evil is similar to Christianity: “God is the creator of man, and yet the sin of man cannot be attributed to God himself or God’s creation, for the evil of man can be regarded only as a part of man. This is exactly Chang’s view. As for the reason why for the evil, caused by the nature of the ether-matter in man, cannot be attributed to heaven, this because it is simply impossible for evil to exist from the stand point of Heaven.”

In displaying is way of reasoning and parallelism between heaven and Christian God, Tang shows that his idea of harmony does not follow continuity as necessary principle. On the contrary there is an

Here I will try to follow Wang Fuzhi interpretation of *Zhengmeng* by affirming that Zhang Zai's human nature is totally based on his metaphysics. In other words, Zhang Zai's concept of human nature adheres completely with his idea of *qi* as depicted in the previous chapter¹⁷⁰. If we understand *qi* in term of unity of opposites, we can thus understand the logic behind Zhang Zai's human nature. Human nature is nothing but the interrelation and interpenetration (or the unity forming) between opposite forces, human nature is what synthesizes the realm of principles and the realm of forms, the realm of potentialities and that of actualities.

The Chinese philosopher Qian Mu (2000:42) has a similar understanding of Confucian idea of human nature. He outlines human nature as the constant reference (center) that synthesizes all oppositions. In the above already quoted analogy of pendulum, he said that:

儒家则要在此不息不已无终无始的一动中指出其循环往复之定性的中来，说此中始是性。宋明儒喜欢说未发之中，说知止，说静，说主宰，说恒，都为此。宋儒又说性即理。“Confucians want to point out a fixed center in this infinite cyclical back and forth, and they call this center human nature, This is also what the Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties liked to call this center as ‘the Center which has not yet become manifest’ ‘knowing the resting place’, ‘stillness’, ‘the master’, ‘the constant’. The Song Neo-Confucians said that this human nature is precisely *li*¹⁷¹.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:72)

ontological difference (break) between heaven and man, and thus harmonization can be only ideally realized.

¹⁷⁰ Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang (2010:51) recognize the close connection between nature and *qi* in Zhang Zai's theory of human nature: “Zhang Zai advanced the pre-Qin debate on the goodness or badness of human nature by linking *xing* (human nature) with the notion of *qi*. It relocates the common dichotomy of good and bad (shan e 善惡) in pre-Qin thought to the metaphysical level of *xing* 性 versus *qizhi* 氣質 (nature and *qi*).”

But their interpretation is still grounded on essential dichotomy between human physically inborn condition (which ought to be modified) and human potential fulfillment (heavenly nature). He continues: “‘Heavenly nature is present in human beings just like the nature of water exists in ice. Although water and ice differ, they are one thing. It is like light; because its level is strong or weak, bright or dim, the light functions differently’. This highlights an important division. On the one hand, human beings are endowed with heavenly nature, a good and universal property; on the other hand, human beings are so diverse, just like light, some are strong and bright, and others are weak and dim. The reason for this divergence is the psycho-physical nature. (*qizhi zhixing* 氣質之性)” (Ibid:50).

¹⁷¹ In Zhang Zai's philosophy human nature is equalized to *qi*, and thus both terms can be understood as the center of the pendulum, in other words, what allow the proceeding of the harmonizing process.

In his latest essay, the American scholar Brook Ziporyn (2015) understands Zhang Zai's concept of nature following the logic of harmony. He claims that the dichotomy between heaven nature and psycho-physical nature (the nature of the quality of *qi*) follows Zhang Zai's harmonic monism. Zhang Zai does not speak of two natures but "one Nature in two different forms":

"The *qi*-constitution Nature and the Heaven-and-Earth Nature are not two natures, I will contend; they are the one Nature in two different forms, as it appears in already condensed forms or in the dispersed material force of the void, and in either case this Nature will have the same character, i.e. it will be the unification of opposed polarities. Zhang's habit of speaking of the Nature in these two forms in fact follows precisely from this conception of the character of the Nature itself...Zhang speaks of the Nature in general as something that is necessarily two and not two, an inclusive unification of polar opposites¹⁷²." (Ziporyn 2015:183)

Here Ziporyn's interpretation is similar to Wang Fuzhi's understanding tending toward a monistic interpretation. But while Wang Fuzhi understands Zhang Zai's monism as *qi* monism, Ziporyn recognizes harmony as Zhang Zai's ultimate category. As we have seen before, my position is that of equalizing the two concepts: *qi* is (refers to) harmony, because it is not a substance per se, but it expresses a relationship; harmony is (refers to) *qi* since it expresses *qi*'s process of changes and transformations. In the same fashion we can understand human nature: human nature is neither conceived within a dualistic interpretation (two distinct natures), nor as a single essence (given inborn state) with two aspects; human nature is conceived as a process of relationship between opposite forces, and this process is dynamic, creative and comprehensive¹⁷³.

¹⁷² Ziporyn (2015:184) understands Zhang Zai's concept of nature as monistic. Since *qi* is the only entity in the universe, Nature cannot be but the nature of *qi*. He states: "There is only one Nature: the Nature of material force, which is characterized by the polarity of yin and yang...This Nature remain the same whether in the dispersed formless material force, or in the coagulated material force of distinct individual beings; in fact, the meaning of Nature is precisely that which never changes, and is the same in all different conditions."

¹⁷³ Several contemporary scholars tend to overcome the Western traditional understanding of human nature that tend toward essentialism, preferring to follow Chinese tendency to see the world as an ongoing process. Angus Graham (1991:288-289) was one of the first trying to undermine the essentialist understanding of Nature and understands it "in terms of spontaneous development in a certain direction...*xing* will be the spontaneous process with a direction continually modified by the effects on it of deliberate action.

Ames (2008:50) follows Graham insights that human nature cannot be reduced to what is innate or a priori. He tries to overcome the essentialist approach, by emphasizing what human does and makes,

Moreover, Zhang Zai understands human nature in such a fashion primarily because this theory supports his critique against heterodox schools and forms the ground for his moral theory.

Below I will first analyze Zhang Zai's critique on heterodox schools concept of human nature.

3.3 What is not the “true nature”

The first question we need to answer, talking about Zhang Zai's theory of human nature, is why Zhang Zai needs to develop a specific theory of human nature that goes a step forward to the previous Confucian theories. As we have seen before, Zhang Zai's first aim is to undermine unorthodox schools. His idea is that Buddhists and Daoists *in primis*, and even some scholars within Confucian orthodoxy, are responsible for the corruption and decay of Song society and the loss of Confucian's unique Way. The ignorance of these lie in the fallacious view of reality. Both heterodoxies¹⁷⁴ and average people (shiren 世人) fail to see the harmonic structure of the world. The firsts by recognizing the metaphysical principle beyond “this world”; and the seconds relying exclusively on what they can see and hear. The result is that they all recognize just a small part of the cosmos being thus unable of making the most of the world. Hence, despite the differences in their theories, in the end, they make the same mistake.

Zhang Zai states:

彼語寂滅者往而不反，徇生執有者物而不化，二者雖有間矣，以言乎失道則均焉。(1978:7) “The people who talk about extinction proceed without coming back; those who totally rely on life and on what they perceive, become like things and cannot transform. Despite their differences, they are the same since they both have lost the Way.”

Zhang Zai basis his critique on two important points: we can call the first metaphysical critique; and the second epistemological critique. The first is that unorthodox teachings

rather than what a person is: “Confucian person is understood fundamentally as a process – person is what we do with our relations rather than what we are. It is in this sense that I want to suggest the Confucian person is conceived of a human becoming rather than a human being”.

¹⁷⁴ Despite the great difference between Buddhist and Daoist metaphysic, here Zhang Zai is claiming that their view of reality is not so different.

do not recognize the continuity between the metaphysical and the physical world. “They proceed without coming back (to this world)”. Without recognizing the metaphysical continuity, they fail to see the relationship between opposites, thus polarities. The second is about the indolent attitude of people that stop their process of learning on what they see and touch. They totally rely on the manifest world without recognizing the principle beyond it. “The sickness of these people is that they focus their heart-mind just on their senses, they do not strive to make the most of their heart-mind” (人病其以耳目見聞累其心而不務盡其心) (1978:25). The result is that they both (unorthodox and indolent) are one-sided: they fail to see the process of harmonization since the firsts rely just on what is beyond, the seconds on what is fully in here. They both evaluate just one opposite without seeing the other.

We first try to analyze the critique against Buddhists and Daoists. We have seen in the previous chapter that Zhang Zai’s critique was based on a different understanding of emptiness; now we can analyze how this is applied on the theory of human nature.

Zhang Zai claims that Buddhists and Daoists do not recognize any continuity in the world, they see the realm of principle (emptiness) and the natural world as totally detached. They recognize just a limited part of the world:

若謂虛能生氣，則虛無窮，氣有限，體用殊絕，入老氏「有生於無」自然之論，不識所謂有無混一之常。若謂萬象為太虛中所見之物，則物與虛不相資，形自形，性自性，形性、天人不相待而有，陷放浮屠以山河大地為見病之說 (1978:8) “If we say that the void produces *qi*, the void will be endless, and the *qi* will have limitations. The substance (*ti*) and its function (*yong*) will become separated. This is because one enters into Laozi’s theory of nature that states: ‘something is born from nothingness’, and does not acknowledge that cosmologically what is said to be determinate and indeterminate is constantly mixed as one. If it is said that the myriad images are all things that can be seen within the Great Void, then things and emptiness will not resource one another. Shape will be shape, and nature will be nature. Thus nature and shape, heaven and humans will not exist correlatively and one will fall into the Buddhist position of viewing the mountains, rivers and the vast earth as illusions.”

Zhang Zai thinks that Buddhists and Daoists see emptiness and fullness, and all polarities, as two distinct realms. They fail to see the real connection among things: among visible things, among invisible things, among both states and finally among human nature and heaven nature. The problem is that they fail to see the world as it is, both Buddhists and Daoists do not grasp polarities: “Their desire is to talk directly about the Great Void, without bothering their heart-mind with day and night, yin and yang” (彼欲直語太虛，不以晝夜、陰陽累其心)(1978:65). By referring to Void as an ultimate reality beyond the world, they have a limited view of the world. They see the world, and thus human being within it, as something superfluous.

以人生為妄見，可謂知人乎？天人一物，輒生取捨，可謂知天乎？...其語到實際，則以人生為幻妄，以有為為疣贅，以世界為蔭濁，遂厭而不有，遺而弗存 (1978:65) “Seeing human life as illusion, can be called realize man? Heaven and man are one thing. Hold to one side and abandon the other, can this be called realize heaven?... The way his theory ends in reality is through positing human life as an illusion and active participation as excrescence. They hates and thus deny the world since they consider it as filthy. Therefore they escape it and ignore it.”

Buddhists do not grasp the unity between heaven and man (and between principle and its function), and thus they are inclined to raise one and discard the other¹⁷⁵. On the one hand, they can recognize void as an important principle of the process, but on the other, they fail to see its connection with the world.

¹⁷⁵ Zhang Zai sees the fallacy of Buddhists understanding of reality comparing it to the limited view of the summer insect: “Buddhists do not recognize the heavenly mandate, thus the dharma of the heart-mind makes and destroys the world. They think that minute produces the greater, and the branch produces the roots. Since they cannot pursue [the Heavenly mandate], they call [it] illusion. This is the same thing as the summer insect not knowing the ice. Since it does not know it, it thinks that does not exist.” (釋氏不知天命而以心法起滅天地，以小緣大，以末緣本，其不能窮而謂之幻妄，真所謂疑冰者，與夏蟲疑冰，以其不識) (1978:26).

Buddhists confuse what is the branch (the function) of reality, considering it as the root. Doing this they forget to grasp the very root of reality: which is the harmonic process of changes and transformations.

Here Zhang Zai refers to *Zhuangzi* well-known allegory: “An insect of the summer cannot be talked with about ice - it knows nothing beyond its own season” (夏蟲不可以語於冰者篤於時也). (Trans. by Legge 1962:375).

懵者略知體虛空為性，不知本天道為用，反以人見之小因緣天地。(1978:8) “The ignorant (Buddhists) roughly realize that void is what form human nature, but they do not understand that its function is based on cosmic changes and transformations. Instead they make what human senses perceived as the real cause of heaven and earth.”

Zhang Zai is claiming that Buddhists (and even Daoists) grasp the fundamental part of human nature: the natural dimension of void. But they are not able to fully understand the function of the void.

釋氏妄意天性而不知範圍天用，反以六根之微因緣天地。明不能盡，則誣天地日月為幻妄，蔽其用於一身之小，溺其志於虛空之大，所以語大語小，流遁失中(1978:26) “Buddhists misunderstand heaven’s nature and do not realize the function of heaven within in it. To the contrary, they identify the smallness of their six senses as the cause of this world. If what is manifest is not made the most of, the heaven and the earth, the sun and the moon are considered as illusions. The function will thus be obstructed by the smallness of our physical body; aspirations will be submerged by the vastness of the void. Therefore talking about the vast and the small, this is the profligate indolence that loses the middle Way¹⁷⁶.”

Heterodoxies do not make the most of the world, because they see the void as the principle detached from the manifest world. Their connection with this world rely on their senses, and thus they cannot but search the principle beyond it. Therefore they cannot but divide nature in two different realms: the nature of principle and the nature of the senses.

有無虛實通為一物者，性也；不能為一，非盡性也。飲食男女皆性也，是烏可滅。然則有無皆性也，是豈無對？莊、老、浮屠為此說久矣，果暢真理乎？(1978:63) “The process of unification of being and nonbeing, voidness and fullness is the nature. If they are not one, the nature is not fulfilled. Eating drinking, and sex are all the nature. How can these be done away with? Since being and nonbeing are all the

¹⁷⁶ Zhang Zai recognizes that Buddhists metaphysical mistakes has ethical and social consequence. If someone’s aspiration lie beyond the human world, his own attitude to this world will be reckless and indolent.

nature, how can this be without opposites? Zhuangzi, Laozi, and the Buddha talked about this since long time; but do they truly understand the true principle?¹⁷⁷”

In Zhang Zai’s words, Buddhists and Daoists vision of human nature is similar to the above showed dualistic view. They think about two different and opposite natures: the inborn human nature which is based on physical senses, and thus on differences, this is thought as an illusion; and the second external heavenly nature which is universal and detached from the real world, this is the real principle¹⁷⁸. They fail to see the continuity between the two, and thus they cannot understand the logic of the process of harmonization.

Besides Buddhists (and in a lesser way Daoists), Zhang Zai criticizes average people, that through their indolent attitude toward life, they reach the same misleading result: they do not understand the continuity between heaven and things. But even if they make a similar mistake, they totally differ from the Buddhists understanding of the world: while the Buddhists stop beyond the world without coming back, the average people stop in the manifest world without make the most of it. Zhang Zai (1978:24) affirms that “The heart-mind of average people stops at the narrowness of their senses.” (世人之
心，止於聞見之狹)” Likewise Buddhists, they have a limited experience of the world since they stop to what is easily given by their senses. But different to Buddhists, average people do not even try to go beyond their senses¹⁷⁹.

人病其以耳目見聞累其心而不務盡其心 (1978:25) “Their problems lie on restrain their heart-minds with what is seen and heard by the eyes and ears. They do not strive to make the most of their heart-minds.”

¹⁷⁷ This is a key passage to understand Zhang Zai’s theory of nature. Here Zhang Zai describes that *xing* includes both the physical nature and the metaphysical one. There is no conflict between the two. Stressing one aspect over the other is to fall into Buddhists and Daoists mistakes.

¹⁷⁸ We can say that in Zhang Zai’s opinion, Buddhists just recognize heavenly nature as the true nature. But Buddhists fail to see nature’s implication with the world, and thus their position is one-sided.

¹⁷⁹ Despite the claim that both Buddhists and average people are equivalent in their mistakes, Zhang Zai seems to prefer the first rather than the second. Kim Junyeup (2008:99) in his analysis of Zhang Zai’s critique, affirms that “whereas the Buddhists have something in common with the Confucians in that they endeavor to expand their experience, although in a distorted way, ordinary people have nothing in common with the Confucian in that they do not want to go beyond their immediately given experience at all.”

They are able to recognize an important part of the natural world; relying on their senses they grasp the spontaneous process of polarities. What they do not grasp is the unity that synthesizes the whole process.

世人知道之自然，未始識自然之為體爾 (1978:14) “Average people understand the spontaneous cosmic process, but they do not see that this spontaneity is the substance of things.”

About human nature, average people simply do not recognize it as a part of the process; on the contrary, they see it as a given and static “essence” that cannot be improved (they do not recognize the function within it). To make this point clear, Zhang Zai compares the attitude of average people to the indolent student within the process of learning:

學者有息時，一如木偶人，搖則動，舍之則息，一日而萬生萬死。學者有息時，亦與死無異，是心死也身雖生，身亦物也 (1978:267) “When students stop, they become like wooden marionettes that move when you pull or shake them and stop when you release them. They live and die ten thousand times in a single day. When learners stop learning, it is also no different from dying, for this is the death of experience. Although their persons live, their persons are just things; and there are many things in this world¹⁸⁰.”

By stopping to the first stage of learning average people become attached to things and become like things themselves. They cannot make the most of their heart-minds and their natures are ossified.

徇物喪心，人化物而滅天理者乎！存神過化，忘物累而順性命者乎 (1978:18) “By submitting to things, the potentiality of the heart-mind will be lost, man will become like a thing and the principle of heaven will be destroyed. By preserving the spiritual dimension, one can go beyond changes; forgets the accumulation of things and follows his nature and decree.”

¹⁸⁰ Here I have employed Kim Junyeup’s (2008:99-121) translation.

Average people destroy the principle of heaven, the principle of harmony in which everything is grounded. Their heart-mind stop on what they can learn from the senses, without bothering to get something more¹⁸¹. The senses for Zhang Zai are just the beginning, they cannot be the end¹⁸².

人謂己有知，由耳目有受也；人之有受，由內外之合也。知合內外於耳目之外，則其知也過人遠矣。(1978:24) “When people thinks to know something, they get this knowledge form the sense organs. What humans get it is the joining of the inner and the outer. The one whose knowledge goes beyond the one of the senses that join the inner with the outer; this man’s knowledge is far beyond [average people].”

We will talk more about the process of learning later, besides, another mistake that Zhang Zai points out, is that most of the people consider nature as equivalent to their single and temporal life.

以生為性，既不通晝夜之道，且人與物等，故告子之妄不可不詆。(1978:22) “If one considers nature the same as individual life, one cannot be connected with the Way of day and night, and man becomes comparable to things. Hence we cannot but refuse Gaozi’s absurdities¹⁸³.”

¹⁸¹ Their position is somehow opposites to the Buddhists. The average people just recognize the nature of opposites failing to see the underlying unity in them.

¹⁸² Brook Zyporin (2015:187-188) affirms that ordinary perception is itself a manifestation of the Great Harmony, since is a kind of joining of inner and outer. Zhang Zai does not totally discard ordinary perception, but he affirms that cannot be considered the end. Ordinary perception is a part of our nature, but it is a narrow form of our nature. It can be a useful starting point but also a fetter to fully realizing one’s nature. We will analyze Zhang Zai’s epistemology in the next chapter.

¹⁸³ Zhang Zai criticizes the Confucian philosopher Gaozi’s 告子(420 B.C-350 B.C.) that sees life as equivalent to nature: “life is what is called *xing*” (生之謂性).

The Chinese scholar Yang Lihua (2008:109) claims that Zhang Zai’s critique against Gaozi is based on two focal points: “first by considering human nature just the biological one, human and things’ nature will necessarily mix together...second, if human nature is just biological nature, the latent and manifest aspects of nature cannot be connected. In this way, the fundamental dimension of life will depend on tangible man’s life, and cannot be linked with what will happen after the extinction of the forms.” (首先,人性被当成了人的生物属性,从而将人性与物性混同起来...其次,如果人性就是人的生物属性,那么,就无法通贯幽明生物属性依附于人有形的生命之体,是不能贯通到形体消亡之后的).

Zhang Zai’s critique on Gaozi’s theory of human nature, thus totally adhere with the critique against average people who stop to the manifest world without bothering of the world of principles. In the end, they all are one-sided and they cannot grasp the paradigm of harmony.

Zhang Zai is saying that nature includes something that goes beyond simple individual life. He wants to claim that what we call nature includes even something that goes beyond life and death.

聚亦吾體，散亦吾體，知死之不亡者，可與言性矣。(1978:7) “Aggregation is my natural dimension, dispersion is too. To know that death is not destruction, is talking about nature .”

盡性然後知生無所得則死無所喪。(1978:21) “Make the most of one’s nature and therefore one can know that life is not gaining, and death is not losing.”

If we think about nature as simply linked to shape, we fall in the same mistake of heterodoxies and average people. The firsts want to free themselves from the cycle of life and death, while the seconds aim to be totally attached to their own lives.

For now we can say that from Zhang Zai’s critique we can understand what the philosopher do not consider the whole human nature. Nature is neither something that belong exclusively to the realm of principles and possibilities, neither to the realm of the senses. Besides, nature is neither something individual, closely linked to our life and death, nor something that goes beyond life and death. Zhang Zai seems to understand nature as a kind of connection between polarities oppositions. The unorthodox schools and the average people both fail to see and experience the continuity between heaven (principles) and human beings. The former tends to evaluate just the realm of principles (they goes without coming back); and the second stops to their individual senses, and thus fail to recognize that nature has something more, it has the ability to join with an expanded reality.

3.4 What is (human) nature

In Zhang Zai’s philosophy, nature first describes something shared not only by human, but by every entities within the cosmos; second, nature seems to have dynamicity and relational capacity as its characteristic. We can find the first important insight in the opening of the first chapter , the Great Harmony.

太和所謂道，中涵浮沈升降動靜相感之性(1978:7) “The Great Harmony is what is called *Dao*, it contains within itself the nature of floating and sinking, rising and falling, of the motion, the rest and the mutually resonance.”

Here Zhang Zai understands nature as something similar to *Dao* itself, which is *qi*'s changes and transformations.¹⁸⁴ Nature corresponds to all *qi*'s movements within the cosmos, movements that allow connections and thus harmony. We have seen before how in Zhang Zai's philosophy polarities represent the rhythm of cosmic changes and transformations: yang is the unifying principle, the movement of expansion which embraces other (creation of a new entity), and represents the visible state; yin is what follows what is started, the completion of thing that goes back to the subtle, and it is the hidden state¹⁸⁵.

Zhang Zai further explains that nature is directly related to these two aspects: “The nature of yin is going toward aggregation, the nature of yang is going toward dispersion. (陰性凝聚，陽性發散)¹⁸⁶ (1978:12)

Nature describes the twofold characteristics or dispositions of the process of changes and transformations. These dispositions belong to every single entity in the world, since are the substances of nature: “polarities interaction (the substance) is what is called nature” (體之謂性) (1978:21)

On the one hand, nature is yinyang's disposition; but on the other, Zhang Zai calls nature what synthesizes [polarities] relationship:

¹⁸⁴ There are several passages in the *Zhengmeng* where nature is coherent with *Dao*. Here we can note that nature is not just human nature, but primarily the nature of everything. It is worth noting that Zhang Zai employs the compound *renxing* (人性), human nature, just one time in the *Zhengmeng*. He states: “in order to realize the subtle and the manifest [it is necessary to] not giving up and continue with goodness. Afterwards the human nature can be accomplished.” (知微知彰，不舍而繼其善，然後可以成人性矣) (1978:17) Besides this example, Zhang Zai employs the general term *xing* to outline nature's comprehensiveness.

¹⁸⁵ And moreover: “The yang virtuosity (natural power) is to proceed; the yin virtuosity is to obstruct.” (陽之德主于遂，陰之德主於閉) (1978:12).

¹⁸⁶ As we have seen, Zhang Zai employs different names to describe polarities. Among others, *gui* and *shen* describes polarities natural dispositions: “The nature of *gui* and *shen* is that of carry out and receive.” (鬼神施受之性) (1978:20) The tradition of interpreting nature in term of yinyang dated back to Han correlative cosmology and particularly to Dong Zhongshu. As Wang (2005:210) has pointed out “Dong was the first to interpret human nature in terms of yin and yang, he identifies yang with *xing* (human nature) and *ren* (humanness/benevolence), and yin with *qing* (emotion) and *tan* (greed).

性其總，合爾也；命其受，有則也；不極總之要，則不至受之分，盡性窮理而不可變，乃吾則也。天所自不能已者謂命，（物所）¹⁸⁷不能無感者謂性（1978:22）
 “Nature is what synthesize polarities relationship; the natural condition¹⁸⁸ is what is received, and thus having principles. Without extending this unification state, the received principle cannot be reached (cannot become part of you). To possess the principle is to actualize one nature by making the most of principles without change. That which is coming from heaven and cannot be changed is called the natural condition; that which makes an entity unable to not affectively resonate is called nature.”

一太極兩儀而象之，性也（1978:10）“Nature is the unifying process of the two polarities within the Great Ultimate that produces images¹⁸⁹.”

On the one hand, each polar force has its own definite nature; but on the other, its polar nature is to tend toward unity. Nature describes both the tendency of each polarities, and their relationship. As we have seen before, polarities interaction is the paradigm of all reality: from what we can perceive, to what we cannot; from what has already a definite shape, to what has not yet. Nature is what encompasses and synthesizes all these polar

¹⁸⁷ Yang Lihua (2008:100) points out that these two characters (suowu 所物) that appears in the *Zhengmeng* are a supplementary explanation added by Zhu Xi.

¹⁸⁸ Zhang Zai in the *Zhengmeng* often speaks of *xing*, nature, and *ming*, destiny or natural/given condition within the logic of polarities, as two different aspects of the same thing (of the same unity). He states: “*xing* and *ming* are connected into unity and thus are not distinct” (性命通一無二). *Xing* and *ming* form an inseparable unity, but at the same time, they cannot be but polarities: “If we generally understand day and night, yin and yang, thus we have the ability to grasp the meaning of nature and give condition, if we possess this ability we know how to be a sage.” (大率知晝夜陰陽則能知性命，能知性命則能知聖人) (1978:65).

Metaphysically speaking, *xing* is the part of nature that tend to be relational and thus is subject to changes; *ming* seems to be what is already pre-determined by heaven.

In his commentary on *Mencius* 7B24, Brook Ziporyn (2012:117-118) describes *ming* as “simple given facts of the matter, which we can do nothing to alter”; *xing* as “what is inborn and what is distinctive to human beings, what they attain without making effort, and how they will grow if both unobstructed and properly nourished”.. This interpretation is coherent with Zhang Zai’s understanding of *ming* which is something we receive from heaven and cannot be changed. Since cannot be changed, cannot be but correct: “*ming* cannot but be correct in man” (命於人無不正) (1978:22). *Ming* represents something intrinsically related to temporal shape, we receive it in the sense that are the given conditions and directions of our lives and of the world we are living on. It is the part of human (and other entities) existence that is always right (is a way to say dependent), it represents the heaven’s principle within man and nature. We can just understand this principle but we cannot change it.

¹⁸⁹ Brook Ziporyn (2015:183) affirms: “Nature and doubleness are in fact interchangeable ideas: the Nature is doubleness, doubleness is the Nature”.

aspects: “The process of unification of being and nonbeing, voidness and fullness, is the nature.” (有無虛實通為一物者，性也) (1978:63)

Zhang Zai understands nature in term of principle behind all interactions, in other words, the capacity for resonance: “Resonance is the unfathomable ability of nature (spiritual dimension); nature is the substance of resonance.” (感者性之神，性者感之體) (1978:64); “That which make (an entity) unable to not affectively resonate is called nature.” (物所不能無感者謂性) (1978:22)

And: “That which make [an entity] unable even for a moment not to affectively resonate, is called nature and heaven’s Way.”¹⁹⁰ (皆無須與之不感，所謂性即天道也) (1978:63). Capacity for resonance that belongs to the cosmos, as we have seen in the previous chapter:

天性，乾坤、陰陽也，二端故有感，本一故能合 (1978:63) “Heaven’s nature is both of *qian kun*, yinyang. With the two sprouts there is resonance. Since they are fundamentally unity there cannot be but connections.”

Nature is what allow the continuity between beings. We, human beings, are not isolated entities, but instead, we need to deal with other man and with the world. We can constantly change and be changed by the world since we have the potential capacity to do that. In this sense, nature can be understood as a creative principle: nature is one’s ability to realize continuity among beings. *Xing* is the harmonic principle (unity) that allows continuity among things.

Zhang Zai’s idea of nature is comprehensive: from the realm of principle to the one of the senses. Nature is what unify these two opposites. Here again we have the paradigm of unity of opposites, nature is conceived as the underlying center that allow polar interactions. In this sense, Zhang Zai understands *xing* in the same fashion of *qi*.

¹⁹⁰ Here Zhang Zai employs two negative adverbs such as *wu* 無 and *bu* 不 that gives to the sentence an affirmative value. The sentence can be also translated into: “that which make (an entity) able to affectively resonate is called nature.”

We have seen before that Zhang Zai explains *qi*'s capacity to interact in term of void, giving to this concept a new understanding. Void is the fundamental part of *qi*'s paradigm necessary for polar interactions. Zhang Zai further explains that nature is nothing but the unity of *qi* with its void dimension (relational capacity): "From the unity between emptiness and *qi* (with shape) we have what is called nature" (合虛與氣，有性之名)(1978:9)

In other words, what is called nature, is the way of interaction between all opposite forces in the cosmos. Here the unity between *qi* and void is the unity between the substance (the harmonic structure of reality which is polarities interaction) with the resonance capacity within it. But what about human nature?

Since everything is made by polar interactions (*qi*), humans do not differ in their nature from other beings and heaven itself: "Nature is the original unity of the ten thousand things, it is not something I get individually." (性者萬物之一源非有我之得私.) (1978:21)

感者性之神，性者感之體。在天在人，其究一也。惟屈伸、動靜、終始之能一也，故所以妙萬物而謂之神，通萬物而謂之道，體萬物而謂之性。(1978:63)
"Resonance is the unfathomable ability of nature; nature is the dimension that allows resonances. This is the dimension of both heaven and man but in reality is one. It is through its contracting and expanding, moving and resting, ending and beginning ability that can become one. the marvelous [ability] of things is called spiritual dimension, [the ability] to put things in connection is called the Way, the substance of things is called nature."

But what does Zhang Zai mean by saying that heaven and things (man in particular) share the same nature?

Zhang Zai employs again the analogy with the process of water and ice to explain the meaning of heavenly nature.

天性在人，正猶水性之在冰，凝釋雖異，為物一也；受光有小大、昏明，其照納不二也 (1978:22) "Heavenly nature is present in human beings just like the nature of

water exists in ice. Although water and ice differ, they are the same process. It is like light; because its level is strong or weak, bright or dim, the light functions differently¹⁹¹.”

This is one of the most famous and most quoted passage of the *Zhengmeng*. Here Zhang Zai seems to understand that human beings share the same nature of heaven, and this nature seems to be substantial: ice cube are the same “thing” as water but with a specific form. But if we refuse the interpretation of nature as essence and we follow the logic of harmonization, we can understand this analogy in the following fashion: human being and heaven, just like water and ice cube, are the same “thing” since they belong to the same process of changes and transformations. There is no such a “thing” as waterness that underlies the process of becoming ice, but just a transactional process of polarities that needs a single reference. Shaped water (ice cube) and formless water are doubleness and unity at the same time. Doubleness since they represent different abilities and features; unity since they refer to the same single reference: the process of water.

As we have seen above, Zhang Zai sometimes expresses the doubleness of human nature with the distinction between heaven nature and the nature of *qi*-quality. We have also seen that *qi*'s nature outlines something that we get with individual form. The Confucian tradition tends to emphasize this concept as the necessary answer to the problem of evil in man. Since *qi*'s nature is something we get individually, cannot but tend toward separation and thus egoistic tendency.

形而後有氣質之性，善反之則天地之性存焉。故氣質之性，君子有弗性者焉。人之剛柔、緩急、有才與不才，氣之偏也。天本參和不偏，養其氣，反之本而不偏，則盡性而天矣。性未成則善惡混，故疊疊而繼善者斯為善矣。惡盡去則善因以成，故舍曰‘善’而曰‘成之者性也’ (1978:23) “With the existence of physical form, there exists physical nature. If one skillfully returns to the original nature endowed by Heaven and Earth, then it will be preserved. Therefore in physical nature there is that which the superior man denies to be his original nature. Man’s strength, weakness, slowness, quickness, and talent or lack of talent are due to the one-sidedness of the material force. Heaven(Nature) is originally harmonious and not one-sided. If one

¹⁹¹ Here I have employed Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang’s (2010:50) translation.

cultivates this material force and returns to his original nature without being one-sided, one can then fully develop his nature and [be in harmony with] Heaven. Before man's nature is formed, good and evil are mixed. Therefore to be untiring in continuing the good which issues [from the Way] is good. If all evil is removed, good will also disappear [for good and evil are relative and are necessary to reveal each other]. Therefore avoid just saying 'good' but say, 'that which realizes it (the Way) is the individual nature.'" (Trans. by Chan 1963:511-512)

This passage can be read as the attempt to talk of two distinct natures, which are essentially in a conflictual position. But if we contextualize it within the Zhang Zai's logic of unity of opposites, and within the *Zhengmeng* primal purpose, we can understand this passage in such a way:

"After [something] acquires a form, its nature is intrinsically embodied in that. If someone [or something] is good at returning, then the nature of heaven is preserved within it. Thus the superior man does not consider the nature embodied in forms as the [whole] nature. Man's being soft or hard, slow or fast, talented or not is the consequence of *qi*'s [with shape] partiality. Heaven fundamental constitution is the all-pervading triadic harmony. By nourishing *qi*, one can go back to the root and thus be impartial. He will make the most of his nature and become [the same as] heaven. When human nature is not yet fulfilled, good and bad are mixed. Therefore to be untiring in continuing the good which issues [from the Way] is good. If all evil is removed, good will also disappear. Therefore avoid just saying 'good' but say 'the nature is fulfilled'¹⁹²."

When one is born, he/she acquires a definite and temporal form which is part of one's nature. This part of nature has potentialities and characteristics that are different from those of others. These differences are intrinsically related to the part of the *qi* that can be perceived (*qi* with form). But this is just one part of our nature, we can say this is just one of the two polar dimensions of our nature. The other one is the capacity within the same *qi* to transcend perception, this is the part which is unfathomable and creative. Nature, like *qi*, is not only the form and abilities that we temporally endowed from heaven. This is what Gaozi and average people think of it. Nature is also void in the

¹⁹² The implication of human nature in Zhang Zai's moral thought will be investigate in the next chapter.

sense that possesses the capacity to build relationships and creates something new. Our nature is able to affect the world, and be affected by the world. Thus our nature is not a static essence, is an on-going process of connection and creation. These two dimensions are not conflictual dimensions, but are complementary. Zhang Zai does not speak of getting rid of the first one or of the other; both are needed if we want to fully understand the world and improve ourselves¹⁹³.

Nature includes and synthesizes all aspects of reality, and thus we cannot dismiss or undervalue some aspect of it. Even our basic natural instinct ought to be evaluated:

有無虛實通為一物者，性也；不能為一，非盡性也。飲食男女皆性也，是烏可滅。然則有無皆性也，是豈無對？(1978:63) “The process of unification of being and nonbeing, voidness and fullness is the nature. If they are not one, the nature is not fulfilled. Eating drinking, and sex are all the nature. How can these be done away with? Since being and nonbeing are all the nature, how can this be without opposites?”

Zhang Zai here warns both the indolent attitude of average people that considers their individual nature as the whole nature, and the Buddhists that dismiss all individuality considering it as filthy. The sages are those that do not stop to the first stage of learning (the stage of forms), the sages know that their nature is the synthesis of the two polarities. We will see below that the effort will be not to get rid of the physical nature, but to harmonize it with the other. To fully actualize one's nature is to fully actualize the dialectical connection between the two apparent conflictual parts. To make the most of our nature can be explained again with the above model of unity of opposites. Only when our oppositive forces become polarities and create something more of what we were before, we fulfill our nature.

¹⁹³ If we understand Zhang Zai's concept of nature with contrasting duality, the critique against heterodox schools and average people lose coherence. Zhang Zai's critique lie on the unilateral view of (and attitude toward) the world of heterodoxies and average people. Buddhists evaluate the realm of principle and dismiss the world of perception; on the contrary, average people only consider the world of forms and dismiss any principle beyond the senses.

3.5 Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I have analyzed Zhang Zai's theory of human nature. I have first outlined the previous understanding of Zhang Zai's theory of nature noticing that the majority of scholars tend to recognize Zhang Zai's theory as dualistic. They see an ontological conflictuality between the two Zhang Zai's idea of nature. We have also seen that this interpretation is not coherent with Zhang Zai's critique against heterodox schools and average people. Zhang Zai sees that heterodox doctrines and average people fail to grasp the totality of reality and have just a partial view of the world: they tend to see just a part of reality failing to grasp the all-pervading harmony. The result is that their idea of human nature is limited (by sensual perception) or thought as an illusion.

In order to resolve this fallacious view, Zhang Zai extends the paradigm of harmony to his theory of human nature. Interpreting human nature within the paradigm of the process of unity of opposites, enable us to resolve the apparent conflictual position behind the two distinctive views of nature. I have claimed that Zhang Zai's idea of double nature is coherent with the paradigm of polarities interaction where no aspect can be dismissed. Both heavenly nature and the nature of the quality of *qi* represent a different aspect of nature that cannot be forgotten. Zhang Zai is saying that man are made by an ongoing process of synthesis and interrelation between their individual aspect and the universal one. The first is the individual shape, instincts, destiny that one receives from heaven; the other is the context¹⁹⁴ where one lives and develop as a person. To become a man neither of the two aspect can be dismissed or even overlooked.

In the following chapters, we will see that Zhang Zai's metaphysics of harmony gives the basis for the formation of his ethical and epistemological program. I will first try to define harmony as the metaphysical foundation of morality, and the adherence of harmony as the goal for the cultivation of the self.

¹⁹⁴ By context here I mean: physical place, historical time, cultural and ethical values and principles.

4. ZHANG ZAI'S MORAL HARMONY

4.1 Introduction

In the first section we have analyzed how Zhang Zai's cosmology and metaphysics can be framed within the concept of harmony and harmonization. Zhang Zai sees the cosmos in term of on-going process of relationship between opposite forces that creates changes and transformations. The process can go on forever since every entity possesses in its intrinsic nature the tendency to relate with others and thus creates novel unities. This creativity seems to be infinite and unpredictable. We have seen that Zhang Zai describes this process in term of yin and yang relationship through the single reference which is called *qi*. We have also seen that this idea can be best synthesized through the paradigm of harmony and harmonization since the intrinsic characteristic of this natural process adheres to the before explained aspect of harmony. First, yin yang relationship with *qi* is understood in term of the process of opposites making unities; second, this process making cannot but be dynamic, creative and comprehensive. Moreover, from Zhang Zai's view of cosmos we have further analyzed the theory of human nature. We have seen that Zhang Zai wants to fit human being into this kind of cosmos. Humanity shares the same nature of every other entities within the cosmos, and thus shares the same nature as the cosmos itself. Likewise the natural world, human nature is conceived as a process of relationship among polarities. On the one hand, man possesses a specific and individual temporal form; but on the other, man is not just that. Man is part of a larger whole made of principles and values which are rooted, as we will see, in the cosmos. Being part of this all-embracing whole, man shares the same ability of it, which is the ability of connections, the ability of building relationships and thus creates novel and infinite possibilities of new development. In this sense, human nature can be conceived as a process of harmonization since it is a process of creation that deals with polarities. Zhang Zai wants to emphasize the polar dimension of reality extending it from human intrinsic and inner nature to the objective cosmos.

This is how Zhang Zai understands the natural world and the human beings within it. But if we stop here, we cannot grasp the very meaning of the *Zhengmeng*. We have seen that the *Zhengmeng*'s first function was pedagogical. Zhang Zai wanted to amend the false beliefs of heterodox schools that have a partial vision of the world and do not grasp the all-pervading harmony within it. Therefore, if we stop to Zhang Zai

speculative thinking we cannot fully grasp his pedagogical aim, which is to show the Confucian unique Way.

In this section, I will focus on Zhang Zai's program of action. We will see that his speculative thinking forms the ground where his pedagogical program arise. Of course being a Confucian, Zhang Zai's primal concern will be to build an harmonious society and a peaceful world. Presenting this metaphysical thinking based on harmony, Zhang Zai is saying that harmony in the world is not only naturally possible, but it is also human duty to promote it since it is part of his intrinsic nature. Heterodox thinkers do not see the world the way it is, therefore their pedagogical program cannot but be misleading. Pedagogy needs to follow the real human nature; man needs to understand their own nature and make the most of its capacity.

In this chapter, my focus will be on the analysis of the origin of morality. In other words, we will see how Zhang Zai's speculative thinking is applied on the formation of morality. Here we will first need to answer to the questions: what is morality? And what is to be moral? what are the precepts that I need to follow in order to be moral?

In the last chapter, my focus will be on Zhang Zai's moral motivation and moral practice, and therefore why should I be moral? Why should I follow these precepts? And how morality can be applied on self-cultivation? Therefore, how can I be moral?

We will further see that all the answers will be intrinsically related to the paradigm of harmony and harmonization, and thus to Zhang Zai's metaphysics.

4.2 Morality and Harmony

In the first chapter, we have seen how in Confucian Classics harmony represented the goal of human activities and how this idealization was extended to political and even cosmological issues. Harmonious society and cosmos were the ideal status where everything could be nourished and flourished, borrowing the *Book of Changes* words, where "each thing found its place"¹⁹⁵. We have also analyzed the ontological feature of

¹⁹⁵ In the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes* it is stated: "each thing found its place." (各得其所). (Trans by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:331) The Chinese philosopher Cheng Yi interprets this as the basis for peace and harmony: "Of the myriad things, each has its own rightful claim. When each

Chinese ideal of harmony which is primarily built on the dynamic, comprehensive and creative relationship between opposite forces. We have defined harmony in term of the process of unities forming by opposite forces.

If we want to translate this paradigm into moral precepts and moral practice as the effort to promote harmony and harmonization, we can easily affirm that a moral thought and/or action is the thought/action which gives its own contribution to the development of the process of harmonization. Since harmony is the ideal state where “each thing found its place”, to be moral will be to do what one should do in order to establish and preserve harmony.

On the one hand, to think/act harmoniously is to do not jeopardize social stability; but on the other, is different to merely compliance: moral thought/action needs to give its own contribution to society which sometimes requires conflict and disagreement¹⁹⁶.

Since Zhang Zai builds his entire philosophical system on the concept of harmony and harmonization, his theory of morality will be grounded on this concept: since the path of the world is harmony, harmony thus represents the highest moral standard that man needs to proceed. In Zhang Zai’s term, objective moral values and duties are rooted in the idea of the natural process of harmony and harmonization. Moreover, human nature resembles this path since potentially shares the same harmonic constitution of the natural world. Therefore what human beings should do is to follow those moral standards of cosmos that already possess in their own nature.

Since the *Zhengmeng* is primarily a pedagogical text and its first aim is to correct the heterodox schools, it is quite obvious that the ethical theory will be the very nucleus of the text. The *Zhengmeng* wants to show to the learners the ontological foundation of morality, the epistemological path that grasp it, and the reason why the Confucian Way is the only possible Way.

Zhang Zai’s answer to the previous ontological question about morality will be: be moral is to follow the process of nature which is rooted in harmony. Harmony is the

gets what it deserves, there is peace; when they do not get it, there is conflict.”(萬物庶事莫不谷有其所得其所則安夫其所則悖) *Cheng Yi Yichuan* 《程頤易傳》 (Trans. by Li 2014:14).

¹⁹⁶ Li Chengyang (ibid:184) states that “harmony is not merely to go along with the flow without contention; it is not about unprincipled compromise; it endorses timely and appropriate actions.”

process that nurtures and develops everything in the cosmos, harmony expresses the condition where “each thing found its place”. Human beings possess in their nature this binding force endowed by the cosmos, therefore it is in human natural disposition to understand the natural model. The human Way is thus that of understanding and then proceed in practice what one has grasped. The practice of the Way of heaven is nurturing and developing other’s natural dispositions following the Way of harmony. If everyone gives his/her contribution to the process of harmonization (since is one’s disposition to do it), universal harmony will naturally arise¹⁹⁷.

Zhang Zai understands ethics in metaphysical term in the sense that human beings ought to first learn the Way of heaven and then realize it in human world. But in order to grasp the language of heaven and translate it into human vocabulary, Zhang Zai employs human ethical category. In other words, in order grasp the Way, one needs to translates the natural process into moral terms which is the only accessible way for human beings.

In the first section, I will analyze Zhang Zai’s attempt to translate the natural process into human moral category.

We will see first that Zhang Zai understands the same process of harmonization as the Supreme Goodness, the moral standard that human ought to follow. Goodness in its utmost manifestation, outlines the continuity, the comprehensiveness and the creativity, therefore the process of harmony.

Second, human moral way to adhere to the process of harmonization is to realize continuity (oneness) with heaven. We will see that Zhang Zai develops the former idea of harmonious unity with heaven (tianrenheyi 天人合一) in his most famous essay: the *Western Inscription* (*Ximing* 《西銘》).

Third, the idea of oneness expressed in the *Western Inscription* will be further explained in the *Zhengmeng* through the concept of cheng 誠 and de 德. Zhang Zai understands *cheng* in term of the Way of harmony and harmonization belong to human nature, and thus to be *cheng* is to form a harmonious unity with heaven. *De*, in its broadest sense, is

¹⁹⁷ Harmony is not a goal but is the fact of the cosmos, therefore morality cannot be just the means to achieve that goal, but it is also the reason why things act, and thus employing Tu Weiming’s (1989:68) assertion, “[Morality] is also the very reason why the community is worth being organized in the first place.”

very similar: it describes cosmologically the “benefic power” of heaven (harmony), and in human terms, the moral way to respond and thus form unity with it. Finally, *de* synthesizes all specific virtues that the moral man needs to develop. Among these virtues the most important is ren 仁: humaneness. Zhang Zai understands humaneness in a threefold senses: as a specific virtue, as a polar virtue, and as the source of all virtues. In this last sense, humaneness is the source and the function of morality since it is the basis by which human-heaven continuity can be achieved.

4.3 The Supreme Goodness

Since Chinese general tendency is to not develop universal categories¹⁹⁸, the concept of goodness has never acquired an absolute independency from its opposite, badness, but rather the two concepts are often thought ontologically related. To see an example we recall for a moment the Qian Mu’s ideal of pendulum. In Qian Mu’s (2000) idea the principle of Goodness “is what we call the constancy in this eternal change, the center in this unceasing motion... Good is just the constant tendency of this motion. Since it is the constant tendency, it emerges in the constantly movement of changes, going on constantly, that no movement can be go too far from it. No matter what change, no matter what move, in the end ought to go back to it and be close to it”. On the contrary, badness is “whatever is separated from it (the center) by a great distance... evil is nothing but going beyond it or not coming up to it”.¹⁹⁹

And moreover:

人类思想普通总认生是正面，死是反面，和平是正面，斗争是反面，健康工作是正面，疾病休息是反面。便不免要认正面的是善，反面的是恶。但依上述理论，恶的只接近善的，也便不恶。善的若太远离了恶的，也便不善了(2000:38) “People usually think of life as positive, death as negative, peace as positive and struggle as negative, health and work as positive and sickness and rest as negative and then they

¹⁹⁸ As Brook Ziporyn has pointed out that it seems that Chinese traditions tended to leave out from their way of thinking categories such as essences and universals where categories such same and different, one and many, are dichotomies. Instead Ziporyn suggests the general paradigm of coherence where things cannot be conceived separately but interweaved and always contextually related. For interesting studies on the idea of coherence. See Brook Ziporyn (2012) and Ziporyn (2013).

¹⁹⁹ See ch. 1.

start thinking that the positive side is good and the negative is evil. But according to the theory we are developing here, as long as evil stays close to good, it is no longer evil, and indeed, if good is too far removed from evil it is no longer good.” (Trans. by Ziporyn 2012:8)

As we have already explained, within the logic of the process of harmonization no principle subsist by itself, everything is ontologically related. What is called goodness is not a monolithic principle, but it is the same fact that the process can go on and does not leave anything behind it. Within this logic, to act morally will be to act by promoting and preserving this process dragging all things to become an active part of it. Morality will be thus strictly linked with equilibrium and connection, and evil is thus the loss of balance which is losing the connection with the center and thus with the opposite force. Evil will be understood as static and one-sided, while goodness will be dynamic, comprehensive and creative, that are the aspects of harmony. Here goodness is relationally conceived, it does not represent a supreme ideal that we ought to follow. Goodness is the hermeneutical device for the correct functioning of the entire harmonic process of changes and transformations²⁰⁰.

Let's see how Zhang Zai directly defines goodness. Following his way of reasoning, Zhang Zai does not employ a single and narrow definition for goodness, instead he defines it in a broad sense. First of all, goodness is metaphysically understood. In his commentary on the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes* he states:

一陰一陽是道也，能繼體此而不已者，善也。善，猶言能繼此者也；其成就之者，則必俟見性，是之謂聖 (1978:187) “One yin and one yang is the *Dao*, goodness is the ability to continuously embody it without end. Goodness is like saying ability to proceed [the Way]. To complete it, one needs to manifest his/her own nature. This is what is called sagehood.”

Zhang Zai sets the concept of goodness in the Way itself, which is, as we have seen before, the same process of harmonization. The sage is the one who is able to embody the Way manifesting his/her “true nature”. Zhang Zai follows Mencius idea that human

²⁰⁰ The notion of goodness implies other concepts such as balance, coherence, harmony.

nature is morally good²⁰¹ since it is part of the same process: “Human nature cannot but be morally good” (性於人無不善) (1978:22)

Similarly to Qian Mu’s idea, the fact that the Way goes on forever without end, and includes everything is translated into human ethical terms such as goodness; human nature possesses this goodness by nature²⁰².

Zhang Zai further connects goodness with voidness as the principle that stands behind this continuity: “The cosmos take voidness as its virtue, therefore voidness is the extreme goodness” (天地以虛為德²⁰³, 至善者虛也) (1978:326); “Generally the virtue of the cosmos is voidness and thus is good in respond” (大率天之為德, 虛而善應) (1978:66)

We have seen before that Zhang Zai understands void as the unlimited capacity of resonance within *qi*. This dimension represents what enable things to connect with others, and therefore void is also an intrinsic part of human nature²⁰⁴. Understanding voidness in term of interconnection and resonance, what stands behind the continuity of the process, Zhang Zai grounds the foundation of morality in the cosmos²⁰⁵.

On the metaphysical level, goodness as voidness is the capacity to resonate and thus influence (*gan* 感) and respond (*ying* 應) to each situation. Human nature, as we have

²⁰¹ The pre-Qin Confucian philosopher Mencius believed that morality was the natural condition of human beings. For Mencius human beings possess at birth what he called the “four seeds” (*siduan* 四端) of morality: humaneness (*ren* 仁), sense of appropriateness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮) and wisdom (*zhi* 智). And then, with natural development of the person, those seeds can be cultivated and developed through moral deeds.

²⁰² The idea of a moral cosmos is clearly showed in the *Book of Changes*. In the *Great Commentary* it is stated: “One yin and one yang are called *Dao*, the continuity of their interaction is goodness” (一陰一陽之謂道, 繼之者善也) (Translation is mine).

As we have already seen in the previous chapters, the harmony of the cosmos depicted on the *Book of Changes* seems to be the model for human harmony in the philosophy of Zhang Zai. This idea seems to be the main tendency among Song philosophers such as Zhou Dunyi, Shao Yong and the Cheng brothers. To deepen the theme of the impact of the *Book of Changes* in Song philosophers see Kidder Smith, Peter Bol, Joseph Adler and Don Wyatt (1990); and Hon tze-ki (2012).

²⁰³ About *de* 德 as virtue see below.

²⁰⁴ See ch. 3.

²⁰⁵ We need to read this within the critique against Buddhism. Filling voidness with moral quality is primarily a means against Buddhist’s view of voidness and enlightenment. Ding Weixiang and Robin Wang (2010:48) recognize that Zhang Zai’s voidness “is raised to become the metaphysical source and ontological basis for Confucian moral cultivation...This metaphysical and ontological footing validates the Confucian value system, supports its moral position and responds to the Buddhist objections.”

seen, naturally endows this capacity of fully resonance: “What nature does is doing good spontaneously²⁰⁶.” (無意為善，性之也) (1978:28)

Therefore, Zhang Zai defines goodness not as a moral quality per se, but as the ability to build connections and thus continue the process of harmonization. Goodness, metaphysically speaking, is to proceed the endless and all-pervading process. To create connections among beings and to be able to properly respond to others, is to create continuity among beings integrating them into the same whole. Morality is a matter of connection and responsiveness²⁰⁷, and thus to abide fully in goodness is to abide fully in voidness as the source of resonance and goodness.

In the *Record of sayings of Master Zhang (Zhangzi Yulu 《張子語錄》)*, Zhang Zai links goodness with voidness with the concept of stillness (or calmness): “Stillness is the root of goodness. Voidness is the root of stillness²⁰⁸.” (靜者善之本，虛者靜之本) (1978:325)

We will see in the next chapter what are the implications that link stillness and voidness, but here we can say that Zhang Zai outlines voidness as the capacity within man to fully respond (resonates) in a proper way to the demand of the situation.

Besides the metaphysical goodness that human beings naturally endow, there is the specific goodness of action which is one of polar dimension of possible action's value. This kind of goodness is contextually related, goes along with its counterpart, and it represents the means to approach the path of harmony (supreme goodness):

性未成則善惡混，故疊疊而繼善者斯為善矣。惡盡去則善因以成，故舍曰善而曰
“成之者性也 (1978:23) “If the nature is not yet completed, good and bad will coexist. If one repeatedly proceed in doing good, one will become truly good. In this way, the bad is removed, and the good will be achieved. Therefore, [the person who has

²⁰⁶ I translate wuyi 無意, literally “without the idea of it”, or “without purpose”, into “spontaneity” in the sense of a natural action without the purpose of doing it.

²⁰⁷ We will see that self-cultivation is a matter of open up the self to the world, harmony here is conceived as intrapersonal harmony.

²⁰⁸ We will see in the next chapter that the stillness of the heart-mind is at the basis of full resonance since is not yet contaminated by egoistic thoughts and feelings. Therefore the process of self-cultivation will be that of calming and empty the heart-mind.

completed his nature] will not talk about the 'good', but rather about 'the nature is completed'."

織惡必除，善斯成性矣；察惡未盡，雖善必粗矣 (1978:23) "Only by reducing bad [habits], we will get rid of it, and thus goodness can complete one's nature. If badness is not yet fully removed, although [it can be called] good, this will be just a rough form of goodness."

Here Zhang Zai is saying that the True Goodness is something different to a moral quality, Goodness cannot even be called goodness since good always refers to its polar counterpart. Goodness as a polar dimension is just a rough form of the Supreme Goodness. Of course here Zhang Zai is not speaking of something similar to platonic idea of goodness (universal goodness); Zhang Zai describes simply the ethical category of goodness which has its counterpart in badness, and the metaphysical one which is the same process of harmony and harmonization (the reference of the process). The cosmic process is Good, because everything gets its own weight. But this kind of Goodness goes beyond ethical category, morality does not concern the cosmos, morality is simply a human stuff. Morality is the result of human's effort to translate cosmic activities²⁰⁹.

In her essay on Zhang Zai's ethical theory, the Israeli scholar Patt-Shamir Galia (2006:185) as shown how Zhang Zai believed in the idea of man as creator of morality. She states:

"Human beings we are creators (of morality). We embody inherent moral categories; thus, we necessarily meet our fellow human beings through these categories, and moral judgments are internal in human creation. Therefore, from the perspective of origin-substance, every act in this world must be understood in moral terms; every existing thing in our world has in this sense an inherent moral value."

²⁰⁹ On the one hand, cosmic activity cannot be but good since it nurtures and sustains everything. But on the other, the very idea of morality is a human invention, is the human's Way to understand cosmos. This idea is again rooted in the *Book of Changes*. In *the Discussion of the Trigrams* it is stated: "In ancient times the holy sages made the *Book of Changes* thus: their purpose was to follow the order of their nature and faith. Therefore they determined the *Dao* of heaven and called it yin and yang. They determined the *Dao* of the earth and called it the yielding and the firm. They determined the *Dao* of man and called it humaneness and appropriateness." (昔者聖人之作《易》也，將以順性命之理，是以立天之道曰陰與陽，立地之道曰柔與剛，立人之道曰仁與義) (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:264 modified).

Morality is totally a human activity. Heaven is beyond the distinction between good and bad, it is just a spontaneous activity (Supreme Goodness), it has no heart-mind and no concern for results. “Heaven thus is without heart-mind, without action. Nothing is directing it. It is forever so.” (天則無心無為，無所主宰，恒然如此) (1978:113)

Heaven’s activity is thus without any personal intention (wuxin 無心), without any personal purpose (wuwei 無為), it is just spontaneous. “Heaven has no heart-mind, the heart-mind is something that belongs to human.” (天無心，心都在人之心) (1978:256); “Heaven’s Way is what gives stimulus to all things, without having the same anxiety of the sage²¹⁰.” (鼓萬物而不與聖人同憂，天道也。) (1978:14)

Zhang Zai thinks about heaven as the spontaneous flowing process that keeps naturally is job. There is no need for a transcendent will: “heaven does not speak but the four seasons proceed.” (天不言而四時行) (1978:14) Heaven’s moral power is to produce all things: “The Way of heaven is to let the four seasons proceed, to produce the hundred beings and to guide to the utmost all of them.” (天道四時行，百物生，無非至教) (1978:13) Heaven does not have moral categories, and does not make distinction between good and bad. But heaven itself cannot but be perfect since the process need to be all-embracing and endless²¹¹.

To complete one’s nature, in Zhang Zai’s term, is to fully actualize the unity with heaven, which means to be ready to undertake and proceed heaven’s virtue of nourishing things and let them flourish. Morality here takes its most comprehensive meaning: what man should do is to conform with heaven’s *Dao* since human has the natural capacity to do this. Man creates morality in order to translate and thus reproduce

²¹⁰ Here on the one hand, Zhang Zai agrees with Laozi’s idea of heaven without heart-mind; but on the other, he criticizes Laozi’s idea of the inhuman sage. In the *Laozi* it is stated: “heaven and earth are not benevolent. They treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs. Sages are not benevolent, they treat the people as straw dogs.” (老子言“天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗”，此是也聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗) (Trans by Ivanhoe 2003:5).

²¹¹ About the morality of the cosmos Kasoff (1984:60) says: “Heaven is good. The process of producing and nourishing things proceed eternally, impartially, reliably and appropriately...[Chang] rejected the idea that heaven acted consciously, but he retained the belief in an ethical cosmos, and in the idea that heaven and man were linked.”

cosmic activities²¹². To make the most of one's nature is thus to overcome the dichotomy between good and bad and reside on goodness. In other words, it is human's duty to morally continue down to this world what heaven naturally does²¹³.

Human nature is what makes this continuity possible, is the principle (the moral principle) that preserves this continuity. To actualize one's nature is to realize and extend the harmonic process to human society. Human nature cannot but wholly belong to the broadest category of goodness since it has continuity as its ontological principle, there is not such a thing as evil ontologically and metaphysically speaking. In the logic of the process of harmony, evil is just a temporary polar category. Zhang Zai understands evil as partiality (what block continuity), as the ossified position that impede resonance.

形而後有氣質之性，善反之則天地之性存焉。故氣質之性，君子有弗性者焉。人之剛柔、緩急、有才與不才，氣之偏也。天本參和不偏，養其氣，反之本而不偏，則盡性而天矣 (1978:23) “After [something] acquires a form, its nature is intrinsically embodied in that. If someone [or something] is good at returning to it, then the nature of heaven is preserved within it. Thus the superior man does not consider the nature embodied in forms the [whole] nature. Man's being soft or hard, slow or fast, talented or not is the consequence of *qi*'s partiality. Heaven fundamental constitution is the all-pervading triadic harmony. By nourishing *qi*, one can go back to the root and thus be impartial. He will make the most of his nature and become [the same as] heaven.”

Human beings need to think themselves relationally and not just as individual beings. Zhang Zai does not believe in an ontologically grounded evil, but on the contrary, evil is given by the idea of an isolated self, detached from the world. If one follows just the physical nature impulses, the idea of an isolated self can arise and result in egoism. This is the attitude of Buddhists and average people as we have seen before. The formers do not see the connection among beings as real and therefore do not make any effort to

²¹² As Hon Tzeki (2012:96) has pointed out, in the philosophy of Zhang Zai “goodness is not merely as an ethical category denoting human demeanor in society, but also a moral metaphysical category referring to one's wholehearted devotion to keeping the cosmic flow alive and refreshed.”

²¹³ As Patt-Shamir (2012:235) has pointed out: “Heaven-human continuity of vital power necessitates that human nature is moral, morality is continuous, void, endless, and eternal.”

actualize it. The seconds do not even recognize any principle that bind all beings into the unique thread; evaluating just what they hear and see, they just follow their physical natural impulses. The result is that both of them have an escapist and egoist attitude toward others and society.

On the contrary, by seeing the self as a part of a larger whole, and thus recognizing that the self is ontologically connected with others, and it is an active part of the process of harmony and harmonization, one will learn that caring for others is a genuine and immediate as caring for oneself.

In sum, Zhang Zai understands goodness in its supreme aspect as the way the process of harmony and harmonization goes on endlessly, generates and nurture everything. Human beings need to translate this into human category, which is primarily moral category. What man should do for being moral, is to extend this partiality to the whole, creating moral continuity between beings. Zhang Zai will express this idea of continuity in the expression “to form one body” (yiti 一體) that expresses poetically in his most famous essay: the *Western Inscription*²¹⁴.

²¹⁴ The idea of forming one body with the world, beside a metaphysical implication, implies ethical values. The American scholar Philip Ivanhoe (1998:63-65) outlines four different ways to be and feel “one”. The first and weakest sense of oneness is to be part of the same group. For example I am member of the University of Michigan’s faculty and in this sense I am “one” with the university...in the same way, human beings might be thought of as one with nature, and yet nature existed before they evolved into the present form and will likely exist long after they are extinct.” The second way is slightly stronger, is when a thing is part of a given ecosystem: “crocodile is part of the ecosystem of the Nile River. This sense of oneness is stronger than the first in that the crocodile interacts and affects the rest of the system in extremely complex ways, both directly and indirectly.” The third is called organismic ecological view: For example, one might argue that we and the earth's biota constitute a single organism in the same way that my arm is "one" with the rest of my body. If you cut off my arm, you radically and directly affect the rest of my body. The fourth sense of oneness: “These involve the claim that we both are part of nature and at the same time share significant constituents with the biota...hypothesis speak not only as if they were part of a planetary-wide system (a large-scale ecological view), and not only as if this system were a single body (the "one-body" view), but as if they and the rest of the planet were in some deep sense co-extensive, as if they were inseparably intertwined and able fluidly to pass into one another.” The fifth and strongest sense of being one is by being identical: not only are we and the rest of the world inseparably intertwined, not only do we share significant constituents, we have the same fundamental nature.” Ivanhoe further identifies this last sense of oneness belonging with Hua Yan and Neo-Confucian understanding of oneness.

4.4 Zhang Zai's moral understanding of forming one

4.4.1 *The Western Inscription*

The *Western Inscription* is Zhang Zai's most famous and celebrated essay. It is a short essay that was originally written in the western wall of Zhang Zai's school and was later integrated in the *Zhengmeng* together with the other essay: the *Eastern Inscription*.²¹⁵ Despite its short length, this essay became very influential within the Neo-Confucian schools representing the very turning point for a new ethical theory. As Chan Wingtsit (1963:498) has pointed out:

“Just as Chou Tun-i's short essay on the diagram of the Great Ultimate has become the basis of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, so Chang's ‘Western Inscription’ has become the basis of Neo-Confucian ethics.”

The Cheng brothers highly praised the *Western Inscription* considering it the most important writing of Zhang Zai. Cheng Yi affirms that its value is comparable to the Mencian theory of moral nature.

西銘之為書，推理以存義，擴前聖所未發，與孟子性善養氣之論同功 (*Ercheng quanshu*) “The *Western Inscription* is a work which, extending principle in order to preserve righteousness, expands on points the sages of the past did not develop, and is as valuable as Mencius' theories of the good Nature and developing the *qi*” (Trans. by Kasoff 1984:143)

Despite its great influence, Zhang Zai did not esteem much his essay, he affirmed that it was just a way to push the learners on the right path.

訂頑²¹⁶之作，只為學者而言，是所以訂頑。天地更分甚父母？只欲學者心于天道，若語道則不須如是言 (1978:313) “The essay *Rectifying the Fool*, is just for the learners. That's why is called rectifying the fool. How can heaven and earth be further

²¹⁵ See Introduction.

²¹⁶ Ding Wan 訂頑 is the original title of Zhang Zai's essay. See intro.

divided into father and mother? I just wanted that learner's heart-mind to be on heaven's Way. If we talk about the Way there is no need to use those words.”

Before commenting Zhang Zai's words, let's have a brief look to the first lines of the essay:

乾稱父，坤稱母；予茲藐焉，乃混然中處。故天地之塞，吾共體；天地之帥，吾其性。民吾同胞，物吾與也。大君者，吾父母宗子；其大臣，宗子之家相也。尊高年，所以長其長；慈孤弱，所以幼吾幼。聖其合德，賢其秀也。凡天下疲癯殘疾、獨鰥寡，皆吾兄弟之顛連而無告者也。于時保之，子之翼也；樂且不憂，純乎孝者也。違曰悖德，害仁曰賊；濟惡者不才，其踐形，唯肖者也。知化則善述其事，窮神則善繼其志 (1978:62) “Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions. The great ruler (the emperor) is the eldest son of my parents (heaven and earth), and the great ministers are his stewards. Respect the ages — that is the way to treat them as elders should be treated. Show deep love toward the orphaned and the weak — this is the way to treat them as the young should be treated. The sage identifies his virtue with that of heaven and earth, and the worthy is the most outstanding man. Even those who are tired, infirm, crippled, or sick; those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to. When the time comes, to keep himself from harm — this is the care of a son. To rejoice in heaven and to have no anxiety — this is filial piety at its purest. He who disobeys [the principle of nature] violates virtue. He who destroys humanity is a robber. He who promotes evil lacks [moral] capacity. But he who puts his moral nature into practice and brings his physical existence into complete fulfillment can match [heaven]. One who knows the principle of transformation will skillfully carry forward the undertakings [of heaven and earth], and one who penetrates spirit to the highest degree will skillfully carry out their will.” (Trans. by Chan 1963:497 modified)

Given its central role on the development of Confucians ethical theory, the *Western Inscription* has been broadly commented, and the interpretation of Zhang Zai's real

meaning are often different to each other. As seems quite obvious already at a first reading of this essay, the key part stands on the first few sentences. Zhang Zai describes the entire cosmos as one single family: “heaven is the father, earth the mother, all beings are brothers and sisters, and all things are companions.” Zhang Zai describes the relationship among human beings and between humans and the cosmos employing the metaphor of family relationship: all beings are part of the same family which is the same as my body²¹⁷. Besides, it is worth noting that the entire essay is written in the first person which is unusual for a philosophical essay. As several scholars has pointed out, the large usage of the first person here is not referring to the same Zhang Zai, but wants to point out that the moral message of the *Western Inscription* is an individual moral obligation²¹⁸.

Since, as we have seen before, goodness is nothing but the continuity of cosmic harmony, Zhang Zai here wants to describe this continuity linking human beings with cosmos. But how is this continuity intended? Heaven as father and earth as mother in which way need to be understood? Is this a Zhang Zai’s poetical description? Or does it describe a mystical belief of unity? And finally, what is the purpose of this description?

Yang Shi 陽時 (1053-1135)²¹⁹, together with his master Cheng Yi, thinks that the underlying meaning of the *Western Inscription* is to define humaneness (ren 仁). Yang Shi affirms that its primarily purpose is pedagogical, Zhang Zai wants to explain to the students the meaning of humaneness. Yang Shi leads back Zhang Zai’s theory of humaneness to the famous Mencius statement “all things are in me”²²⁰. But differently

²¹⁷ Zhang Zai employs the term gongti 共體, which literally means common body. By employing that image of a family, Zhang Zai is saying that this common body can be extended to the whole universe. On the first sight, this image can resemble what Philip Ivanhoe (1998) has called the first sense to be one: to be part of the same group. But as he further outlines, the Neo-Confucians understanding of oneness was rather the fifth sense: one as identity. Here in my opinion, the idea of oneness as common body need to be understood through the paradigm of harmony: the unity of multiplicity.

²¹⁸ Patt-Shamir (2012:224) states: “The first person address regarding filial life and restful death presents a view in which despite its universality, one is forced to acknowledge the personal aspect of morality as one’s own life.”

Lee, de Bary (1997:355) “Who read this work should neither consider these ten [first-person pronouns] as references to the self of Hengchu nor put them off as referring to the self of others: they must all be seen as indications of one’s personal responsibility for what is one’s own affair.”

Cua (2013:868): “Here Zhang Zai uses the first person to speak of heaven and earth as parents of the human person.”

²¹⁹ Yang Shi was one of Cheng Yi’s disciples.

²²⁰ Mencius: “All the ten thousands things are there in me” (萬物皆備於我矣).

to Mencius that refers only to human beings, Zhang Zai extends the connection to the whole universe²²¹.

Following Zhang Zai's own words, the *Western Inscription* is primarily a pedagogical essay. Zhang Zai wrote this essay primarily to show to his students the continuity between man and heaven and thus the metaphysical foundation of morality. But since morality is a human matter (even if its grounded in the natural world), he could not but employ a human practical vocabulary. His first aim is not to present a kind of mystical humanism²²², but it is better a "call to act"²²³ and a desire of attacking the Buddhist metaphysical denial of reality²²⁴. Heaven and earth as father and mother are not taken

²²¹ See Chan (1963:499).

The theory of "forming one body with the universe" was further developed first by Cheng Hao, and later by the Ming philosopher Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529). Cheng Hao's excellent description of this theory employs a medical example: "a book of medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of *humaneness*. This is an excellent description." (醫家言四體不仁,最能體仁之名也) *Cheng Hao yulu* 《程顥語錄》 (Trans. by Ibid:530).

Wang Yangming largely employed the idea of forming one body with the universe emphasizing its ethical implication. The opening statement of his *Inquiry On the Great Learning* (*daxuewen* 《大學問》) states: "The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person...that the great man can regard Heaven, Earth and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the human nature of his mind to do so...therefore when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humaneness forms one body with the child.(大人者, 以天地萬物為一體者也, 其視天下猶一家, 中國猶一人焉...大人之能以天地萬物為一體也, 非意之也, 其心之仁本若是...是故見孺子之入井, 而必有怵惕惻隱之心焉, 是其仁之與孺子而為一體也) Wang Yangming *Daxue wen*. (Trans. by Ibid:659).

Recently the American philosopher Michael Slote (2010) sees in Cheng Hao and Wang Yangming's idea of forming one body something similar to the proto-idea of what modern psychologists and philosophers calls "empathy altruism". He states: "Wang Yang-Ming in the sixteenth-century CE speaks of our forming one body with others when we feel sympathy and compassion for them or their plight, and this idea or metaphor is similar to what we speak of (in the West) when we say that someone identifies with the problems of...But Wang's work reflects the influence of the eleventh-century philosopher Cheng Hao who had also spoken of the humane (*ren*) individual as someone who forms one body with others (alternatively, as someone who regards others as part of himself, as within him). And both Wang and Cheng were harking back to a passage in the Mencius (7a4) that speaks of the benevolent individual as containing other beings (as part of himself... Moreover, psychologists nowadays typically hold (on the basis of empirical studies) that empathy is the engine of the compassion and concern we have for others. This is the so called 'empathy/altruism hypothesis'; and it comes close to what earlier Chinese philosophers like Mengzi, Cheng, and Wang claimed on the basis of personal experience and philosophical acumen." (2010:304).

²²² Tucker (1998:195) borrowing a phrase from Thomas Barry, describes Zhang Zai's ethical theory and the *Western Inscription* as mystical humanism.

²²³ Taylor (1998:53): "The *Western Inscription* is not simply a description of the interrelatedness of all things; it is a call to act in a manner that recognizes such interrelatedness. Through the identification of the commonality of material force and the nature of all things."

²²⁴ Huang (1971:145) affirms that the statement "Heaven is my father, and earth is my mother" implies a twofold affirmative proposition that the universe is not only real but also the cosmic origin of man. Such an assertion that heaven and earth are man's universal parents was motivated by the desire of attacking the Buddhist metaphysical denial of the cosmic and human reality.

Another important aspect that link the *Western Inscription* to Zhang Zai's critique against Buddhism could be the central role of filial piety in this essay. Filial piety is one the most important virtue in

mystically as truly one's parent, but instead they are moral means²²⁵. Here the role of the filial piety is important in the human understanding of what really is morality. From the I perspective as a filial son, I have already the model for morality that can be extended to the whole world²²⁶.

But what Zhang Zai is also saying here, is that human beings, in the most broadest and refined sense, remove the barriers of perceived separation and embrace the whole. Forming one body with the cosmos (share the same system) does not concern a mystical belief but a moral one. The sage is the one who feels the experience of continuity, which is to feel one with others in the sense that whatever happens to others affect me in the first place²²⁷. Since all things in the natural world are interconnected and thus mutually cooperate, human beings, to be really human and thus complete their nature, need to recognize this fact and promote it.

Zhang Zai explains this continuity in term of blood-line relationship that implies a natural moral response: the virtue of filial piety (xiao 孝)²²⁸. Even if in the *Zhengmeng*, the virtue of filial piety has not a prominent role, here in the *Western Inscription* becomes the primal model for human moral response and responsibility toward natural harmony. As Patt-Shamir Galia (2006:227) insightfully has pointed out:

“In Zhang's model of heaven and earth as father and mother, the choice of filial piety as the basic moral relation is not coincidental. It is specifically filial piety that plays an

Confucianism which has always been rejected by Buddhism. By binding filial piety in the cosmos, Zhang Zai is affirming the permanent and natural connection between man and cosmos; on the contrary, by refusing to recognize this virtue Buddhists are also refusing to recognize the continuity between man and cosmos.

²²⁵ Patt-Shamir (2012:226) comments that this intimate relationship has a moral purpose: “Zhang Zai offers a picture of all people as siblings, whose responsibility for their parents and for each other is due to a natural bond. In other words, describing the filial kinship with heaven and earth is neither a naïve mystical belief that heaven and earth are truly one's parents, nor is it a mere metaphor in which we understand one thing in terms of another. Rather the world is one and continuous for real; as a human-being in this continuity, Zhang Zai's only way to understand the world is a human Way, as moral.”

²²⁶ Tu Weiming (1989:113) employs the image of a concentric circle that expands: it begins within oneself, and then moves progressively toward one's family, friends and so on.

²²⁷ In this sense we can recall Michael Slote (2010) understanding of empathy. See below.

²²⁸ The idea of filial piety as the source for humaneness and morality can be seen in the *Analects* and in the *Book of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 《孝經》). In the *Analects* Confucius affirms: “filial piety and fraternal duty – surely they are the roots of humaneness.” (孝弟也者，其為仁之本與！). (Trans. by Dawson 2008:3).

In the opening line of the *Book of Filial Piety* it is stated: “Now filial piety is the root of (all) virtue, and (the stem) out of which grows (all moral) teaching.” (夫孝，德之本也，教之所由生也) (Trans. by Legge 1990:466).

important role in the human understanding of morality: through the blood line that is obvious in filial piety, Zhang is able to lead his reader to a broader sense of inherent moral continuity. Importantly, since humans are connected to the cosmos through moral attributes, going against our ‘cosmic parents’ is not only violating nature, it is moreover violating human morality.”

Zhang Zai employs the family paradigm extending it to the whole cosmos in order to fully broaden the *Dao* of the filial piety. Family is the ground where the feeling of oneness/continuity can arise and filial piety is the natural paradigm for morality. But this paradigm needs to be extended to the whole world to undertake the cosmic duty of harmony and harmonization. The *Western Inscription*’s primal purpose seems to be to define man’s moral obligations which are that of proceeding harmony through the actualization of interconnections. To form one body is first to recognize humans-world integrity, and second is to actualize this unity morally.

4.4.2 In the *Zhengmeng*

Being either a pedagogical essay or a poetical one, what the *Western Inscription* wants to stress is the idea that to build an harmonious and peaceful society, human beings need to understand themselves relationally. Men are interconnected and this is metaphysically explained by the fact that human nature shares the same nature of the cosmos, the process of harmony and harmonization. Besides one individual and one-sided specific nature, man shares the same characteristic of everyone and everything in the world, and thus in order to follow and complete one’s nature, this connection cannot be ignored. Moreover, the interconnection among beings is the ontological basis of harmony and the basis for morality too. As we have seen above, Supreme Goodness expresses the continuity of the process of interactions and interpenetrations. Zhang Zai seems to say: if human beings learn to focus primarily on the universal aspect of their nature, rather than to their individuality, the sense of unity and reciprocity will naturally grow. This sense of unity (forming one body) represents thus the ground where moral thought and action can develop²²⁹.

²²⁹ It is important to note that unity here is different from full identification. Zhang Zai’s idea of unity follows the paradigm of harmony that requires differences. The *Western Inscription* expresses the idea of the family as a single cosmic body that exemplify the idea of harmony as sameness and differences.

Besides the *Western Inscription*, Zhang Zai expresses the idea of harmonic interrelation between beings and between beings and things employing mainly two terms: de 德, (or tiande 天德), and cheng 誠; the first is usually translated into virtue, and the second into sincerity. In the *Zhengmeng* they will both represent the ontological foundation of morality replacing the poetical image of the *Western Inscription*.

Zhang Zai generally understands the two terms as strictly connected:

釋氏語實際，乃知道者所謂誠也，天德也。其語到實際，則以人生為幻妄，以有為為疣贅，以世界為蔭濁，遂厭而不有，遺而弗存。就使得之，乃誠而惡明者也。(1978:65) “What Buddhists call reality is defined by the knower of the Way sincerity and heaven’s virtue. They (Buddhists) speak of reality but at the same time consider human life as an illusion and active participation as excrescence. They hate and thus deny the world since they consider it as filthy. Therefore they escape it and ignore it. What they get is just sincerity but rejecting what is manifest²³⁰.”

From Zhang Zai’s critique we can grasp first that Confucians and Buddhists have some overlapping view of the world: both consider sincerity and virtue as key concepts. Second, from the different view between the two schools we can grasp that both sincerity and heaven’s virtue directly relates to metaphysical aspects of reality.

Therefore what is the meaning of this two important terms? How do they relate to morality?

The Chinese philosopher Cheng Yi follows the idea that harmony between sameness and differences is the necessary requisite for morality, and the basis for humaneness and appropriateness: “The defect of [only recognizing] the many distinctions is that selfishness will dominate and humaneness will be lost. On the other hand, the fault of recognizing no distinctions is that there will be impartial love for all without appropriateness.” (分殊之蔽，私勝而失仁：無分之罪，兼愛而無義) *Ercheng quanshu* (Trans. by Angle 2009:68-69).

²³⁰ Zhang Zai employs the word ming 明 to describe the part of reality that we can perceive through the senses.

4.4.2.1 *Cheng*: The Way of Harmony

The Chinese character *cheng* has a quite long history in Confucian and non-Confucian tradition, it encompasses a vast range of meanings which are often difficult to translate into Western concepts²³¹.

Cheng is already present in several texts before the Warring States period, but it is with Mencius and the *Zhongyong* that becomes frequently employed. *Cheng* further acquires its most important and broadest meaning with the Song philosophers where it becomes one of the most central idea in metaphysical, ethical and epistemological theories²³².

The most employed translations into English are sincerity, authenticity, integrity and reality/truth. As the Chinese scholar An Yanming (2004:134) has pointed out:

“All these translations are appropriate in certain contexts in the sense that each of them has correctly identified, at least, one meaning of *cheng*, meanwhile, as showed by my description above, none of them is comprehensive enough to cover independently the whole range of the idea of *cheng*”.

This is true for most of the attempt to translate Chinese term into a Western language, but it is particularly true for a really broad term as it is *cheng*.

In addition to these translations, American scholars such as David Hall and Roger Ames (2001:62) propose a translation that combines three terms: the traditionally employed integrity and sincerity, and an another one which is suggested by the etymology of the character: creativity²³³. They state:

“In a world of changing events, ‘integrity’ suggests an active process of bringing circumstances together in a meaningful way to achieve the coherence that

²³¹ The Chinese philosopher Zhang Dainian accounts it as “the most unintelligible concept in Chinese philosophy.” In An (2004:117). Besides Zhang Dainian; Donald Munro (1988:117) calls it an “elusive term”; Joseph Needham (1956:468) chooses to just employ the transliteration since it is untranslatable but still so important. For a complete survey on the development of *cheng* and its translations see An (2004).

²³² See Cheng (2000:442).

²³³ The character is composed by two radicals: *cheng* 成, to complete, to realize; and by the classifier *yan* 言, to speak. Ames and Hall explains that to be *cheng* is to be sincere and thus without duplicity, to be a whole, and creativity is the process of realizing this wholeness. See Ames and Hall (2001:62).

meaningfulness implies. As such, ‘integrity’ suggests a creative process. ‘Sincerity’ connotes the subjective form of feeling with which that creative process proceeds. That is, it suggests the mood or emotional tone that promotes successful integration. This cluster of three alternative translations receives support etymologically from the fact that the ‘creative’ sense of the graph *cheng* is reflected in the cognate *cheng* —‘to consummate, complete, finish, bring to fruition’—that together with the ‘speech’ classifier *yan* makes up the character. Thus ‘sincerity’ as ‘the absence of duplicity’, ‘integrity’ as ‘wholeness’, and ‘creativity’ as the process leading to the achievement of such wholeness.”

The employment of these three terms give an important insight about the double dimension of the meaning of *cheng*: on the one hand, *cheng* describes a subjective and inner dimension (sincerity); and on the other, a more objective and external one.

Chan Wing-Tsit (1963:96) affirms:

“Sincerity is not just a state of mind, but an active force that is always transforming things and completing things, and drawing man and Heaven (Tien, Nature) together in the same current.”

And the Korean scholar Ro Young-chan (1989:80):

“This is why we cannot say that *ch'eng* as the vital force of an individual being, and *ch'eng* as the essential principle of unity among different beings, are two different matters. A being can only be complete when it is in relationship with other beings through *ch'eng*.”

The idea of *cheng* is thus generally what first ontologically and second morally connects all human beings and things among themselves (horizontal connection); and humans with cosmos (vertical connection). And moreover, on the one hand it is a force that comes from one’s inner world, on the other, this inner force must be applied outside the self since *cheng* implies the integration of things into the same whole.

The Confucian classic *Zhongyong* shows clearly this double dimension of *cheng*: “Sincerity is the Way of heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the proper way of

becoming human.” (誠者，天之道也；誠之者，人之道也) (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:104). And:

誠者自成也，而道自道也。誠者物之終始，不誠無物。是故君子誠之為貴。誠者非自成己而已也，所以成物也。成己，仁也；成物，知也。性之德也，合外內之道也，故時措之宜也。 “Sincerity is a process taken from its beginning to its end, and without this sincerity, there are no events. It is thus that, for exemplary persons, it is creativity that is prized. But sincerity is not simply the self-consummating of one's own person; it is what consummates events. Consummating oneself is humaneness; consummating other events is wisdom. This is the excellence of one's natural tendencies and is the way of integrating what is more internal and what is more external. Thus, whenever one applies this excellence, it is fitting.” (Ibid:106)

To be sincere to one's nature, in other words “to be true to oneself”, is first a matter of cultivation of one's inner and deepest feelings, and second includes the action of transforming (*hua* 化) others. But moreover, sincerity is also the end and the beginning of things, therefore encompasses the objective reality²³⁴. To achieve the unity between inside (subjective) and outside (objective), and between all differences, is sincerity. In this sense *cheng* is creativity, since is the principle of integration and thus forming unities.

For what concern this investigation, I see that *cheng* fits within the paradigm of harmony, as the force that integrates opposite into the same whole, creating novel unities. This creative force cannot but be good since adheres completely with the notion of goodness depicted above. To be true to oneself implies and requires morality²³⁵ as the Chinese philosopher Xiong Shili has insightfully pointed out:

“The term *cheng* simultaneously highlights both ‘truth’ and ‘good’ . People may just talk about ‘good’, while ‘truth’ is already implied Therefore, an absolute truth is never

²³⁴ An Yanming (2004:123) explains that *cheng* in mainstream Confucianism can be understood as the unity between sincerity and reality: “In form, it is similar to ‘sincerity’, meaning ‘to be true to oneself’. In content, ‘true’ refers to a true feeling possessed universally by humans, while ‘self’ refers to human nature or reality” See An (2004:123).

²³⁵ Mencius stressed that: “If one does not understand goodness, he cannot be true to himself” (不明乎善不誠其身矣) (Trans. by Lau 2004:82).

short of ‘good’. By the same token, an absolute pure ‘good’ is never short of ‘truth’. How can ‘truth’ and ‘good’ be separated?²³⁶”

Since goodness is ontologically related to the proper function of harmony and harmonization, to be sincere is to be functional to the same process. How can one be functional to the process of harmony and harmonization?

The classical Confucian philosopher Mencius states:

萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉 (*Mencius* 7A)
“All the ten thousands things are there in me. There is no greater joy for me than to find, on self-examination, that I am true to myself. Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence.” (Trans. by Lau 2004:146)

Mencius’ claim is similar to Zhang Zai’s *Western Inscription*. To be sincerely true to oneself one needs to overcome individuality and enlarge oneself to embrace the entire world. As we have seen, this unity is not of a mystical kind where the subject and the object dissolve their differences, but it is rather a moral unity: the self and the other share the same basic condition (nature) without losing their distinctiveness, and they care for each other on the basis of this identity²³⁷.

In his interpretation of *Zhongyong* through the ideal of harmony, the Chinese scholar Li Chengyang (2004:186) interprets *cheng* as the means for harmonization:

“*Cheng* is a pivotal point that connects the Way of the tian and the human Way. The person of *cheng* adopts the central way and is at home in treading such a path. The description of this sage-Way is reminiscent of Confucius himself, who was able to do whatever he wished at the age of seventy without transgressing any boundaries: he was entirely at ease walking the human Way. Such a state is undoubtedly a state of harmony and *cheng* is the way to achieve such harmony.”

²³⁶ In An (2004:126).

²³⁷ See above the fifth sense of being one.

Here I will follow somehow Li's insight, interpreting (and often translating) Zhang Zai's idea of *cheng* mostly into the Way of harmony and harmonization (and intrapersonal harmony). I also justify this translation as the attempt to synthesize all the above interpretations adhering with Zhang Zai's philosophy of harmony and harmonization. As we have seen before, Zhang Zai understands harmony as the paradigm of true and thus reality; to harmonize is to integrate differences into a single whole and thus to create a novel unity. Finally to be true to the natural process and to the self (sincere), one needs to harmonize the self, making the most of his/her nature and then creates connection with others²³⁸.

The concept of *cheng* has a prominent role in Zhang Zai's ethical theory since is considered the principle (the foundation) by which self-concern and concern for others are unified into the same activity. The fact that *Zhengmeng* sixth's chapter is dedicated to this concept is a clue to the centrality on Zhang Zai's system²³⁹.

First of all, Zhang Zai's understanding of *cheng* resembles the *Zhongyong*: "To fully actualize the Way of harmonization is heaven's nature." (至誠，天性也)

As we have seen above, heaven's nature is nothing but the process of harmonization of polarities relationship²⁴⁰: "The unity between nature and heaven Way is preserved in the Way of harmonization." (性與天道合一存乎誠)(1978:20); And very similarly: "If heaven and human differs in their functions, it cannot be called the Way of harmony." (天人異用，不足以言誠)(1978:20)

天所以長久不已之道，乃所謂誠。仁人孝子所以事天誠身，不過不已於仁孝而已。故君子誠之為貴。(1978:21) "Harmony is the Way according to which heaven can last for long and be unceasing. The reason why the benevolent man and the filial son can serve heaven and harmonize the self is simply that they are unceasing in their

²³⁸ Li Chengyang (2013:89) has defined *cheng* as the "logical prerequisite to personal cultivation—which I will show implies intrapersonal harmony — and they regard personal cultivation as a logical prerequisite to harmonizing the family — and so forth." In this sense we can understand *cheng* in term of the Way of harmony and harmonization.

²³⁹ Chan Wingsit (1963:496) recognizes the first and the sixth chapter as *Zhengmeng*'s most important chapter.

²⁴⁰ See ch. 3.

humaneness and filial piety. Therefore for the superior man, harmony is the most valuable.” (Trans. by Chan 1963:508 slightly modified)

As it was in the *Zhongyong*, here *cheng* represents the living and creative force of the natural world. Human being needs to translate it into man’s term, which are essentially moral terms. To fulfil harmony is to actualize the connection between our nature and the world itself, which means to create the connection between the self and the world. As we have seen before, Zhang Zai explains cosmic relationship in term of resonance. Human nature possesses the capacity for resonance, and thus making the most of one’s nature is to actualize this capacity. Man capacity of harmonization (*cheng*) is thus understood in term of resonance, and more specifically resonance actualized through morality: “Contraction and expansion mutually resonate, hereby arises that which furthers,²⁴¹ with harmonization there is resonance.” (屈信相感而利生，感以誠也) (1978:24) And moreover: “Disharmony²⁴² is what arises without resonance. The Way of harmony is resonance and penetration.” (無所感而起，妄也；感而通，誠也) (1978:28)

As we have already seen, on the level of natural process, without resonance and penetration among polarities, reality is nothing but a mere illusion²⁴³: “after resonance there is interpenetration, without the two [polarities] there will be no unity” (感而後有通，不有兩則無一) (1978:9)

On metaphysical level, *cheng* can be understood also as the reality itself: the process of harmony and harmonization.

誠有是物，則有終有始；偽實不有，何終始之有！故曰“不誠無物” (1978:21)
“Harmony implies things. Therefore they have beginnings and ends. Disharmony

²⁴¹ This is a quote from the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*: “The past contracts. The future expands. Contraction and expansion mutually resonate, hereby arises that which furthers.” (往者屈也，來者信也，屈信相感而利生焉。) (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:338 slightly modified).

²⁴² Here I have choose to translate wang 妄 with disharmony, because Zhang Zai employs it as opposite of *cheng*. Another possible translation is the one employed by Kim Junyuep (2008:109), incongruity. He explains that: “being incongruous is being trapped within one's own experience and being unable to communicate with others”. This interpretation resonate with the understanding of *wang* as disharmony since is the state contrary to interaction.

²⁴³ This is the mistake of Buddhism that sees metaphysical reality totally detached to the world of perception. See above.

(falsehood) implies absence of reality. How can it have a beginning or end? Therefore it is said: without harmony there will be nothing.”

Things in the world naturally influence each other on the basis of the unity that underlies them. Outside this connection there is no transcendental principle.

On moral level, man ought to recognize connections and actualize them. To be *cheng* is to actualize this capacity of resonance within one’s nature by seeing and experiencing (to become one) the underlying continuity of the process of changes and transformations. “Man needs to fully extend the Way of harmony and thus makes the most of his natural possibilities” (人能至誠則性盡) (1978:63)

To fully extend the Way of harmony, men need first to overcome their own individuality²⁴⁴: “Arbitrary opinion, dogmatism, obstinacy and egoism, if even one of these is preserved, there will be no harmony [in the self]²⁴⁵.” (意、必、固、我，一物存焉，非誠也。) (1978:28)

By filling the heart-mind with arbitrary opinion, dogmatism, obstinacy and egoistic feeling, one will totally focus on the self; one thus will become like a wooden marionette which is subdued by things and egoistic desires losing his/her capacity of full resonance²⁴⁶. On the contrary, the one that exploits to the most his/her natural endowment, can achieve the unity with others and the whole and thus proceeds the process of harmonization. To actualize the principle of harmonization is thus to feel interconnected: “only those of [that achieve] fully harmonization in the world are able to effect transformation” (至誠為能化) states the *Zhongyong*²⁴⁷.

²⁴⁴ In the *Zhengmeng*, Zhang Zai states: “The sage is the one who fully extend the Way of harmony and gets the name of heaven.” (聖者，至誠得天之謂) (1978:9).

²⁴⁵ There will be no space for intrapersonal harmony. Zhang Zai further explains that: “Arbitrary opinion is to have predetermined opinion; dogmatism is to have something to rely on; obstinacy is being unable to transform; egoism is to have a fixed direction. All these four in the end are the same, they do not resemble with what heaven and earth do.” (意，有思也；必，有待也；固，不化也；我，有方也。四者有一焉，則與天地為不相似) (1978:28).

In the *Analects* it is stated: “The Master cut out four things. He never took anything for granted, he never insisted on certainty, he was never inflexible and never egotistical. (子絕四：毋意，毋必，毋固，毋我) (Trans. by Dawson 2008:31).

²⁴⁶ See the next chapter.

²⁴⁷ Zhang Zai quotes the *Zhongyong*’s statement in the fourth chapter of the *Zhengmeng*: “only those of [that achieve] fully harmonization in the world are able to effect transformation” (唯天下至誠為能化) (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:105).

Cheng as the Way of harmonization possesses a strong ethical value since is the principle by which man can build harmonious relationship within the world. On a cosmological level, *cheng* is the lively force for things interconnection and interpenetration; on the moral one, represents the moral force naturally endowed by human nature that enables human beings to feel and create relationship and sets the basis for harmony. The man of *cheng* is thus the man who forms one with the whole and thus is completely true to him/herself.

4.4.2.2 De 德: the unifying power of Virtue

The concept of de 德 has a very long and puzzling history in Chinese thought. It appears at beginning (or even prior) to the Zhou dynasty and develops during the Warring States acquiring a vast range of meanings. Therefore, the attempt to find a single translation that can encompass an absolute and single meaning of this character is quite impossible²⁴⁸. As we have seen above, Zhang Zai's understanding of *de*, at least when refers to heaven, is intrinsically connected with *cheng* (the Way of creative harmony). On the cosmological level, *cheng* represents the natural process of harmonization which is endowed by human nature. This Way of harmonization is defined by Zhang Zai in moral term with *de*: virtue

大率天之為德，虛而善應，其應非思慮聰明可求，故謂之神，老氏沉諸穀以此。
(1978:66) “Generally the virtue of the cosmos is voidness and thus is good in respond. Its responsiveness is not that can be achieved through human senses and brightness. That's why it is called the spiritual dimension, which is what Laozi called the resonance of the valley²⁴⁹.”

²⁴⁸ Since my focus is on the understanding of Zhang Zai's concept of virtue (*de*), I will refer to previous scholarships on the development of this character as the means to acquire a complete understanding.

²⁴⁹ Here Zhang Zai compares heaven's virtue with Laozi's spirit of the valley. In *Laozi* chapter 6 it is stated: “The spirit of the valley never dies. She is called the Enigmatic Female. The portal of the Enigmatic Female; is call the root of Heaven and Earth. An unbroken, gossamer thread; it seems to be there. But use will not unsettle it”. (穀神不死，是謂玄牝。玄牝之門，是謂天地根。綿綿若存，用之不勤) (Trans. by Ivanoe 2003:6).

Zhang Zai understands the spirit of the valley as the void capacity to produce echoes. When this sound gains its image (get contact with emptiness), it is ready to resonate with other elements: “the spirit of the valley has its images, so its sound gets response.”(穀神能象其聲而應之).

Zhang Zai defines virtue in terms of the above showed principle of *qi*'s polar capacities: void and the spiritual dimension. "Heaven and earth take voidness as their virtue, utmost goodness is voidness." (天地以虛為德，至善者虛也) (1978:326); "the spiritual dimension is heaven's virtue." (神，天德) (1978:15); "The yang virtuosity (natural power) is to proceed; the yin virtuosity is to obstruct." (陽之德主于遂，陰之德主於閉) (1978:12)

On the metaphysical level, virtue seems to be understood as the cosmic power that underlies all polarities movements and interactions: "yin and yang are joined in virtue" (natural power) (德合陰陽)²⁵⁰. This understanding of *de* is close to what the Canadian scholar Scott Barnwell (2013:49) glosses as "benefic power of Nature (the *Dao*)" defining one of the Daoist understanding of this character. This "cosmic power" can be easily translated into moral term as virtue or benefic power (which imply goodness) in the sense I have explained above: goodness and thus virtue is the liveness of the process²⁵¹.

Given the idea of a direct correspondence between cosmos and man, and the tendency to understand and translate cosmos and cosmic activity into moral terms, human maximal expression of virtue is to reach complete resemble with cosmos: "The sage identifies his virtue [with that of heaven and earth] . (聖其合德)" (1978:62)

The virtue of the sage is that of achieving the same perspective of heaven, which is the perspective of the whole:

天地合德，日月合明，然後能無方體；能無方體，然後能無我 (1978:33) "To identify with heaven and earth's virtue, and to be bright as sun and moon, then one will be without limits. Being without limits then will have no egoism²⁵²."

²⁵⁰ The *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes* states: "yin and yang are joined in their nature, the firm and the yielding receive their constitutions." (陰陽合德，而剛柔有體) (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:344 modified).

²⁵¹ Barnwell (2003:78) calls it: "life-affirming and empowering force in nature, often considered the essential requirement for life."

²⁵² The *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes* points out that the spiritual dimension (*shen*) and the changes (*yi*) are the conditions of being without the limitation of directions (place) and constitutions: "Therefore the spirit is bound to no one place, nor the changes to any one form" (神無方而易無體). (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:296 modified).

Overcoming the limits is to become great and thus reach the virtue of heaven: “becoming great and one will have the same virtue of heaven and earth²⁵³.” (大則天地合德) (1978:35)

窮神知化，與天為一，豈有我所能勉哉？乃德盛而自致爾。(1978:17) “By grasping the spirits and knowing the transformations, one can form one with heaven. Can egoistic person achieve that? Only through the flowering of virtue one can spontaneously reach it.”

We will talk later about how to overcome individuality and reach the utmost of one’s nature, here we focus on the definition of virtue in human terms. The man who let “flourish the virtue” (desheng 德盛) is the one that can reach or embody the process of harmony, but how can this be translated into moral terms?

To encompass everything is to care for others, and thus to develop the ability of respond properly to other’s (or event) need.

至當之謂德，百順之謂福。德者福之基，福者德之致，無入而非百順，故君子樂得其道。循天下之理之謂道，得天下之理之謂德，故曰：易簡之善配至德 (1978:32) “Virtue is what is called utmost appropriateness; to complete all duties is called blessing. Virtue is the basis of blessing, blessing is what is conveyed by virtue; without entering [in virtue], duties cannot be completed, that’s why the moral man achieves the Way joyfully. To follow world’s principle is called the Way; to get it is called the virtue. That’s why [the *Changes*] says: Because of the good in the easy and the simple, it corresponds to the utmost virtue²⁵⁴.”

Zhang Zai comments to this passage states: “[it is said] the spiritual is without direction, the changes are without constitution, this is the greatness which is simply unity” (“神無方”，“易無體”，大且一而已爾) (1978:15).

²⁵³ To become great is to overcome limitations. I will analyze more deeply this concept in the next chapter on self-cultivation.

²⁵⁴ Here Zhang Zai quotes the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*: “Because of its vastness and greatness, it corresponds with heaven and earth. Because of its changes and its continuity, it corresponds with the four seasons. Because of the appropriateness of yin and yang, it corresponds with sun and moon. Because of the good in the easy and the simple, it corresponds to the utmost virtue” (廣大配天地，變通配四時，陰陽之義配日月，易簡之善配至德) (Trans by Wilhem, Baynes 2003:302 modified).

The virtuous man is the one that gives to things what they need to be completed by being responsive. To know and thus respond correctly in time to all situations is to be virtuous.

天道四時行，百物生，無非至教；聖人之動，無非至德，夫何言哉！(1978:13)
“Heaven’s Way proceeds through the four seasons and generates the hundred things, this is its most important teaching. Among all movements²⁵⁵ of sage no one does not count as utmost virtue, is there anything else to say about it?”

But what kind of virtue is *de*?

As the German scholar Michael Lackner (2008:31) has pointed out, in the *Zhengmeng*, Zhang Zai principally employs *de* (especially in the compound with sheng 盛, flowering virtue) as the general and comprehensive term that include other kind of virtues:

“The cardinal virtues of Confucianism as well as the ‘little virtues’ (seriousness (*zhuang*), watchfulness (*jing*), generosity (*hou*), and so forth). The phrase “flowering of virtue” is thus the unifying connotation of virtue par excellence, and without it, individual virtues only have a divided – which is to say, a cut or sliced, or in other words, partial or not whole – character.”

De encompasses humaneness and wisdom: “the great virtue of mighty transformation, is the unity of benevolence and wisdom” (“大德敦化” , 仁智合一)²⁵⁶(1978:32); humaneness and appropriateness: “virtue is humanness and appropriateness.” (仁義德也) (1978:48) And even the unity between knowledge, humaneness and courage:

²⁵⁵ In his translation and interpretation of the *Zhengmeng*, the Chinese scholar Zhou Yun (2014:27) interprets the expression sage’s movements (shengren zhi dong 聖人之動) in term of “sage’s words and actions” (圣人的言行).

²⁵⁶ This is a quote from the *Zhongyong* statement: “Their greater excellences are to be seen as massive transformations. That is why the heavens and the earth are so great.” (大德敦化，此天地之所以為大也) (Trans by Ames, Hall 2001:112).

知、仁、勇，天下之達德，雖本之有差，及所以知之成之則一也。(1978:29)
“Knowledge, humaneness, courage, are the virtues universally binding. Although they have fundamental differences, they way to realize and complete them is one.”

In other words, here Zhang Zai describes *de* as virtue in its broadest term. Virtue is what unify all specific virtues; virtue is the substance (ti 體), and the others are the functions (yong 用) of the one. The man of virtue is thus the one that let all virtues flourish and achieve the unity with heaven.

In sum, Zhang Zai employment of the term *cheng* and *de* is very similar and both can be understood through the paradigm of harmony in cosmological and ethical terms. But within the paradigm, we can grasp a slight difference between the two terms. While *cheng* describes reality as such (the process of harmonization), and in human terms, to be *cheng* is to recognize and thus adhere to this reality (to be true to it and thus to be one with the whole). To make the most of one's nature is to fully adhere with the natural process by endorse the same process of integration and creative relationships. This can be achieved through the actualization of connection and interpenetration. Instead, virtue is seen as the attempt to translate cosmic harmony into moral terms, which primarily means the proper way to respond (create connections) correctly and timely to events and others. In this sense, each event needs the correct response of a specific virtue, and *de* is the synthesis of all those virtues. In other term, *de* is the unity that synthesizes all different ways of responding morally to a given situation. To fully possess virtue is to become great and thus become one with the cosmos in the sense that one's movement of responding never fails to be correct: “among all movements of sage no one does not count as utmost virtue.” (聖人之動，無非至德) (1978:13)

If we want to answer to the questions that we attempt above: What is morality? What does to be moral means?

Zhang Zai's answers to the first question will be that morality is the human attempt to translate the natural process of harmony and harmonization. This process cannot but be translated into human's idea of Supreme Goodness since it is limitless, and it nurtures and fosters everything within it.

Second. To be moral for human beings means to adhere and be an active part of this process. Since man endows by nature the possibility to resemble the process of harmonization, man's morality is based on the achievement of the continuity and harmonization with the cosmos.

We have seen that first Zhang Zai interprets continuity in term "forming one body" which is poetically represented in the *Western Inscription*. Second, he explains continuity in term of the principle of harmony (intrapersonal harmony) and virtue. With the first he wants to stress the creative aspect of human-heaven integration. The man of *cheng* is the one who harmonizes the self and transforms the others through proper relationships. Since the natural process is made by opposites interaction and interpenetration which is its creative power, to be moral, human beings ought to act in the same fashion. Besides, Zhang Zai employs the term virtue and heaven's virtue to translate the creative power of cosmos into moral practice. Heaven's virtue describes polar interaction (therefore is the same of harmony), and man's virtue is the moral (the best) way to respond to these interactions. Virtue is the unity of all virtues bestowed by human nature, therefore synthesizes all best ways to respond to situations.

Among all virtues, humaneness²⁵⁷ seems to be the core of Zhang Zai's ethical philosophy²⁵⁸, as we have seen in the *Western Inscription*. Zhang Zai seems to point out

²⁵⁷ Humaneness is one of the several translations and interpretations of this term. Besides the mainstream choose to translate it as benevolence, humanity, human-heartedness and so on.

In Fingarette's (1972:79) opinion these translations emphasize too much the psychological aspect of *ren*. He therefore prefers a more externally related reading. He defines *ren* as the aspect of conduct that direct our attention to the particular person.

Ames and Hall (1987:122) want to synthesize the inner psychological aspect of *ren* with the outer integrative intercommunication. They thus define *ren* Authoritative Person, which is "a process of integrative person making in which one incorporates the interests of others as his own and conducts himself in a manner that addresses the general good".

In an insightful essay, the Chinese scholar Wang Huaiyu (2012) has investigated the connection of *ren* with the concept of resonance *gantong* 感通 (or *ganying* 感應). Wang (ibid:463) outlines *ren*'s origins in "the rites of ancestral worship that summoned the divine presence by dint of the affinity (*gantong*) between grandfathers and grandsons." The connection with *gantong* stresses a fundamental aspect of *ren* which is resonance among similarities, in other words empathy. Wang (Ibid:467) shows as this meaning is attested in texts such as *Lishi chunqiu*: "Ren is among of the same kinds" (仁乎其類者也).

Another important connection between the two terms it can be found in the ancient medical classic the *Suwen* 素問 (Huangdi neijing *suwen* 《黃帝內經素問》). In this text there are numerous instances in which the phrase *buren* 不仁 is used to describe the paralysis of limbs, muscles, and skin. Wang thus states: "if the status of "not *ren*" (*buren*) corresponded to a lack of sensation and perception, then it is reasonable to infer that sensation and perception (i.e., *gantong*) were indeed the meanings of *ren* assumed by the author of the text.

In the Neo-Confucianism we have several examples on the centrality of resonance in the understanding of *ren*: we have already seen above Cheng Hao's reference to the *Suwen*, and Wang

that humaneness is the necessary virtue that can lead man's path in forming the harmonic unity with the cosmos.

4.4.2.3 The virtue of humaneness (ren 仁) and its several implications

Zhang Zai describes the virtue of humaneness in three different but interrelated fashions: First Zhang Zai speaks of humaneness as a specific virtue which deals with feeling of love, care, compassion.

Second. Humaneness is one of the polar aspect of human's *Dao*.

Third. Humaneness is understood in its broadest meaning as the attainment of all interrelated virtues (unity). In this fashion, the meaning of *ren* is really closed (if not identical) to virtue (*de*)²⁵⁹.

About the first usage of *ren* as a specific virtue, Zhang Zai describes *ren* coherently with the Confucian tradition: "The one who possess humaneness loves others"²⁶⁰.(仁者愛人) (1978:46); "Compassion (or empathy) is humaneness"(惻隱，仁也) (Ibidem); "Humaneness at its most extension, is the extreme of the Way of love." (仁之至也，愛

Yangming too (see above) but the same Zhang Zai employs a similar understanding in the *Western Inscription* where the person of *ren* resonates with the whole universe. In the later Confucianism, the philosopher Liang Qichao 梁啟超(1873-1929) defines *ren* in a way that resembles our contemporary idea of empathy: "the perception and realization of the other as one's own kind" (tonglei yishi 同類意識): "Humanity manifests itself first and foremost through the consciousness of the same kind (tonglei yishi) to which two or more persons belong together." In Wang (2012:472) Similarly Mou Zongsan, commenting Cheng Hao's idea of *ren*, sees the basis in resonance: "the nature of humaneness is resonance." (仁以感通爲性) (Ibid:464).

Here I will show that Zhang Zai's understanding of *ren* is grounded in this connection since the root of *ren* is void.

²⁵⁸ This is coherent within the Confucian traditional ethics where the concept of *ren* occupies a central role. As Ames and Hall (1987:111) have pointed out: "First, it has a central role in the *Analects*, occurring some 105 times in fifty-eight of the 499 passages included in that text. 68 Followers ask Confucius specifically about this concept more than any other. Prior to Confucius it seems to have been a relatively unimportant term. Few instances of *jen* (*ren*) occur in the pre-*Analects* literature. *Jen* (*ren*) as found in the *Analects* has a richness and prominence that seems to depart significantly from its earlier usages."

²⁵⁹ On the connection between *de* and *ren*, the Chinese scholar Yu Jiyuan (2007:32) affirms that *ren* is what human virtue is or should be. Angle (2009) identifies confucian's concept of *ren* in two senses: "first a specific virtue. Second the interrelation of all virtues". About *ren* as unifying moral concept Tu Weiming (1978:9) defines it as a unifying concept. It not only gives meanings to other important Confucian concepts, but it also shapes their characteristics and unifies them in a comprehensive whole.

²⁶⁰ One of the several definition of *ren* in the *Analects* 12.22 is *ai* 愛,love: "Fan Chi asked about humaneness. The Master said: 'It is to love others'" (樊遲問仁。子曰：愛人) (Trans. by Dawson 2008:47).

道之極也) (1978:36) “What is desirable [by sages], is called goodness. If the will is on humaneness there will be no evil.” (可欲之謂善，志仁則無惡也) (1978:27) “What is called a good man, is the one who desires humaneness but he has not yet studied for it.” (善人，欲仁而未致其學者也) (1978:29)

Humaneness is compassion, love, and learn to do goodness. The man of humanness is the one that have concern for others and thus strive to transforms others: “The one who can change a person without humaneness into a person of humanity, has proceed his humanity at the best.” (能使不仁者仁，仁之施厚矣) (1978:32)

Zhang Zai here is saying that the person who possesses and practices humaneness is not only the one who cares about other sufferings, but he is the one who tries to let them being humanness. Here compassion includes the effort to change other’s inability to proceed humaneness. Therefore humaneness needs to be conceived in a larger context and larger goals: humaneness is not an individual feeling but rather a collective and metaphysical one. In this sense, to be a man of humanity, love and care are not enough. The feeling of *ren* focuses primarily on harmony as a whole and thus on the Supreme Goodness beyond the contextual goodness. Humaneness as a specific virtue is love, but this feeling of love that we can experience naturally and properly first within our family, and second through other relationships, needs to be guided appropriately by other virtues, and needs to be extended. Moreover, to love someone is to have concern for his life as a whole, thus the man of humaneness transforms the others, since to love them is to love the particular in the whole²⁶¹.

The second meaning of humaneness is broader than the first. Here Zhang Zai employs his metaphysical polar understanding to describe sage’s paradigmatic virtue: if *de* represents the oneness behind morality and the proper response to all situations, this unity is specifically represented by two specific virtues: humanness, and *yi* 義, which is usually translated into righteousness or appropriateness²⁶².

²⁶¹ In this sense the man of humaneness does not love the others for the sake of the others, but more broadly for the sake of the others within the world.

²⁶² On the connection of the two terms in the Zhang Zai’s philosophy, Ira Kasoff (1984:168 n. 17) affirms: “Chang did not explain how humaneness and righteousness relate to the other polarities, which are more clearly opposite poles of continuum. He simply followed the Change in treating them as another complementary pair.”

Here Kasoff refers to Zhang Zai comments of the *Great Commentary* where he states: “Qian in the heaven is yang, in the earth is hard, and in man is humaneness. Kun in the heaven is yin, in the earth is

易一物而合三才：陰陽氣也，而謂之天；剛柔質也，而謂之地；仁義德也，而謂之人 (1978:48) “The process of unification [outlined in the] *Changes* is the connection of the triadic powers: the yinyang’s *qi* are called [the power] of heaven; firm and soft qualities are [the power] of earth; benevolence and appropriateness virtue are called [the power] of man.”

一物而兩體，其太極之謂與！陰陽天道，象之成也；剛柔地道，法之效也；仁義人道，性之立也。三才兩之，莫不有乾坤之道。(1978:48) “Does *taiji* is what we call process of unification constituted by the two natural dimensions (unity of opposites)? The interaction of yinyang is the heaven’s process (*tiandao*), it is the completion [all] images The interaction between soft and hard is the earth’s process gives, it is the effectiveness of all natural laws. Benevolence and righteousness are human’s Way. It is the foundation of human’s nature. The three primordial powers are [made by] opposites. Everything have the Way of *qian* and *kun*.”

存虛明，久至德，順變化，達時中，仁之至，義之盡也 (1978:17) “To preserve voidness and brightness, to prolong the supreme virtue for a long time, to follow changes and transformations and to attain timeliness and centrality is the utmost of humaneness and it is making the most of appropriateness.”

In other words, the Way of humaneness and of appropriateness is human moral Way to proceed cosmic harmony. Zhang Zai understands appropriateness and humaneness within the polar paradigm of yinyang.

soft and in man is appropriateness.” (乾于天為陽，於地為剛，于人為仁；坤于天則陰，於地則柔，於人則義) (1978:225) (Trans by Kasoff 1984:45).

Another example of the polar relationship between humaneness and appropriateness can be found in the *Discussion of the Trigrams of the Book of Changes*: “In ancient times the holy sages made the Book of Changes thus: their purpose was to follow the order of their nature and faith. Therefore they determined the tao of heaven and called it yin and yang. They determined the tao of the earth and called it the yielding and the firm. They determined the tao of man and called it humaneness and appropriateness.” (昔者聖人之作《易》也，將以順性命之理，是以立天之道曰陰與陽，立地之道曰柔與剛，立人之道曰仁與義) (Trans by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:264 modified).

Patt-Shamir (2012:234) has pointed out that the connection between polar forces and virtues is not uncommon in Neo-Confucianism. In the commentary on the *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (Taijitu shuo)*, Zhu Xi identifies yang in the universal order with humanity in human order, and yin in the universal order is identified with righteousness.

義以反經為本，經正則精²⁶³；仁以敦化為深，化行則顯。義入神²⁶⁴，動一靜也；仁敦化，靜一動也。仁敦化則無體，義入神則無方。(1978:18) “The appropriateness takes the movement of returning to the guiding principle as the root, its correctness is [appropriateness]’s essence. Humaneness takes complete transformation to the deepest, then the transformations proceed and become perceivable. When appropriateness penetrates the spiritual dimension, the motion change into stillness. When humaneness completes the transformation, stillness changes into motion. Humaneness as magnificent transformation has no fixed body; appropriateness that penetrates into spiritual ability has no direction.”

Zhang Zai here understands humaneness as the virtue that moves from the inner realm to the external world, since caring for someone is a movement that goes from the inner subjective world to the external objective one; on the contrary appropriateness represents the opposite movement since it represents the inward movement that penetrates the internal spiritual life²⁶⁵.

Humaneness and appropriateness are thus virtues that are strictly connected. Being polarities, they cannot but mutually respond to each other and influence each other.

義，仁之動也，流于義者於仁或傷；仁，體之常也，過於仁者於義或害 (1978:34)
 “Appropriateness is the movement of humaneness, but if [the movement] of appropriateness degenerate, humaneness will be damaged. Humaneness is the constancy

²⁶³ In the *Commentary of the Zhengmeng of the Master Zhang*, Wang Fuzhi understands jing 經 as the basic principle (structure) of the cosmos, and fan 反 as the movement that goes back to heart-mind’s original stillness: “The principle of the cosmos is the great root of men and things, events and principles. Going back, is returning and seek for the stillness of the heart-mind.” (經者，人物事理之大本；反者，反而求乎心之安也) (Tang 2000:124).

²⁶⁴ The *Great Commentary of the Book of Changes* states: “when one investigates the essence and the reason (of things), till has entered into the unfathomable, one attains to the largest practical application of them.” (精義入神，以致用也).

²⁶⁵ This association can be better grasped by yinyang’s association. Humaneness as yang extends outward (shen 伸), while appropriateness as yin returns to the origin (gui 歸). This idea was already introduced by the time of Dong Zhongshu. In the *Chunqiu Fanlu* 《春秋繁露》 he states: “Humaneness is to take care of others, appropriateness is to correct oneself. Therefore humaneness is called the acts on others, and appropriateness is called the act on the self. This is the difference about the two terms. (以仁安人，以義正我，故仁之為言人也，義之為言我也，言名以別矣。)(*Chunqiu Fanlu*). On the analysis of the two characters, Roger Ames and David Hall (1987:118) understand the relationship between appropriateness and humaneness as such: “The difference between *yi* and *ren* is that while *ren* is out-ward-directed, *yi* means proceeding inward; while *ren* emphasizes what is distant, *yi* stresses what is close at hand; while love invested in others is *ren*, being appropriate to one’s achieved personhood is *yi*; the focus of *ren* is mainly on others while that of *yi* is one’s person.”

of the natural process, but if one's exceed on humaneness, appropriateness will be harmed.”

Here Zhang Zai's way of reasoning seems to be illogical: on the one hand one, one needs to extend humaneness to the utmost (仁之至) and makes the most of appropriateness (義之盡); on the other, neither the first nor the second can exceed because losing the right balance will result in harmful results. This way of reasoning is only apparently illogical, but totally fits within the logic of harmony. We have seen that humaneness include feelings such as love, compassion, care and so on; besides Zhang Zai understands appropriateness as the proper way to act in the right time (righteousness): “The essence of appropriateness is timely action²⁶⁶.” (精義時措) (1978:51)

動靜不失其時²⁶⁷, 義之極也。義極則光明著見, 唯其時, 物前定而不疚 (1978:37)
“Utmost appropriateness is not to lose timeliness in movement and rest. When there is utmost appropriateness, everything will be bright and evident. Only with timeliness things can be foreseen and there will not be any regret.”

The two virtues ought to be understood relationally, therefore as polarities. Humaneness need to coordinate with appropriateness, the excess of humanity, where any balance and thus appropriateness is lost is not humanity; and similarly to act in time but without humaneness is not righteous action²⁶⁸.

²⁶⁶ As Kasoff (1984:167) has showed, Zhang Zai glosses appropriateness with its homophone yi 宜, suitable, right. This gloss comes from the *Zhongyong*'s statement: “Appropriateness means doing what is fitting wherein esteeming those of superior character is most important.” (義者宜也, 尊賢為大) (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:101).

²⁶⁷ This is a quote from the *Commentary of the Decision* of the hexagram Gen 艮 in the *Book of Changes*: “When it is time to stop, then stop. When it is time to advance, then advance. Thus movement and rest do not miss the right time, and their course becomes light and clear.” (時止則止, 時行則行, 動靜不失其時, 其道光明). (Trans. by Wilhem, Baynes 2003:653).

²⁶⁸ Angle (2009:99) affirms that: “maximal humaneness does not mean to abandon all restraint in indulging another's desires. We are familiar with stories in which love for another causes one to lose one's bearings.”

About the interaction between humaneness and appropriateness Cheng Yi affirms: “The defect of [only recognizing] the many distinctions is that selfishness will dominate and humaneness (*ren*) will be lost. On the other hand, the fault of recognizing no distinctions is that there will be impartial love for all without appropriateness.” (分殊之蔽, 私勝而失仁: 無分之罪, 兼愛而無義) *Ercheng quanshu*. (In *Ibid.*:68-69).

The Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi explained that “extreme of humaneness and the utmost of appropriateness” are only possible when there is no favoring of one over the other, and then adds that

As it was for the natural Way, the human Way, morality, is the Way of harmony. All virtues need to be thought within this logic of harmonization in a large scale. By grounding moral virtues on cosmological world, Zhang Zai extends human morality to the utmost. As we have seen, to act morally in a given situation without grasping the larger context and thus without following the coherency of harmony, will be acting partially or even amorally. The man of virtue is the man that grasps the coherence of the whole and thus loves and acts in a proper way.

In this second sense of humaneness, Zhang Zai broaden the very concept of love and care supporting it with the sense of appropriateness. Here humaneness is something more than a specific virtue, being together with *yi* it acquires the status of polar category. Humaneness and appropriateness synthesize all virtues since they represents the right pattern that man needs to proceed.

The third and the most important meaning of humaneness is the core of Zhang Zai's ethics. Here the philosopher understands humaneness as the unifying concept where all other virtues acquire their specific meanings. As a comprehensive concept we can probably employ the Chinese philosopher Tu Weiming's (1978) claim of *ren* as morality itself²⁶⁹.

Zhang Zai states:

天體物不遺，猶仁體事無不在也。“禮儀三百，威儀三千²⁷⁰”，無一物而非仁也 (1978:13) “Heaven is the natural dimension of everything and does not leave anything behind. Similarly humaneness embody all events and cannot be lost. ‘The rites and ceremonies number fully three hundred, the rules of observance number fully three thousand.’ There is no one single event without humaneness.”

the “extreme of humaneness” and the “utmost of appropriateness” are independent of one another, implying that each is defined by the whole situation, rather than by a specific trade-off against the other value. (Ibidem).

²⁶⁹ Tu Weiming (1978:8) states that “Jen (*ren*) is thus both the moral and ontological basis of self-cultivation. It is, on the one hand, conceived as a driving force behind, and on the other hand, a meaning-structure above moral conduct. Actually, jen is morality.”

²⁷⁰ This is a quote from the *Zhongyong*: “So great indeed! The rites and ceremonies number fully three hundred, the rules of observance number fully three thousand, and only the sage carry them out.” (優優大哉！禮儀三百，威儀三千，待其人然後行) (Trans by Ames, Hall 2001:108).

Humaneness here seems to be the constancy that encompasses all events in the natural world. Represents the sages translation of the cosmic Way into human's word and action (ceremony and rules). Zhang Zai's understanding of humaneness here is thus identical to the broadest meaning of virtue showed above. Humaneness is the natural dimension of things (*ti*) and thus the other virtues are just the function of it:

禮義者仁之用...敬和接物，仁之用 (1978:325) “Ritual propriety and appropriateness are the function of humaneness...give reverence to things and to harmonize them are the functions of humaneness.”

We have seen above that Zhang Zai understands virtue in term of voidness which is the capacity to influence and respond morally to a given situation. Zhang Zai further explains that voidness is the origin of humaneness: “Voidness is the origin of humaneness”(虛者，仁之原) (Ibidem); “From voidness [thereby] the generation of humaneness.” (虛則生仁) (Ibidem)

Humaneness has its roots in voidness, which is nothing but the capacity to build creative and infinite connections. This understanding of *ren*, the most important Confucian virtue, is in my view totally coherent with the purpose of *Zhengmeng*: Zhang Zai's first aim is to undermine heterodox schools and primarily Buddhist metaphysical understanding of void as transcendental principle. We have seen that Zhang Zai first attacks Buddhist's theory of voidness by grounding it on *qi*'s polarities; in particular void is the dimension of *qi* that stands behind interconnections. Here he extends his critique to ethics by saying that Buddhists false understanding of the world has a strong ethical implication since result in an escapist attitude toward society.(see above) One of the reason behind this false attitude toward the world is the false understanding of the concept of void. Zhang Zai here enriches this concept with moral values, what Buddhists understand as the principle that leads to an escapist attitude, is for Zhang Zai the principle that leads to the most important Confucian virtue: humaneness.

But what does this mean? What is the meaning behind the statement “from voidness [thereby] the generation of humaneness?”

We have already seen that voidness stands for goodness: the way the cosmic process goes on; but the goodness is nothing but resonance, the harmonic process of interconnections and interpenetrations. This is the foundation of human morality: human morality is grounded in void since it requires interconnection and interpenetration. The humaneness person, is the one who actualizes proper interconnections and interpenetrations with others and the world²⁷¹; in other words, the humaneness person is the one who actualizes harmony (*cheng*) in the human world.

The ontological basis of harmony is the relationship between differences, and in Zhang Zai's metaphysics the model of relationship is given by the resonance among polarities. Zhang Zai further translates this resonance into moral vocabulary. The moral correspondence of resonance is first love and care, which are the basis of humaneness, and thus the basis for proper interactions. Through humaneness one can feel and experience the sense of unity showed before in the *Western Inscription*. Humaneness is thus the basis for all kind of interactions, is thus the principle of full resonance²⁷²: "The sage rejoice the heaven; hence he unifies the inside with the outside completing his humaneness." (聖人樂天，故合內外而成其仁) (1978:43)

But the virtue of *ren* is not just a matter of simple interaction through love and care. Being concern for others' sake, the person of humaneness does not stop on the realm of feeling, but strives for transforming others for the sake of the entire world. To form one body and thus be true to oneself and to the world, implies the action of integration of the self in the world, but at the same time the integration of others into the same whole. The person of *ren* is concerned for others not being *ren* because in this case harmony cannot

²⁷¹ Insightfully the American scholar Angle (2009:122) defines humaneness as "the felt human interconnection with all aspects of our environment."

²⁷² By understanding humaneness as void and thus resonance, Zhang Zai probably retrieves the original and central aspect of the concept of *ren* and gives it a new dimension. As the essay of Wang Huaiyu (2012) has showed, the original meaning of *ren* lies in the sense of *gantong*, which describes the very manner in which sky and earth, the human and the divine, are brought together in a harmonious conjunction. As Wang (ibid:482) has point out: "*Gantong* refers to the reciprocal influences between humans and gods, the open comportment of a human self with things and events in the surrounding world, and the intercourse between the cosmic forces of yin and yang. *Gantong* is also the foundation of the consciousness of the same kind that is invoked in the ancestral sacrificial ceremonies, that is, the *shi* rites... the significance of *gantong* and its relation to the same-kind consciousness offers a unique vantage point from which we may finally see in perspective the different aspects of *ren* such as the love of others, benevolence, humanity, affinity, and perfect virtue."

Kim Junyuep (2008) has a similar understanding of Zhang Zai's concept of *ren*. He translates *ren* into resonance among humans.

But I do not agree with Kim's restriction of *ren* within human relationship. As the above interpretation points out, *ren* is rooted in a broader context than just human relationship. This is also quite evident in Zhang Zai's *Western Inscription* where the full resonance is extended to the entire world.

be achieved. If harmony cannot be achieved, there will be something in the world that cannot get what is due²⁷³: “The one who can change a person without humaneness into a person of humanity, has proceed his humanity at the best.” (能使不仁者仁，仁之施厚矣) (1978:32) And in the broadest sense: “humaneness unifies the goodness of the world.” (仁統天下之善) (1978:50)

This sense of humaneness goes along with the Way of harmony (*cheng*) depicted above and the idea of Supreme Goodness: since Goodness in the broadest sense is to undertake cosmic activity of harmonization, and to be *cheng* is to actualize this possibility that we endow by nature; in order to achieve this unity man needs to overcome themselves through the practice of humaneness. Therefore humaneness is the virtue by which harmony can be achieved, and in this sense it is the source and the Way of morality²⁷⁴.

²⁷³ This way of reasoning follows the *Great Learning*'s idea of the achievement of harmony as a comprehensive activity. Harmonize the self is not just an inward activity, but requires also the transformation of others through compassion and care. Li Chengyang (2014:89) points out that this process cannot be understood as a temporal progression from inner world to the external one. Since harmony is intrapersonal harmony, inner self-cultivation goes along with interaction and transformation of others.

²⁷⁴ Zhang Zai's understanding of humaneness as the source of morality and its relation with resonance leads us to an interesting similarity with what contemporary psychologists and philosophers call empathy and empathic care. Empathy is “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another”(Hobson 2004:151), this meaning is often described with the expression of “being in someone else's shoes”. Moreover, if we want to analyze the origin and development of the term we can see that there are many similarities with the idea of moral resonance and harmony. Even if the idea of empathy can be even dated back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, will be directly express only from the end of the eighteenth century in Germany through the word *Einfühlung*. Analyzing the German word we can see that it is composed by the prefix *ein* which can mean inside and a movement of penetration from outside. But *ein* recalls even the one (*eins*), the unity and the unity forming of the two. *Fühlung*, form *fühlen* which can be translated into feel. In his study on the history of empathy Andrea Pinotti (2010:92-93) affirmed that: “[Einfühlung is] the movement from the subject towards the other (the other subject—the stranger, the foreign human being—or the object, living or nonliving), according to a dual, bipolar structure, and (2) the process of the cancellation of such alterity, dualism, or polarity: the becoming one of two, exactly thanks to such a movement of identification” Empathy from its very meaning seems to deal to the feeling of becoming one, to the movement form alterity to unity.

In recent years a numbers of psychologists and philosophers have begun to analyze the implication of empathy in moral experience. Michael Slote (2007) who has analyzed the role of empathy in ethics, understands empathy as the engine of the compassion and concern for others. On what concern Zhang Zai's morality, the idea of humaneness (defined through resonance as the foundation of the harmonization of becoming one of the two) seems to have some similarities. Both empathy and humaneness work through resonance and thus interaction and interpenetration, and both deal with the process of unity forming. It is interesting to note that in the history of the development of this concept, sometimes were employed example of resonance that resemble the above showed example in ancient Chinese texts. Philosophers as David Hume and Johann Gottfried Herder employed the above showed example of the resonance between strings to explain the feeling of empathy (they called sympathy but it is closer to empathy). See in Pinotti (2010).

Another similarity between humaneness and empathy lie in their goals which is to transform the others. The humaneness person is the one who transform the non-humaneness person into a humaneness one; in a similar fashion helping others to be empathic is to be empathic oneself.

But how can we learn to be virtuous? How can we actualize the natural goodness possessed by our nature? In other words, how can we proceed harmony in human world?

To answer to these questions, I need first to analyze Zhang Zai's theory of knowledge within the process of self-cultivation, this because Zhang Zai's moral practice goes along with moral knowledge and perception in the sense that to know goodness is directly linked to appropriate moral response toward a given situation²⁷⁵. But morality in its utmost meaning is not to simply act correctly, it is also a process of transforming the self and the others, to build and harmonious whole, and to create an harmonious continuity between the inner self and the external world. In this sense, knowledge and practice need to be conceived mutually interconnected: knowledge cannot be separated from practice because the result will not be knowledge, they thus can be framed within the polar discourse showed above; knowledge is the necessary condition to moral practice, but at the same time, practice is the necessary condition for moral knowledge. In the next chapter I will analyze Zhang Zai's theory of moral knowledge and how it is applied in the process of the self-cultivation.

For a discussion of the term of empathy within the Confucian tradition see Slote (2010), and Stephen Angle (2009).

²⁷⁵ As Angle (2009:121) has pointed out: "There is now a considerable body of contemporary Western philosophical reflection on the nature of moral perception, much of it building on ideas found in Aristotle." He further presents the idea of the contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum that recognizes a direct link between moral perception and moral response: "Perception is not merely aided by emotion but is also part constituted by appropriate response. Good perception is a full recognition or acknowledgment of the practical situation; the whole personality sees it for what it is".

5. ZHANG ZAI'S MORAL CULTIVATION

5.1 Introduction

In order to answer to the question how to become a moral person, that in Zhang Zai's philosophy implies how to act according to the process of harmony and harmonization, we will need first to analyze Zhang Zai's theory of the heart-mind and thus Zhang Zai's epistemological theory.

In this chapter, we will see first that Zhang Zai's epistemology is primarily moral epistemology since to know the truth of something is to know how that thing can fit morally in that given context. This seems now quite obvious because Supreme Goodness (harmony) is the underlying structure of the natural process. In other words, knowing how something can adhere and proceed in tune with the process, is knowing the truth of something²⁷⁶. Second, we will see that Zhang Zai's primal interest on heart-mind is about how to cultivate it and thus how develop morality, rather than to give an epistemological description of it. This is because to know the truth of something is at the same time to know how to act conforming to that truth²⁷⁷.

But how can this knowledge be possible? And why does not everyone possess it or develop it?

The answer to the first question will be that human being knows due to the inner ability of heart-mind; and the second, will be that not every human being possesses knowledge because not everyone's will is committed to harmony. Therefore, first even if everyone possesses the same moral capacity, not everyone makes the most of this capacity, since to learn how to do it one need to undergoing through a process of cultivation of the self.

²⁷⁶ Moral action is thus related to what kind of contribution a certain action gives to the whole. The American scholar Donald Munro (1969:29) analyzing Confucian ethics general tendencies claims that Chinese idea of "ethical imperative derives from the contribution that a given object provide to the stability of the total order...naturally without interference."

²⁷⁷ We can say that Confucian thinkers generally tend to focus their attention on the activity of the heart-mind engaged in moral thinking rather than trying to give a description of epistemological experience. Thinking about the cosmos as an harmonious process that is morally good, the effort of human being will be that of trying to know the underlying moral principle that guide it. Therefore the primal function of human heart-mind will be on grasping these moral principles. In this sense Munro defines Chinese concept of mind as an "evaluative organ that has the function to identify normative qualities in Nature and society...to know is to grasp general moral principle". See Ibid:28.
Zhang Zai follows this trend of thought since his theory of the heart-mind is primarily focused on the cultivation of the moral heart-mind.

Since the answer to the first question pinpoints to the capacity of human heart-mind we need first to explain what is this heart-mind and how is related to the paradigm of harmony as the main theme of this investigation.

5.2 Zhang Zai's theory of heart-mind

We have seen in the previous chapter that Zhang Zai considers the main difference between human and heaven the fact that human being has mind and heaven has not. Heaven acts correctly without the need of the reason, it nurtures and let things flourish without efforts and without concerns. Therefore heaven does not need mind²⁷⁸. On the other hand, human beings need to reflect on things in order to act correctly and in accord with the Way. The mind is the tool man uses to adhere to this process: by setting one's mind into the cosmic process, one will be attuned with it: “[the sage] sets the mind in heaven and earth, establish the Way of the people²⁷⁹.” (為天地立心，為生民立道) (1978:376)

But how does Zhang Zai define the heart-mind? How can one develop the ability to attune it with the cosmos?

²⁷⁸ We have seen in the previous chapter that Zhang Zai almost agrees with the Laozi's assertion of heaven not having heart-mind. (see ch. 4). Besides, Zhang Zai further refers to the *Changes* statement about the heart-mind of heaven in the hexagram Fu 復. He explains that when the *Changes* talks about heaven's heart-mind, it does not mean the real mind, but shows heaven's generative power of giving birth to things: “The hexagram *Fu* speaks about the heart-mind of heaven and earth; the hexagram *Xian*, *Heng* and *Dazhuang* talk about the feeling of heaven and earth. The heart-mind is internal, its origin is inside, and then after it acquires forms it can be seen. Feelings are what can be seen within matters, hence can be grasped and have names and forms...what is generally defined the mind of heaven and earth, is the great virtue of heaven and earth which gives life; the heart- mind of heaven and earth is the roots that gives life to things.” (複言“天地之心”，鹹、恒、大壯言“天地之情”。心，內也，其原在內時，則有形見，情則見於事也，故可得而名狀...大抵言“天地之心”者，天地之大德曰生，則以生物為本者，乃天地之心也) (1978:113).

²⁷⁹ The past century philosopher Feng Youlan (1999:159) comments this famous passage as such: “Heaven and earth have no mind, but human beings are born in them, and human beings have mind, hence human mind is heaven and earth's mind. In other words, the physical world have no thinking capacity; human's brain is the highest form by which things are composed. The activity of the brain is to think; to think is thus the result of things activity. Among all beings, man is the one with intelligence, intelligence is the ability to think, therefore is in the mind. To establish the mind on heaven and earth is to develop the human's thinking ability to the highest limit. Therefore one can achieve the most and the highest understanding of things and rules of the world. (天地是没有心的，但人生于其间，人是有人心的，人的心也就是天地之心了。换句话说物质世界是没有思维的，人的脑子是物质组成的最高形式。脑子的活动是思维，思维也是物质活动的产物。人为万物之灵，灵就灵在他能思维，他有心。为天地立心就是把人的思维能力发展到最高限度，天地间的事物和规律得到最多和最高理解”).

Zhang Zai defines the heart-mind as the unity between nature and consciousness: “From the harmonious unity between nature and consciousness we have what is called the heart-mind.” (合性與知覺²⁸⁰, 有心之名) (1978:9)

And moreover:

由象²⁸¹識心，徇象喪心。知象者心，存象之心，亦象而已，謂之心可乎? (1978:24)
“From images the heart-mind can be perceived, by over-attaching to images the mind will be lost. The mind is what knows images, but the heart-mind that preserve these images become image too. How can this be called the heart-mind?”

First of all, Zhang Zai defines the heart-mind as that part of human being that allows the connection between human nature and perception; in other words, it is due to one’s heart-mind whether we are able (we have the disposition) to perceive and know things.

有無一，內外合，(自注:庸聖同。)此人心之所自來也 (1978:63) “Being and non being are united, internal and external interact (Zhang’s note: ordinary man and sages share the same capacity). This is where the heart-mind comes from.”

On the one hand, the mind is the principle by which one can interact with the world, the connection between inner state and the external world; one perceive the mind from the interaction with things, if there were no things, no mind will exist. But on the other hand, Zhang Zai is also saying that if one is too much concerned with the perceiving object, the heart-mind will lose its function.

To better explains Zhang Zai’s idea of losing one’s mind functioning, we need to clarify the ontological constitution of the heart-mind.

Zhang Zai states: “The Great Void is the reality of the heart-mind.” (太虛者心之實也) (1978:324)

²⁸⁰ Tang Junyi (1956:119) defines consciousness the result that comes from the contact with things.

²⁸¹ Tang Junyi (Ibidem) points out that by images (phenomena) Zhang Zai means “the appearance of things perceived by the mind and the impressions and ideas left on the mind due to its perceptions”. Similarly, Ziporyn (2015:180) defines image “concrete mental conception, the immediate fixed notions of apprehended objects”; in other words, “images are the content of the mind” (象是心的內容) as Yang Lihua (2008:118) synthesizes.

Human's heart-mind, in its natural state, is nothing but voidness²⁸². Being voidness (the capacity for resonance within *qi* that one endows by nature), the heart-mind is what allows man's connection with things and with the world; in other words, the heart-mind is human's fundamental organ by which one can make the most of one's nature and achieves a complete attunement with the Way.

心能盡性，“人能弘道”也；性不知檢其心，“非道弘人”也²⁸³ (1978:22) “The heart-mind has the ability to make the most of nature, therefore it is said ‘man can enlarge the Way’; human nature does not know how to control the heart-mind, therefore it is said ‘the Way cannot enlarge the man.’”

Zhang Zai here quotes Confucius famous statement, and explains that the Way that one endows by nature does not have the capacity to lead and direct the man. The Way has no heart-mind. Therefore is man responsibility of making the most of his/her own nature and thus achieve the complete adherence with the Way. Man can do it by extending the heart-mind to the utmost²⁸⁴.

天大無外，故有外之心不足以合天心 (1978:24) “Heaven is that vast that nothing stands outside it. Therefore the heart-mind that has something outside, it has not yet achieved the unity with heaven's heart-mind.”

²⁸² The idea of void as the basic constitution of heart-mind was probably influenced by Buddhism. But as Tang Junyi (1956:116) has pointed out, the idea of a direct relationship between void and heart-mind generally belongs to the whole Chinese tradition: “In traditional Chinese thought, mind is seldom taken as a collection of numerous ideas and impressions, for ideas and impressions come and go constantly in the mind. When they are there, they are there; when they are gone, they are gone. Since the comings and goings replace and cancel each other, we cannot really locate these impressions and ideas in our minds, and let them be taken as the determinant of its nature, nor can we take the mind as a collection of impressions and ideas of objects...hence, the nature of the mind is void.”

Moreover, as we have seen before, Zhang Zai's understanding of void differs with Buddhism; voidness is even one of the main argument that he employs on his critique against Buddhism. Tang Junyi recognizes three major differences between Zhang Zai's idea of void heart-mind, and Buddhist's one (Tang primarily analyzes Chan Buddhism): first, the Ch'ans make no reference to the objective and cosmic origin of the void and intuitive heart-mind; second, the Ch'ans have nothing to say about the virtue and value content of the heart-mind; and, third, the Ch'ans are silent on the practice of social ethics through the complete realization of the heart- mind and its nature. (Ibid:118).

We will see below in more detail the second and the third points, for what concern the first we have already seen that Zhang Zai's idea of great void grounds on *qi*'s principle of resonance, emptying the heart-mind is to prepare the heart-mind for full resonance. The heart-mind needs to be free of concerns and desires, and as Kasoff (1984:88) has pointed out, it needs to be impartial and devoid of self-interest.

²⁸³ Zhang Zai here quotes Confucius, *Analects* 15.29: “the Master said: man can enlarge the Way, but it is not true that the Way enlarges man.” (子曰：人能弘道，非道弘人。)(Trans. by Dawson 2008:63).

²⁸⁴ We will see below that Zhang Zai understands the heart-mind as what leads nature and emotions.

And: “When the heart-mind is void, nothing can stand outside and block it.” (虛心則無外以為累) (1978:325) “After making the heart-mind void, one can make the most of it. (虛心然後能盡心²⁸⁵) (1978:325)

大其心則能體²⁸⁶天下之物，物有未體，則心為有外 (1978:24) “Extending the mind one can embody all things in the world. If even one thing is not yet embodied, the heart-mind still have something outside it.”

The function of the heart-mind is to allow human connection with others and the world. This basic functionality can be extended to the utmost by reaching every entity in the cosmos. This is what Zhang Zai calls “to make the most of the nature.” (jinxing 盡性) “The man who has extended [his heart-mind], has made the most of his/her nature.” (大人盡性) (1978:21) The one who is able to extend the heart-mind is able to be one with heaven. As we have observed in the previous chapter, this has also a moral implication since to form one with heaven is to be right, and doing right is being concerned of others and the whole world. Therefore being a principle of interconnection and interpenetration, the heart-mind stands also for the principle of moral achievement²⁸⁷.

求養之道，心只求是而已。蓋心弘則是，不弘則不是，心大則百物皆通，心小則百物皆病²⁸⁸ (1978:269) “Seeking the Way of self-cultivation is simply seeking rightness with the heart-mind. By extending the heart-mind and one will be right; without extending it one will be not right. When the heart-mind is extended all the hundred things are connected. When the heart-mind is small, all the hundred things are isolated.”

²⁸⁵ The idea of “making the most of one’s heart-mind” (jinxin 盡心) comes from Mencius. *Mencius* 7A: “Mencius said: For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. The retention of his heart and the nurturing of his nature are the means by which he serves Heaven.” (孟子曰：盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。存其心，養其性，所以事天也) (Trans. by Lau 2004:145).

²⁸⁶ Here the character ti 體 can be translated into to embody or to experience something.

²⁸⁷ Being grounded on nature and world, that are naturally moral, heart-mind’s natural function is moral knowledge.

²⁸⁸ Here bing 病 that is usually translated into sickness, can be understood as being separated from the flow of the process: to be isolated. For the relationship between healthiness and the harmonious flow of the process, see below.

But the heart-mind's ability to connect with things is also problematic because it is also the reason why the same heart-mind can be lost: "The heart-mind that preserve these images becomes image too" (存象之心，亦象而已) (1978:24).

To lose one's heart-mind means to lose the capacity of resonance: "If the heart-mind cannot be void is because it is overgrown and blocked by things" (心之不能虛，由物榛礙) (1978:325).

It is because the heart-mind is filled by ideas and impressions that loses its liveliness and original voidness: "Submitting to things the mind will be lost, that's why human [mind] transforms into things and the principle of heaven is destroyed!" (徇物喪心，人化物而滅天理者乎) (1978:18) "By over-attaching to images the heart-mind will be lost." (徇象喪心) (1978:24)

How can one solve this apparent contradiction? How can one preserve the natural capacity of resonance without being tied by things? How can one perceive things without being attached to them? how can the heart-mind be extended?

Zhang Zai's answer to these questions is crucial for our investigation. First, Zhang Zai cannot think about to preserve the capacity of resonance of the heart-mind by avoiding interactions with the external world, this will be against his critique on Buddhism, and against his ethical theory. Second, since Zhang Zai's philosophical primal aim is pedagogical, and points toward moral education, his solution must imply an ethical solution.

Zhang Zai points out that the reason why the heart-mind becomes tied to things and thus loses its liveliness is due to selfish desires. Being led by personal desires and egoistic purposes, human's heart-mind becomes subdued by things and loses its inborn purity. The result is that the heart-mind becomes the same thing that perceives:

成心²⁸⁹忘然後可與進於道。(原注:成心者,私意也。)化則無成心矣。成心者,意之謂與?無成心者,時中而已矣。(1978:25) "Only after the predetermined heart-

²⁸⁹ The concept of *chenxin* 成心, predetermined heart-mind, comes from Zhuangzi. In the *Zhuangzi qiwulun*'s 《齊物論》 chapter it is stated: "If we were to follow the judgments of the predetermined

mind is forgotten one can go along with the Way. (Original comments: predetermined heart-mind is to have personal intentions.) To transform is being without a predetermined heart-mind. Is not the predetermined mind what is called intentions? Without the predetermined heart-mind one will act in the right time and with equilibrium.”

毋四者²⁹⁰則心虛，虛者，止善之本也²⁹¹ (1978:307) “Removing the four bad and the heart-mind will be void. Voidness is to reside in the roots of goodness.”

Zhang Zai is saying that human heart-mind is potentially limitless (voidness), can reach and encompass everything in the cosmos. The empty heart-mind is the heart-mind that is free from the tyranny of desires and personal goals, this free heart-mind is clear as a mirror that is able to reflect without holding on things²⁹².

mind, who would be left alone and without a teacher? Not only would it be so with those who know the sequences (of knowledge and feeling) and make their own selection among them, but it would be so as well with the stupid and unthinking. For one who has not this determined mind, to have his affirmations and negations is like the case described in the saying, 'He went to Yue today, and arrived at it yesterday.' It would be making what was not a fact to be a fact.” (夫隨其成心而師之，誰獨且無師乎？奚必知代而心自取者有之？愚者與有焉。未成乎心而有是非，是今日適越而昔至也。是以無有為有) (Trans by Legge 1962:181).

²⁹⁰ The so called four bads are arbitrary opinion (yi 意), dogmatism (bi 必), obstinacy (gu 固) and egoism (wo 我). See ch. 4.

²⁹¹ To “reside in the roots of goodness” (止善之本也) is similar to the *Great Learning* statement: to “rest in the highest excellence.” (在止於至善).

²⁹² The analogy mirror and heart-mind is largely employed along the history of Chinese thought. From Confucian Xunzi, to Daoist Zhuangzi and even Buddhist schools such as Huayan and Chan, all employ this analogy to explain the best achievement of one's heart-mind. The mirror mind is the enlightened mind that is able to respond properly to all given situation. As Erine Cline (2008:338) has noted in her investigation on this analogy, in early China “instead of passively reflecting the objects that came before them, mirrors were thought to respond to their environment in active and dynamic ways, evidencing a mysterious power.”

The earliest uses of mirror as mind's ideal state analogy is in the *Zhuangzi*. It is stated: “When the perfect man employs his mind, it is a mirror. It conducts nothing and anticipates nothing; it responds to (what is before it), but does not retain it. Thus he is able to deal successfully with all things, and injures none.” (至人之用心若鏡，不將不迎，應而不藏，故能勝物而不傷) (Trans. by Legge 1962:266).

The perfect mind does not store anything but is able to respond actively to all demands. Besides Zhuangzi, the Confucian Xunzi employs this metaphor to explain the ideal state of mind engaged in learning: “Hence, the human mind may be compared to a pan of water. If you place the pan upright and do not stir the water up, the mud will sink to the bottom, and the water on top will be clear and pure enough to see your beard and eyebrows and to examine the lines on your face. But if a slight wind passes over its surface, the submerged mud will be stirred up from the bottom, and the clarity and purity of the water at the top will be disturbed so that it is impossible to obtain the correct impression of even the general outline of the face. Now, the mind is just the same.” (故人心譬如槃水，正錯而勿動，則湛濁在下，而清明在上，則足以見鬢眉而察理矣。微風過之，湛濁動乎下，清明亂於上，則不可以得大形之正也。心亦如是矣。) (Trans. by Knoblock 1994:107).

人當平物我，合內外，如是以身鑒物便偏見，以天理中鑒則人與己皆見，猶持鏡在此，但可鑒彼，于己莫能見也，以鏡居中則盡照。只為天理常在，身與物均見，則自不私，己亦是一物，人常脫去己身則自明…是以大人正己而物正，須待自己者皆是著見，于人物自然而正。以誠而明者，既實而行之明也，明則民斯信矣。己未正而正人，便是有意、我、固、必。鑒己與物皆見，則自然心弘而公平。(1978:285) “When man are able to equalize the self with things, they can unify the inner with external. In this way the self reflects the things and the results is partial seeing. The [mirror formed by the] principles of heaven reflects both the self and others. It is as if you hold a mirror over here: you can only reflect the other person, and see nothing of yourself. But with the mirror in the center everything is reflected. When the principles of heaven are always present, yourself and things are all seen; then you are not selfish, [because you realize] you are also a thing. [In this manner,] people often transcend their own bodies, and thus achieve clarity²⁹³ ...therefore the great man rectifies the self and thus things will become correct. One has to wait until himself has reached a global vision and then others and things will be naturally rectified. Being in harmony and possesses clarity [of the heart-mind] is like sees reality [for what it is] and proceed with clarity. With clarity one will achieve the trust of people. If the self is not yet corrected and wants to rectify the others, the result will be [a heart-mind] with arbitrary opinion, dogmatism, obstinacy and egoism. The mirror [‘s heart-mind] reflects the self and things; in this way the heart-mind naturally expand and reach universal impartiality.”

The mirror reflects without holding on things and thus is able to be responsive, likewise the clear heart-mind is not tied to things and thus is not limited to selfish desires and goals. But on the contrary, by focusing on specific and limited things, the heart-mind will be limited to those things and will lose clarity: “When the heart-mind is limited, it stops in pursuing limited events.” (以有限之心，止可求有限之事)(1978:272)

On the one hand, Zhang Zai recognizes the fundamental function of the heart-mind which is to connect the self with the external world. This function is the key to reach a

Here Xunzi is comparing the mind with a pan of water that can be disturbed by external worries and desires and lose its pure clarity.

The metaphor of mirror was later largely employed by several Chinese Buddhists schools such as Huayan and Chan among others.

²⁹³ Some part of this translation are from Kasoff (1984:107).

complete vision of the world and thus to make the most of one's nature. But on the other hand, this can be also problematic since it is due to this ability that one can become tied to things and thus lose the ability to expand the self. Morally speaking, to fully exploit heart-mind's potentiality is to transcend the self, and this has a strong moral implication: transcending the self by focusing on others implies transcending selfish desires focusing on universal needs. The expanded heart-mind is not focused on personal goals but on universal harmony.

Therefore here we have two kinds of knowledge directly linked to two different uses of the heart-mind: the first knowledge is the limited knowledge of the senses that unify the subjective inner self with the world objective external world; the second is the knowledge of the expanded heart-mind, which can be called moral knowledge, that is able to transcend the difference between the self and the world. But even if this two kinds of knowledge seems to be in a conflictual position (we need to get rid of the first in order to reach the second), Zhang Zai harmonizes them into a single functional path.

5.2.1 Empirical and moral knowledge

We have seen before that Zhang Zai's critique on heterodox schools is based on the claim of them being one-sided: Buddhists and Daoists fail to see the world as a whole, they divide the world of principles and values from that of the senses, the result is to see this world, and human life within it, as an illusion. On the other hand, Zhang Zai criticizes average people's attitude toward life because they fail to exploit their nature, they totally rely on what they hear and see. Zhang Zai tries to repair this fracture basing his system on the idea of the process of harmony and harmonization between the two opposed attitude. This vision is naturally applied in his epistemological theory which is first a moral epistemology, and second is the base of self-cultivation.

First of all, we need to clarify these two kinds of knowledge. Zhang Zai calls the first form of knowledge the empirical knowledge, the one that relies on senses. The description that Zhang Zai gives in defining this kind of knowledge is problematic since he changes its values several times along his writings. Besides, the second form of knowledge (moral knowledge) is constant in its high evaluation.

5.2.1.1 Empirical knowledge

Zhang Zai's idea of empirical knowledge is first developed in the critique toward the indolent attitude of average people. In the sixth chapter of the *Zhengmeng*, he compares the extended mind of the sage with the small mind of the majority:

大其心則能體天下之物，物有未體，則心為有外。世人之心，止於聞見之狹。聖人盡性，不以見聞梏其心，其視天下無一物非我 (1978:24) “Extending the heart-mind one can embody (experience, come in contact with) all things in the world. If even one thing is not yet embodied, the heart-mind will still have something outside it. The heart-mind of average people stops to the narrowness of their senses. The sage makes the most of his nature; when the heart-mind is not restrained by the senses, I can see that there is no one thing in the world that is not [part of] myself.”

The difference between the moral man and the average people seems to lie in a different use of the heart-mind in the process of learning. Average people rely exclusively on the information given by the senses. They think that is all about their heart-mind and knowledge.

人病其以耳目見聞累其心而不務盡其心，故思盡其心者，必知心所從來而後能。(1978:25) “The problem of people is that their heart-mind is tied up by the senses and they are not engaged in the process of making the most of their heart-mind. If one thinks about making the most of his/her heart-mind, he/she ought to know where the heart-mind comes from, and then he/she can proceed.”

人謂己有知，由耳目有受也；人之有受，由內外之合也。知合內外於耳目之外，則其知也過人遠矣 (1978:25) “When people thinks to know something, they get this knowledge from the sense organs. What humans get it is the joining of the inner and the outer. The one whose knowledge goes beyond the one of the senses that join the inner with the outer; this man's knowledge is far beyond [average people].”

The empirical knowledge is limited and one-sided. Relying just in the sensual experience, one can just grasp one part of the world: “the problem is partial seeing, if someone’s heart-mind has this problem, the senses have also this problem.” (偏見者即病也，人心病則耳目亦病) (1978:314)

But on the other hand, the senses are still part of one’s nature and therefore one cannot forget sensual experience²⁹⁴. Forgetting it one will fall in the mistake of heterodox schools. As we have already seen, what Zhang Zai refuses is not the world of the senses, but the lack of harmony between the empirical world and the world of principles. Relying completely on the senses, one will fail to extend the heart-mind to the utmost since the senses are limited like the things they perceive. But on the other hand, they are what human naturally endows. In order to restore the sensual experience that was humiliate by Buddhists’ attitude²⁹⁵, Zhang Zai validates the experience of the senses as a fundamental part in the process of knowledge and self-cultivation:

耳目雖為性累，然合內外之德，知其為啟²⁹⁶之之要也。(1978:25) “Although the senses may tie up one’s nature, they possess the virtue (principle) of unifying the internal and the external, they nonetheless are needed for enlightenment.”

聞見不足以盡物，然又須要他。耳目不得則是木石，要他便合得內外之道，若不聞不見又何驗？(1978:313) “The perception of the senses is not enough to make the most of things, but one still needs them. If the senses cannot get, they become the same as woods and stones; one needs them to grasp the Way that connects the inner world with the external one. If one cannot hear or see how can one get this kind of experience?”

²⁹⁴ Life include appetite for sex, food and so on. “Eating drinking, and sex are all the nature. How can these be done away with?” (飲食男女皆性也，是烏可滅) (1978:63) See ch. 3.

²⁹⁵ As we have seen, in Zhang Zai’s interpretation, on the one hand Buddhists recognize the senses as the unique cause of the world; but on the other, they see the world and thus human sensual perception as an illusion. See ch. 3.

²⁹⁶ Here I choose to translate qi 啟 into “enlightenment”, but as the Chinese scholar Zhen Zemian (2015:1256) has insightfully pointed out, it literally means both “to open” and “to see”. All these meanings are coherent with Zhang Zai’s idea of enlightenment since the sage is the one who is fully responsive and thus fully open the self to the world; moreover, the sage is not one-sided and has a complete and harmonic vision of the world.

Human senses are an important part of human basic constitution; the senses show to human heart-mind the principle of knowledge and moral cultivation. The senses show the “primitive unity” between our inner part and the external world, they show how to join different and opposite parts of the same whole. In this sense, empirical knowledge gained through sensual perception is the key to heart-mind’s expansion and moral achievement²⁹⁷.

The problem arises when the sensual perception becomes the only experience one can rely on; the one who stops at the stage of sensual perception cannot but fail to make the most of the heart-mind:

有無一，內外合，（自注：庸聖同。）此人心之所自來也。若聖人則不專以聞見為心，故能不專以聞見為用（1978:63）“Being and non being are united, internal and external interact (Zhang’s note: ordinary man and sages are the same in this). This is where the heart-mind comes from. Since the sage does not exclusively concentrate on the sensual perception as his heart-mind, he does not take the sensual perception as his sole function.”

We will see that the moral man are those who can balance their senses without burden their heart-mind. On the other hand, Zhang Zai sees that most of the people lean exclusively on their senses letting the heart-mind be obscured by things and desires.

5.2.1.2 Moral knowledge

Besides the knowledge gained from sensual perception, Zhang Zai accounts another kind of knowledge. This second form of knowledge is beyond the limits of the first, and it is that by which one can make the most of the heart-mind and achieve the unity with the Way. Zhang Zai calls this superior form of knowledge: “the knowledge of the virtue nature”（德性所知/之知）and the “knowledge gained from harmonization and enlightenment.”（誠明所知）²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ It is important to note that Zhang Zai never ascribes to the senses the failure of enlightenment’s achievement. On the contrary, since the perception of the objective world originates on the senses, one needs to fully exploit their potentiality to the utmost.

²⁹⁸ It is important to note that in Chinese Classical language the character zhi 知 usually translated with the verb to know has a broader range of meanings. As Roger Ames and David Hall (1987:50-52) has

見聞之知，乃物交而知，非德性所知；德性所知，不萌於見聞 (1978:24) “The knowledge gained by sensual perception is the knowledge that comes from the interaction with things, is not the knowledge of the virtue nature. The knowledge of the virtue nature does not emerge from sensual perception.”

誠明所知乃天德良知，非聞見小知而已。(1978:15) “The knowledge of enlightenment that results from harmonization is the intuitive knowledge of the heaven’s virtue, is not the limited knowledge of the sensual perception.”

Zhang Zai links this superior form of knowledge to virtue nature and harmony. This form of knowledge seems to go beyond the sensual perception and thus to the contact with things, therefore it is not limited to things. Besides, Zhang Zai describes this form of knowledge as “natural” and “intuitive”, pairing it with two important Confucian terms: “the virtue of heaven” and “the intuitive knowledge”. We have seen before that the “virtue of heaven” (天德) is nothing but the benefic power of cosmos that nourishes all things and let them flourish, in other words: harmony²⁹⁹. The second term, “intuitive knowledge” (良知), comes from Mencius and basically pinpoints to a form of knowledge that goes beyond reflection³⁰⁰.

insightfully showed that *zhi* can often be translated into the verb to realize. In this sense the act of knowing cannot be separated from the act of doing what one has learnt.

For instance in the *Analects* 15.4 Confucius employs *zhi* in this performative (unity of knowledge and action) sense: “The Master said: You rare are those who understand virtue” (子曰：由！知德者鮮矣。)(Trans. by Dawson 2008:60).

For what concern our investigation, here both the “knowledge of virtue nature” and the “knowledge gained from harmonization and enlightenment” include this performative sense. As Alison Black (1989:193) has pointed out: “in Chang Tsai’s writing... ideally (as in the case of the sage) one acted morally out of a comprehensive identification with and spontaneous participation in the cosmic unity. In its combination of knowing and sensing, moral understanding was expected to lead to moral action. thus to achieve moral understanding was also to become morally good.”

²⁹⁹ See ch. 4.

³⁰⁰ *Mencius* 7A: “Mencius said, what a man is able to do without having to learn is what he can truly do; what he knows without having to reflect on it is what he truly knows.” (孟子曰：人之所不學而能者，其良能也；所不慮而知者，其良知也。)(Trans. by Lau 2004:101).

However as Wang Fuzhi has noted, Zhang Zai just employs the term *liangzhi* 良知 once in the *Zhengmeng*, preferring to employ another Mencian term: *liangneng* 良能. “While master Mencius talks about both innate knowledge and innate ability, master Zhang stress more on innate ability.” (孟子言良知良能，而张子重言良能。)(Tang 2000:133).

In my opinion Zhang Zai emphasizes the role of innate ability to stress the actual possibility of unity between heaven and man over the speculative knowledge promoted by Buddhists. “Heaven innate abilities are basically my own innate abilities” (天良能本吾良能) (1978:22).

“What sages cannot know are the innate abilities of heaven’s virtue. But by setting their heart-mind on seeking them, even if they cannot get them they come to know them.” (聖不可知者，乃天德良能，立心求之，則不可得而知之。)(1978:17).

Being without reflection, in other words intuitive, and being totally coherent with the process of harmony and harmonization, this kind of knowledge is the full spontaneous expression of one's heart-mind and of one's natural disposition:

天人異用，不足以言誠；天人異知，不足以盡明。所謂誠明者，性與天道不見乎小大之別也。(1978:20) “If heaven and human differ in their functions, it cannot be called the Way of harmony. If heaven and human differ in their knowledge, it cannot be called making the most of brightness. What is called the knowledge gained from harmonization and enlightenment is when in the unity between cosmic process and human nature one cannot see the difference between smallness greatness³⁰¹.”

We have already seen that Zhang Zai defines *cheng* as the complete adherence with the process of harmonization³⁰²; to adhere with the process (forming one) one can reach enlightenment (明), which is the fullest form of knowledge able to encompass everything (大). In this sense there is no difference between heaven and man since both of them encompass every single entity. This kind of knowledge that flourish from one's natural constitution cannot but be moral knowledge because to adhere to the process is to undertake the duty of harmonization. Expanding one's heart-mind and making the most of one natural virtue is to harmonize oneself and others with the Way: “When one's virtue nature is full and realized, man's transformation begins from the self. Rectifying the self, things will become correct.” (己德性充實，人自化矣，正己而物正也)(1978:312)

How can one reach this highest form of knowledge? And what is the relationship between this form of knowledge and sensual perception? Since moral knowledge apparently transcends sensual knowledge, are they completely unrelated?

In other words, to know heaven abilities is to know the principle of the natural process and accord with it.

³⁰¹ Wang Fuzhi comments that smallness refers to man, while greatness to the cosmic process: “Since nature belongs to man is small, while the Way that belong to heaven is great. But since man knows heaven and the experience of heaven lies in man, heaven stands in me and thus there can be no difference between small and great.” (性雖在人而小，道雖在天而大，以人知天，體天於人，則天在我而無小大之別矣。)(Tang 2000:130).

³⁰² See ch. 3.

The Chinese philosopher Zhang Dainian (1978:5) argues that Zhang Zai's theory of knowledge "cut off" the perceptive knowledge from the process of learning. This leads to a mystical and idealistic approach to reality. He states:

他所謂“德性所知”是以道德修養為基礎的關於宇宙本源的認識。他說：“窮神知化，乃養盛自致”（《正蒙·神化》），窮神知化的認識就是德性所知了。他的認識論可以說是一種唯物論的唯理論，從唯物論反映論出發，強調了理性認識（“窮理”、“窮神知化”）的重要，卻割斷了理性認識與感性認識的聯繫，因而最後陷入於唯心論神秘主義。這是張載認識論方面的局限性。“What he (Zhang Zai) calls ‘the knowledge of virtue nature’ takes moral cultivation as the basis for the understanding of the foundation of the cosmos. He says: ‘to grasp the spirits and to know transformations correspond to the cultivation that let the self flourish to the utmost’ (*Zhengmeng Shenhua*'s chapter). The knowledge that reach the spirits and the knowledge of transformations are thus the knowledge of virtue nature. This theory of knowledge can be described as a kind of rational materialism, since his theory of reflection proceeds from materialism emphasizing the key role of rational knowledge (grasp the principle, grasp the spirits and knows the transformations). However in this way he cuts off the relationships between rational knowledge and perceptual knowledge, consequently in the end he falls into a kind of mystical idealism. This is the limits of Zhang Zai's theory of knowledge.”

The main problem with Zhang Dainian's interpretation about Zhang Zai's theory of knowledge, in my opinion, is that in Zhang Zai's system there is no clear-cut between the two kinds of knowledge. As we have seen, if we split moral knowledge and sensual perception the result will be the one-sided vision of reality. And labeling Zhang Zai's theory of knowledge into a kind of “mystical idealism” is not coherent with his critique toward Buddhism. Moreover, being Zhang Zai's philosophical aim primarily pedagogical, and thus based on the practice of morality in the world, a direct relationship with the world is needed. Hence, how does the two forms of knowledge relate?

We have seen that Zhang Zai esteems moral knowledge over sensual perception: the first is limitless and the second has limits; the first expands the heart-mind to the utmost,

while the second blocks it; and the first expresses harmony and thus is the full expression of morality, while the second is partial and tends toward personal fulfillment. But, on the other hand, we have also seen that Zhang Zai considers sensual perception necessary for the enlightenment, since it shows the primitive function of knowledge: it expresses the principle of unity between the inner world with the external one. In other words, it shows the principle of joining and harmonizing differences (opposites) into the same coherent whole that belongs to the same natural process of harmonization. Therefore sensual perception outlines (in a primitive and narrow form) the basic principle of the natural process and thus the first stage in the achievement of moral knowledge and moral action: if we get rid of the former we will be not able to grasp the principles of harmony, and we will fail to proceed along the Way.

This idea is supported by Zhang Zai's distinction between two different paths of sagehood:

“自明誠”，由窮理而盡性也；“自誠明”，由盡性而窮理也³⁰³ (1978:21)
 “‘Harmonization resulting from enlightenment’ is making the most of nature by first grasping the principles. ‘Enlightenment resulting from harmonization’, is grasping the principles by first making the most of nature.”

儒者則因明致誠，因誠致明，故天人合一，致學而可以成聖，得天而未始遺人，易所謂不遺、不流、不過者也³⁰⁴ (1978:65) “Confucians achieve harmony through enlightenment, and enlightenment through harmony. Thus heaven and man can form an harmonious unity, and sagehood can be reached through learning. To get [the unity with]

³⁰³ Chengming 誠明 and mingcheng 明誠 both come from the *Zhongyong*: “Understanding born of creativity is a gift of our natural tendencies; creativity born of understanding is a gift of education. Where there is creativity, there is understanding; where understanding, creativity. (自誠明，謂之性；自明誠，謂之教。誠則明矣，明則誠矣) (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:105).

³⁰⁴ Buyi 不遺, buliu 不流, buguo 不過 are from the *Great Commentary of the Book of Changes*: “His wisdom embraces all things, and his tao brings order into the whole world; therefore he does not err. He is active everywhere but does not let himself be carried away. He rejoices in heaven and has knowledge of fate, therefore he is free of care. He is content with his circumstances and genuine in his kindness, therefore he can practice love. In it are included the forms and the scope of everything in the heavens and on earth, so that nothing escapes it. In it all things everywhere are completed, so that none is missing. Therefore by means of it we can penetrate the tao of day and night, and so understand it. Therefore the spirit is bound to no one place, nor the Book of Changes to any one form.” (知周乎萬物，而道濟天下，故不過。旁行而不流，樂天知命，故不憂。安土敦乎仁，故能愛。範圍天地之化而不過，曲成萬物而不遺，通乎晝夜之道而知，故神无方而易无體。) (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:295-296).

heaven, one will not forget human beings. This is what the *Changes* calls not forgetting, not being carried away, not falling in error.”

He further explains:

須知自誠明與自明誠者有異。自誠明者，先盡性以至於窮理也，謂先自其性理會來，以至窮理；自明誠者，先窮理以至於盡性也，謂先從學問理會，以推達於天性也 (1978:330) “You must know that there is a difference between enlightenment resulting from harmonization and harmonization resulting from enlightenment. The former is to first make the most of nature and thereby arrive at grasping the principles; this is to say, on the basis of first understanding the nature, to arrive at grasping all principles [in the world]. The latter is to arrive at making the most of nature by first grasping principles; this is to say, by first understanding from learning and inquiring; and extending to get the heaven nature³⁰⁵.”

While the former path is based on the intuitive ability that transcends the senses, the second rely on a process of refinement of the senses through learning.

自明誠者須是要窮理，窮理即是學也，所觀所求皆學也 (1978:330) “Harmonization resulting from enlightenment must go through grasping the principles, and to grasp principles is equivalent to study. Observing and seeking everything is to study.”

Among the two possible paths, Zhang Zai emphasizes the second (harmonization resulting from enlightenment) as the most reliable and achievable one³⁰⁶. The reason is grounded in the Confucian tradition that primarily sees in learning the means for self-cultivation and the attainment of sagehood. Only through learning one can really guide the nature.

³⁰⁵ I have basically employed Kasoff’s (1984:96) translation with some modifications.

³⁰⁶ Zhang Zai seems to have chosen the second path even for himself when he is saying: “Nowadays, I also humbly aspire to “Harmonization [resulting from] enlightenment”, and thus diligently persist [in my learning], taking comfort in not regressing.” (某今亦竊希於明誠，所以勉勉安於不退) (Trans. by Kasoff 1984:97 with some modification) .

Moreover, as Kasoff has pointed out, is interesting to note that Zhang Zai’s students thought that he himself achieved this goal. See Ibidem .

吾儒以參³⁰⁷為性，故先窮理而後盡性 (1978:234) “Confucian takes nature as harmonious threefold unity, therefore first, one needs to grasp the principles [of this process], and then makes the most of the nature.”

Zhang Zai is saying that the process of extending nature and heart-mind must go through a process of understanding the principle behind things interaction. Without this first step, the nature can go astray as Buddhists theories clearly show:

儒者窮理，故率性可以謂之道³⁰⁸。浮圖不知窮理而自謂之性，故其說不可推而行。(1978:31) “Confucians by grasping the principle, can draw out their natural tendencies, this is called the Way. Buddhists call nature without knowing how to grasp the principles, therefore their theories cannot be exhausted and practiced.”

萬物皆有理，若不知窮理，如夢過一生。釋氏便不窮理，皆以為見病所致...有志于學者，都更不論氣之美惡，只看志如何 (1978:321) “All the things have principles, if one does not know how to grasp these principles, will live the whole life as a dream. Buddhists do not grasp the principles, they think that everything is caused by the sickness of their senses (of what they see)³⁰⁹. With the will committed on learning, one cannot anymore discuss on the goodness and badness of *qi* and can just look on his/her will.”

Although both paths are theoretically possible, the intuitive one is beyond one actual possibility and just belong to sages³¹⁰. Besides, one can go through the second one by committing the will on learning. But learning necessary involves the senses, it is a process of refinement and extension of the senses. Since the senses are what enable us

³⁰⁷ See ch. 2.

³⁰⁸ This is a quote from the *Zhongyong*: “What tian (heaven) commands is called natural tendencies; drawing out these natural tendencies is called the proper Way; improving upon this Way is called education.” (天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教) (Trans. by Ames, Hall 2001:89).

³⁰⁹ As we have seen before, Zhang Zai thinks that Buddhists recognize the principle of things external to the world, and thus they think about this world as caused by the smallness of the six senses. See ch 2

³¹⁰ On the one hand Zhang Zai thinks of sagehood as an attainable goal: “the sage gives instruction so that everyone can reach this [level]. Everyone can become a Yao or Shun” (聖人設教，便是人人可以至此。“人皆可以為堯舜) (1978:282); but on the other, he expresses the idea that just a few man in the history of humanity has reached this goal. In Zhang Zai’s view neither Yan Hui nor Mencius had reached this goal. See Kasoff (1984:105).

to get the principle of harmonization, one ought to learn how to refine these tools and extend them to the utmost:

獨見獨聞，雖小異，怪也，出於疾與妄也；共見共聞，雖大異，誠也，出陰陽之正也 (1978:20) “In the case that there is little difference amongst that which is seen and heard in isolation from one another yet this is still considered strange and comes from sickness and disharmony. On the other hand, even though there are great differences among what has been seen and heard together, this is seen as the Way of harmony, coming from the appropriateness of yin and yang.” (Trans. by Kasoff 1984:109 slightly modified)

Zhang Zai explains here that the broadest and most comprehensive form of knowledge does not stop to the realm of the senses. One can extend the senses to the utmost and can conceive them as universals: if one conceives what perceive as a global perception that anyone can share (despite differences of degrees), one can grasp the coherence (unity, continuity) among oppositions. Therefore one can use the senses in two different ways: the average people confines them to self-realization; while the moral man extends them to the whole. What he/she can hear and see is the perspective of the whole.

Therefore when Zhang Zai speaks about the need of overcoming the narrowness of the senses, he does not mean to obscure them with inward self-reflection. In order to grasp the principle and then make the most of one's nature, one needs to refine the senses and extend them to the point of self-transcendence and global comprehension. In this state, the heart-mind reaches its fullest possibility by encompassing all beings. In other words, Zhang Zai thinks that the only way to fully exploit one's heart-mind and thus one nature is to gain moral knowledge. Moral knowledge is the highest form of knowledge since it has the very process of harmony and harmonization (true and rightness) as its object of knowing³¹¹.

³¹¹ It is interesting to note that Zhang Zai sees a close connection between the perspective of the whole and morality. One cannot reach this intuition through rational thinking and knowledge. Zhang Zai explains that investigation can reach a certain point, but beyond that there is much more: “Recently, my thoughts and considerations seldom fail to hit the mark. And in these days, I benefit from being at leisure. When I am at leisure for a few days, my thoughts are wide-ranging, and in my reading I arrive at places that cannot be investigated.” (近來思慮大率少不中處，今則利在閑，閑得數日，便意思長遠，觀書到無可推考處。) See Ibid:123.

That places that cannot be investigated is the awareness of being one with heaven. This awareness arises from the intuition of an enlarged self that only moral thinking and practice can give. For

蓋心弘則是，不弘則不是，心大則百物皆通，心小則百物皆病。(1978:269) “By extending the heart-mind one will be right; by not extending it one will be not right. When the heart-mind is extended, all the hundred things are connected. When the heart-mind is small, all the hundred things are isolated.”

In Zhang Zai’s understanding, the expanded heart-mind is the full expression of one’s natural and moral essence, reaching this ability one will response with appropriateness and timeliness to any situation.

惟君子為能與時消息，順性命、躬天德而誠行之也。精義時措，故能保合太和，健利且貞，孟子所謂始終條理，集大成于聖智者與³¹² (1078:51) “Only the moral man acts in time following nature and decree; he/she experiences heaven’s virtue and proceeds the Way of harmony. By perfect appropriateness, timely and proper action, the Great Harmony can be preserved, firmness will be furthered and [everything] will get its correctness. Mencius called this to begin and to end in an orderly fashion; isn’t the wisdom of the sages what gather together and complete?”

How can one achieve this experience? How can one’s heart-mind can be extended to the utmost and encompass every beings? In other words, how can one become a truly moral person?

instance, the feeling of love and care (and also faith which is love utmost expansion) can give an intuitive grasp of this unity.

³¹² This quote is from *Mencius* 5B: “Confucius was the one who gathered together all that was good. To do this is to open with bells and conclude with jade tubes. To open with bells is to begin in an orderly fashion; to conclude with jade tube is to end in an orderly fashion. To begin in an orderly fashion pertains to wisdom while to end in an orderly fashion pertains to sageness.” (孔子之謂集大成。集大成也者，金聲而玉振之也。金聲也者，始條理也；玉振之也者，終條理也。始條理者，智之事也；終條理者，聖之事也) (Trans. by Lau 2004:112).

5.3 The path of self-cultivation

5.3.1 Confucian path of self-cultivation

Generally speaking, Confucians answer to these questions will be that becoming a moral person (junzi 君子) one needs to go through a long process of cultivation of the self. The general idea is that “only through committing oneself to a resolute regimen of personal cultivation that one can achieve the comprehensive intellectual and moral understanding that will make the most of the human experience³¹³.” Cultivate oneself is therefore transforming the self into a most refined form, which is able to think and act in harmony with the world, and find one proper place within the cosmic order. But furthermore, the cultivation of the self never just focuses on the self as such, it is not a process that aims to isolate the self from the world; but it is rather a process of engaging the self in the world transforming the “isolated self” into a “relational self”. As the American scholar Mary Evelyn Tucker has pointed out: “self-cultivation was intended to eliminate the separation between oneself and others³¹⁴.”

For what concerns this investigation, we have seen already in the first chapter that Confucians use to link directly the process of cultivation with the ideal of harmony: from the *Analects* famous description of cultivation stages, to the Mencius idea of the sage; from the *Great Learning* to the *Doctrine of the Mean*³¹⁵. All these texts show how the process of self-cultivation is centered in the harmonization and the balance between the inner self with the external world. Being harmony the most comprehensive concept within the Confucian tradition, the ideal of it thus encompasses all aspects of personal and collective life: the harmony of the self is thus the harmony of one’s heart-mind and body, but also of one’s family, society and the whole universe³¹⁶. The self is primarily

³¹³ See Li (2014: xii).

³¹⁴ Tucker (1998:202-203).

³¹⁵ See ch. 1.

³¹⁶ The *Great Learning* directly shows these stages of self-cultivation. Cultivation begins from the harmonization of the self and proceed toward the harmony of the world: “Extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.” (物格而後知至，知至而後意誠，意誠而後心正，心正而後身修，身修而後家齊，家齊而後國治，國治而後天下平) (Trans. by Legge 1872:383).

relational and thus is never thought as detached from the world; in this sense the self is “the center of the moral world”³¹⁷, and the foundation of harmony. As the American scholar Steve Angle has pointed out, Confucians believe that “our own harmony relates intimately to a broader harmony”³¹⁸. It is for this reason that the cultivation of the self is not just learning how to act morally, but is primarily transforming oneself in order to understand and fit in the harmonious connection of the world. The cultivated self is open and responsive, encompasses all entities in the sense that his/her will is focused on promoting harmony in its broader and comprehensive form. The cultivation of the self is thus the way one learns to see and understand reality as a whole integrating all partialities into the same whole³¹⁹.

Moreover, several texts from pre-Qin periods to later times, belonging to different schools, show the relationship between the program of self-cultivation and the cultivation of one’s *qi*. We have already seen that the concept of *qi* can be exemplified by the paradigm of harmony and harmonization in term of unity of opposites. When the two oppositional forces interacts harmoniously creating novel unities without losing a dynamic balance, they are in harmony. But the two polarities can also lose this balance by tending too much toward one or the other without, and then losing the right balance. At that point the former creative tension will be lost and conflicts arise. As the Traditional Chinese Medicine clearly shows, these problematic conditions can also

³¹⁷ See Yao (2013:260). Here Yao directly refers to *Mencius* 4A: “Mencius said, if others do not respond to your love with love, look into your own benevolence; if others do not respond to your attempts to govern them with order, look into your own wisdom; if others do not return your courtesy, look into your own respect. In other words, look into yourself whenever you fail to achieve your purpose. When you are correct in your person, the Empire will turn to you.” (孟子曰：愛人不親反其仁，治人不治反其智，禮人不答反其敬。行有不得者，皆反求諸己，其身正而天下歸之。) (Trans. by Lau 2004:79). And *Mencius* 4A: “Mencius said, there is a common expression, the Empire, the state, the family. The Empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and the family in one’s own self.” (孟子曰：人有恆言，皆曰『天下國家』。天下之本在國，國之本在家，家之本在身。) (Ibidem).

³¹⁸ Angle (2009:118).

³¹⁹ The self we are talking about is not the individual and narrow self, but it is rather the extended one which is the subject and the object of the transformation. In this most extended form, the self opens to the world by becoming the parameter of every action. As the phenomenologist philosopher Edmund Husserl has pointed out: “intersubjective experience plays a fundamental role in our constitution of both ourselves as objectively existing subjects, other experiencing subjects, and the objective spatio-temporal world.” In Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online version). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/>.

The idea that sets the self at the center of harmonization lies in the belief that all conflicts can be traced back to individual ignorance, and thus self-cultivation can benefits the entire society. In other words, whether the self can be in harmony or not is also a collective concern. Therefore it is one’s responsibility to proceed with self-cultivation. The cultivated self is in harmony (inner harmony) and promotes this harmony outside in the world. (The way of joining in and out)

appear in human beings body and mind. For instance, the ancient medical text, the *Huangdi neijing* 《黃帝內經》 (around 200 C.E.), shows that the cause of disease is mainly the imbalance of yinyang. Hence the medical treatment aims to bring back balance by adjusting yin and yang³²⁰.

But the harmonization of *qi* does not just concern medical treatment, but even the cultivation of morality. There are several Confucian pre-Qin examples on the relationship between the cultivation of *qi* and morality. For instance, the *Analects* of Confucius explains that the cultivation of morality is a matter of controlling and harmonizing one's *qi*³²¹:

孔子曰：君子有三戒：少之時，血氣未定，戒之在色；及其壯也，血氣方剛，戒之在鬪；及其老也，血氣既衰，戒之在得 (*Lunyu* 16.7) “Master Kong said: there are three things which the gentlemen guards against: in the time of his youth, when his vital powers (blood-qi) have not settle down, he is on his guard in matters of sex; when he reaches the prime of life and his vital powers have just attained consistency, he is on his guard in matters of contention; and when he becomes old and his vital powers have declined, he is on his guard in matters of acquisition.” (Trans. by Dawson 2008:67)

The Confucian philosopher Mencius emphasizes the key role of *qi* in the cultivation of the self employing the well-known expression “flood-like *qi*” (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣)³²²:

我知言，我善養吾浩然之氣...難言也。其為氣也，至大至剛，以直養而無害，則塞于天地之間。其為氣也，配義與道；無是，餒也。是集義所生者，非義襲而取之也。行有不慊於心，則餒矣。我故曰，告子未嘗知義，以其外之也。必有事焉而勿正，心勿忘，勿助長也 (*Mencius* 2A) “I have an insight into words. I am good at

³²⁰ The *Huangdi neijing* is the oldest extant Chinese medical treatise. For a survey on the theory of yinyang in Chinese Traditional Medicine see Wang (2012 ch. 5).

³²¹ Confucius believed that the action of a person could be influenced by personal *qi*. Hence self-cultivation was directly connected with controlling one's *qi* temperament. The best way to manage this personal *qi* was moral discipline.

³²² The expression *haoran zhi qi* employed by Mencius outlines a particular usage of the notion of *qi*. Philip Ivanhoe explains “the *haoran zhi qi* is a special kind of ‘energy’, something like moral strength or moral courage...Mengzi’s floodlike *qi* is the power which motivates one to moral action. it grows naturally in the properly cultivated individual, just as the ‘energy’ of any creature increases as it matures.” See Ivanhoe (2002:199-200).

cultivating my flood-like ch'i (qi)... t is difficult to explain. This is a qi which is, in the highest degree, vast and unyielding. Nourish it with integrity and place no obstacle in its path and it will fill the space between Heaven and Earth. it is a ch'i (qi) which unites rightness and the Way. Deprive it of these and it will starve. It is born of accumulated rightness and cannot be appropriated by anyone through a sporadic show of rightness. Whenever one acts in a way that falls below the standard set in one's mind-heart, it will collapse. Hence I said that Kao-tzu (Gaozi) never understood rightness because he looked upon it as external. You must work at it and never let it out of your mind. At the same time while you must never let it out of your mind, you must not forcibly help it grow either.” (Trans. by Lau 2004:33).

Here Mencius seems to go further than Confucius: while Confucius seems to stress the implication of *qi* in training human body, Mencius emphasizes the spiritual and moral dimension of *qi* that can be extended to the whole universe. As Li Chenyang (2010:28) has pointed out, with Mencius the cultivation of *qi* acquires a direct link with morality:

“A person cannot foster this flood-like qi without developing a sense of moral rightness and cultivating the Dao. Therefore, the flood-like qi possesses a spiritual dimension, in the sense that it is directly linked with the living world and is connected to a meaningful, moral life.”³²³

The other Confucian pre-Qin master Xunzi similarly follows Mencius idea of a direct connection between moral cultivation and the cultivation of *qi*. In the self-cultivation chapter of his work he states:

治氣養心之術：血氣剛強，則柔之以調和；知慮漸深，則一之以易良；勇膽猛戾，則輔之以道順；齊給便利，則節之以動止；狹隘褊小，則廓之以廣大；卑溼重遲貪利，則抗之以高志 (Xunzi 2) “*The Art of Controlling the Vita Breath (qi) and Nourishing the mind*: If the blood humour (blood-qi) is too strong and robust, calm it

³²³ Zhang Zai describes *haoran zhi qi* as what is generate from righteous actions: “the flood-like *qi* is basically generated from gathering righteous action” (浩然之氣本來是集義所生) (1978:286); “through gathering righteous action one can nurture the flood-like *qi*. To gather righteous action is to accumulate goodness, since to be righteous one’s need to be constant without stopping. Therefore one can produce the flood-like moral *qi*.” (所以養浩然之氣是集義所生者，集義猶言積善也，義須是常集，勿使有息，故能生浩然道德之氣) (1978:281).

with balance and harmony. If knowledge and foresight are too penetrating and deep, unify them with ease and sincerity. If the impulse to daring and bravery is too fierce and violent, stay it with guidance and instruction. If the quickness of the mind and the fluency of the tongue are too punctilious and sharp, moderate them in your activity and rest. What is narrow and restricted that it has become mean and petty, broaden with liberality and magnanimity. What is base and low from greed for selfish gain, lift up with a sense of high purpose.” (Trans. by Knoblock 1994:153-154)

Hence Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi similarly show that self-cultivation is a comprehensive process that include the refinement of one’s physical, mental and moral self. Moreover the process imply the harmonization and the extension of *qi*³²⁴.

Coming to our subject of investigation, this will be similar in Zhang Zai’s program of self-cultivation. In Zhang Zai’s terms, self-cultivation is a process of physical, mental and thus moral harmonization; since the process is directed by *qi*’s changes and transformations, the effort will be of making one’s own *qi* fully resonate with the cosmos.

5.3.2 Zhang Zai’s program of self-cultivation

We have seen above that Zhang Zai understands *qi* in term of process of interaction between polarities, and how this process is depicted by the paradigm of harmony. Moreover, the process is all-encompassing and thus includes human beings: human beings naturally possess the same nature as heaven and thus they possess the ability to harmonize with the natural process. But harmony is not a brute state of fact, it is rather a process of harmonizing oppositions, and human beings need to exercise their power in order to grasp the underling coherence of the process and contribute actively to this process. We have also seen that the power of being able of adhering to the process belong to human’s heart-mind. By focusing one’s heart-mind to the whole process, one is able to grasp the underlying principle of the cosmos and act in accord with it. By acting in accord with it, harmony will be preserved and promoted.

³²⁴ On the relationship between self-cultivation and *qi*’s harmonization in the Confucian tradition see Li Chengyang (2010) and Robin Wang (2010).

But the main problem lies in the actual fact that human mind is far from being focused on harmony; on the contrary, it tends toward partiality and egoism. Man tends to be focused on their own close desires and goals, forgetting the fact that they belong to a larger whole. Desires and personal goals block the expansion of the mind and *qi* loses its liveliness³²⁵. In order to solve this problem Zhang Zai promotes a program of self-cultivation that focuses on the harmonization of *qi* through the rectification of the heart-mind: if the heart- mind is correct, *qi* will naturally flow and resonate with heaven.

5.3.2.1 Nurturing the *qi* and the rectification of the heart-mind

We have already seen in the third chapter that Zhang Zai recognizes an individual physical nature besides the universal one.

形而後有氣質之性，善反之則天地之性存焉。故氣質之性，君子有弗性者焉。人之剛柔、緩急、有才與不才，氣之偏也。天本參和不偏，養其氣，反之本而不偏，則盡性而天矣。(1978:23) “After [something] acquire a form, its nature is intrinsically embodied in that. If someone [or something] is good at returning, then the nature of heaven is preserved within it. Thus the superior man does not consider the nature embodied in forms as the [whole] nature. Man’s being soft or hard, slow or fast, talented or not is the consequence of *qi*[with shape]’s partiality. Heaven fundamental constitution is the all-pervading triadic harmony. By nourishing *qi*, one can go back to the root and thus be impartial. He will make the most of his nature and become [the same as] heaven.”

Human beings have inborn qualities and characteristics depending on the quality of shaped *qi* they endow from heaven. Zhang Zai explains that this is the fundamental part of human nature that can be nurtured and improved. The effort will be that of nurture and refine this shaped and partial *qi* in order to harmonize it with the whole (let resonate it). In one of his most important work, the *Thesaurus of Principles for the Study of the*

³²⁵ The relationship between human nature and human heart-mind is somehow similar to the one between *qi* and void and the spiritual dimension. We have seen that void and the spiritual dimension are *qi*’s resonance capacities at the base of interaction. In the same sense, the heart-mind is the relational capacity of human nature. Man’s connection to the world is due to the voidness capacity of his/her heart-mind.

Classics (Jingxue liku 《經學理窟》), Zhang Zai assigns an entire chapter to the task of refining (literally transform) the shaped *qi*³²⁶.

變化氣質。孟子曰：“居移氣，養移體”³²⁷，況居天下之廣居者乎！居仁由義，自然心和而體正。更要約時，但拂去舊日所為，使動作皆中禮，則氣質自然全好。禮曰“心寬體胖”³²⁸...大抵有諸中者必形諸外，故君子心和則氣和，心正則氣正。(1978:265) “Transforming the *qi*-quality is the same of Mencius definition: ‘inhabiting the transforming *qi* and cultivating the transforming body’...residing on humaneness and adhering to appropriateness, one will spontaneously harmonize the heart-mind and correct the body... removing one’s past improper behavior, every action will be centered on rituals, and the *qi*-quality will be spontaneously perfect. The rites says: ‘the heart-mind is vast and the body is at ease’...therefore the heart-mind of the moral person is in harmony and thus also his *qi*, his heart-mind is correct and thus is *qi* too.”

人之氣質美惡與貴賤夭壽之理，皆是所受定分。如氣質惡者學即能移 (1978:266) “Various *qi*-qualities, beautiful and ugly appearance, noble and lowly social status, and brevity and longevity in one’s life are a result of one’s genetic inheritance. These have fixed limits and cannot be altered. Nonetheless, the bad *qi* quality can be transformed and changed through learning.” (Trans. by Wang 2010:347)

為學大益，在自求變化氣質，不爾皆為人之弊，卒無所發明，不得見聖人之奧。故學者先須變化氣質，變化氣質與虛心相表裏。(1978:274) “The great benefit of engaging in learning is that you are able, through your own efforts, to change and transform your *qi*-qualities. If you do not learn, you will never have anything that leads to enlightenment, and you will be unable to see the profundity of the sages. Thus

³²⁶ The fifth chapter of this work, the *quality of qi* (qizhi 氣質) is dedicated to the cultivation and the refinement of one’s *qi*. For *Jingxue liku*’s editions and dates see Introduction.

³²⁷ This quote is from *Mencius* 7A: “Inhabiting the transforming *qi* and cultivating the transforming body. Great indeed are a man’s surroundings! Otherwise, are we not all the son of some man or another?” (居移氣，養移體，大哉居乎！夫非盡人之子與？) (Trans. by D.C Lau 2004:153). About the first sentence of this passage I have employed Robin Wang’s (2010:346) translation because it is more coherent with my understanding.

³²⁸ From the *Great Learning*: “Riches adorn a house, and virtue adorns the person. The mind is expanded, and the body is at ease. Therefore, the superior man must make his thoughts sincere” (富潤屋，德潤身，心寬體胖，故君子必誠其意) (Trans. by Legge 1872).

learners must first change and transform their *qi*-qualities. Transforms one's *qi* and makes the heart-mind void are complementary.”

Zhang Zai shows that the very task of the learners is to improve the quality of their own *qi*. But what does refine *qi*-quality mean?

We have seen before that *qi* is a comprehensive concept that includes both physical realm and psychological one, the manifest world and the latent one. Therefore the refinement of one *qi*'s quality will naturally include the refinement of the body and the heart-mind, and moreover of the individual inner self and the external expanded one: harmonize one's *qi* is to harmonize one's heart-mind and body³²⁹; transforming one's *qi* quality is nothing but restore the intrinsic harmony of *qi*'s changes and transformations and thus learn how to flow along the natural process³³⁰. In this sense, harmonize one's *qi* goes along with making the heart-mind open and responsive.

The cultivation of the self is the cultivation of the whole: “The Way of the superior man is to consider the realization of the body self and the nature as necessary achievements.” (君子之道，成身成性以為功者也) (1978:27)

子曰：君子安其身而後動，易其心而後語，定其交而後求，君子修此三者，故全也。(1978:225) “The Master said: The superior man (in a high place) sets his person at rest before he moves; he composes his heart-mind before he speaks; he makes his relations firm before he asks for something. By attending to these three matters, the superior man gains complete security³³¹.”

³²⁹ Since Chinese generally do not see mind and body as dichotomies, but rather as intrinsically related, the cultivation of the person (xiushen 修身) implies the cultivation of the whole person. Therefore, it includes both the cultivation of the body's *qi* and the nurturing of the heart-mind.

³³⁰ As Li Chenyang (2010) insightfully shows, Dong Zhongshu was one the first philosopher who made the closest connection between the moral pursuit of the *Dao*, the nurturing of the person (shen 身), and the harmonization of the self as a whole. In the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, he wrote, “It is called [the pursuit of] *Dao* when people nurture themselves (shen) in accordance with the Heavenly *Dao*” (循天之道，以養其身，謂之道也); *Chunqiu Fanlu*. (Trans. by Ibid 2010:30).

To accord with the heavenly *Dao* is to harmonize the self with the Way of harmony: “the one can manage the world with balance and harmony let the greatest virtue flourish. Those are able to nourish their self with balance and harmony and expand their life to the utmost of [heaven]'s command. (是故能以中和理天下者，其德大盛；能以中和養其身者，其壽極命) (*Chunqiu Fanlu*).

³³¹ Here Zhang Zai quotes the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*. (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:343).

Pacifies one's body and emptying the heart-mind are the keys to achieve the harmony of the self. This because quietude is the root of goodness in the sense that with a clear and empty mind we are able to respond with timeliness and appropriateness to all situations: "Stillness is the root of goodness; void is the root of stillness³³²." (靜者善之本，虛者靜之本) (1978:325)

Through stillness and voidness the heart-mind can fully resonate with the world; in other words, the aim of self-cultivation is to open up the self to the world, actualize the capacity for resonance that one naturally endow. The harmonization of one's *qi* goes along with the harmonization of one's heart-mind, and the harmonization of the heart-mind goes along with the harmonization of emotions³³³.

In his program of self-cultivation, Zhang Zai wants to emphasize the role of emotions since they are fundamental aspects of human life. Zhang Zai remarks that emotions are the natural response of the connection with things:

“利貞者，性情³³⁴也”³³⁵，以利解性，以貞解情。利，流通之義，貞者實也…情盡在氣之外，其發見莫非性之自然，快利盡性，所以神也。情則是實事，喜怒哀

³³² In a famous letter to Cheng Hao that is not anymore extant, Zhang Zai seems to raise the problem of how one can calm the nature/mind when he/she is dealing with things. From Cheng Hao's responding letter we can fortunately come to know Zhang Zai's question as such: "In calming *xing* (nature), [the person who calms *xing*] cannot be without action [or at least intention to act], but then he is still burdened with [the disturbance of] external things," (定性未能不動，猶累于外物). From Chan (1963:526).

Zhang Zai's question about how to calm one's nature is crucial to Zhang Zai's theory of self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is a matter of emptying one's heart-mind and nature in order to let them fully resonate with the whole. During this process one needs to learn how to deal with external things without let the self be tied with them. For different translations and interpretations of Cheng Hao's reply to Zhang Zai's letter see Ibid:525-526, and Zheng Zemian (2015).

³³³ As we have seen in the first chapter, the harmonization of emotions are an essential part of Confucian program of self-cultivation. In the famous passage of the *Zhongyong* we see that when emotions arise in due and balanced degree the heart-mind is in harmony and is able to resonate with the cosmos. See ch. 1.

³³⁴ The character is usually translated into emotion and feeling, but it possesses a broader range of meanings. Christoph Harbsmeier (2003:71-71) classifies seven different basic meanings of *qing* in pre-Buddhist era: 1. Factual, the basic fact of a matter; 2. Metaphysical, underlying and basic dynamic factor; 3. Political, basic popular sentiments/responses; 4. Anthropological: general basic instincts/propensities; 5. Positive, essential sensibilities and sentiments, viewed as commendable; 6. Basic motivation/attitude; 7. Emotional, personal deep convictions, responses feelings.

Michael Puett (2004:42) remarks: "the term *qing* has a broad semantic range, including such meanings as basic tendencies, inclinations, dispositions (including emotional dispositions), and fundamental qualities."

During the Han dynasty the term began to be intrinsically related with desires and passions, developing negative values. The development of this idea is primarily shown in the writing of Dong Zhongshu. See Ibid pp. 64-66 and Wang (2012).

樂之謂也，欲喜者如此喜之，欲怒者如此怒之，欲哀欲樂者如此樂之哀之，莫非性中發出實事也。(1978:78) “Furtherance and perseverance, thus it brings about the nature and the reality of all beings. Through furtherance one unfolds the nature; through correctness one unfolds his feelings. Furtherance is the flow and the penetration of appropriateness. Correctness is reality...emotions realize themselves in the external movement of *qi*, they arise and then are visible, they are nothing but the spontaneous [movement] of the nature. What makes the most of one’s nature easy and smooth is the spirit. Emotion therefore reality, this is what is called pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy. One tends (desires) toward joy and thus one enjoy; one tends toward anger, and thus one is angry about something; one feels sorrow or joy and thus feel sorrow or joy about something. These all are real things that come from nature.”

Zhang Zai understands nature and emotions as intrinsically related³³⁶. Nature is the potential state when emotion are not yet arisen; emotions are the natural response toward things³³⁷.

In Buddhist texts *qing* usually has a negative connotation by referring to the activities of the unenlightened mind. However, as Christoph Anderl (2004:152-153) has pointed out: “*qing* in Buddhist texts does not mean real feeling, a meaning often found in classical texts. *Qing* rather refers to the mental processes which arise when sentient beings relate to the external world, and when they process data which they have received through contact with objects. those mental activities in the common person’s mind are, by Buddhist standards, basically deluded and create a distorted view of the world reinforcing attachment to objects.”

In Song times, Neo-Confucian’s philosophers understand *qing* basically as emotion and feelings that is directly connected with nature.

Zhang Zai understands *qing* as a very comprehensive notion which is close to consciousness. In this direction we can interpret Zhang Zai statements: “the heart-mind leads nature and emotions” (心統性情) (1978:338), which goes along with the above showed statement: “From the harmonious unity between nature and consciousness we have what is called the heart-mind” (合性與知覺，有心之名) (1978:9). Here I have employed Yang Lihua’s interpretation of *tong* 統 as *tonglin* 統領, to lead, (see Yang Lihua 2008:117), rather than following Zhu Xi’s reading of *tong* 統 as *jian* 兼, to embrace, since in Zhang Zai’s idea, nature and emotions are polarities of the same whole that ought to be harmonized.

The idea of a polar relationships between nature and emotion arise firstly in the Han dynasty with Dong Zhongshu. As Robin Wang (2012:135) has pointed out, Dong was the first philosopher to interpret human nature through polarities. He identifies yang with human nature, and yin with emotions. Moreover, after Dong Zhongshu “the linking of *xing* and *qing* to yang and yin became widely accepted and has been endorsed by many thinkers and literati.”

³³⁵ This is a quote from the *Book of Changes*. (Trans. by Wilhelm; Baynes 2003:377 slightly modified).

³³⁶ Angus Graham understands Neo-Confucian’s idea of *qing* as opposed to moral nature (*xing*). He translates *qing* into passions emphasizing the negative meaning of the term. See Graham (1967:51-52) But Ulrik Middendorf (2008:114) shows, Graham’s statement seems to be not coherent with Neo-Confucian’s idea of *qing*: “The interpretation of *qing* vis-à-vis *xing* makes clear that Graham’s claim about the notion of *qing* in Neo-Confucian texts is unwarranted, at least for this philosopher. Zhu Xi, actually, saw *qing* as an activated, “expressive” (*fa*) form of *xing* and hence as an inherent part of it.”

愛惡之情同出於太虛，而卒歸於物欲，倏而生，忽而成，不容有毫髮之間，其神矣夫！(1978:10) “The feelings of love and hate together arise from the Great Void; and they ultimate result in desire for things. Suddenly to bring into existence and promptly to bring to completion without a moment's interruption—this is indeed the wonderful operation of spirit³³⁸.”

Emotions such as love and hate are balanced when they are not stirred, and fully possess the capacity of resonance that belongs to one's nature. When one interacts with a certain thing, a specific emotion arises and manifest itself outwardly. In other words, emotions are the way the heart-mind naturally interact with the world, they therefore possess the principle of joining inner and outer. Being an active part of reality they cannot be intrinsically bad; the problems arise when emotions are unbalanced³³⁹.

情未必為惡，哀樂喜怒發而皆中節謂之和，不中節則為惡。(1978:27) “Emotions are not necessary evil. When pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy have been stirred, and they

I think we can claim something very similar about Zhang Zai's vision of *qing/xing* relationships. And might be for this reason that Zhu Xi highly evaluated Zhang Zai's statement of the “harmonious unity between emotion and nature.”

However, even though Neo-Confucians' attitude toward emotions is not totally negative is surely problematic, as Alison Black (1989:257) points out: “the Sung philosopher had a certain amount of difficulty with the emotions or feelings (*ch'ing*) because they represented an unstable and irregular element of threatening the harmony and the equilibrium of the ideal order of things.”

³³⁷ Here Zhang Zai understands nature similar to what the *Zhongyong* defines centrality (*zhong* 中): the state where emotion are balanced. See ch. 1.

³³⁸ I have basically employed Chan (1963:506) translation with some modifications.

³³⁹ The idea of a direct implication of emotion in morality has been long debated in the history of Chinese thought. For what concern the negative attitude toward emotion in the process of self-cultivation, Dong Zhongshu was one of the first philosopher to understand emotion in terms of desires, and viewed desires an obstacle for moral cultivation: “Heaven's command I call the mandate; the mandate can only be put into practice by a sage. One's substance I call nature; nature can only be completed through education. Human desire I call *qing*; *qing* can only be modulated through standards and regulations.”(天命之謂命,命非聖人不行;質朴之謂性'性非教化不成;人欲之謂情,情非制度不節) (Trans. by Puett 2004:65).

This idea was later developed by the Tang dynasty philosopher Li Ao 李翱 (772-841). In his famous essay, *Fuxing shu* 《復性書》, he claims: “Joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire [*yu*] — these seven are the workings of *qing*. When *qing* has become darkened, the nature is hidden, but this is through no shortcoming of the nature: these seven follow one another in constant succession, so that the nature cannot achieve its fullness.”(人之所以為聖人者性也人之所以惑其性者情也喜怒哀懼愛惡欲七者皆情之所為也情既昏性斯匿矣非性之過也七者循環而交來故性不能充也) (Trans. by Huang 2001:25-26).

For what concern Zhang Zai's philosophy, he understands emotion directly linked to desires, but desires are not necessarily bad since are an intrinsic part of one's nature. Desires become harmful for self-cultivation when they are not in harmony and thus obscure the clear vision of reality.

act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of harmony. When they are not balanced there is evil.”

The key point here is that the task of self-cultivation is primarily to harmonize the heart-mind, which means do not let feelings or desires overcome the due degree and lead the self goes astray. Emotions and desires are not intrinsically bad, they are part of the same nature and one needs them to be in contact with the world³⁴⁰. But, on the other hand, they can become harmful to self-cultivation when they lose harmony and balance; for instance when one specific desire and/or passion overcomes others and begins to lead the heart-mind, one loses harmony and becomes one-sided: “When the sight is partial is not correct, sickness is disharmony (falsehood).” (偏見之者非病即偽)(1978:313)

“屈信相感而利生”，感以誠也；“情偽相感而利害生”³⁴¹，雜以偽也。至誠則順理而利，偽則不循理而害 (1978:24) “‘Contraction and expansion act upon each other, hereby arises that which furthers’, with harmonization there is resonance. ‘the true and the false influence each other, and advantage and injury result therefrom’. The mixture [of advantageous and injury] is disharmony (falsehood). With utmost harmonization one follow the principle and there are benefit, with disharmony (falsehood) one is not able to follow the principle and thus the result is injury.”

Here Zhang Zai’s way of reasoning resonates with the *Great Learning* statement of making one’s “heart-mind correct and one’s intention sincere”³⁴². The heart-mind can be in harmony when the intentions are sincere and follow the principle of things without distress. As we have seen before, to be true to oneself (sincere) is to be in harmony with the whole self and the others and then with the entire world. One needs to set the heart-mind on rightness (zheng 正) in order to be balanced: “Harmonizing the heart-mind one

³⁴⁰ Here again Zhang Zai seems to go against Buddhism and its negative attitude toward passions and desires. To claim that emotions and desires are totally bad is to deny their nature and any connection with the real world.

³⁴¹ Both quotes are from the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*: “The past contracts. The future expands. Contraction and expansion act upon each other; hereby arises that which furthers.” (往者屈也，來者信也，屈信相感而利生焉); (Trans by Wilhelm, Baynes 2003:338).

“Love and hate combat each other, and good fortune and misfortune result therefrom. The far and the near injure each other, and remorse and humiliation result therefrom. The true and the false influence each other, and advantage and injury result therefrom. (愛惡相攻而吉凶生，遠近相取而悔吝生，情偽相感而利害生) (Ibid:355).

³⁴² See above.

will be focus on rightness, and will not be submitted to emotions.” (和其心以備顧對，不可徇其喜怒好惡) (1978:320)

Harmony of the heart-mind and thus harmony of the *qi* is thus being free from tyranny of unbalanced emotions caused by minor desires.

湛一，氣之本；攻取，氣之欲。口腹于飲食，鼻舌於臭味，皆攻取之性也。知德者屬厭而已，不以嗜欲累其心，不以小害大、末喪本焉爾。(1978:22) “Oneness is the root of *qi*; attacking and taking are the desires of *qi*. The mouth and stomach want food; the nose and tongue can distinguish malodorous smells. These are manifestations of the nature of attacking and taking. One who knows virtue will recognize repulsive things and not allow desires to burden the heart-mind or let small things destroy the big by losing the root³⁴³.” (Trans. by Ding, Wang 2010:53)

志大則才大、事業大…志久則氣久、德性久 (1978:389) “Setting the will on greatness one can achieve great capacities and complete great task. When the will endures [on greatness], the *qi* will endure and the natural virtuous knowledge will endure.”

志道則進據者不止矣³⁴⁴，依仁則小者可遊而不失和矣 (1978:29) “Setting the will on the Way, [one] will enter and reside on it without resting. Abiding on humaneness one can be attracted by small things without losing the harmony of the self.”

In other words, if the self is focused on what is really important, it will be steady and without anxiety: “To undertake the cultivation of the self, one ought to first focus on what is important and keep on that.” (將修己，必先厚重以自持) (1978:66)

³⁴³ Again Zhang Zai seems to recall the *Great Learning* by saying that self-cultivation focuses on recognize greatness and smallness as the way to harmonize the self.

The *Great Learning* states: “the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides. It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered. It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.” (自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本。其本亂而未治者否矣，其所厚者薄，而其所薄者厚，未之有也！) (Trans. by Legge).

³⁴⁴ This is a quote from the *Analects* 7.6 : “the Master said: set your heart on the Way, base yourself on virtue, rely on humaneness, and take your relaxation in the arts.” (子曰：志於道，據於德，依於仁，游於藝。) (Trans. by R. Dawson 2008:24).

At that point, one is not anymore concerned whether smallness (selfish needs and desires) can be achieved or not³⁴⁵. Moreover, setting the will on greatness one can overcome individuality and egoistic thought, therefore actions and thoughts will point toward the comprehensive harmony: “Without individuality one can become great; with greatness the nature is fulfilled and sagehood will be reached.” (無我而後大，大成性而後聖) (1978:17) “When greatness reach heaven, the nature and the body self are fulfilled.” (大達于天，則成性成身矣) (1978:34)

The aim of the moral person is thus to be focused on the greatest achievement, which is to let one’s *qi* and one’s heart-mind resonate with the cosmos. Learners need to first balancing the heart-mind and the body by overcoming egoistic desires and feelings. Overcoming selfishness the will can reside in correctness and virtuosity and the heart-mind will be expanded to the utmost.

中正然後貫天下之道，此君子之所以大居正也。蓋得正則得所止，得所止則可以弘而至於大(1978:26) “Through balance and correctness one can follow the Way of the world. This is the greatness of the moral person that resides in correctness. Once he gets correctness he resides in it; once he resides in it he can broaden [the Way] and reach greatness.”

Self-cultivation points toward comprehensive harmony and comprehensive morality. To be moral is to embrace the greatness virtue of the heaven that nurtures and fosters everything in the world. This is a crucial point in Zhang Zai’s pedagogical thought which is again grounded in the critique toward the escapist attitude of heterodox schools. As we have seen before, Zhang Zai sees Buddhists program of self-cultivation principally committed toward the enlightenment of the self in isolation. This attitude is one of the main cause of the loss of the Way. Besides Buddhists, there are also others that do not even try to cultivate their own self and stop to what they hear and see. Zhang

³⁴⁵ As we have seen, Zhang Zai believes that this is one of the greatest mistakes of Buddhism: “Buddhists do not recognize the heavenly mandate, thus the dharma of the mind makes and destroys the world. They think that minute produces the greater, and the branch produces the roots. Since they cannot pursue [the heavenly mandate], they call [it] illusion. This is the same thing as the summer insect not knowing the ice. Since it does not know it, it thinks that does not exist.” (釋氏不知天命而以心法起滅天地，以小緣大，以末緣本，其不能窮而謂之幻妄，真所謂疑冰者，與夏蟲疑冰，以其不識) (1978:26).

Zai's philosophy try to correct those mistakes: self-cultivation is a long and difficult process of refinement that points toward the comprehensive harmony. One needs to learn how can harmonize his own self (heart-mind and body), harmonizing the self, one learns how to extend his/her influences to others and finally reach the entire world. But this process of self-cultivation cannot be thought as a temporal sequence but as a logic one³⁴⁶: on the one hand, one refines the self and then can resonate and thus respond to the world needs; but on the other, the way one can refine the self is to respond morally to the world³⁴⁷. Self-cultivation is a bilateral process of joining inner and external realm. If one focuses on just one part of this process (from one point to the other), one will fall in Buddhists belief in the separation between the enlightenment of the self and the harmony of the world.

But why do learners commit on this task on the first place? What are the intrinsic motivation that push one to commit the self into cultivation?

5.3.3 Self-cultivation and moral motivation

Being self-cultivation a difficult and never ending process of refinement, one needs a strong motivation to choose and keep committing the self on this task. The fact that human nature naturally endows goodness and can spontaneously resonates with the cosmos, seems to be too ideal and then far from being a strong motivation for self-cultivation commitment and moral achievement. However, Confucians strongly believe that the best way to motivate man on moral action was self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is to learn how to desire goodness: as much as the self joins the process, more will be committed to this task³⁴⁸. Moreover, self-cultivation does not provide any external achievement and rewards, and thus seems to be an auto-motivating activity³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁶ See ch. 4. n. 119.

³⁴⁷ Zhang Zai states: "By expanding [the self] to the utmost, one can seek the balance; by residing on balance, one can reach greatness." (極其大而後中可求，止其中而後大可有) (1978:28).

Zhang Zai is saying that one can seek inner balance and harmony by extending one's heart-mind and body; but at the same time it is only through this balance that one can reach greatness. This is a clear example of the bidirectional way of thinking at the base of the process of self-cultivation. Both the effort of extending the self, and the effort of harmonize the self, are complementary and need to be exercised together. Since only an harmonized self can be expanded to the utmost, but only an expanded self can be totally in harmony within him/herself and with the entire world.

³⁴⁸ One of the best example is given by the famous passage from the *Analecets* that outlines Confucius stages of self-cultivation. *Lunyu* 2.4: "the Master said: at fifteen I set my heart on learning, at thirty I was established, at forty I had no perplexities, at fifty I understood the decrees of Heaven, at sixty my ear was in accord, and at seventy I followed what my heart desired but did not transgress what was

Confucians mostly answer to the question “why to be moral” adding to the natural tendency toward morality³⁵⁰, the fact that acting in accord to the process is the most joyful and pleasurable human’s activity. Confucians were aware that human beings seek a joyful and pleasant life in the first place, and living a joyful and pleasant life seems to be one of the strongest motivation³⁵¹. Why to be moral?

Confucian will answer because moral action is the primal source for a long standing joy. Being the most natural things one can do, doing good cannot but bring joy. In other words, acting morally is the most natural way human beings can express themselves,

right.” (子曰：吾十有五而志于學，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳順，七十而從心所欲，不踰矩。.) (Trans. by Dawson 2008:6).

Confucius here explains that the final step of self-cultivation is to get to the point that one’s heart-mind is completely attuned with heaven. At this point, one exclusively desires goodness.

Zhang Zai comments on this last stage of self-cultivation states: “At seventy, he is of the same virtue as heaven; he does not strive, and is smoothly and easily in harmony with the Way.” (七十與天同德，不思不勉，從容中道。) (Trans by Kasoff 1984:119). Being attuned with the Way, he desires nothing but harmony and goodness. But “goodness is what is desirable” (可欲之謂善). In other words, the one who undertakes the process of self-cultivation learns how to desire goodness.

³⁴⁹ The contemporary psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2008:67) calls this kind of activity “autotelic”. “The term autotelic derives from two Greek words, *auto*, meaning self, and *telos* meaning goal. It refers to a self-contained activity, one that is done not with the expectation of some future benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward.”

One can notify that self-cultivation actually has an external object, sagehood, but being this goal mostly unattainable and being the process endless, the real goal of self-cultivation seems to be internal to the same activity. Therefore, sagehood, more than a goal to achieve, is more a direction to point at.

³⁵⁰ For Mencius, morality was the distinctive sign of human being. Human beings are humans since are moral beings. For Mencius morality is the actual difference between humanity and beast. *Mencius* 4B: “Mencius said: Slight is the difference between man and beasts. The common man loses this distinguishing feature, while the gentlemen retains it. Shun understood the way of things and had a keen insight into human relationships. He followed the path of morality. He did not just put morality into practice.” (孟子曰：人之所以異於禽獸者幾希，庶民去之，君子存之。舜明於庶物，察於人倫，由仁義行，非行仁義也) (Trans. by Lau 2004:91). Here I have slightly modified the translation of Lau of the character *shou* 獸. I understand *shou* as beats which is more a literal interpretation than Lau’s definition, “brute”.

³⁵¹ There are several examples in Confucian texts where joy is the most crucial feeling. For instance the *Analects* famous opening: “The Master said: to learn something and at times to practice it – surely that is a pleasure? To have friends coming from distant places – surely that is delightful? But not to be resentful at others’ failure to appreciate one – surely that is to be a true gentleman?” (子曰：學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎？) (Trans. by Dawson 2008:3).

Moreover, Mencius directly relates joy with moral cultivation. *Mencius* 7A: “Mencius said: all the ten thousand things are there in me. There is no greater joy for me than to find, on self-examination, that I am true to myself. Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence.” (孟子曰：萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。) (Trans. by Lau 2004:146).

As the Chinese scholar Yao Xinzong (2012:285.286) has remarked, Confucians generally “believe that only when enjoying something [for example, learning] can one constantly pursue it”. This is also true for self-cultivation: “self-cultivation is not a dull and boring ‘job’, but a joyful and pleasant process of personal engagement in moral growth, which is believed to be able to bring about great joy and deep wisdom to us. The association of joy to self-cultivation is central to the Confucian doctrine of the self and moral training.”

therefore nature is the very source of moral motivation. To act against morality will be to act against our nature and thus one's responding feeling will be repulsion. Joy is thus on the one hand, the primal motivation for morality: we are motivated in doing good because we feel happy in doing that; but on the other, it is also an important clue that shows whether we are proceeding in the right path: if you do not feel joy in doing good, you are not being true to your nature³⁵². Moreover, since moral and virtuous actions come directly from nature, they are the most natural and healthy way to preserve the harmonious flow of one's *qi* and thus preserve one's life integrity. On the contrary, bad actions will lead to disharmony and thus physical and mental unbalance. In this sense we can understand Confucian moral motivation as twofold: first the self-commitment on morality is a joyful and pleasurable activity; second, moral action is directly linked with an healthy and long life.

5.3.4 Zhang Zai's idea of self-cultivation as moral motivation

Zhang Zai sees the path of self-cultivation as an ongoing process of refinement of *qi*-quality and of emptying the heart-mind that leads to attunement of the self with the process of harmonization. When one's heart-mind is in harmony, one's *qi* will be in harmony and will achieve the ability to resonate with the process. Since the process is a moral process, to resonate is to respond to contextual requirement in moral ways. This is part of human natural ability, and hence to make the most of one's nature will be to reach the ability of responding morally to each situation with ease and spontaneity:

勉而清，非聖人之清；勉而和，非聖人之和。所謂聖者，不勉不思而至焉者也。
(1978:26) “The purity that comes from effort is not the purity of the sage. The harmony that comes from effort is not the harmony of the sage. The one who is called sage extend [the Way] without effort and thoughts.”

Since utmost moral action is without doubts and efforts, the correlated emotion will be that of cheerful joyousness and pleasure. To proceed along the Way is the most joyful and pleasurable activity.

³⁵² In the interpretation of Mencius ethical theory, Philip Ivanhoe (2002:44) explains that “the sense of joy which accompanies moral action marks the moral life as the natural course of human development. It eliminates the need for coercion and shows that the development of morality is the fulfillment of our nature.”

“萬物皆備於我”，言萬物皆有素於我也；“反身而誠”³⁵³，謂行無不慊於心，則樂莫大焉。(1978:33) “‘All things are complete in me’, it means that all things can be fulfilled through me. ‘Being true³⁵⁴ to the self through self-examination’, it means that without a sincere heart-mind there will be no action. To do that there is no greater delight.”

Zhang Zai follows the Confucian tradition by considering self-cultivation and moral practice the most important source of joy. Moreover, he explains that the reason one feels this great delight, is due to the peaceful and harmonious state that arise from this activity. In this sense, joy is the feeling arises from an harmonized self: “harmony is advantage, joy is peacefulness.”(和斯利，樂斯安) (1978:36)

和樂，道之端乎！和則可大，樂則可久³⁵⁵ (1978:24) “Harmony and joy are the sprouts of the Way! Harmony and thus can be comprehensive; joy and thus can last for long.”

Joy and harmony are intrinsically related because it is through the joyful attitude in learning that one’s heart-mind drop out worries and distress of daily life

“樂則行之，憂則違之”³⁵⁶，主於求吾志而已，無所求於外 (1978:51) “If joy, he can proceed [the Way]; if worried, he will lose it. The important thing is setting the will on the inner self without seeking external things.”

³⁵³ Both quotes are from Mencius, see above.

³⁵⁴ As we have seen in the previous chapter, to be cheng 誠 (true) is to be in harmony with the self and the process.

³⁵⁵ Zhang here recalls the *Record of Music*’s (*Yueji*) idea of a direct relationship between joy and harmony, and joy with long term commitment. The text states: “Joy goes on to a feeling of repose. This repose is long-continued. The man in this constant repose becomes (a sort of) Heaven. Heaven-like, (his action) is spirit-like...If the heart be for a moment without the feeling of harmony and joy, meanness and deceitfulness enter it.” (樂則安，安則久，久則天，天則神...心中斯須不和不樂，而鄙詐之心入之矣) (Trans. by Legge 1990:224).

The *Record of Music* says that one can make the most of his/her mind through the feeling of harmony and joy. These are the feelings that can last long and support peacefulness.

³⁵⁶ This quote is from the *Commentary on the Words of the Text of the Book of Changes*: “If joy, he can proceed [the Way]; if worried, he will lose it. Verily, he cannot be uprooted; he is a hidden dragon” (樂則行之，憂則違之，確乎其不可拔，潛龍也). (Trans. by Wilhelm; Baynes 2003:379 with some modifications). Here Wilhelm understands yue 樂 as fortune and you 憂 as misfortune; my interpretation is more adherent with the traditional meaning of the characters.

Being spontaneous, being true to oneself and go back to the root of the nature are different ways to pinpoint the same goal of self-cultivation. As we have seen before, self-cultivation is the way by which one can make the most of the nature and expand the heart-mind to the utmost. To act spontaneously without being worried by external things is to fully express the inner capabilities of the goodness of human nature. In this sense, by residing and proceeding along the Way, one feels joy and ease (these are the feelings of the person without worries). The one that joyfully cultivates the self feels no anxiety because his heart-mind is focused on the inner mental status: “With Joy one has no worries” (樂且不憂) (1978:62); “Joy let forget worries” (樂以忘憂) (1978:344).

Self-cultivation is therefore a joyful process of self-refinement. The important matter here is that, on the one hand, the joy that arises from self-cultivation seems to be the spontaneous reaction of one’s nature, and thus it is not an external goal one needs to pursue: we do not cultivate the self for the sake of pleasure, rather we spontaneously feel pleasure in cultivating the self: “The moral person accords joyfully with the Way.” (君子樂得其道) (1978:32)

Long lasting and balanced joy is spontaneous since it does not have any second goal besides its self fulfilment (the feeling of joy); thus to feel joy can be an important clue that what one is doing is good. For this reason the sage highly evaluates joy: “The moral person considers the attainment of joy the most valuable thing.” (君子樂取之為貴) (1978:48)

克己行法為賢，樂己可法為聖，聖與賢，跡相近而心之所至有差焉。(1978:46)
“The one who by controlling the self can regulate his action is a virtuous person. The one who feels joy in that is a sage. The sage and the virtuous person are similar in what they do, their difference lies in the heart-mind.”

But on the other hand, the feeling of joy can be an useful tool for learners since enduring pleasure is one of the most natural aim human beings possess. For this reason joy is equivalent to endure (jiu 久); when we feel joy we hope to keep it:

樂則生矣”³⁵⁷，學至於樂則自不已，故進也。(1978:282) “Joy and thus one will grow. If one learns with joy, the self will be without limits, and thus will reach the Way.”

Joy helps human nature and heart-mind to grow and reach their utmost possibility and thus help to harmonize with heaven. Zhang Zai explains that the above showed forming harmonious unity with heaven (tianren heyi 天人合一) is nothing but to rejoice with it³⁵⁸.

不知來物，不足以利用；不通晝夜，未足以樂天。聖人成其德，不私其身，故乾乾自強，所以成之於天爾 (1978:35) “Without knowing the coming things one will not have advantage in using them; without penetrating the coherence within day and night’s alternation, one has not yet rejoice with heaven. The sage fulfils his/her virtue, he/she is not selfish in [following] body’s desires. Therefore he/she is creatively active and strengthen the self fulfilling the unity with heaven.”

聖人樂天，故合內外而成其仁。(1978:43) “The sages enjoy the Way of heaven, therefore harmonize the inner and the outer and complete humaneness.”

Making the most of one’s nature through moral and virtuous action, one will joyfully harmonize the self with heaven, a state of full tranquility and peacefulness: “Aiming upward one will enjoy the Way of heaven. Enjoying the Way of heaven and one will not

³⁵⁷ This quote is from *Mencius* 4A: “The content of music is the joy that comes of delighting in them. when joy arises how can one stop it? And when one cannot stop it, then one begins to dance with one’s feet and wave one’s arms without knowing it.” (樂之實，樂斯二者，樂則生矣；生則惡可已也，惡可已，則不知足之蹈之、手之舞之。) (Trans. by Lau 2004:87).

³⁵⁸ To make one’s heart-mind resonate with heaven is to rejoice with it. This idea was first coined by Zhuangzi. In the outer chapter of the *Zhuangzi* it is stated: “Being in harmony with men is called the joy of men; being in harmony with Heaven is called the joy of heaven.”(與人和者，謂之人樂；與天和者，謂之天樂). (Trans. by Legge 1962:332).

To share the joy of heaven is to attune one’s heart to the cosmos and enjoy it. In this sense the self can grow and reach its greatness. Again contemporary psychology can help to understand this statement. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2008:64-65) affirms that by not being “preoccupied with ourselves, we actually have a chance to expand the concept of who we are. Loss of self-consciousness can lead to self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward. This feeling is not just a fancy of the imagination, but is based on a concrete experience of close interaction with some Other, an interaction that produces a rare sense of unity with these usually foreign entities...there is nothing mysterious or mystical about them. when a person invests all her psychic energy into interaction...she in effect becomes a part of a system of action greater than what the individual self had been before...this growth of the self occurs only if the interaction is an enjoyable one.”

complain.” (上達則樂天，樂天則不怨) (Ibidem) “Enjoy the Way of heaven and knows the mandate, therefore one will not have worries.” (樂天知命，故不憂) (1978:185)

The sage is the one that comes to know heaven’s mandate and accept it; therefore he does not have worries about what can gain and what can lose. Being without worries his feelings are balanced and he is in harmony with the Way³⁵⁹.

德不勝氣，性命於氣；德勝其氣，性命於德。窮理盡性，則性天德，命天理，氣之不可變者，獨死生修夭而已。…此大德所以必受命，易簡理得而成位乎天地之中也。所謂天理也者，能悅諸心，能通天下之志之理也。(1978:23) “If virtue cannot conquer *qi*, human nature and the mandate will be commanded by *qi*; if virtue can conquer the *qi*, then human nature and the mandate will be commanded by virtue. If one can exhaust principle and make the most of one’s nature, one’s nature will be [in accord with] the virtue of heaven³⁶⁰.... the one of great virtue receives the mandate, he/she grasps the principle with ease and simplicity and fulfils the self by setting in the mids of heaven and earth. What is called the principle of heaven makes all heart-minds joyful, and let all wills be in accord with the principle.”

Zhang Zai is saying again that through moral virtue one can grasp the coherence of the process of harmonization. And furthermore, grasping the coherence of heaven one will be able to accord with it and enjoy this accord. But moreover, joy can also be an important tool to promote harmony in the world³⁶¹.

³⁵⁹ In the *Thesaurus of Principles for the Study of the Classics*’s chapter on music and rites (liyue 禮樂) Zhang Zai conveys to music (ancient music) the power to nurture and harmonize the self: “Ancient music can nurture the virtue nature of a person balancing and harmonizing the qi; what the followings call music stops this by seeking grief” (古樂所以養人德性中和之氣，後之言樂者止以求哀) (1978:262).

Zhang Zai follows Confucian idea that the proper music possesses the power to harmonize and nurture the heart-mind of man, this because music is nothing but the joyful expression of one’s heart-mind. See intro.

³⁶⁰ Trans by Ding, Wang’s (2010:51-52) with some modification.

³⁶¹ Zhang Zai strongly believes that joy can greatly influence people’s attitude and behavior. An example which is often employed by Confucian is again music. The *Record on Music* states that “music and/or joy unites people.” (樂者為同). Joy and music have the intrinsic ability of influence others and let other respond and join to them for this reason can be an important tool of promoting harmony. The American scholar William Thompson (2008:25) states that music possess a great power of enhancing social bonds through joy and pleasure: “Music can influence arousal and mood states, and sharing these affective experiences may enhance social bonds.”

In addition to joy as a strong motivation for self-cultivation and moral practice, Zhang Zai adds that cultivates oneself through virtue is a path toward longevity and immortality. Here longevity and immortality have two different meanings. The first one has concrete meaning in the sense that refining one's *qi* and harmonizing the heart-mind let one's life be healthier than a disharmonic self. The second has an ideal sense: since morality is grounded on the endless process of harmony and harmonization, to be in accord with this process is to transcend one's body and limits, and join the eternal flow of changes and transformations.

We have seen above that besides the fact that human being receives a fixed inborn *qi*-quality which establish one's own life, through self-cultivation one can refine this inborn quality. To refine this quality is to harmonize *qi* and heart-mind, this will improve one's life:

氣者在性學之間，性猶有氣之惡者為病，氣又有習以害之，此所以要鞭辟至於齊，強學以勝其氣習 (1978:329) “*Qi* stands between nature and learning. By possessing bad *qi* quality, one will be sick; if this *qi* arises from [bad] practice, it will be harmful. Therefore one needs to learn how to order the self, and by strengthening through learning will triumph over the *qi* of bad habits.”

Here Zhang Zai relates one's bad behavior with the unhealthy state of the body and heart-mind. We can explain this statement as such: moral and virtuous behavior lead to an harmonious state of the heart-mind which is directly linked to the body self; on the contrary, bad behaviors will lead to disharmony of the self and thus to sickness³⁶².

愛人然後能保其身，（自注：寡助則親戚畔之。）能保其身則不擇地而安。（自注：不能有其身，則資安處以置之。）不擇地而安，蓋所達者大矣；大達于天，則成性成身矣。(1978:34) “By loving others one can preserve the body (Zhang Zai's note: with insufficient support even relatives could be against him/her) being able to preserve the body self, one will be peaceful in the face of any circumstances (Zhang Zai's note: without being able to control/pacify the body one needs to find the proper [external]

³⁶² Disharmony of the heart-mind and body is often related to sickness in Chinese medicine. See above.

condition to be peaceful). To be peaceful in any circumstance it means to reach the greatness. When greatness reach heaven, the nature and the body self are fulfilled.”

The path of morality and virtue is directly related with one’s physical and psychological health. Living a good and moral life goes along with living an healthy life since both are grounded in harmony: “The man of humaneness has a long life; he/she is quiet and peaceful and then can endure, this is the image of longevity.” (“仁者壽”³⁶³, 安靜而久長, 壽之象也。)(1978:308)

By quoting Confucius, Zhang Zai wants to remark the intrinsic relationship between the practice of morality and harmonious, peaceful and healthy life. But as we have seen above, human’s life does not totally depend on subjective effort of changing and improving one’s *qi*; each life has its mandate that cannot be really changed since it is received from heaven. What one can do is thus understand and accept it. Therefore here longevity is not a just a matter about the length of one’s life, but it is first to make one’s life worth of living: to live a pleasant, joyful and healthy life is directly related with morality³⁶⁴. Second, reaching the greatness of heaven and rejoice with it, it has also a strong idealistic implication: transcending the physical self, enable one to live the life of the whole and then becomes immortal³⁶⁵.

We have seen in the third chapter that Zhang Zai understands human moral nature beyond the limit of life and death. Since human nature goes along the process of polarities changes and transformations, it cannot be limited by temporal forms: “Aggregation is my natural dimension, dispersion is too. To know that death is not destruction, is talking about nature.” (聚亦吾體, 散亦吾體, 知死之不亡者, 可與言性矣。)(1978:7) “Make the most of one’s nature and after we can know that life we do

³⁶³ This is a quote from the *Lunyu* 6.23: “The Master said: the wise delight in water, but the humane delight in mountains. For although the wise are active, the humane are at rest. And although the wise will find joy, the humane will have long life.” (子曰: 知者樂水, 仁者樂山; 知者動, 仁者靜; 知者樂, 仁者壽。). (Trans. by Dawson 2008:22).

³⁶⁴ As Li Chengyang (2014:32) has pointed out: “Confucian ideal of longevity is not merely living a long time but also living a quality life and a virtuous life.”

³⁶⁵ The Israeli scholar Patt-Shamir Galia (2012:238) insightfully has pointed out that Zhang Zai thinks about longevity and immortality as something that does not concern human physical life, but moral life. The idea is not how to become immortal but rather how to make death pointless for discussion: “it is life as moral, through which one can “overcome death,” and gain moral eternity, which makes death pointless for discussion.”

not gain, and with death we do not lose.” (盡性然後知生無所得則死無所喪。)(1978:21)

道德性命是長在不死之物也，己身則死，此則常在。(1978:273) “The Way, the virtue, human nature and the mandate are long lasting things and never dies. The body self dies, but the principle is constant.”

When one is able to extend the heart-mind and *qi* and resonates with cosmos, he/she has reached immortality. He/she will become one with the cosmos and thus his/her own body will fill the universe. The moral person transcends the self and becomes void in his/her desires; transcending the self is able to embrace all things and becomes all things. This is possible because all things in the world are united in the same process of yinyang's interaction.

This is naturally an idealistic or even a religious sense of immortality, based on Zhang Zai's metaphysics grounded on all-pervading harmony: being all things in the world intrinsically related and mutually interdependent, to harmonize the self is to fully blend and flow with the endless process of harmonization. But despite this ideal or rather mystical goal, the idea of harmonious unity with the cosmos is first a strong moral motivation for the learner of the Way. To live a moral life is to live a life which is worth of living by being joyful and being not worried (without regret) in the face of death. In this sense we can understand the Western Inscription's last sentence: “In life I follow and serve [heaven and earth]; in death I will be at peace.” (存，吾順事，沒，吾寧也)(1978:63)

5.4 Chapter Conclusions

In this last section we have analyzed Zhang Zai's epistemological theory and Zhang Zai's program of self-cultivation. We have seen that the philosopher recognizes to the heart-mind the ability to link the inner subjective world with the external objective one. This ability can be extended to the utmost by reaching a complete unity of the self with the world. Since the world is conceived as an endless process of harmonization, which

is morally good, to reach the complete unity with this process, one needs to attune the heart-mind and the body with that through a process of self-refinement.

In the end we have also seen that this process of refinement is the most joyful and pleasant activity that human being can do and how this joy can be a strong motivation for moral action. Together with joy, self-cultivation implies also the idea of self-preservation since the harmonized self is an healthy self, and it is connected to the idea that a moral life is a life which is worth of living, in this sense moral life does not fear death and thus can be defined immortal.

6. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Zhang Zai and the Confucian tradition

Despite the key role that Zhang Zai has been played in the history of Confucian philosophy, his influence on Confucian orthodoxy has been often underestimated or partially recognized. This trend follows the way of thinking of Confucian orthodoxy along the centuries where Zhang Zai's philosophy were subject to ups and downs. Almost forgotten during his time, he was later retrieved by Zhu Xi's orthodoxy for the contribution to the development of the idea of *qi* and human physical nature. Successively, after the Song, he was almost forgotten³⁶⁶ until the end of the Ming dynasty, where a group of literati recalled his teachings as a support for the critique against Confucian orthodoxy. Later, in the beginning of the last century, Zhang Zai's philosophy was at the center of an hermeneutical debate between materialist and idealist philosophers³⁶⁷.

Contemporary scholarships that deal comprehensively with Zhang Zai's system are just few, especially in the Western academia, and the majority of them focus on cosmology and metaphysics. The general tendency is that of understanding Zhang Zai's philosophy under the category of monism based on the concept of *qi*. This interpretation is coherent with the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, and particularly with Zhu Xi's understanding. In the introduction to this study I have reported several interpretations that follow this line of thinking. However, in recent years, the tendency among sinologists is to reinterpret Zhang Zai's philosophy outside the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, placing Zhang Zai in his historical context and emphasizing the differences between Zhang's line of thinking and the later Confucian orthodoxy.

Among these scholarships, there are two works that are particularly significant in this investigation. The first is Kim Jungyeup's doctoral dissertation (2008) that deals with a particular understanding of Zhang Zai's idea of *qi*; the second is Ziporyn's essay (2015) on Zhang Zai's concept of harmony.

³⁶⁶ An important clue about the undervaluation of Zhang Zai's doctrine in later Song and Yuan period can be found in the *Histories of the Song* (Songshi 宋史). In the biographical part of the *Songshi*, the *Western Inscription* is Zhang Zai's only cited work.

³⁶⁷ See intro.

At the first sight the two approaches seem to be totally opposed to each other. First. The former wants to overcome the substance-monism interpretation of Zhang Zai's system through the idea of *qi* in term of polar relationships; and the later reaffirms the substance-monistic approach employing the notion of harmony. Second. The former focus on *qi* as Zhang Zai's ultimate category; and the later outlines the paradigm of harmony as the coherence of Zhang Zai's system. But what the two interpretations (probably unwillingly) share is first, besides they emphasize two different concepts (*qi* and harmony), they are talking about the same paradigm (the unity of opposites)³⁶⁸. Second, they share the idea that Zhang Zai elaborated his theories in response to the needs of his time, and particularly, as the philosophical means against Buddhist's escapist attitude toward reality.

With this study I have followed the approach of dealing with the peculiar historical context, and Zhang Zai's personal aims. As we have seen above, the eleventh century's China was marked by the attempt of the literati to retrieve the Way (*Dao*) of the *Classics* and undermine heterodox (especially Buddhism) theories. The effort of these intellectuals was to find the one single thread that could unify Confucian classical thinking and actualize it to the needs of their time. They believed that by retrieving the essence of Confucianism, the State could be strengthened, and at the same time, Buddhist ideology could be eradicated from Chinese elite. From Zhang Zai's biography³⁶⁹, we have seen that he was totally on this mission, and even though he encountered several failures in his political career, he never gave up on this task. On the contrary, after the failure in the court, he found in teaching and in writing the best way to influence society. In my opinion, it is through this lens that we ought to analyze and categorize Zhang Zai's entire philosophy. His entire philosophical system, and all his theories, can be unified by the attempt to find the Confucian coherence that could restore Confucian orthodoxy and eradicate heterodoxies.

On the basis of this approach, it is hard to pinpoint the concept of *qi* by itself as the coherence that could synthesize all Confucian teachings. Despite *qi*'s ascending influence in Chinese general thinking, and within the Confucian philosophers, we can hardly define *qi* as the ultimate and comprehensive coherence of this tradition; in other words, if Zhang Zai was looking for the *single thread* that could synthesize all

³⁶⁸ For a brief review of these two positions see introduction.

³⁶⁹ See introduction.

Confucians thinking, the choice of *qi* will hardly cohere with Confucius and Confucian Classics. Here I am not saying that *qi* was not a key concept in Zhang Zai's system, this will be against all evidence and all previous scholarships; but what I am saying, and what I have showed above, is that *qi* cannot be isolated and elevated as Zhang Zai's ultimate substance. Zhang Zai's *qi* follows Confucian general idea of relational process, and ought to be understood under the specific paradigm that recalls the idea of harmony. Harmony, I have claimed, can be the *single thread* that unifies all Confucian Classics in Zhang Zai's view.

Understanding Zhang Zai's system within the logic of the process of harmony and harmonization, on the one hand allows him truly adhere with Confucian highly evaluation of harmony; and on the other, let him sets a different paradigm through which he could attack heterodox doctrines. This new paradigm differs from the later Confucian orthodoxy based primarily on the concept of *li* 理, and places him under a different line of thought. For instance, as Kim Jungyeup (2008:22) has pointed out, in the new paradigm of the Song-Ming (and Qing) period that places "*qi* as the central concept and that culminates in the thoughts of such philosophers as Wang Fuzhi."

This interpretation have several implications in the historical and philosophical evaluation of Zhang Zai's contribute to the development of Neo-Confucian philosophy. The idea that a single paradigm could string all differences into the same coherent whole was, as I said before, was what eleventh century Chinese literati wanted to achieve, and this idea kept its liveliness even after the Northern Song era. Philosophers such as Zhu Xi (influenced by Cheng Yi) pinpoints the concept of *li* as the unifying category; and others such as Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1192), and later Wang Yangming focus on the principle of the mind. Zhang Zai follows this trend and chooses *qi* through the ideal of harmony as the ultimate and comprehensive paradigmatic category. This in my opinion gives him a more coherent position within the Confucian teachings.

As we have seen, in the first chapter of this dissertation, the concept of harmony and its model can be probably defined as the key concept of Confucianism. As Li Chengyang (2014:18) has insightfully pointed out:

“My claim is that *ren* is indeed the most important concept in Confucius’s philosophy, but it is only one of the most important concepts in Confucian philosophy. If there is such a thing as ‘the most important concept in Confucianism, it has to be harmony.’”

Harmony is the most important concept of the Confucianism because its model encompasses the whole reality: from cosmology to ethics and epistemology. Zhang Zai, in my opinion, recognized the key role of harmony and its paradigm in Confucian *Classics*, elevating it to be the paradigmatic category of his whole system.

Zhang Zai’s idea of *qi* in term of the process of harmony and harmonization is even more coherent with the Confucian classical thought than other philosophers within the same tradition that emphasize concepts such as *li* (the principle) and/or *xin* (the heart-mind). For instance, the concept of *li*, which is the most important concept within the Neo-Confucian tradition of the Song, it is not found in the Confucian Classic with the same meaning, as the scholar Chan Wingsit (1969:46) has pointed out:

“One would expect the concept of *li* to be central in Confucianism from the very beginning. But such is not the case. An examination of ancient Confucian classics reveals several surprising facts. One is that the word does not appear in most of these Classics.”

This cannot be undervalued in a tradition where the continuity with the past is considered very important in the evaluation of a philosopher. Unfortunately, probably due to Zhang Zai’s personal choices and attitude³⁷⁰, his teachings did not acquire great consideration by his time; but the fact that later Confucian philosophers such as Wang Fuzhi, Wang Tingxiang and Dai Zhen recalled his teachings in their critique against Confucian orthodoxy cannot be underestimated.

³⁷⁰ Unfortunately, we do not know so much about Zhang Zai’s Guanzhong school after Zhang Zai’s death. From the *History of Song* we know that some of Zhang’s most prominent disciples went to Luoyang following the Chengs (one of the most important is Lü Dalin), and others, such as Su Bing and Fan Yu, vanished from the sight. Later, this school was gradually absorbed by the Luoyang schools. The later Ming philosopher Wang Fuzhi explains the fact of Zhang’s teaching disappearance as such: “Master Zhang taught in Guanzhong and his disciples were not very numerous. As he was a man of ordinary status living in retirement he had no means of gaining the support of the great men and venerable scholars of his day like Fu (Pi), Wen (Yanbo), and Ssi-ma (Guang). This is why his doctrine was never practiced to anything like the same extent as the numerology of Shao Kangjie (Shao Yong).” (張子教學於關中，其門人未有殆庶者。而當時鉅公耆儒如富、文、司馬諸公，張子皆以素位隱隱居而未由相為羽翼。其道之行，曾不得與邵康節之數學相與頡頏) (Tang 2000:81) (Trans. by McMorran 1975:433).

Wang Fuzhi strongly believes that the doctrine promoted by Zhang Zai was closer to Confucius and Mencius than Zhu Xi's one:

張子之學上承孔孟之志、下救來茲之失,如皎日麗天,無幽不燭,聖人復起,未有能易焉者也 (Tang 2000:81) “Master Chang’s doctrine inherit the purpose of Confucius and Mencius on the one hand, and retrieves the errors of the future on the other. Like a bright sun shining in the heavens, there is no darkness which it does not illumine. Were another sage appear, there would be nothing for him to change in it.” (Trans. by McMorran 1975:432)

世之信從者寡,故道之誠然者不著,貞邪相競而互為畸勝。是以不百年而陸子靜之異說興,又二百年而王伯安之邪說熾,其以朱子格物、爭貞勝者猶水勝火,一盈一虛而莫適有定。使張子之學曉然大明,以正童蒙之志於始,則浮屠生死之狂惑不折而自摧 (Tang 2000:82) “As he [Zhang] had few followers in the world, the integrity of the Way was not made clear, and the pure and the heretic struggled against one another with each gaining partial victories. Thus it was in less than one hundred years the heterodox theory of Lu Tzu-ching arose, and in another two hundred years Wang Po-an’s heresy spread like wildfire. In the ensuing struggle between this and Master Chu’s doctrines of investigating things and following the path of constant inquiry and study, the pure triumphed as water triumphs over fire, now succeeding now failing, but never achieving absolute victory. If the doctrines of Master Chang had shone forth in their full brilliance, correcting the will of young scholars at the start, then the Buddha’s reckless confusion of life and death would had been completely destroyed.” (Trans. by McMorran 1975:433-434)

And Dai Zhen:

獨張子之說,可以分別錄之。如言「由氣化,有道之名」言「化,天道」,言「推行有漸為化,合一不測為神」,此數語者,聖人復起,無以易也。(Li 1991:107) “Only the thoughts of master Zhang are worth recording. For example, the assertions 'by the transformation of *qi* there is the Way', 'transformation is the Way of nature' or, 'the gradual process that ends in consummation is transformation, and 'that which is

continuous at the roots and thus cannot be fathomed is the numinous' will not be in need of correction even by the sage if he were to come again.” (in Kim 2008:21)

Both Wang Fuzhi and Dai Zhen recognize Zhang Zai's complete adherence to Confucians orthodoxy, and think that recalling his teaching is the way to gain the final victory against Buddhism and corrupted Confucians. The fact that they believe that Zhang Zai inherited directly the teachings of Confucian classical masters, and they use this belief to criticize the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and undermine heterodox doctrines, is important for a new evaluation of Zhang Zai's philosophy. Here the idea of harmony as Zhang Zai's comprehensive category can surely strengthen his position and affinity with classical Confucianism.

I think this will be a good starting point for further investigations.

6.2 Against Heterodoxies and indolent people

The other important aspect that goes along with the former is that: Zhang Zai's searching for affinities with Confucianism has the primal aim in the eradication of heterodoxies from Chinese elite. As we have seen along of this dissertation, *Zhengmeng's* primal purpose is to show the Confucian Way through the critique against Buddhism (and Daoism in a lesser manner) and corrupted or indolent attitude of average people. Here the paradigm of harmony seems to play a key role in this critique. Zhang Zai criticizes heterodox thinking by being one-sided and being unable to grasp reality as a whole which include all polar forces interactions (*qi*). He believes that Buddhists are just interested on the world beyond the senses, they reject what one can see and hear by focusing on the principles that rule the world. The problem is that they confine these principles outside the world of human being, outside human nature and outside the process of harmony and harmonization. In Zhang Zai's view, their greater and most dangerous problem is that they fail to grasp the connection between the sensual world and the one of principles. They consider the first limited, ignoring the endless potentiality of changes and transformations; and they set the second beyond this world with the consequence to remove human interests and considerations on this world, causing the decay of Song society.

Besides the fallacious thinking of Buddhists, Zhang Zai criticizes another kind of people, the one that is not interested on learning, and thus cannot understand the Way (*Dao*). The attitude of this people is to stop on what they can see and hear, and totally rely on desires. Being interested on what they perceive and ignoring the development, the changes and transformations of things, their effort is focused on satisfying the needs and desires of each given situation. They grasp the forms without knowing the underlying coherence of things.

Hence, even if the attitude of Buddhists and average people seems to be opposite, in the end the results are the same: they both have a partial view of the world that causes a partial and egoistic attitude toward society. As we have seen, this seems to be the starting point of Zhang Zai's entire system. Zhang Zai's effort to find a single and coherent principle that can underlie all Confucian teachings is moved by the attempt to eradicate this dangerous attitude from the eleventh century's literati. Zhang Zai shows that the problem of these people is primarily metaphysical, they have a partial view of the world, and this have a strong impact in their ethical view and moral behavior. They fail to recognize the comprehensive paradigm of reality which is constituted by the endless and constant interrelation and interpenetration of opposite forces. We have seen that Zhang Zai calls the paradigm of reality "*yiwu liangti*" ("the process of unification constituted by the two polarities' interaction"), in other words, harmony. Harmony pervades every single being and every single process of the world, and therefore this paradigm needs to be extended to all aspects of reality. Since if one fails to recognize the all-embracing harmony which constitutes the feature and the virtue of the cosmos, one will be unable to proceed harmony into human's world. Failing to grasp the ontology of morality, one will be not able to adhere with it. Hence, harmony is not only the paradigm of the cosmos (the process of changes and transformations of *qi*), but it is the key for moral cultivation and moral practice: through the harmonization of the self one can help others and extend harmony to the whole society.

This lead to another key aspect of Zhang Zai's philosophy of harmony: harmony is the metaphysical principle of morality and thus the base for self-cultivation.

6.3 Harmony and self-cultivation

Harmony, for Confucians, is the paradigm that describes cosmic features and its function; but harmony primarily outlines the way and the result of an ideal human activity, and even pinpoints to the healthier and morally better's way human, family and society can live and endure in peace. In this study on the concept of harmony, I have also tried to draw out the specific paradigm that outlines the characteristics of harmony within the Confucian tradition. I have recognized that the Confucian idea of harmony includes five specific features: differences, unity, dynamicity, comprehensiveness and creativity. All these features seem to belong to activities that implies harmony as both the way of functioning, and the aimed ideal result.

Following this central idea in Confucian thought, I have recognized the same paradigm in all Zhang Zai's key concepts, such as: *qi*, void and the spiritual dimension (chapter 2); and human nature (chapter 3). And in the second part of this dissertation, I have extended this paradigm to ethical (chapter 4) and epistemological (chapter 5) issues. In this sense, Zhang Zai's most important and later work, the *Zhengmeng*, represents an important clue for the definition of harmony as the Zhang Zai's most comprehensive category (the one single thread).

First. the fact that Zhang Zai (or better his disciples) chooses the concept of Great Harmony as the opening of the *Zhengmeng*, both as the title of the first chapter, and as the first concept that he presented³⁷¹, it is an important clue to the centrality of this concept along this work.

Second. Since this chapter is generally considered the nucleus of his philosophy because it sets the base of Zhang's metaphysics, harmony cannot but have a central position in his line of thinking.

Third, as I have tried to show along this study, the paradigm depicted in the concept of the Great Harmony, that in my understanding adhere with the Confucian's

³⁷¹ This way of thinking is not new in Chinese philosopher. For instance in the *Analects*, Confucius disciples emphasize the central concept of study by placing it as the title of the first chapter, and referring to it in the first dialogue. See *Lunyu* 1.1. Another example could be *Laozi*'s opening with the central concept of *Dao* and so on.

understanding of harmony, can be extended to other metaphysical concepts becoming the key concept of the *Zhengmeng*.

Fourth, as I have shown in chapter two, Zhang Zai's concept of *qi*, traditionally understood as the nucleus of his metaphysics, adheres with the paradigm of harmony whether it is understood in Kim Jungyeup's term of process of polarities interaction. *Qi* is not the substance that can stand by itself, but it is rather a process of interaction between polar forces.

Setting Zhang Zai's metaphysics on the paradigm of harmony, can give a solid ground for the proper understanding of his whole system. Therefore theories such as human nature goes back to this view. Human nature is part of the same process of polar forces' interactions and therefore cannot but be double and one at the same time. Human nature is universal (objective), but at the same time individual (subjective); it possesses infinite possibilities of growing, but at the same time it is defined and limited by forms. All these features cannot be thought as separated from each other, they are part of the same whole, the paradigm of harmony. In the same direction goes the theory of the heart-mind and the process of the acquisition of knowledge. Both sensual experience (the knowledge of the senses), and the intuitive ethical knowledge are different expression of the same epistemological process. In chapter four I have also outlined harmony as the ground where Zhang Zai's ethical theories can develop. This ground is again an ontological one: morality is grounded ontologically in the cosmic process of changes and transformations; in other words, since the cosmic process of *qi*'s changes and transformations nurtures and preserves all things in the world, it cannot but be intrinsically moral. And since this process is nothing but the process of harmony itself, morality is nothing but the virtue of harmony. Hence human beings need to understand and proceed the Way of harmony in the world. Man's duty will be to reproduce within the world and within the self this harmony, which means to integrate all differences into a coherent and productive whole. To harmonize the self and the others is thus the key by which harmonious society and harmonious world can be finally fulfilled.

Hence, the paradigm of harmony is not just the paradigm that depicts the metaphysical realm, but even more important, becomes the most important means by which undertake and realize the Confucian Way. As we have seen, the *Zhengmeng* is primarily a pedagogical text, it wants to show to the learners the foundation of all Confucian

teachings for the purpose of the cultivation of the self. Being harmony the foundation of all Confucian teachings, harmony clearly becomes the foundation of the cultivation program. The self needs to be firstly harmonized. But being harmony an “holistic paradigm”, the self needs to be thought in its most extended meaning: the subjective inner self that include both body and mind, and the relational self in which relation with others and the world occupies an important position. In other words, to achieve harmony means to be in harmony with oneself (mind and body), and with others. The interesting point here is that Zhang Zai grounds this program of cultivation on his metaphysical system by referring directly on *qi*. The process of cultivation is nothing but the process of refinement of the quality of one’s *qi*. To refine one’s *qi* is nothing but let first the mind and the body be in harmony, and second to harmonize our relationship with family, with friends and the world. The refinement of *qi* encompasses every aspect of one’s life, from the psychological to the physical, from the inward activities to the outward ones.

Here I choose do not deepen the practice of self-harmonization in details, since my first concern was to apply the paradigm of harmony in Zhang Zai’s philosophical system in general. But the last chapter of this work can be a good starting point to deepen this aspect of Zhang Zai’s philosophy. For instance, as I have briefly sketched along this dissertation, the practice of music and rituals occupy a central position in cultivation activity. After all, as the *Record of Music (Yueji)* clearly shows, music and rituals together realize the paradigm of harmony: the unity and the multiplicity.

樂者為同，禮者為異。同則相親，異則相敬，樂勝則流，禮勝則離。合情飾貌者禮樂之事也 (*Yueji*) “Similarity and union are the aim of music; difference and distinction, that of ceremony. From union comes mutual affection; from difference, mutual respect. Where music prevails, we find a weak coalescence; where ceremony prevails, a tendency to separation. It is the business of the two to blend people's feelings and give elegance to their outward manifestations.” (Trans. by Legge1990:98)

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Daxue 大學 SKQS.

Guoyu 國語 SKQS.

Liji 禮記 SKQS.

Lunyu 論語 SKQS.

Mengzi 孟子 SKQS.

Shijing 詩經 SKQS.

Xiaojing 孝經 SKQS.

Xunzi 荀子 SKQS.

Yijing/zhuan 易經/專 SKQS.

Zhongyong 中庸 SKQS.

Zuozhuan 左傳 SKQS.

DAOIST CLASSICS

Dao Dejing 道德經 SKQS.

Zhuangzi 莊子 SKQS.

MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER PRE-SONG TEXTS

Chuci 楚辭 SKQS.

Chunqiu Fanlu 春秋繁露 SKQS.

Guanzi 管子 SKQS.

Huangdi Neijing 黃帝內經 ZTDZ.

Huainanzi 淮南子 ZTDZ.

Liushi Chunqiu 呂氏春秋 SBCK.

COMMENTARIES ON THE CLASSICAL TEXTS

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