The Ti/Yong 體用Model and its Discontents: Models of Ambiguous Priority in Chinese Buddhism and Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism

Final draft of chapter published as part of *The Buddhist Roots of Zhu Xi’s Philosophical Thought,* edited by John Makeham(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). All rights reserved.

Brook Ziporyn

University of Chicago

Introduction and Overview

This paper explores the structural peculiarities of three different metaphysical models: those found in Huayan Buddhism, in Tiantai Buddhism, and in Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism. Each of these models involves its own distinctive conception of the relation between one and many, between prior and posterior, between foundational and derivative, between formless and formed, between unperceived and perceived, between indeterminate and determinate, between center and periphery. All three models touch on the issues listed above, and all three regard the relations listed as largely parallel if not ultimately synonymous (i.e., the center is the one is the prior is the foundational is the formless is the unperceived, and so on). Moreover, as John Makeham’s excellent contribution to this volume has amply illustrated, Zhu Xi’s borrows a huge portion of his metaphysical structural assumptions from a template developed in the Buddhist schools, especially the *ti/yong* 體用model. Nevertheless, as Steve Angle’s paper in this volume discusses in depth, the levels of influence and interchange encoded in the shared use of borrowed tropes and images, and even general structural principles, is susceptible to a highly complex dialectic in this period of Chinese intellectual history. Hence we should expect huge swaths of shared vocabulary and concern that nonetheless are tweaked at decisive points by apparently small but, to the thinkers themselves, decisively important differences in emphasis and torque. These differences and their consequences are what I want to explore here.

For although Tiantai, Huayan and Zhu Xi all deploy the *ti/yong* model as a crucial component of their metaphysics, in certain key places they deploy it to different purposes, restricted or expanded to different ranges of application at different levels of their discussions, leading to subtle structural differences with what were for them large philosophical consequences. I think they were right to see large philosophical consequences implied by these tweaks, and it is this that I will try to clarify in the pages that follow.

The first model we will discuss comes in two forms: I will call them 1) “the classic *ti/yong* model,” and 2) its “radicalized” modified version. The classic *ti/yong* model is found in a few motifs scattered through early Chinese Buddhism and here and there in non-Buddhist thinkers like Wang Bi. The radicalized *ti/yong* model derives mainly from the Huayan Buddhist development of this classic model.

The pre-modified “classic ti/yong model” prioritizes *ti* over *yong*, and maintains that priority as primary, such that the contents of *ti* and *yong* are always different and opposed; *ti* is one and unseen, *yong* is many and seen, and *yong* is always dependent on *ti* but not vice versa.

The radicalized Huayan modification collapses *ti* and *yong*, make them fully *coextensive*, sharing the same contents, but still distinguished structurally by a conceptual priority of *ti* over *yong,* the latter always being dependent on the former in a way the former is not dependent on the latter. Huayan employs this model globally; that is, it is the key explanatory model on all levels and is applied to well-nigh all aspects of doctrine. In particular, it is applied equally to the individual psychic level and the universal metaphysical levels of explanation. That is, the relation between the mind and its mental acts, the relation between the individual consciousness and its own experiences, conceptions, emotions, and so forth, is a *ti/yong* relation--and the Li/*shi* 理事relation, between the sole ultimate reality and its multiple manifestations, is *also* a *ti/yong* relation. Indeed, ultimately these are one and the same, because all things are functions as *shi* whose *ti* is Li, and the activity of any individual mind is itself a *yong* which is the *shi* whose *ti* is Li, the one universal interreflective *ti* which is the sole real Li of all *shi*.

This “one” is however a weird kind of one, also legitimately describable as a “none,” and it is this special Buddhist peculiarity that allows the “radical” Huayan modification of the *ti/yong* paradigm. For in this case the *ti* is Emptiness (*kong* 空*)*, conceived not as the passive blank cutting off of all activities but as the active enabling of all activities—Emptiness as the enabling of all beings. It is blank like a mirror, not blank like a white wall: the reflectivity that embraces all forms rather than excluding all forms. It is this that is directly active in any individual thing’s activity and awareness, the formless essence pervading each thing that allows it to move and perceive and think and ultimately to be interpenetrating, interreflecting, with all other things. The Huayan model is straightforward and elegant: *ti* is Li, *yong* is *shi*, and these two have the specific Buddhist relation of interpenetration and coextensivity: form is emptiness, emptiness is form, so Li is *shi*, *shi* is Li. *However, the conceptual priority of Li and ti remains in spite of their eternal mutual immanence and coextensivity*. The terms denoting this relation, this final irreversibility and asymmetry of dependence even of two terms regarded as coextensive, go all the way back to the first works of the Du Shun corpus laying the groundwork of Huayan thought. It is the distinction between *suoyi* 所依and *nengyi* 能依*,* that which is relied upon and that which relies.[[1]](#footnote-1) Though coextensive, the *ti* and the *yong* are marked by a one-way dependence relation, a conceptual priority of *ti* over *yong*. This brilliant and hugely influential move is possible here because *ti* is Emptiness itself. [[2]](#footnote-2)

The second model is the Tiantai Buddhist model.

The third model is Zhu Xi’s own innovation.

Both of these continue to employ the *ti/yong* model unproblematically on the individual psychic level (in the Tiantai case, however, mainly only after importing this model from Huayan in via Zhanran’s work in the Tang dynasty), though with important tweaks in each case. In the Tiantai case, the modified use of *ti/yong* at the psychic level is accomplished through the doctrine that the deluded mind itself transforms into and thereby entails in itself the conditions of possibility of the Three Thousand objects of its possible experience, and thus in that sense “creates” them. Since it is deluded, and thus committed to a false sense of subject-object dualism, it is necessarily apparently distinguished from them. But for that very reason it inseparable from them, and this inseparability is ultimately analyzed into a dialectical identity with them as they appear. In this way Tiantai presents the necessary interidentity between deluded mind and whatever is putatively outside of and opposed to deluded mind, for which the *ti/yong* description can then be used in certain contexts. We will see this in unpacking Jingxi Zhanran’s description of the individual mind/world relation: “The [deluded] mind is all minds and bodies, so even as it goes through the transformation of states, these are just the mind itself. It is just this transformation that is the creation of its experiences, which means the experienced temporal *yong* are just the *ti* itself.” (*xinzhisexin jixinmingbian zaoweitiyong* 心之色心，即心名變，變即是造，造謂體用),[[3]](#footnote-3) a conception we will explore in detail below.

In Zhu Xi’s case, the modification of *ti/yong* at the individual psychic level is accomplished through a careful adaptation of Zhang Zai’s dicta, “Mind is the controlling unifier of the Nature and the emotions.” (*xin tong xingqing* 心統性情*)* and “Mind has no opposite” （*weixinwudui* 惟心無對）—singled out by Zhu Xi as superior to anything the Cheng brothers ever said on the subject of the individual mind.[[4]](#footnote-4)Here we have a straight *ti/yong* relation between the Nature and the emotions, owing much to the Huayan-derived Chan model, with the Nature as the *ti* and the emotions as the *yong* and the former phenomenologically available *only* as the latter. Zhu Xi however adds an innovative third term, the mind itself as the unity of the two, which controls their relation. This innovation depends on his alternative to the straight *ti/yong* relation at the cosmic universal level, replacing it with a center/periphery model of Taiji and Yin-Yang, described not as *ti/yong* but as an original opposite-unifying numinousity (*miao 妙*) and the opposed extremes conceived as the triggers of reversal that carry this opposite-unifying center (*suochengzhiji* 所乘之機) that adds a new normative dimension, present in all *ti* and thus available in all *yong.*

However, in many contexts, both Zhu Xi and Tiantai strongly resist applying the classic or radicalized *ti/yong* model directly or straightforwardly to the universal level. The global metaphysical relation between Li and *shi* in the Tiantai case and between Li and Qi in the Zhu Xi case are ultimately not straightforwardclassic *ti/yong* relations, or are highly modified versions to which the *ti/yong* model is applied grudgingly and with many qualifiers. They are rather models of center/periphery, of two extremes unified by a center point that paradoxically combines the two extremes, a broader category very pervasive in Chinese thought. Indeed, we may think of the *ti/yong* model as one particular type of center/periphery model, but one that in some periods of Chinese intellectual history, perhaps to the brilliance and elegance of the radicalized Huayan version, temporarily eclipsed other forms the center/periphery model.

In the Tiantai case, the *ti/yong* pair does occur in Zhiyi’s works when speaking of the general ontological condition of things, but very rarely and unsystematically, and specifically linking the Third Truth, the Middle (*zhong* 中), as *ti* and the other two truths, i.e., of Emptiness and Provisional Positing （*kongjia*空假, as *yong.[[5]](#footnote-5)* That is, the *ti/yong* model is emphatically subordinated to the center/periphery model, making both phenomenal reality *and its coextensive negation* the *yong,* with the enabling Middle as the *ti,* rather than phenomenal reality as *yong* and its coextensive enabling negation as *ti* as we shall see in Huayan*.* We will trace the intricacies and consequences of this seemingly small distinction below. Later Tiantai writers, starting with Zhanran, on the contrary, adopt from Huayan the *ti/yong* terminology, sometimes even indeed directly equating *ti* with Li and *yong* with *shi*. But the fit is not a tidy one. Tiantai writers are then forced to rewrite and qualify its usage, and to distinguish it from the classic *ti/yong* model in which *ti* just is Li and *yong* just is shi, where *ti* is one and *yong* are many, where Li is one and *shi* are many and so on.

Zhu Xi pulls away from the *ti/yong* model for the global metaphysical level, the Taiji/Yin-Yang (Qi), relation in middle age, saying that he had formerly applied it directly to that relation but that “this way of putting it definitely has something wrong with it” *qiyanguyoubing*其言固有病; he nevertheless continues to use the model in the very same passage, but with reservations and modifications. [[6]](#footnote-6) These modifications provide us with the deepest insights into his metaphysical vision and how it both builds upon and differs from both Tiantai and Huayan Buddhist conceptions.

The three models have very different ways of conceiving the relation of the central term to its peripheral terms, and thus although all three claim some sort of pre-existent grounding of all events in something prior, either temporally or conceptually, to those events, they do so in different ways. None of these are much like the kind of conceptual priority we would find in a Platonic or Aristotelian system or their derivatives, because of differences, primarily, in the conceptions of oneness and difference, the one-many relation, which is perhaps the main determinant of resulting differences in the conception of the precise structure of metaphysical priority.

1. The Classic Ti/Yong Model and its Huayan Radicalization

The basic position of the Huayan school, as it develops in the thought of Dushun, Zhiyan, Fazang, Chengguan and Zongmi, proposes that all phenomena are grounded in, rooted in, derived from, ultimately coextensive with, the originally “pure” (i.e., indeterminate, but infinitely determinable) Suchness, also called the Buddha-nature or Dharma-nature. All things owe their phenomenal existence to that purity in the sense of its lack of any definite characteristics (viewed as obstructions and thus as defilements), but are not as such “contained in” that Suchness which is the Buddha-nature. Indeed, it is held that it is precisely the lack of these specific determinate multiple phenomena in the Buddha-nature (or Dharma-nature) itself that makes their arising possible, as images appear in a mirror only because the mirror itself is devoid of any definite images of its own, thereby enabling it to produce any image at all, when the external conditions for doing so are right. As Fazang beautifully puts it:

The Perfectly Complete Nature, although it becomes defiled or pure as it follows conditions, yet never loses the purity of its self-nature. Indeed, it is just because it never loses the purity of its self-nature that it is able to follow conditions and become defiled or pure. It is like a bright mirror showing defiled or pure things: although it manifests purity or defilement, it never loses the purity of the mirror’s brightness. Indeed, it is precisely because it never loses the purity of the mirror’s brightness that it is able to manifest all the marks of purity and defilement. It is through its manifesting of defilement and purity that we know that the mirror’s brightness is pure, and it is because the mirror’s brightness is pure that we know it can manifest defilement and purity. Thus the two meanings really refer to one and the same Nature. The mirror’s brightness is not increased when it manifests pure things, nor dirtied when it manifests defiled things. Not only is it not dirtied—this manifestation of defiled things is actually what shows the purity of the mirror’s brightness. You should know that it works just the same way with Suchness. It is not only that the purity of the unmoving nature becomes all defiled and pure things, but precisely this becoming defiled and pure things is what shows the purity of the Nature. Not only is there no need to eliminate defiled and pure things to perceived the purity of the nature, rather it is only because of the purity of the nature that it becomes defiled or pure. Thus the two aspects are completely absorbed into each other, one nature not two—how could they contradict each other?

且如圓成。雖復隨緣成於染淨而恒不失自性清淨。秪由不失自性清淨故。能隨緣成染淨也。猶如明鏡現於染淨。雖現染淨而恒不失鏡之明淨。秪由不失鏡明淨故。方能現染淨之相。以現染淨知鏡明淨。以鏡明淨知現染淨。是故二義唯是一性。雖現淨法不增鏡明。雖現染法不污鏡淨。非直不污。亦乃由此反顯鏡之明淨。當知真如道理亦爾。非直不動性淨成於染淨。亦乃由成染淨方顯性淨。非直不壞染淨明於性淨。亦乃由性淨故方成染淨。是故二義全體相收一性無二。豈相違耶[[7]](#footnote-7)

Although Fazang does not here use the *nengyi/suoyi* 能依／所依terminology found in the Dushun literature, it seems fair to see a similar structure in this passage, marked by a one-way dependence relationship between the imageless but image-enabling “brightness” and the “images.” Huayan starts with the straightforward assumption that the conditional (finite, limited) is the determinate (that “determination is negation,” as Spinoza put it), and thus the unconditional (infinite, illimitable) can only be the indeterminate. The Buddhist indeterminate, however, is not a blank, which would still be determinate as something definite (i.e., pure white or black space that excludes all other colors), but rather is blank in the way that a mirror’s brightness is blank, and hence neither inclusive of determinations nor exclusive of them; indeed, it is what enables and in a sense produces all determinations. This idea was a commonplace in Chinese Buddhism at least from the time of Seng Zhao, who declares in his essay, “Prajna has No Knowledge,” “If we took the lack of all characteristics as being a definite lack of any characteristics, then the lack of characteristics would ipso facto be a determinate characteristic” (*ruo yi wuxiang wei wuxiang, wuxiang ji wei xiang* 若以無相為無相，無相即為相).[[8]](#footnote-8) The true indeterminacy cannot be indeterminacy to the exclusion of all determinacy, but must rather be the enabling and allowing of all and any determinacies.

On the basis of this insight, Huayan offers a vision of the coextensivity and yet asymmetry between the determinate and the indeterminate. When looking at any given image, the brightness of the mirror and the image are coextensive, and never separate. All of the image is the brightness, and conversely we also see no brightness that is not some image. And yet there remains a clear structural asymmetry between them, having to do with dependence: the brightness is what enables the image to exist, while the images are only what allows the brightness to manifest itself concretely. And the brightness is always the same in the sense of being indistinguishable in one case and in another, while the images are each different and changing. So although any given image is entirely brightness, with nothing extra added, and all brightness is manifest as images, still brightness is brightness, and is primary, is one, is impermanent, while images are images, and are secondary, multiple, and impermanent. This implies a specific structure of both 1) continuity (or even identity) and 2) contrast between the two levels.

In fact, this Huayan model is a Buddhist modification of the classic *ti/yong* structure, and it is in Huayan thought that this trope achieves perhaps its most extensive developments and applications.[[9]](#footnote-9) The basic metaphor of the *ti/yong* model, insofar as it exists at all before Buddhist transformation, is that of a plant, with a root and branches.[[10]](#footnote-10) The root is the *ti,* while the branches are the *yong.* This has certain features that made it highly useful to Buddhist thought, above all to Huayan Buddhist thought.

The classic *ti/yong* structure, on this model, implies both strong *contrast* and strong *continuity* between *ti* and *yong*.

Strong *contrast* is intrinsic to the model, in that 1) the *ti* is independent, the *yong* is dependent, just as the branches are dependent on the root; 2) the *ti* is in some sense one and the *yong* is in some sense many, just as the root is one and the branches are many, 3) the *ti* is in some sense unmoving and the branches are in some sense active, again just like a root and its branches, 4) in some sense the *ti* is hidden and the *yong* are visible, again like a root and its branches (the root is underground)—this can present as any kind of sharp decrease of degree of definiteness between the two levels: either relatively hidden and exposed (levels of relative obviousness or knowability), or absolutely hidden and exposed (indeterminacy and determinacy per se, nothingness and being, and so on), as in the universal metaphysical usage in both Wang Bi’s *Daodejing* commentary and subsequently in Huayan. Indeed, the unmovingness and hiddenness of *ti* amount in the first instance to indeterminacy itself as opposed to determinacy.[[11]](#footnote-11)

But strong *continuity* is implied in that

5) *ti* is the source or basis of *yong,* like the root of a plant and its branches and

6) these remain inseparable, again like a root and its branches, an indivisible totality of living interconnection, sometimes pushed so far as to suggest that nothing can be definitively localized as pertaining to only one part rather than another, [[12]](#footnote-12) which starts to come close the claims about some sense of identity between *ti* and *yong* in the radicalized version, where they are

6a) coextensive, stressing in either case the oneness in spite of the above contrasts.

There is one more item we could add to this list:

7) the *ti* is in the middle, a “Center,” while the *yong* are spread out to the periphery, again like a root and its branches.[[13]](#footnote-13)

But a center between two extremes has some peculiar qualities when it comes to continuity and contrast: the odd thing about this item is that it is difficult to tally it up to the “contrast” side or to the “continuity” side. It is both contrast and continuity, and in an immediate sense: the center is the exclusion of the two opposed extremes, by definition belonging to neither of them, and yet it is also the point of contact, intersection, overlap between the two extremes, as the center of a circle is a part of every radius of the circle, even those that end in diametrically opposite points on the periphery of the circle. It is what is both inseparable from both extremes and yet contained completely in neither extreme. It is in that peculiar sense both immanent to them and transcendent of them. Moreover, on the contrast side, it has another weird property: it is contrasted to both the extremes as extremes, but it also enables *their* contrast with one another. So it is a double contrast and a double continuity, all in one: it contrasts to both, it foments contrast between both, but it is also a part of both, and the ground that enables them to be what they are (i.e., contrasted).

We can thus see how the center/periphery trope does much of the contrast-and-continuity work of the *ti/yong* model*,* but in a different way. We should also note again that *ti/yong can* be construed as an instance of center/periphery, or vice versa. What I think we find in the Huayan development of the trope is a radicalization of items 1 through 6, ending in complete coextensivity of *ti* and *yong*, but preserving both their contrast and their continuity—to such an extent that the Center model is dispensed with altogether, for it seems as if its effects have been achieved already through other means. As we shall see, this is only partly true: not all of the effects of the Center have been duplicated by the radicalized *ti/yong* model.

Let us then explore this radicalized Huayan *ti/yong* model. Emptiness, Li, is *ti*: it is indeterminacy as such, quiescence as such, oneness in the special sense of noneness, which is therefore indivisible (its main feature in Du Shun’s dialectics), and therefore unchanging in any time or place. In an important way, this can indeed also be described as a kind of Center, as the (exclusive) Mean, the Middle Way, the unconditioned—for it is neither without characteristics nor with characters, neither indeterminate nor determinate, neither being nor non-being, neither blank nor full: it is the mirror’s reflectivity, the emptiness that is always manifesting as all beings, so it has the characteristics of the joining of opposites. In contrast, phenomena, *shi*, are determinacies as such, changing, multiple, dispersed. As such, they are not this center, but are the one-sided peripheral items which it unites and groudns. The *ti/yong* model already makes the determinacies dependent upon and inseparable from indeterminacy. This is easily accommodated and indeed given a robust intuitive expression in the Huayan indeterminate as a mirror-indeterminacy as opposed to blank-indeterminacy: the images in a mirror are produced by that mirror and always remain inseparable from it. The mirror is quiescent, one, and “hidden” (i.e., always discovered only secondarily, after first seeing through the manifest image), while the images are moving, many, definite. The mirror is unconditioned, eternal, omnipresent and so forth, and hence is Suchness, is Nirvanic, is the Buddha-mind, free of suffering, while the images are conditioned and transient, and hence suffering.

Now just because this is mirror-indeterminacy and not blank-indeterminacy, the two levels interfuse: since reflectivity is indivisible, it is fully present in each instance, in each image. The image is nothing but reflectivity, reflectivity is completely images (including the silvery image of mirroriness, since there is no blank: it is always reflecting something, even if it is only definite spaces between definite images). There is no reflectivity outside images, no images outside reflectivity—hence no oneness outside manyness, no quiescence outside motion, no permanence outside impermanence, no unconditionality outside the conditional. It is because the *ti* here is the specific kind of *ti* it is, reflectivity, that it does not remain inertly apart from its functions. The water-wave model works exactly the same way: the water is all waves, the waves are all water. There, instead of reflectivity, we have wetness, fluidity keeping the two levels from being in any way divisible or separable, ensuring that they are thoroughly interfused. Whatever is present in the *ti* is also present in the *yong,* and vice versa.

Nonetheless, the relation of irreversible causal priority intrinsic to the *ti/yong* model is in no way effaced. In fact it remains essential: the waves depend on the wetness of the water, but the wetness in no way depends on the waves. The images depend on the mirror’s brightness to exist, but the brightness does not depend on the images to exist, but only to be known or manifested. Note that this means the Huayan writers *can* claim reversibility of *ti* and *yong* at the phenomenal level, but when they are doing so they are actually shifting the reference from Li to *shi* in the two cases. Wave A may be *ti* to Wave B as its *yong,* and Wave B may also be *ti* to Wave A as its yong. But what this actually means is simply that Li is always *ti*, and *shi* is always *yong,* and the two are always coextensive but structurally *yong* always depends on *ti* and *shi* always depends on *yong*. Wave A, considered as water, is *ti* to Wave B considered as wave. Wave B considered as water is *ti* to Wave A considered as wave. Since both are always entirely wave and entirely water, we can shift the description *ad libitum.* But in all cases, water is *ti* and wave is *yong,* Li is *ti* and *shi* is yong. That relation of one-way dependence never changes.

It is because of the precise nature of the *ti*, the kind of *ti* it is (bright reflectivity or fluid wetness, not inertness or opacity), that the contrasts, though very real, are also subsumed by the continuity: the diversity and motion of the branches is also present in oneness and quiescence of the root, because the very nature of a mirror is to reflect and the nature of water is to be wet and hence unrestricted to any one shape.

Let us now return to the status of item 7) above, the aspect of “Center” entailed in the *ti/yong* model. In the Huayan case, the *ti* in question (pure bright reflectivity of the mirror, pure wetness of the water) is indeed in a certain sense a “center” in that it is a perfect union of opposite extremes: it is pure being and pure non-being, pure blank and pure fullness, pure indeterminacy and pure determinacy. But while this could well be conceived as the ground for its ability to serve as *ti* to various *yong*, it does not thereby make it stand as a center to the various specific *yong* that depend upon it, nor to structure them as various pairs of opposites around a particular center, but stands as a center only to the two aspects of affirmation and negation of *yong* as such and in general. Indeed, the *yong* are collapsed into the *ti*, and the *ti* into the *yong,* so that the *ti* does not serve as the center of the *yong,* but rather is just itself a center between what are in the pre-radicalized version the *ti* and the *yong,* which are in that earlier model inseparable but contrasted, not coextensive. In the classical model, the *ti* is the hidden, the indeterminate, the one, the “nonbeing,” while the *yong* are the manifest, the determinate, the many, the beings. In the Huayan model, the *ti* is both determinate and indeterminate (and likewise is one and many, nonbeing and being, and so on), and is coextensive with the *yong,* and therefore the *yong* is also both. *Ti* as mirrorlike Emptiness is all things and it is no thing, and in that sense alone it is a Center between being something and being nothing. But this being Center is not contrasted to extremes that it also connects. It does not stand beyond and between opposites, unifying them, and in that sense also participating in the extremes, as we described for the center/periphery model above and will explore in more detail below. This is because all those diverse and opposed things, the extremes, are part of the arrayed manifold, the moving diversity, the manifest, the phenomenal, which is simply one half of what it, this *ti* itself, is (since it is itself one-many and so forth). Centrality pertains to the *ti*’s own constitution, its own double nature, rather than being the relation it has with the things it grounds.

We can perhaps begin to glimpse here why Tiantai writers will gleefully critique the Huayan conception as “the exclusive Center” (*danzhong* 但中), belonging to the Separate Teaching 別教, although this should become clearer once we consider the Tiantai alternative. What I want to stress here concerns simply the relation of the *ti/yong* model to the notion of Centrality per se. While the *ti* is still in some weak sense the center, as the root stands in the center between the spreading branching, the importance of centrality as such is much downplayed in this usage. The main result of this downplaying of the Center is that the various functions are not necessarily thought of *dyadically*, *contrastively*—at least there is nothing in the model that especially encourages such an association. On the plus side, this allows perhaps a freer set of conceptualizations: *yong* do not need to be forced into any pre-conceived demand that everything must turn out to be ultimately dyadic. We can have a more empirically-derived and diverse array of possible functions, of all functions whatever they are—and in fact this is just how Huayan tends to speak of function, as a blanket “everything,” 一切 rather than, say, the more internally structured term preferred by Tiantai, “the Three Thousand,” 三千which enfolds some specific dyadic contrasts and paradoxes. *Ti/yong* encourages a stress on the foundational-yet-coextensive nature rather than the “central” relation of its key term to its peripheral terms—or perhaps we should say, in *ti/yong* the *ti* is loosely central only as a side-effect of its foundational character; as a result, the elements it grounds, even when coextensive with it, have no necessary structural relation to its centrality except that which derives from being a ground or foundation per se. It is not because it is a center that it grounds its functions (which are not dyads), but rather because it grounds its functions it is *in some loose sense* their center. In the alternate models to be considered below, this is reversed: whatever weak sense of foundation is attributed to the central term is a side-effect of its centrality, and the derivative terms are derivative precisely insofar as they are dyadically related to the center. These models will each involve a different sense of ambiguous conceptual priority.

The Tiantai Model of the Center and its Expressions as Affirmation and Negation: Here-Now Presence as Filtering Down of Prior Omnipresence and Omnitemporality

A very different model of ambiguous logical and temporal priority is found within another school of Chinese Buddhism, the Tiantai model, which does not map neatly onto a classic *ti/yong* structure, but allows for an ambiguity with respect to priority in a different sense. For the Tiantai view of the relation between Li and *shi* does not hold that Li is one and *shi* are many, nor, as in Huayan, that Li is indeterminate (as a mirror’s reflectivity is indeterminate, and is hence also the enabling of all determination) and *shi* are determinate (as mirror-images are determinate, composed entirely of the brightness of the mirror’s reflectivity, and thus also enabled to transcend their own determinacy into all other determinacies). Hence the subsequent turnaround where the determinate and the indeterminate end up being interfused and inseparable, and even in a sense “identical,” in the Tiantai case does *not* maintain the irreversible structural *dependence* priority that we still find in the Huayan model. It is not the case that Li is root from which *shi* emerges, and it is not the case that *shi* “arise from” Li.

The classic descriptions for the two alternate models, employed in debates between the two schools, are “All Things Arise from the Omnipresent Nature” (*xingqi* 性起 ) for Huayan and “All Things Are Inherently Entailed in the Omnipresent Nature” (*xingju*性具) for Tiantai。 It is often difficult to distinguish between these two positions, partially because of the lack of number, of articles, and of grammatical distinguishers in the Chinese language. We can make the difference more simply discernible in English. A sentence like, say, “Each and every dharma is precisely Li” (*yiqiezhufa yiyijili* 一切諸法一一即理), or any variant thereof, can mean either, “Each dharma is identical to the one Li (=the Omnipresent Nature), inasmuch as they are all functions of that one substance, *yong* of that one *ti*, completely coextensive with it” (the Huayan view), or “Each dharma is precisely *a* Li (i.e., *an* Omnipresent Nature)—that is, each determination as such (chair, table, greed, anger, delusion) is eternal, omnipresent, unconditional (all the characteristics that a Li is supposed to have), is the substance of all other things as its functions, the *ti* of all *yong,* and since *ti* and *yong* are coextensive and identical, each dharma is the *ti* that is identical to all other dharmas as its *yong,* and vice versa.” That is the Tiantai view.

The distinction cannot be gleaned by looking at isolated Chinese sentences, in which this ambiguity is almost unavoidable—leading to the strident use of the tendentious term “Three Thousand” *sanqian* 三千in later Tiantai writings as an attempt to clarify that this is meant in the sense that entails irreducible plurality, internested dyadic contrasts, and intersubsumption of bias and completeness, of the dyadically contrasted opposites of delusion and enlightenment. Rather, we must take in the entire system of thought of the two schools and interpret accordingly. The Tiantai view, using the character *ju* 具, holds that there is no phenomenon which is not also *a* Li, an alternate name for the Buddha-nature, an Omnipresent determinate-indeterminate which pervades and grounds all other phenomena. That means it is not just “Buddhahood” which is the nature, so we call that nature the Buddha-nature. Rather, cup is also the nature (i.e., omnipresent, unconditional, determinate-cupness as indeterminate and indeterminate as determinate-cupness), and thus we can just as legitimately speak of the Cup-Nature, or the Frog-Nature, or the Greed-Nature, or the Key-of-A-Flat-Minor-Nature as the enabling ground of all phenomena. The nature is not any one nature of all things in the universe; there are infinite alternate natures of the universe. An individual determinate thing is not merely a function of the Buddha-nature which is coextensive and ultimately (*in a sense*) identical with it because of the strange double-natured properties of Huayan idea of Buddha-nature indicated above; an individual determination of any thing is the all-pervasive unconditional Nature itself and as such. It is in an attempt to distinguish these two positions, both of which equally can read into the vast majority of statements made to describe either one of them, that Zhili stresses, “The so-called one Nature, although one, is not any fixed or definite one” *yixingdengzhe xingsuishiyi er wudingyizhixing* 一性等者，性雖是一而無定一之性. [[14]](#footnote-14) But this is still quite easily understood in the Huayan sense: it could mean “The Nature is not any one definite thing, just as the reflectivity of the mirror is not any one color—it is a oneness that is really a noneness,” rather than his intended meaning as I give in the translation. Hence we find Zhili later in the same work trying to clarify unmistakably: “The natureitself, does not mean some single nature: it is Three Thousand Nature(s).” *youcixingyi feiweiyixing, gai sanqianxingye*又此性體非謂一性，蓋三千性也.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Nature is evidently importantly both one and many, with neither of these determinations being more primary than the other. This does not mean “It is the one Nature *shared by* all the Three Thousand.” In that cases, it would still be *a* single nature, which is just what Zhili is denying here. The use of the plural in English is thus our most effective way of getting this point across intuitively, perhaps, or a strange locution like, “It is the Three Thousandfold Nature(s),” singular. We will have to understand in what sense the Nature, which is the *ti*, is both one and many, even when considered without reference to the *shi*, which is the *yong*. This sense is to be found in the Tiantai doctrine of the Three Truths, which are a synonym for the Nature, for Li, for *ti*. It is Three Thousand alternate Lis, each of which subsumes all other Lis.

Now this Threethousandfold Alternately Natured Nature is still the *ti* to the *yong* which is all empirical phenomena, and the *ti/yong* relation between them is still one of total coextensivity and identity. Moreover, it is still true that there is a kind of priority of *ti* over *yong* here. Indeed, as Zhanran says and as Zhili often quotes, “it is only because a given determinacy is inherently included in Li that it can function in *shi*.” (並由理具, 方有事用）。That certainly *sounds* like a straight dependence relationship, easily understood as a classic *ti/yong* relation, with Li as *ti* and *shi* as *yong*—but it *is not,* and this is where the confusion comes in. So what is this alternate Tiantai model of Li and *shi* that still allows Tiantai writers to make claims that superficially sound so Huayan? Let me attempt an explanation here.

Divergence of Tiantai and Huayan Views of What Determination Is

The Tiantai view, like the final Huayan view, holds that the contents of Li and *shi* are in a certain sense coextensive, that any determination at all, any real or imagined thing, is readable as either Li or *shi*. But the conception of *what a determination is* differs in Huayan and in Tiantai. In Huayan, to be determinate is like being a wave or an image in a mirror: it is to be wholly mirror or wholly wetness, and yet also wholly image or wholly wave-shape. That is, it is to be wholly indeterminate (Li) and wholly determinate (*shi*). To be determinate is really to be determinate-and-indeterminate, and determinacy is *only* possible if it is also indeterminate in this way. But the relationship between these two equally necessary and all-pervasive aspects has a specific structure: the determinate is dependent upon the indeterminate.

The Tiantai view also holds that the determinate is always also indeterminate, and vice versa. So the two schools can both claim that to be determinate as such is really to be determinate-indeterminate. But the Tiantai view does *not* involve the one-way dependence relation between the indeterminate and the determinate Rather, it has a “horizontal” view of their relation: they are not compared to root and branch, not *ti* and *yong,* not basis and expression, not wetness and wave, but rather they are alternate one-sided interpretations of the same totality comprised of two opposites, the determinate-indeterminate. If anything, both determinacy and indeterminacy are *yong,* and both determinacy and indeterminacy (but unified as determinacy-indeterminacy) are *ti.*  Neither determinacy nor indeterminacy is more fundamental than the other, neither causes the other, neither is the basis of the other unilaterally. The determinate-indeterminate (which is the *ti)* can be read in any instance in two different ways, either as determinate or as indeterminate (two diametrically opposed *yong)*. The shift in description from determinate (*jia* 假) to indeterminate (*kong* 空) is not from the independent (*ti*) to the dependent aspect (*yong*); it is *simply* an aspect shift, implying no priority of one over the other, even logically or conceptually. *Both* of these, determinacy and indeterminacy, are Li, are *ti*, both apply equally to the prior or independent level, and thus both apply to the posterior level as well, *both* of them are *yong,* phenomenal events. Symmetry applies on both levels, top to bottom.

This conception is perhaps a little trickier to grasp than the relatively straightforward Huayan case. What is this counterintuitive relation between determination and indeterminacy? First, as we saw above, starting with Seng Zhao, it is a shared insight of most Chinese Buddhist schools that indeterminacy cannot be determinate blankness, the exclusion of all characteristics. The Huayan solution to this problem was to make “reflectivity” stand for indeterminacy, the indeterminacy of a mirror. The danger of this being taken as a determinate something—e.g., as brightness as opposed to images—was handled by collapsing the two, so that all the brightness was images and all the images was brightness. The indeterminate has no content of its own, not even that of blankness: it is just the enabling aspect of all the determinate, and their interdetermination.

However, to later Tiantai critics, the one-way dependence of this relation still makes the brightness, the reflectivity, the wetness something determinate in another, subtler sense. To them, this was a misunderstanding of what it means to be truly indeterminate. In Tiantai, to be determinate is to be indeterminate in the sense of *ambiguous*, which also accounts for all the effects and qualities of “reflectivity,” and the like (light is not *just* the light, it is *also* wholly the image, and the mirror, and so on; by the same token, image is not *just* image, but also wholly readable as nothing but light, and so on[[16]](#footnote-16)) but eliminates the one-way dependence relationship between determinate and indeterminate. Rather, the two terms are seen to be strict *synonyms.*  To be determinate (*jia)* is to be ambiguous (*kong)* and to be ambiguous is to be determinate.

Any determinacy itself (not the coextensive grounding of any determinacy) can be considered in two alternate ways: as omnipresent eternal unconditional Buddha-nature or as a temporal phenomenon. That is, as Li or as *shi,* as *ti* or as *yong.* But in *either* case, the determinacy is also an indeterminacy, it is always also ambiguous. The question is, how can a determination be considered as unconditional Buddha-nature? For as we touched on above, determination is negation: determination per se is conditional, since negation is synonymous with a condition (to say something is in any way negated means “there are some cases, times or places to which this does not pertain” which means the same as “it is conditional”). Huayan answers by saying, “a determination can be ‘identical’ to the unconditioned just as an image is coextensive with the reflectivity or brightness of a mirror.” Tiantai answers that in this Huayan understanding, it is not the determination as such that is unconditional, but merely the unconditional to which it is necessarily in a weak sense identical, i.e., on which it depends, and with which it is coextensive.

Tiantai offers another solution, which can be redescribed in the following way. Determination (negation itself) is indeed negation, that is, limitation. That is, it is created by termini, by ends, by limits. Determination is a function of boundaries. These boundaries must also be determinate for the determination they accomplish to be determination. Now “it is determinate” is generally taken to mean, on some level, “it cannot be both what it is and something else; it excludes what it is not.” Enormously paradoxical consequences result if we try to evade this intuitive definition on every level; in some sense or other, to be determinate is to exclude, and exclusion is accomplished by boundaries of some sort. But boundaries themselves can never be simply determinate in the sense of mutually exclusive with all that they are not. Instead, to be a boundary is to be an interface. That is, to be a boundary is to be both of the two bounded things and neither of the two bounded things: to be their interface, which can belong to neither, and yet must belong to both; to be what contrasts them, and contrasted to both of them, and yet also to be identical to both, inside and outside both. It is, in short, a *Center.*  Determination per se is paradoxical, both transcendental and immanent, involves being both inside and outside a set of boundaries, because determination is a function of the separation of things, and the separations (boundaries, interfaces) of things are precisely *Center*.

It is this doubleness that pertains intrinsically to Centrality that defines Buddha-nature as what is everywhere and nowhere, the Unconditional which is the union of the conditional (the two divided determinate items) and the unconditional (the boundary which is at once within both of these definitionally contradictory things), thereby both immanence and transcendent. This means that this very boundary is both inside and outside, and the determination it defines is both inside and outside that boundary. In other words, that determination itself is omnipresent and eternal (if we apply the same logic the boundaries between putative moments in time). It is unconditional and omnipresent and yet, or therefore, determinate, and is determinate yet, or therefore, unconditional and omnipresent.

Hence from the Tiantai point of view, to consider a determination to be Buddha-nature means simply to consider it as omnipresent and omnitemporal, while to consider it as temporal phenomenon is to consider it as manifest in a particular time and place as opposed to other times and places. To consider it as Buddha-nature is to consider it as unconditioned, and hence as pervading all times and places, and to be therefore the end of suffering, to be Buddahood itself; to consider it as phenomenon is to consider it as conditional, finite, limited, and suffering. In effect, this means that conditionality and determinacy are no longer synonyms, as they are in the Huayan view, and in the commonsensical view. Nor are unconditioned and indeterminacy synonyms in this Tiantai view. Rather, determinacy as such (which *any* starting point has to be, to even do the work of function as a starting point, including even “indeterminacy” as such, including even both-determinacy-and-indeterminacy as such, and so on) turns out to be both inextricable *and* impossible. Whatever is or isn’t is determinacy, but determinacy depends on boundaries, and boundaries are incoherent, cannot be determinately one thing as the exclusion of all others: they are Centers. So to be determinate is be an inside-which-is-contrasted-to-an-outside-which-however-is not-outside-it. To be determinate is to be Empty is to be Center, which is the unconditioned, but only because it is at once both Empty and Determinate (*kong* and *jia*), and neither Empty nor Determinate. Provisional is conditional, Emptiness is unconditional, but Provisional and Empty are opposites which are also synonyms, not merely opposites which are also applied to all the same things.

So it is not just that everything that is conditional (*shi*事) is also unconditional (Li 理), every wave is also entirely wetness and vice versa, though with an inviolable conceptual priority, a one-way dependence relation between them, as in Huayan. Rather, conditionality per se really means conditional-unconditional. Unconditionality per se really means unconditional-conditional. That is the Three Truths in a nutshell. Indeed, the idea that externality (having an outside) is itself internal to the being-determinate of any determination or entity, and this “absolute-as-relative-as-absolute” or “unconditional-as-conditional-as-unconditional” is what “absolute” or “unconditional” or Nirvanic or Buddhahood (in Tiantai terms, the Center 中) amounts to, is the crux of Tiantai ontology, in the formula of the Three Truths. It applies perfectly univocally to both the Buddha-nature per se, the mind, or to any cup, dog, blueness or other specific entity. What pervades the universe, and is coextensive with all particular entities as water is to wave, is not just Emptiness and is not just Mind, not just Li as such: it is *any determination considered as the Three Truths, i.e., as Li*. Those are names for what can also be called Matter, or Being, or Dog, or Fish, or Table, or Humming Furious Greenness.

Nature-Entailment As Supplement to Nature-Origination

In one sense, this claim is not so much a rejection of the nature-origination view as its supplement, taken up from the opposite side, the side of the conditional. First, on the ontological level, it accepts the “empty mirror” account of the relation between determinate and indeterminate, but reads it differently: the presence of “external conditions” as genuinely external is regarded as incoherent with respect to the Buddha-nature, which is by definition unconditional and thus necessarily unexcludable from any possible entity. This is just the reverse way of saying that nothing is actually excludable from *any* determinate conditional entity, necause determination per se is indetermination, because boundaries cannot definitively exclude anything. Because strictly speaking, no conditional thing has an “outside,” the alleged Unconditioned (brightness, wetness, whatever) can also be outside of none of them, which means that it too has no outside (because it is also really determinate, or if you like, because that to which it is supposed to be external, the determinate and conditional, turned out not to be so), and thus no conditions affecting it can be considered external to it. The dust, the objects confronting the mirror, the external factors, the deluded thoughts of sentient beings, must also be Buddha-nature. Even their externality and deludedness per se (their regarding of themselves as outside the Buddha-nature), if those are in any way determinate (which they must be to even be named as having the activity of blocking or obstructing Buddha-nature) must be Buddha-nature.

This is really just a claim about where the division between one thing and another is to be posited, what is to be named what, and the inseparability of the parts of a whole. Mirror-plus-external-object—indeterminate openness plus the limited determinations contributed by deluded conceptions of sentient beings--is one inseparable whole, and it is this whole which produces all specific dharmas. Both Huayan and Tiantai accept the claim that Buddha-nature is the absolute, the unconditioned, which therefore must be strictly omnipresent in all possible states. But for Tiantai this all-inclusiveness means that Buddha-nature must be non-external to even the delusions which seem to obstruct it. Hence Tiantai writers call this totality of unstained openness *and* delusion the Buddha-nature, and say all determinations are “inherently included” in this whole (indeterminacy plus delusion). The Huayan writers call only the openness per se the Buddha-nature. For them, the entire Buddha-nature (“vertically”) enables the production of each concrete determination, and always remains coextensive with it; but each determination is also determined (“horizontally”) by all the other concrete determinations enabled by the Buddha-nature. In their horizontal relations, when they lose sight of the Buddha-nature that enables them all, these can give rise to deluded thoughts and karma, and thus come to posit and believe in illusory objects which they seek or avoid. When that happens, these karmic actions of seeking and avoiding become definite impediments to the realization of the Buddha-nature, impeding its full manifestation. These deluded determinate conditions can still coherently be said to have arisen from the Buddha-nautre: they arise from it precisely because it is so pure, because it does not hold to any particular nature, as we already saw in the Fazang quotation above. But once they have arisen, they can genuinely obstruct the apprehension of the indeterminacy that is always enabling them, insofar as to-be-determinate-that-manifests-indetermination is not the same thing as to-be-the-indeterminate-that-is-manifested-in-determination, and so this doesn’t change the basic externality that pertains to them. That means that in Tiantai the contrast to the obstructing objects must itself be part of the mirror, and so its being impinged upon by external things is also something inherent to its own nature, as are whatever specific delusions in the minds of sentient beings have conditioned the appearance of precisely these forms and no others. Not only that there are delusions, but the contents of these delusions, whatever these delusions hold to be true, are all unconditional in just the same way, for all that is required to be unconditional is to be determinate in any way, insofar as that always involve inescapable but impossible (i.e., Central) boundaries. Not only the deluded mentations that imagine false images, but also the false images so imagined, are the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

In What Sense Tiantai Centrality Can Be Said To Pre-Exist and Enable The Extremes

This is what is meant by the One Nature which is Three Thousand different One Natures, the one Li which is Three Thousand different Lis. It is not that there is a Nature, but that whatever exists necessarily also has the characteristics that make something qualify as the Nature: eternity and omnipresence. Whatever determination appears to anyone in any way is a Li, whatever determination appears to anyone is a *ti*. Every experience of every sentient being is a *xing*, a Li, a *ti*. As Zhili says:

The term Nature means Unchanging. It means that the *ti* of each thing has with the Four Meritorious Properties of Permanence, Bliss, Selfhood and Purity, and is never altered. We must understand that all four Properties apply to each dharma, such that even all the way down to each and every one of the causes and effects, environment and organisms of all the purgatories, every one without exception is itself Permanent, is Blissful, is Self, is Pure. This is what the Lotus Sutra means when it says “The phenomenal characteristics of the mundane world are all eternal.”

所言性者。不變為義。謂四德之體無遷易故。須知此四遍一切法。下至地獄依正因果。一一無非常樂我淨。世間相常斯之謂也。[[17]](#footnote-17)

The idea of the Center is what is crucial here. This can be seen clearly if we consider the full quotation from which the “foundationalist-*ti/yong-*sounding” claim above, about how there are *shi*-*yong* are only possible because there is priorly inherence in the *ti,* was taken. The passage comes from Zhanran’s commentary to Zhiyi’s *Mohezhiguan*. The topic here is a meditation technique known as “contemplation of the mind” (*guanxin* 觀心), concerned only with the phenomenal level of mind. After having delineated three senses in which mind may be said to “create” all dharmas,[[18]](#footnote-18) Zhanran says:

All of these function (*yong*) as phenomena only because they are inherently available as Li. Now if we want to practice the contemplation, all we attend to is this omnipresent availability as Li. That means that all determinations are, all at once, negated as determinate, all are established as determinate, and all are the entire omnipresent all-there-is of the Dharma-realm. Each one then freely integrates, however it may turn, whatever other determinations may appear, whether ultimate and provisional.”

並由理具方有事用。今欲修觀但觀理具。俱破俱立俱是法界。任運攝得權實所現 .[[19]](#footnote-19)

To say of any determinate here-now X that it is Li is to say that it is identical to the Three Truths, which just means to say of it three things: X is not (definitely) X, X is (somehow) X, and X is everything. The “everything,” the Center which denotes omnipresence, is specifically the interchangeability of “X is not X” and “X is X,” due to the ambiguous (i.e., “Central”) quality of boundaries, which are definitional to all determinacy qua determinacy. It means both that the putative boundary between determinate things is a Center of two determinate extremes, enabling and establishing them, uniting them and distinguishing them, ensuring both that they negate one another and that this negation of each other is precisely what establishes both of them, and yet showing that they do not actually negate each other, since they somehow coexist precisely as this interface, this Center, without which they cannot exist. In fact, the determinate thing defined by such constitutively ambiguous boundaries is itself ambiguous, and is itself a Center, both itself and its outside, and indeed a kind of interface of all the things that precede it and follow it, all its premises and conclusions, all its causes and effects, which stand on either side of it as the two extremes it both excludes and includes.

The conceptual priority is here not the result of a foundation and derivative relationship, as in *ti/yong*, made merely conceptual and ambiguous by the fact that the foundation in question happens to be non-inert, non-obstructive, actively interpenetrative either as the formless reflective light of a mirror or the lubricity of water’s wetness. It is rather the ambiguous priority of the kind that a Center has over the two dyadic extremes that it enables. If we think of the extremes to which a pendulum swings in relation to the center-point of that swing range, the extremes qua extremes do not pre-exist the Center, but in a certain weird way the Center does pre-exist the extremes, in that the oscillation may be anywhere from zero to very minute to very huge, but the one thing that will be constant throughout will be this zero-point of the Center. If the pendulum is not moving at all, it is there at the Center. If it moves slightly, producing extremes a and b, the center is still there. If it moves more robustly, or in a more complex three-dimensional orbit, producing the extremes c and d, the center is still there exactly as before. If it becomes a vortex, or a vortex of vortices, producing hugely complex interested hierarchies of dyadic opposites, the center remains exactly where and what it was in the previous cases. In all cases, it unites, relates, enables, regulates, defines, establishes whatever extremes there may be. It is still, while they are moving. It is one, while they are many. It is enduring, while they are transient. It is not directly manifest, while they are directly manifest. Its existence can only be known from observing them. And yet they are inseparable from it, and in an important way it permeates and pervades them (wherever we are seeing the extremes we are seeing the Center in action). All these things could also be said about the *ti* relation to *yong*. But in fact, as should be quite evident now, the two models are quite importantly different in their structures and implications.

So what then, on this Centrality/Periphery model, do the Tiantai writers mean when they say, “Only because it is already inherently present in Li does it function as Shi”? *Not* that a particular *shi* arises because it is already present in Li; rather that it *does not arise at all.* Not that a determination—say, this cup with all its characteristics—arises because anything at all can arise from the formlessness of a mirror’s light or a water’s wetness, which obstructs nothing; but also not because there was also an identical set of determinations in some spectral eternal realm of Li. Rather, because it is one and the same determination that we are now calling Li and now calling *shi*. The cupness-just-as-it-is is omnipresent and omnitemporal; that is why it is also here and now.

Inititally, we cannot reverse *this* relation and say it is omnipresent and omnitemporal because it is here and now, because omnipresence and omnitemporality *includes* being here and now. It is not the *basis* of its arising, but the *whole* of which it is a part. However, this is merely the first step. On closer examination, we discover that each part is also intersubsumptive with all other parts, and is thus itself inseparably the whole, so that there is finally a sense of reversibility, or perhaps synonymity, even here: its being here-and-now is finally synonymous with it being everywhere, alternate descriptions of the same fact. The relation is horizontal rather than vertical. Seeing this cup here and now, in my ordinary deluded experience, is seeing the eternal omnipresent cup, the cup which is the Li of cupness. I am not seeing an expression or it, or a result of it, or the manifestation of it: I am seeing *it.* I am seeing the Li itself with my eyes.I am seeing it where it really is. It is really in this time and this place.

To see it merely as *yong* or as *shi* simply means that I am indeed already seeing the omnipresent *ti* or *Li* that is right here, but that I am not *also* seeing it *everywhere else.* I am seeing it here, where it has always been, but I am not seeing it being here in the past and future, and I am not seeing it being everywhere else. Why? Because of my particular set of attachments and delusions, my karma, which *filters out* all the other instances of its presence, narrowing them down to just this one. Why is it appearing as if here and now only? The Huayan answer has to be, it is arising from Suchness (the Omnipresent Formless Buddhanature, and so on), and it is directly from Suchness that it gets its arising: it is the *yong* of the *ti* which is Suchness. That is the “vertical” explanation of its causality.[[20]](#footnote-20) The supplemental horizontal explanation in Huayan will be that it is shaped by the totality of other conditions, a single univocal set of them, all with the same status as provisionally real but ultimately unreal, in the universe. The horizontal explanation will be the traditional Buddhist karmic explanation of predictable and univocal causal process, with all its moral-epistemological entailments basically unchanged. Each thing is vertically the open unconditional totality, but these individual versions of the totality are enabled and not prevented by the totality to interfere with and condition and attach to each other in ways that obstruct their apprehension of this totality in themselves and others, and this ignorance in turn exacerbates this alienation and suffering.

In contrast, the Tiantai story about arising *has no vertical dimension.* Arising is a *narrowing down* of what is already there, and is always only spoken of as pertaining to the experience of some specific sentient being or beings. So to explain it, we must explain the arising of the perception of motion or change in a sentient being, which is the arising of mental action chopping up a non-arising reality of infinite alternate omnipresences. The arising of *that* action, which is necessarily subjective, is only horizontal, and alternately explainable in “Three Thousand” different ways, none of which is merely true or merely false, and each of these Three Thousand different causal stories manifests internally to this specific mental event. The mental event orients itself by implicitly positing its own story about where it came from, about which sort of othernesses in time and space it stands surrounded by. It generally posits its own past in terms of either prior conditions (previous moment causes subsequent moment of experience), the conceived conjunction of subject and object (eye comes into contact with object), or conceptual contrast against a negation (long versus short). But its implicit explanation of self-proclaimed arising is not like a single univocal causal account, even on the horizontal level. In Tiantai there is no vertical causality, but even on the horizontal level the explanation for why a particular experience seems to arise at a particular time and place and not elsewhere is not univocal: it is to be sought not in a single birds-eye story about the causes and conditions that actually pertain to modifying the mirror-like indeterminacy and producing this particular image, as in Huayan horizontal dimension, but rather in an infinite number of subjective causal accounts at once, literally any way any sentient being perceives it at any time (thus nested explanations are the rule), and then the intersubsumption of these alternate subjective explanations. These are the infinite alternate sets of conventional truths that result from Three Truth theory, in contrast to the *single* set of conventional truths that result from Two Truths theory (Huayan and all other Mahāyāna Buddhism).

I see cupness, which is everywhere, only here because of my particular karmic story. I think of it a certain way. But that certain way is not self-containable, any more than other determinate thing. *Its* boundaries too, the “way’s” boundaries, turn out to be paradoxical and porous, due to the incoherent nature of what a boundary is, on which all determination depends. That is why this single explanation, this story I tell myself about myself, always falls apart and starts bleeding into other explanations, other horizontal causal stories. Once I see all of possible explanations as versions of my original idiotic self-serving explanation, I see that it is all and none of these that account for the arising of the mental event that made me experience a flash of greenness only here-and-now, constrained within these particular boundaries, rather than everywhere at once and all of the time, in the form of both itself and everything opposed to it. This cupness does not arise: rather, its other instances are suppressed by my ignorance. This cupness does not depend on indeterminacy any more than indeterminacy depends on cupness, for these are synonyms: the indeterminacy of the cup is just a one-sided way of describing the omnipresence of cupness, its presence *as* every other determinacy, just as the cupness is a one-sided way of describing the indeterminacy. They are both one-sided ways of describing the omnipresence; that is, *kong* and *jia* are one-sided ways of describing *zhong* 中. Another sentient being may agree with me about the presence of the cup right here and not everywhere else because she, to that extent, has similar karma with mine. The causes of her suppression of all the other presences of the omnipresent cupness are part of her present self-accepted implicit karmic story, while mine are part of mine. (Needless to say, these stories differ and interpenetrate in the same way—they too will end up being omnipresent and mutually interpervasive, insofar as they were determinate at all, and determinate is constitutively incoherent.) Yet we are both seeing the same omnipresent cupness, which is unconditional and thus present *as* something or other (in both of these two cases, as something nameable and agreeable-upon as “cup”) everywhere.

Among these alternate explanations of the arising of this cup will be the one given by Buddhas and bodhisattvas who see me seeing it: for them, it arising as part of their own compassionate *upāya*, and when I see them seeing me seeing it, when I think of them thinking about me thinking about the cup, I also experience this alternate causal account. That means the cup must be there just as it is: it is an expression of Buddhahood, of compassion, of upayic wisdom. That is now (one of the) explanation(s) for why it has arising in this time and place, even though it has always been everywhere.

Putting these two types of explanations together, we see the significance of the Three Truths. The seeming to arise is a necessary aspect of the non-arising, the omnipresence, for Provisional Positing is a necessary dimension of the Center’s being the Center. Indeed, in the final analysis, looking back at the arising of the here-now version of an eternal omnipresent determination, I cannot say even that it is a simple unambiguous fact that it ever arose: that too is ambiguous, in one sense it can be said to have arisen but in another not to have arisen at all. For even the act of filtering down is not a positive addition to reality, but itself an eternal quality that is filtered down by that act of filtering, positing itself. This is as far down as we can go: the determinate mental event, our intrinsic belief in the reality of which is the primal starting point and primal ignorance to which Tiantai practice is directed. In a sort of *cogito-*esque way, this mental determination is undoubtable; what ensues in practice is that this undoubtable reality is supplemented by conviction of its coterminous impossibility, and that is all the “prior” omnipresence really amounts to, seen finally to have always been both a here-now event of filtering out all the other instances and forms of that determination and the omnipresence of that determination as internally possible only as this prior omnipresence and its provisional contrasting of itself to all that it is not, without which that determination cannot be established as determinate. That is, it is not that it is first omnipresent and then arises in some particular time and place; being omnipresent (Center) and arising in a particular place (Provisional Positing) and not being indistinguishable from where it is not (Emptiness) are synonyms, and *all three* belong to Li, to what it is to be omnipresent.

To view any given thing as omnipresent is to view it, as Zhanran says above, as “at once negated, established, and omnipresent” (*jupuo juli jufajie*俱破俱立俱法界), as three alternate descriptions of the same fact. I have tried to explain this at length elsewhere in two related ways: as an *asness* relation, and as the way this relation is expressed in the setup/punchline structure. That is, X is omnipresent not as X, but as all other things, as non-X, which are X appearing as non-X. Omnipresence itself must posit X in some here-and-now (this being, presumably, the only way to establish it as distinct from other things, as determinate at all) and also as the superseding of the illusion of its limitedness to that particular here-and-now; there is no other way for X to be omnipresent, while the same is true for Y and Z and so on. So ultimately omnipresence itself posits its own illusion and the superseding of its illusion; when sentient beings are experiencing delusion, they are just experiencing the first half of a two-step process, necessary to that process. When the rest of the process is seen by the originally deluded sentient being, they no longer see their past delusion only as delusion, but also as upāya, and as an expression of Buddhahood, hence also as non-arising, as omnipresent, as the active presence of Buddhahood itself.

So omnipresence posits its own delusions about itself as the only way to be omnipresent, but this is still not vertical causality. First, it is single-plane omnipresence, more/less, whole/part at stake here, rather than two distinct levels. Hence Zhanran will say, ordinary experience of separate, bounded, finite things and moments is not an illusion but rather “a small portion of Conventional Truth” (*shidi shaofen* 世諦少分).[[21]](#footnote-21) But more importantly, the deluded sentient being’s initial understanding, that what they are experiencing are just real divisions in the world, or that it is the result of his own deluded karma, is on an even footing with the subsequent view that it is omnipresence itself that posits its own limitations. Indeed, *these* two views interpenetrate in Li, neither is given priority, for as the *Lotus Sūtra* is taken to establish, it is only by being an illusion that it is an upāya that it is part of Buddhahood, as well as vice versa.

Why It Matters: Inherent Evil in Tiantai and Ti/Yong as Center/Periphery

This position also has a special soteriological implication important to Tiantai writers: that all evils and delusions are themselves not only ineradicable from the Buddha-nature, but that each of them *is* the Buddha-nature from which nothing can be eradicated. As Zhili says in maximally explicit mode, “The entire *ti* of every here-and-now evil deed or cognition is the same evil as omnipresent, unconditional Nature: each of the twelve links in the chain of samsaric causation, each of the five aggregates of clinging, is like space: eternally dwelling, pervading all times and places” (*xiu’e quanti shi xing’e gu, shi’er yinyuan jiyi wuyin yi yi ru kong changzhu zhoubian* 修惡全體是性惡故。十二因緣及以五陰。一一如空常住周遍).[[22]](#footnote-22) That is, part of what is at stake in the Tiantai claim discussed here is the soteriological idea that delusions and evils are not to be eliminated to reach the pristine purity of the original nature, but rather that each and every one of them can itself function *as* that nature, i.e., as unconditioned, omnipresent, omnipotent, appearing in and as all other phenomena. Zhanran makes this very explicit:

The Three Thousand at the stage of [mere identity to Buddhahood in terms of] Li[[23]](#footnote-23) are all to be called Ignorance, while the same Three Thousand as the completed fruition [when this identity is realized in *shi*] are all to be called eternal and blissful. The Three Thousand do not change in the least, so the Ignorance is precisely the Enlightenment. Each of the Three Thousand is eternal; each is *ti*, each is *yong*.”

三千在理同名無明，三千果成咸稱常樂。三千無改無明即明，三千並常俱體俱用.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The deluded world of the sentient being is the Three Thousand; the enlightened world of the Buddha is the same Three Thousand. To understand the full thrust of this claim we must remind ourselves that “the Three Thousand” explicitly includes among its members both the deluded sentient being and the enlightened Buddha themselves. Hence each includes the others’ Three Thousand, and these are still all the same Three Thousand. This is so only because of what “the same” means in Tiantai: one corner of the Three Truths, hence also “different” and “omnipresent into whatever is different from it.”

Zhili’s explanation clarifies the radical meaning of this position precisely in terms of the Tiantai understanding of *ti* and *yong*:

*Each and every one of the Three Thousand worldly phenomena is eternal*. These Three Thousand considered as pre-existing Li are all named *ti*, and these same Three Thousand considered as phenomenal transformations are all named *yong*. Thus Zhanran says, each is *ti*, each is *yong*. The first two lines here show that both the cause and the effect each possesses all Three Thousand; the third line shows that the Three Thousand of the cause and the Three Thousand of the effect are one and the same Three Thousand, because none of them are altered. The fourth line shows that all of the Three Thousand of causes and effects can give rise to functions. From the causal position, each of the Three Thousand gives rise to defiled functions, while from the fruition position, each of the same Three Thousand gives rise to pure functions. This fourth line delineates the Perfect Teaching most explicitly. Why? Because the terms *ti* and *yong* are originally a way of asserting full mutual identity. So whenever we say that all dharmas are identical to Li, this “identical” is only legitimate if it is the entire *yong* without exception that is precisely the *ti*.

三千世間一一常住，理具三千俱名為體，變造三千俱名為用，故云俱體俱用。此四句中，初二明因果各具三千，三明因果三千秖一三千，以無改故，四明因果三千之體俱能起用，則因中三千起於染用，果上三千起於淨用，此第四句明圓最顯。何者？夫體用之名本相即之義，故凡言諸法即理者，全用即體方可言即.[[25]](#footnote-25)

*Ti/yong* in its radicalized Huayan sense is still a crucial premise for this usage, because of its implication of total coextensivity and identity, combined with a certain sense of priority of *ti* over *yong*. Indeed, the identity is more thoroughgoing, just as the transcendence is more thoroughgoing: the one-way dependence relation that still divided the alleged identity between the determinate and the indeterminate in Huayan is here eliminated. Only one of the contrastive elements is retained: quiescence versus activity.  *Ti* is still quiescent and eternal as opposed to the transience of *yong*, though these two are now also seen as coextensive on a meta-level, as just described in the previous few paragraphs. But the other key contrastive elements of the classical *ti/yong* model--*ti* as one/*yong* as many, *ti* as indeterminate/*yong* as determinate, *ti* as *suoyi, yong* as *nengyi*—are eliminated in Tiantai. These crucial contrastive elements are moved into the nature of *ti* itself, and also into the nature of *yong* itself.  *Ti* is self-contrasted as one and many, *yong* is also self-contrasted as one-and many. The two “contrastive” elements, dependence and quiescence, are retained but altered: they are now understood on the model of whole and part. Thus the *ti* has conceptual priority in the sense in which whole is conceptually prior to part, and where omnipresence is conceived as a function of Centrality. The Center is conceptually prior to its peripheral elements, and pervades them. The *ti* is thus quiescent in the sense that it pervades all times and places, and cannot shift from one position to another or ever be absent in some and present in others. It is not quiescent or one in the sense of being Emptiness as opposed to Provisional Positing, for it is both. In other words, the contrastive elements are reconceived on the Center/periphery model: a contrast between center and periphery, which also enables a contrast of the more normal *ti/yong* kind between the diverse peripheries. The normal *ti/yong* kind of dependence pertains, but reversibly, to the relation between any one Li and all the other Li, and any one *shi* and all the other *shi—*and indeed to any one Liand all *shi*, and to any one *shi* and all Li. As Zhili says, “The Three Thousand of deluded sentient beings and the Three Thousand of the Buddhas are one and the same ‘secret treasury,’ and each and every one of those Three Thousand is fully endowed with the Three Truths. All of them together occupy any single moment of experience.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Thus we see that Tiantai, although after Zhanran it will freely use the originally Huayan *ti/yong* terminology, can only do so by radically altering and qualifying its meanings.

Schematic Approach to the Different Models

Here too, then, the claim that all dharmas are originally present in the nature is not a claim that there are mutually exclusive, fully determinate entities existing in the pre-manifest state and waiting to be given a phenomenal form—as for example in Plato’s theory of forms, or in another sense in Kant’s transcendental forms, or his notion of intelligible character, where something with some determinate characteristics of some kind is waiting behind empirical reality to be given an opportunity to transfer, unchanged, from that state or form to this, from an a priori to an a posteriori form. (In Plato’s case, *more* determinate than their manifestation; in Kant’s case, determinate in a different respect—as form, as norm, as universal rule for unifying particulars of sensory intuition—but equally determinate: the necessary law of causality, just as it is as an a priori form, is exactly what I know phenomenally when I recognize an instance of causality empirically). The Tiantai Three Truths claim, instead, that determinacy is indeterminacy and vice versa, that local coherence is global incoherence, that provisional positing is Emptiness. This means any determinacy is at once fully determinately itself and at the same time inherently always something beyond itself, beyond any given determinacy, and that it is only able to be at all determinate in any sense because it is not fully determinate (it is a specific image because it is formless light), just as in Huayan, but not-being-determinate is itself a determination (formless light, the empty mirror, is itself a specific image).

Indeed, in all these Chinese cases, we must note a stark contrast to the doctrines of innate ideas or pre-existing determinate norms or structures in Western thinkers; in Plato, for example, pre-existent is not a result of inseparability of the two realms, and hence the impossibility of either existing independently of the other, *but just the reverse:* pre-existence is taken to mean that the multiply determinate pre-empirical reality can exist and be known independently of the appearance of the forms of that pre-empirical reality in space and time. Kant’s case is different, inasmuch as transcendental forms cannot be known without first being instantiated in sensible intuitions of space and time; but the reason they cannot be known is not because they lack determinacy, nor because they are themselves interdependent with sensible intuitions, of which they are in themselves entirely independent. In short, in all the Chinese cases, pre-existence of the non-empirical is an entailment of inseparability of the empirical and non-empirical, not of the independence of the pre-empirical realm, and a marker of the inseparability of every element within empirical reality from every other element, *and* of every element of non-empirical reality with every other element of non-empirical reality.

The mutual inclusion and identity relationship between any two *shi* entities is not as in Huayan:

A=X (*shi/li, yong/ti*) 🡨----------🡪 B=X (*shi/li, yong/ti) ,*

*therefore* A=B

Therefore A is the *ti* of B (because A is X, and we already know that X is the *ti* of B) and “reversibly,” B is the *ti* of A (because B is X, and we already know X is the *ti* of A.

But rather, in Tiantai:

A = A + B (3000 as Li, as *ti,* and hence *including* also 3000 as *shi,* as *yong)* 🡨🡪 B = A +B (3000 as Li, as *ti,* and hence *including* also 3000 as *shi,* as *yong)*

*Therefore* A=B

Therefore, if we apply *ti/yong* language, A is the *ti* of B (it is A+B, the 3000, that serve as the *ti* of B), and reversibly, B is the *ti* of A (it is A+B, the 3000, that serve as the *ti* of A).

Reversible *Ti/Yong* and the Tiantai Center

This might become clearer if we examine the redescription from usually non *ti/yong* language in Zhiyi to *ti/yong* language in Zhanran. The *locus classicus* of this doctrine of mutual inclusion, the identity of one moment of thought and the Three Thousand aspects of reality, in a famous passage of the *Mohezhiguan*, where Zhiyi says:

One mind inherently possesses the ten dharma realms, and each of the dharma realms possesses the ten dharma-realms again, making a hundred dharma-realms. Each realm inherently possesses the three types of world, so the hundred dharma-realms inherently possess three thousand types of world. These three thousand reside in any single moment of sentience. If there were no sentience, that would be one thing, but as soon as there is the least sentience, even the smallest moment of it, it immediately possesses thes three thousand. We shouldn’t say sentience exists first and that all known phenomena later, nor that all known phenomena are first and sentience of them comes later. It is like the characteristics of change in an object [generation, persistence, decay, destruction]: if the thing were prior to characteristics, the thing would not be changed by them, and if the characteristics were prior to the thing, the thing would also not be changed. Neither prior nor posterior is permissible here: when we speak of the thing, we refer to just the process of change of the characteristics, and when we speak of the process of change of the characteristics, we refer to just the thing. The mind is also like this. If all dharmas were produced by the mind, this would be a vertical relationship of priority. If the mind simultaneously encompassed all dharmas, this would be a horizontal relationship of coexistence. Neither of these is permissible: rather, the mind is precisely all dharmas, and all dharmas are precisely the mind.

夫一心具十法界。一法界又具十法界百法界。一界具三十種世間。百法界即具三千種世間。此三千在一念心。若無心而已。介爾有心即具三千。亦不言一心在前一切法在後。亦不言一切法在前一心在後。例如八相遷物。物在相前物不被遷。相在物前亦不被遷。前亦不可後亦不可。秖物論相遷秖相遷論物。今心亦如是。若從一心生一切法者。此則是縱。若心一時含一切法者。此即是橫。縱亦不可橫亦不可。秖心是一切法。一切法是心故。[[27]](#footnote-27)

The topic here is the phenomenal individual psychic level, not the relation between Li and *shi* as such: mind in this passage is emphatically phenomenal mind, a here-now moment of mentation, arising from the interaction of sense-object and sense-organ, rather than mind as a synonym for the pure mirrorlike reflectivity of the *ti* in the Huayan *ti/yong* model. Note that there is no *ti/yong* language at all here, as this is from Zhiyi, written at a time before that model enters the mainstream of Tiantai discourse. Zhiyi tells us that the mind, as a particular entity, does not “contain” all things, nor does it really “produce” them; rather, it *is* them. Any moment of sentience *is* all the objects of sentience, and all other ways of sensing them. The noetic and noematic aspects of a single act of consciousness are compared to a thing and its characteristics—as we might say that a red box right here is nothing but redness and boxness and right-hereness (and so on). The entity and its characteristics are the same thing described in two different ways, unitarily or severally. Their relationship is like that given by the Huayan *ti* and *yong* at the universal metaphysical level: coextensive, collapsed into the other. Whatever is mind is its objects, whatever is its objects is mind. But this is said not at the universal level, but at the direct phenomenological level, the individual psychic level: this ambiguity of mind and matter is what is to be noticed as characterizing every particular experience. They are in a reversible relationship, where just as I can say with equal legitimacy either that the thing is reducible to its characteristics, or the characteristics are reducible to the thing, I can say that all mind is its objects, or all objects are the mind.

It is here, on the interphenomenal level, that we see something close to the Huayan coextensive *ti/yong,* but now applied reversibly, and *it is this reversibility, rather than one of the two aspects of the coextensive ti/yong, that describes Li*. This is true in Huayan too, inasmuch as the Center-Buddhanature (Li) is revealed ultimately only as the interpervasion of all *shi*. But as mentioned above, the reversibility in Huayan is really still always Li as *ti* and *shi* as *yong,* simply switching the aspects in the two alternate descriptions. In Tiantai, each determination is reversible both in Li and in *shi,* the latter initially as a small portion of the former, or a single side of what is delineated by the former qua Center. In Tiantai it is weakly *ti* because it is strongly Center, rather than being weakly center because it is strongly *ti.*  Significantly, it is not just any characteristics that Zhiyi gives as identical to the entity itself: it is the characteristics of the process of change, or arising and perishing, the history of the entity’s generation and destruction. The thing is the thing’s life-death process, the thing’s temporal career in its transition from not-being-X to being-X to not-being-X. Transition here is impermanence, which is the most immediate manifestation of conditionality, which is simply the necessary relation to otherness. The internal characteristics of a thing with which its being is reversibly reducible are thus its relations to othernesses--its intrinsic inclusion, in its very essence, of what is not itself. It is not accidental but necessary for any determinate thing to have an outside. Having an outside is essential—and hence internal--to all determination. Having precisely *this* outside is essential—and hence internal—to being precisely *this* thing. A thing is nothing but its characteristics, and its characteristics are nothing but the thing, but all those characteristics are the internality of its own externality. A thing is nothing but its own otherness.

Here is Zhanran’s summation of the situation, again emphatically at the individual psychic level (translated according to the explanation by Zhili):

All dharmas without exception are of the nature of mind, but any all-inclusive nature is ipso facto no specific nature, and thus it is the Three Thousand, all present there unchanged. We must understand that the [phenomenal, momentary] mind, [is shown through the meditative process to be inseparable from the eternal, omnipresent] minds and bodies [of all beings, including their partial appearance as the initially apparently external objects of that phenomenal mind’s experience, related to it just as in Zhiyi’s metaphor of the thing and its marks of transformation above], so even as it goes through the transformation of states [which are its experiencing of putatively external objects], these are just the mind itself. It is just this transformation that is called the “creation” of all dharmas of its experience, which means the experienced temporal *yong* [Three Thousand] are just the *ti* [Three Thousand] itself. It is truly for this reason that each of those contents is neither matter nor mind, and yet is matter as opposed to mind and mind as opposed to matter, and yet is also only matter, and is also only mind. Thus merely be looking at one’s own present moment of experience one sees oneself, sees all others, sees all sentient beings, sees all Buddhas. Since even the sentient beinghood and Buddhahood of others is thus the same as one’s own [single phenenomenal moment of] mentation, how much more so one’s own sentient beinghood and Buddhahood?

一切諸法無非心性，一性無性。三千宛然。當知心之色心，即心名變，變名為造， 造謂體用。是則非色非心而色而心，唯色唯心良由於此。故知但識一念，遍見己他生佛。他生他佛尚與心同，況己心生佛寧乖一念？[[28]](#footnote-28)

Here we see how *ti/yong* is grafted onto to Zhiyi’s *ti/yong-*free exposition above, and how that model is thereby apparently but not ultimately modified. What is key to note is, first, that the oneness of the Nature and the noneness of the Nature and the multiplicity of the Nature(s) are all synonyms here, the Three Truths restated. The Three Truths are Li, that is the Nature, which is the Nature of mind but also the Nature of any other thing. This Li is what will be described as the *ti,* but it is not the noneness alone (as in Fazang’s trope of pure unchanging imageless reflectivity alone) nor even just the noneness and its coextensive muchness (imageless reflectivity necessarily always expressed as multiple images), as it was in the Huayan “exclusive Center.” Rather, it is first *one specific determinate nature:* this is not the imagelessness here (reflectivity), but rather *the characteristic of mentalness,* which is one *specific, partial, determinate, conditional* characteristic. As Zhili likes to stress, this could equally well be “the nature of materiality” *se’xing* 色性*，* rather than “the nature of mentalness” *xinxing* 心性*。* We might have said, “All dharmas without exception are of the nature of *matter, are instances of the characteristic of materiality, i.e., are material*. But any all-inclusive nature is ipso facto no specific nature, therefore…” “Mind” is not the universal *indeterminate* formlessness here; it is a particular *determinate* characteristic, *this* single moment of experience qua a single mentation. When everything is seen as having the characteristic of “being mental as opposed to material,” then “mental” loses its original meaning, which was based on its boundaries excluding the material as non-mental. That is why Zhanran goes on to say that “one nature is no nature,” and that this is all Three Thousand Natures.

Let us note also that, according to Zhili, the first usage of “mind” here refers to the momentary, temporal, deluded, phenomenal mind, while the phrase “mind and body,” which the first is claimed to be identical to, refers all minds and bodies available phenomenally in space and time *and* those very same minds and bodies reseen as each eternal and omnipresent, of which the temporal version is a small *portion*. It is seeing the coextensivity of this single temporal moment of mentation and all other possible objects of experience, which establishes an immediate experience of the untenability of their mutual exclusivity: “this mentation” and “that chair it is seeing” claim to be either/or entities, since they are determinate, but the fact that what we are experiencing is simultaneously “this mentation” and “that chair” shows that this cannot be so. This lived coextensivity of allegedly mutually exclusive determinaticies is why whatever this phenomenal moment of mentation perceives, it nonetheless is *also* perceiving itself, and this is the manifestation in direct experience of its being at once self and other, and therefore omnipresent and eternal.

Further, it is through their identity with this one phenomenon (this moment of mentation) now demonstrated to be eternal, not with a prior eternal formlessness (reflectivity as *ti,* and so on) that each and every one of the Three Thousand experienced phenomena is also seen to be uncontainable in any particular time and place, and thus Three Thousand alternate names for the Nature, Three Thousand alternate Lis. [[29]](#footnote-29)

Hence Zhili, in his interpretation of this passage, emphasizes that this cannot be taken simply to mean the mind is Li, and that Li is one, while phenomena created by the mind are *shi*, and *shi* are many. Rather, both mind and experienced phenomena are here both Li and *shi*, and Li and *shi* each separately are both one and many.[[30]](#footnote-30) That means simply that each and every phenomenon is all-pervasive and eternal, and that all other experiences are seen, on examination, to be one-sided, narrowed-down experiences of each of them *as* something else. The eternal Three Thousand are the *ti* here, the phenomenal Three Thousand are the *yong,* but they are really just one and the same Three Thousand.

We could utter a sentence that sounds almost identical to that last sentence to describe the Huayan *ti/yong* model (just alternate ways of describing the wave, as wetness or as wave): the eternal Li is all the phenomena, the phenomena are the eternal Li, just as the wave is the wetness and the wetness is the wave. But there the unity is the wetness and the multiplicity is the wave, the radicalized classical *ti/yong* model. Here on the Tiantai side, *“ti*” is borrowed to mean the eternity and omnipresence of any determination, i.e., that determination seen as Li, i.e., as the Three Truths, i.e., as determinacy-indeterminacy, as provisional positing as Emptiness as identical to each other, i.e., as the Center. It is this Centrality that is meant by omnipresence, and it is this alone that makes any given dharma the *ti*.

So the claim of inherent inclusion, the pre-existence of all determinacies prior to their manifestation in a particular time and place, is really just a claim about the nature of determinacy itself. It means simply that what is prior to any given determinacy cannot be thought of as the definitive exclusion of that newly arisen determinacy, for that would mean that that exclusion of X was itself fully determinate, continently boundaried, in at least this one way. The pre-existence of X does not mean something could be *known* about X prior to its manifestation in some time and space. It means that *once it has appeared in time and space*, the times prior to and after its appearance must be viewed as non-exclusive of it, as all of one piece as it. Given the inseparability (due to the incoherence, i.e., Centrality, of boundaries) of being-so-determined and not-yet-being-so-determined, each is really both. The *ti* is an omnipresence not merely of being-indeterminate-as-being-determined as in Huayan, but of being-indeterminate-as-being-*so*-determined.

Yet we also see here clearly that entailment does not actually mean the presence of fully-formed determinations in the mind, on the model of “innate ideas,” or some sort of non-physical realities like Plato’s ideas. There really are no purely non-physical realities in the Tiantai world: physicality is rather a narrowed down one-sided view of something that is always both physical and mental. As in Zhu Xi, pre-existence does not mean there could exist knowledge of something prior to some kind of physical manifestation of it, for there would be no one to do this knowing; both Tiantai and Zhu Xi deny that there could exist any purely non-physical, purely non-temporal, purely non-spatial knowers—a key point for all truly atheist epistemologies! The point in Tiantai is that the phenomenal mind is precisely the dharmas that are opposed to it, and the dharmas are none other than that mind itself. This also means precisely that neither could mind “alone” produce all dharmas nor could the totality of all dharmas alone produce the mind: for it is impossible for either to be “alone.” But then, further, in another sense each one alone can produce the other: precisely because each one alone is entirely unintelligible, what is referred to when I say “mind” or “the totality of non-mind dharmas” is actually always the whole comprised of both, or the whole readable as either; because each “alone” can only really *mean* “the whole, included both parts.” Mind means mind-and-dharmas, dharmas means mind-and-dharmas, so either mind alone or dharmas alone can provide all mind and all dharmas. The issue is again inseparability, indivisibility, such that really what we are denoting when we say “mind” is also the dharmas, and vice versa; they are two ways of looking at the same thing.

Zhu Xi on Li’s Pre-existence of Qi

Let us now turn to Zhu Xi. How does his build his own usage of *ti/yong* in relation to the two Buddhist versions we have examined, and how does this relate to his claim that Li, in some sense but not in every sense, pre-exists Qi? As we shall see, Zhu Xi’s case lies interestingly right between the two Buddhist cases: like Huayan, he admits full conceptual priority of a singled-out metaphysical entity which is characterized by absolute disjunction and absolute coextensivity with all physical manifestations (Taiji), but like Tiantai the reason he gives for this special wondrousness is derived from considerations of its *Centrality,* considered to be synonymous with the actual effectivity of the Li that stands above and within all manifest existence (also Taiji), given primary expression in its capacity to enable and unite dyadic *oppositions*, and derives from that an neither-one-nor-many asness relation between a *multitude* of Li (each of which is also the entire Taiji). In this way, Zhu Xi brings the two models together. Let us see how.

Asked whether there is a priority between Li and qi, Zhu Xi says:

Someone asked: Is it that there must first exist a certain Li before there can be a certain sort of Qi?

Zhu Xi answered: Basically neither is prior to nor posterior to the other. But if you insist on searching out the origin, you must say that the Li is first. But Li is also not some separate thing; it exists here within this Qi. Without this Qi, the Li has no other place that can carry it. Qi refers to metal, wood, water and fire, while Li means benevolence, rightness, ritual and wisdom.

或問：「必有是理，然後有是氣，如何？」曰：「此本無先後之可言。然必欲推其所從來，則須說先有是理。然理又非別為一物，即存乎是氣之中；無是氣，則是理亦無掛搭處。氣則為金木水火，理則為仁義禮智。」[[31]](#footnote-31)

Again:

Someone asked about the theory that Li precedes Qi. [Zhu Xi] said, “One cannot say that. Can we know that, as things appear at present, Li precedes Qi, or Qi precedes Li? Neither can be found out. But if we speculate on it, it seems that this Qi always moves in dependence on this Li, and wherever this Qi gathers, Li is also present. Now Qi can solidify and thereby create things, while Li has no sentiment or intention, no plan, no calculation, no creation. But wherever qi solidifies, Li is within it. It is something like the plants and animals and people in the world; none is born without a root; and it is certain that nothing grows in unplanted land from no seed. But all of that [root/branch stuff] is a matter of Qi. As for Li, it is just a realm （世界*shijie*) of its own, pure and open, without form or trace. It cannot create, whereas Qi can ferment and solidify to generate things. But wherever this Qi is, Li is within it.”

或問先有理後有氣之說。曰：「不消如此說。而今知得他合下是先有理，後有氣邪；後有理，先有氣邪？皆不可得而推究。然以意度之，則疑此氣是依傍這理行。及此氣之聚，則理亦在焉。蓋氣則能凝結造作，理却無情意，無計度，無造作。只此氣凝聚處，理便在其中。且如天地間人物草木禽獸，其生也，莫不有種，定不會無種子白地生出一箇物事，這箇都是氣。若理，則只是箇淨潔空闊底世界，無形迹，他却不會造作；氣則能醞釀凝聚生物也。但有此氣，則理便在其中。」[[32]](#footnote-32)

We all know many more examples of this kind of hedging and prevarication on Zhu Xi’s part. He seems to be saying that Li and Qi are always copresent and inseparable, but then again, if forced to speculate about the question at all, one has to conclude that in some unspecified sense Li has some priority, a sense that seems to imply that it is somehow in one sense priority and in another sense not. I believe this can be simply resolved. The key is the equivocation between *singular and plural,* inherent in the Chinese language when left unmodified. When Li is mentioned without modification, it is may denote either Li per se, and any given specific Li, or possibly both. This is further complicated by the fact that Zhu Xi’s metaphysics specifically stipulate that in one sense there is only one Li everywhere in the universe (the Taiji), but that in another sense each thing has its own specific distinct Li—these being two ways of viewing a neither-one-nor-different asness relation inherent to the nature of Li, to be explored in a moment. With these premises in mind, I think we can locate a fairly straightforward position in Zhu Xi: 1) in a temporal sense, Li and Qi never ever ever exist without each other, so there is no Li existing alone in the universe without *some* Qi. In that sense there is no priority: no temporal priority of Li per se over Qi per se. 2) However, in all states Li has a certain conceptual priority, to be specified below. 3) But in the case of any *specific* Li, the specific Li always literally precedes its instantiation in Qi even temporally—*for it is already retrospectively found to be present in and as any other previous Li*.

Though Zhu will say in some passages that Li can exist before and after Heaven and Earth exist, this is not the same as saying it can exist before or after Qi exists. Heaven and Earth are a specific arrangement of Qi. They are Yin and Yang already divided. Li existing in inchoate undivided Qi, before and after Heaven and Earth (or any particular Heaven and Earth cycle) is really just Li existing in an extreme macro-form of Yin qi, really not conceptually different from the way the Li of life, of springtime, of Benevolence (*ren*仁*)*, exists unexpressed in the depths of winter before the solstice, a necessary phase of dormancy.[[33]](#footnote-33) We may pause here to consider the fact that Zhu Xi was a careful and appreciative reader of Zhang Zai, and though he does not by any means accept everything Zhang has to say, he is emphatic in pointing out where he disagrees with him. I am assuming that Zhu basically accepts Zhang’s account of what Qi is and how it behaves, and Zhang’s key point about the impossibility of Qi’s literal non-existence; among later Neo-Confucians, Zhang Zai is perhaps the accepted authority on what Qi is, though they may regard him to have been badly confused about Li. Zhang’s conception of Qi is designed specifically to exclude the very idea of Qi ever not existing. Very explicitly and emphatically, Qi in its most indeterminate, vacuous state is still Qi, and is to be sharply distinguished from the heretical notion of “Non-Being,” which the Sages never talked about and which Zhang considers both incoherent and pernicious. I think Zhu probably accepted this view of Qi, while sharply disagreeing with Zhang about the status of Li in relation to it.[[34]](#footnote-34) So, on my reading, contrary to appearances, Zhu Xi does *not* admit the existence of Li without any Qi existing, even as a possibility, at any actual moment of time, either past or future. If he thought there definitely was a time when Li existed and Qi per se did not, it is hard to understand why he would feel the need to prevaricate on this issue at all, let alone so persistently and insistently. Admittedly, it is possible that he is merely prevaricating out of empirical humility—that he is really unsure, not having been there (and no mind could be there to know it, since minds are Qi), although he thinks it possible and consistent with the nature of the Li/Qi relation.[[35]](#footnote-35) I don’t rule that possibility out (and it would mean reading his reservations about Zhang Zai more harshly, which is indeed possible), but I think we have a simpler explanation for the prevarication that does not involve Zhu taking the odd and problematic stand that Li can ever exist without Qi. That position is not what Zhu is claiming when he does feel the need to affirm pre-existence of Li as one leg of his paradox. The issue is rather the sense in which, in spite of the constant copresence of Li and Qi in all actual instances, Li is nevertheless *also* in some sense “prior” (*xian*). As suggested above, I think this is true in two senses: 1) Li as such is conceptually but not temporally prior to Qi as such, with a dependence relation which however is not a simple classical or radicalized *ti/yong* relation but the *ti/yong-plus* relation that is a center/periphery relation; but also in that 2) *any particular Li* is prior *temporally* to *its* manifestation as a *particular* configuration of Qi.[[36]](#footnote-36)

We saw in the Huayan radicalization of the *ti/yong* model how Li and *shi* can be inseparable, coextensive, beginninglessly and endlessly so, but still retain a structural relation of one-way dependence between them. Is the Huayanesque *ti/yong* model what Zhu Xi also means when he says Li and Qi are inseparable, always existing together, but that there is also some sense in which Li is “prior”? In one sense, yes, but not completely; though he will still speak of the Taiji as the *benti,* he is at pains to avoid the straightforward *ti/yong* relation uninflectedly; indeed, this is just what Zhu Xi tells when reporting how his views on the Li/Qi relation changed radically around the age of 40, that he had previously mistakenly applied a straight *ti/yon*g structure to Li and Qi, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter.[[37]](#footnote-37) This suggests that he has an alternate model in hand after that time, one which still admits of an ambiguity when it comes to priority, but in a rather different sense. What is this new model?

We saw one alternative in the Tiantai model of whole as unconditional and and part as conditional, where the unconditional is precisely the Center, taken to mean non-one-sidedness to either presence or absence, and hence omnipresent asness. Here it is Centrality itself that makes something roughly describable as *ti*, that makes phenomenal appearances depend on its prior existence. It is not central because *ti*, it is *ti* because central. It is *ti* only to the extent of, and in the manner of, uniting opposites: in the Tiantai case, the opposites of presence and absence, inside and outside, this and that. Thus the Center in a certain sense the overlapping of the two radii, and must contain the both of the two extremes (it belongs to both X and non-X), while in another sense it is opposed to the extremes (it belongs to neither X nor non-X). As the overlap of the two it is the whole that contains all the opposed determinations. As belonging to neither, it is transcendent, standing beyond all determinations. The Li pre-exists the *shi* as the Center pre-exists the two-extremes, as the whole pre-exists the part. In another sense the two extremes and the Center are coeval. It seems that Zhu Xi’s modification of *ti/yong* as applied to the Li/Qi relation shares this trait: the Taiji is fundamental and prior because it is a Center, a union of opposites which contains them but also transcends them. But in this case the opposites are designated in a precise way that derives from traditional Confucian ethics and its philosophy of nature: motion and rest, Yang and Yin.

Zhu gives his most comprehensive account of the macro-structure involved here in the opening passage of his commentary to Zhou Dunyi’s “Explanation of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot Diagram.” The problem there is precisely the relation between the Supreme Ultimate Pivot (*taiji)* and the motion and stillness that produce yang and yin. Here is Zhou’s text and Zhu’s commentary:

Zhou Dunyi: The most formless of all is yet the Supreme Ultimate Pivot of all! The motion of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot generates Yang. When this motion reaches its ultimate it pivots into stillness, and this stillness generates Yin. When the stillness reaches its ultimate it pivots back to motion. Alternate motion and stillness thus serve as the root of one another, separating into Yin and Yang, thereby establishing the two modes.

週敦頤： 無極而太極。太極動而生陽，動極而靜，靜而生陰。靜極復動。一動一靜，互為其根；分陰分陽，兩儀立焉。

Zhu Xi: “The workings of Heaven above have not even sound or smell” and yet it is genuinely the axis, the hinge, the pivot of all creation and transformation, the root and foundation of all manner of existences. Thus he says, “The most formless of all is yet the Supreme Ultimate Pivot of all!” He does not mean that outside of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot there is something else which is the most formless of all. The motion and stillness of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is the flow of the Heavenly Mandate. This is what the *Yi* describes when it says, “The alternation of Yin and Yang is called the Way.” Now True Integration (*cheng* 誠) is the root of the sage and is the end and new beginning of each thing; that is just what here is called ‘the Way.’ Its motion is the unobstructed going forth of the True Integration, [what the *Yi* calls] “the Good which is its continuation,” “that which all things depend on to begin to exist.” Its stillness is the reversion of the True Integration, [what the *Yi* calls] “human nature as its completion,” “all things making straight their own natures and destinies.” Motion goes still at its extreme, stillness returns to motion at its extreme, motion and stillness alternating and serving as the root of one another—this is why the life and mandate of Heaven flow on without cease. The motion generates Yang, the stillness generates Yin, separating Yin and Yang so that the two modes are established—that is why their individual roles and identities are fixed and unchanging. *In sum, the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is the inherent original paradoxical numinosity at the root of all things,[[38]](#footnote-38) and motion and stillness are the triggers of transition in which it is carried.* The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is “the Way that is above form,” while motion and stillness are “its tools that are endowed with form.”

　朱熹：　上天之載，無聲無臭，而實造化之樞紐，品彙之根柢也。故曰：「無極而太極。」非太極之外，復有無極也。太極之有動靜，是天命之流行也，所謂「一陰一陽之謂道」。誠者，聖人之本，物之終始，而命之道也。其動也，誠之通也，繼之者善，萬物之所資以始也；其靜也，誠之復也，成之者性，萬物各正其性命也。動極而靜，靜極復動，一動一靜，互為其根，命之所以流行而不已也；動而生陽，靜而生陰，分陰分陽，兩儀立焉，分之所以一定而不移也。蓋太極者，本然之妙也；動靜者，所乘之機也。太極，形而上之道也；陰陽，形而下之器也。

The crucial line here, indicating Zhu Xi’s deliberate and self-conscious post midlife-crisis revision of his earlier *ti/yong* undersanding of the Taiji/*yinyang* relation (which is also the global Li/Qi relation) is, “In sum, the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is the inherent original paradoxical numinousness at the root of all things, and motion and stillness are the triggers of transition in which it is carried.” Whalen Lai deserves great credit for focusing on this substitution of *ji* (trigger, incipient reversal) for *yong* (function) as the key to Zhu Xi’s mature metaphysics, although I disagree with almost all the conclusions he draws in his analysis of Zhu Xi’s “turn.”[[39]](#footnote-39) What we can agree on is that the Li/Qi relation is not straightforwardly a “substance functioning” relation. It is a “numinousness carried in triggers of transition” relation. The key is to understand the idea of *triggering reversal* in Zhu Xi’s metaphysics. What does reversal have to do with the Taiji, with the Great Ultimate Pivot?

　　Taiji, the Supreme Ultimate Pivot, is intrinsically *paradoxical,* and this is what makes it appropriate to describe it as numinous (*miao)*. That is what the first line of Zhou’s text has told us: it is nowhere and everywhere, the least and the most, it is most absent and most present, it is most formless and yet the decisive pivotal element of all things. It is the source of their production, the principle of their formation, and the standard of harmonious flourishing, but always by virtue of precisely its absence, its formlessness, its non-assertion and non-control, by being unfindable as any one specific element or thing. But these familiar paradoxes, which also pertain to the Dao of the *Daodejing*, are so not for the Daoist reasons pertaining the formlessness and namelessness of the undifferentiated unhewn (*pu* 樸，無名*)* as opposed to formed named and valued objects of desire cut out from that background (*qi*器, 名*)*, nor for the similar Huayan reasons (the formlessness of the brightness enables, negates and coextends the forms) but for specifically Confucian reason derived from the “Great Commentary” to the *Yi:* the Taiji, the pivot and interface between Yin and Yang. This is the center point between the two extremes of motion and rest, the point of transition between them which is also the point of connection between them. A pivot between two extremes is also paradoxical in the ways just mentioned, but also in a different and additional way: it participates in both of the two extremes, it unifies them, it defines them, and yet it must also be above them, beyond them, contained in neither of them. The key to understanding the structure here is the figure of the axis, the center. I have written about this at length elsewhere, borrowing Qian Mu’s metaphor of a swinging pendulum. Qian’s metaphor, in fact, comes from a long and thoughtful engagement with precisely Zhu Xi’s idea of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot and its relation to the two extremes of Yin and Yang. The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is undivided, “wondrous,” *miao* 妙 , which means paradoxical, more than one thing at once, not limited to the boundaries of any one side of a dyad of opposites—a usage deriving from the *Yijing* on *miao* 妙and *shen* 神. Zhu Xi makes clear just what he means by the numinous in his extravagant praise for Zhang Zai’s dicta, “It is the copresent twoness that makes it inconceivable” and “it is the [simultaneous] twoness that causes change” (兩在故不測)。『兩故化』)[[40]](#footnote-40)—this being the key to his entire account of how change occurs, [[41]](#footnote-41) while this wondrousness, this numinousness, is completely identical with that seemingly exclusive “one state” which it occupies, whether Yin or Yang. Though it is in one sense the undermining opposite of any state, it is also completely coextensive and immanent to that state, present *as* that state. As Zhu Xi says, “When in the state of Yin, it is entirely Yin; when in the state of Yang, it is entirely Yang.” [[42]](#footnote-42)

The Center is the paradoxical place that is One yet Two, omnipresent yet nowhere, unmoving and yet unstill, and participating in motion and rest yet beyond motion and rest. Zhu Xi explicitly calls it an axis or hinge (*shuniu* 樞紐), a center point around which two extremes oscillate. The two extremes are nonparadoxical, “simply located” (i.e., determinate and restricted within their own boundaries), one-sided, in flux, dependent on the central axis. But they are the dynamic “carriers” of that axis, that center. As Qian puts it, the two extremes in the pendulum swing are only what they are, only identifiable, only determinate, if they *turn back*, toward each other: any motion, any tendency, any process going “its own way,” in its own direction, infinitely without turning back, never actually becomes knowable or determinate as any particular thing; it is perpetually unfinished, unclosed, uncircumscribed, undescribed. So motion stays motion only because of its relation to ceasing to be motion (its defining boundary), only in relation to stillness. Stillness likewise is only stillness in relation to motion, by turning back toward motion. The transition point, the center of gravity, the holding together of these two extremes, which makes them determinate, which makes them themselves, which allows them to be and to continue to be, is the Center, the axis. Qian gives examples of health and sickness, peace and war, sleep and wakefulness, etc.: each is able to maintain itself only by never going *too far* from the other. Herein lies also its normative dimension: it sets the limits beyond which a thing cannot go and still remain coherent with the whole, which is what is required for it to exist and continue. The Center is manifest in any thing as this pullback against going too far, the centripetal form drawing it back toward the opposite.

But the claim here is that this entails an important sense in which the Center is really prior to and transcendent to the extremes. While it may seem natural for us to speak of them as mutually dependent, there is also some justification to the claim that the Center is not constituted by the extremes; rather, the extremes are constituted by the Center. For the Center is the enabler of the whole swing of the motion between the two extremes. It is the enabler of the being of the whole as a whole, and thus of the parts being the parts of that whole, for the dynamic and holistic model of a swinging pendulum implies that the parts (the two extremes of the swing) are only anything if they are parts of this whole (the swing). The two opposed motions of a pendulum swing do not exist outside of the pendulum swing. It is not a whole that is composed of parts; it is a whole that is temporally simultaneous with its parts, but with an identifiable and fairly straightforward sort of priority over those parts. We do not have the construction of a whole from pre-existing parts; we have only virtual parts that are aspects or functions of the whole, that are inconceivable and impossible without the whole, which is only identifiable through the grasp of a Center, even though that Center too is merely virtual (i.e., the pendulum never rests there, it is not marked in space by any visible form). We may say that each part is impossible with the other parts, indeed that “each is the root of the other.” But that provides no explanation of either part; each is enabled by what it itself enables, neither can be prior, on that level of explanation alone we can find no way to establish either. Hence we must speak separately, and in a different sense, of the Center as the enabler of both extremes and, what is the same, of their necessary relation to each other. The Center is the relation of each part to the other, and it is thus in that sense prior to either part, though temporally simultaneous. The model here is not building up from atomistic preexisting units, but rather a kind of *mitosis*. But even if the entire swinging pendulum is eternal, we still have a reason to speak separately of the Center as the explanatory principle of the whole and of all of its parts. The whole enables the parts, and the Center enables the whole. Is it then itself precisely the whole? Yes and no. It is what makes the parts the parts by making whole the whole, and is alone what we name when we identify the whole: we call the vortex by the name of its identifiable vertex, which is what it reads *as* from outside. In that sense it is the whole which makes the parts the parts. Is it a specific part of the whole? Yes and no. The pendulum never comes to rest in the Center, and yet the Center is what is most evident in its motions, continually and everywhere expressed in either of the extremes, and in the relations of the extremes to each other, their copotentiality to become each other and thus form a whole that sustainably continues the swing. It is nowhere and everywhere. It is nothing and everything. It is the most absent and yet the omnipresent axis. And this is just what Zhu Xi says about the Taiji in relation to Yin and Yang. It must be prior, it must be transcendent, it must be elevated above them and it mustn’t be mistaken for them. Li is not Qi, Li is prior to Qi. And yet it is always coexistent with them, always present only as manifested in them, always immanent to them. Specifically, it manifests as their triggers of transition, their boundaries, which are what make them what they are.

Zhu Xi explains the idea of a “trigger of transition” with a mechanical example of a pedal:

Zhou Quiqing asked about the line, “Motion and stillness are the triggers of transition in which it is carried.”

Zhu Xi said, “*Ji* 機means a mechanical stop-start switch. You step on the pedal when the thing is moving, and the stillness comes; you step on the pedal when its still, and motion comes.”

周貴卿問「動靜者，所乘之機」。曰：「機，是關捩子。踏著動底機，便挑撥得那靜底；踏著靜底機，便挑撥得那動底。」[[43]](#footnote-43)

The motion and stillness of Qi are the triggers of reversal which manifest the Taiji, the original numinous paradoxicality of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot. For we now see that Taiji is literally a *pivot:* it acts on any state as *the trigger of its reversal*. That is, it “rides on” and “attaches to” and “is carried by“ Qi, but it is “on” them in the manner of a triggering mechanism which reverses them: the touch of the Taiji is what reverses the state of Qi, brings it back into contact with its opposite, joins the two extremes into a balanced productive totality. It is carried by Qi, hence always immanent in Qi and sharing its state; but it is that in any state which *reverses* that state. Zhu Xi says,

Q: What does it mean], ‘motion and stillness are the triggers that carry it’? Zhu Xi answered, The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is Li, while motion and stillness are Qi. When Qi proceeds, Li also proceeds. The two are always together as mutually dependent and never separated from one another. The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is like a man and motion and stillness are like the horse upon which he rides. Wherever the horse goes, the man also goes. For any single motion or stillness, there is none in which the numinousness of the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is not present in it. This is what I meant by ‘the trigger that carries it.’ For this ultimate formless [Supreme Pivot] is precisely what allows the two (Yin and Yang) and the Five Elemental Phases of Qi to ‘numinously combine. (*miaohe*).[[44]](#footnote-44)

The Supreme Ultimate Pivot rides on the Qi, is carried on it, is dependent on it for its activity, but also in control of it, like the man on the horse. Li is never apart from Qi, and is always there doing whatever Qi is doing. Its “control” resides in its “numinousness” (i.e., its union of opposites, its paradoxicality, its identity to the least present of all, Wuji) which resides in its “unifying”: *all of these are combined in the idea of pivot as the trigger of reversal.* The reversal is the shaping of the contour which gives them their proper boundaries, their proper measures, which makes them parts of the whole, which makes them what they are, makes them identifiably and conceivably this or that.

Numinous on the other hand means inconceivable, beyond the defined and exclusive character of motion or of stillness: it is that in each thing by which the opposite thing is also present, for it is both and it is neither. Hence it is what is “unseen” in that thing or state, “the least palpably present of all,” and yet what allows it to exist as that state, on the holistic premise that existing as that state is only possible when it is coherent with other states, with opposite states.

The above could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, by either a Huayan or a Tiantai writer. A Huayan writer would mean: “The entire indivisible Li is present completely in any *shi*, just as the indivisible quality of wetness is wholly present with nothing left out in any wave, or the undivided bright reflectiveness of the mirror is completely present and identical with any image.” The Tiantai writer would mean, “It is the entire Three Thousand acting and manifesting itself *as* this one of the Three Thousand which always arises together with the remaining 2999 as its background.” What Zhu Xi means this claim in a derivative but importantly tweaked way: he means that, as in Zhou Dunyi’s diagram, the circle and the center of the circle remain the same in each instance, performing the same function, no matter whether the contents of the circle are wood, metal, earth, fire, water, or plain yin and yang: it is coextensive with them, and yet is also what unites them in this particular structure as a union of opposites around a center, making them interface with each other, turn back to each other, change into each other. This is what changes the behavior of a thing—hence though seemingly completely coextensive with it, it is also that which can undermine and control it and regulate it into coherence with whatever is outside it, like the repeated circles in the diagram. This is true of the human mind as well, which is why it can regulate and control itself, an extremely important advance for Zhu Xi’s moral psychology. And this is how the two extremes interface, and thereby unite. All of these are combined in the notion of the Center, and beautifully illustrated by the circle in the diagram on which Zhu Xi is commenting.

More specifically, the *ji* 機in question here are undoubtedly what are manifested and carried by what the Zhou Dunyi text refers to as the *ultimates at which reversal occurs.* The word Zhou uses for that reversal point is *ji* 極, the same as the name of word used for the Taiji which is the numinousness. The nature is Taiji, the Supreme Ultimate Pivot, manifest as the limit (also *ji*極), the standard (also *ji*極). For the limits of a thing are what define it as what it is, providing the proper measure that allows it to form a harmonious part of the whole, and this is the normative standard by which it is to be regulated. The Taiji is the roofbeam, the hinge, the center point of the pendulum between motion and stillness, yin and yang. As such, it is Center, it is Balance, it is expressed as Harmony of opposing dyads (e.g., as joy and anger, happiness and sorrow), as connection and interface, as integrater, as Coherence that is also endlessly productive and reproductive (*sheng sheng bu xi* 生生不息*)*. That is Li. But it is also the specific Li of each thing: its specific turning-around point, its proper measure and limits, the standard that defines it, the Li as “why it is so” (*suoyiran zhi li* 所以然之理) and the Li as “how it should be” (*dangran zhi li 當然之理*) of each thing. That Li in both senses is just *ji* 極*,* the turning around point which is the trigger of reversal *ji* 機, which is what carries the numinous wondrous paradoxicality of the Center, the Taiji 太極. Thus are all definite things produced, carved out, boundaried, while also containing their ability to go beyond their boundaries into their opposites, to mate and produce further.

This understanding can help us better understand the nature of this production and reproduction Zhu Xi speaks of. For the process of production here is given a general character rooted in boundary and boundary-overstepping, in Centrality and dynamic holism that combines and reverses opposites, which touches on the sexual reproduction of living beings but is not limited to it. Yin-yang is sexual but also more than sexual, and in the same way *sheng* (production, generation)is here life and also more than life. It does not mean that there is some preference for living beings over non-living beings, and that this really defines the reason things are as they are, or that the universe intends to produce living beings. The process of production and reproduction spoken of by Zhu Xi is not some sort of folk-Schopenhauerian “will to life”[[45]](#footnote-45) or a Bergsonian *elan vital,* a will to life that is the secret purpose behind the production of non-living things. The reason for this qualification lies in the meaning of the Chinese word *sheng* 生*.* Consider the following explanations from Zhu Xi:

問：「曾見答余方叔書，以為枯槁有理。不知枯槁瓦礫，如何有理？」曰：「且如大黃、附子，亦是枯槁。然大黃不可為附子，附子不可為大黃。」

Q: I have seen that in your letter responding to Yu Fangshu that you consider even dry and withered things to have Productive Compossibility. But I don’t see what Productive Compossibilities there are in dried and withered things, or tiles and shards.

A: Consider the medicines made from rhubarb and from aconitum. These are dried and withered, but the rhubarb medicine cannot be used in place of aconitum, and aconitum cannot be used in place of rhubarb.

問：「枯槁之物亦有性，是如何？」曰：「是他合下有此理，故云天下無性外之物。」因行街，云：「階磚便有磚之理。」因坐，云：「竹椅便有竹椅之理。枯槁之物，謂之無生意，則可；謂之無生理，則不可。如朽木無所用。止可付之爨，是無生意矣。然燒甚麼木，則是甚麼氣，亦各不同，這是理元如此。」

Q: “Dried and withered things also have the Nature”—what does this mean?

A: It means they should also be said to have this Productive Compossibility. Thus [Cheng Hao] said “In the whole world there are no things outside the Nature.” Then walking on the street he said, “The bricks of the steps have the Productive Compossibility of the bricks of the steps.” Sitting down he said, “The bamboo chair has the Productive Compossibility of a bamboo chair. Dried and withered things can be said to lack the intention to produce (*shengyi* 生意), but not the Compossibility of Production (*shengli* 生理[[46]](#footnote-46)). For example, rotten wood cannot be used, and can only be put to the flame. This is what it means to say it has no impulse of production. But even so, burning a given kind of wood produces a given kind of smoke, each one different from the others. This is because the Productive Compossibility of each is thus.”

問：「枯槁有理否？」曰：「才有物，便有理。天不曾生箇筆，人把兔毫來做筆。才有筆，便有理。」又問：「筆上如何分仁義？」曰：「小小底，不消恁地分仁義。」

Q: Do dry and withered things have Productive Compossibility or not?

A: If there is any thing at all, it has its Productive Compossibility. Heaven produced no writing brushes; it was human beings who take rabbit hair and make a writing brush out of it. But as there is a brush, there must be the Productive Compossibilities of the brush.

Q: How do you discern Humaneness from Righteousness in the brush?

A: Such a small thing does not bear a division into its Humaneness and its Righteousness.[[47]](#footnote-47)

“Production,” *sheng,* does not refer only to what we mean by the English word “life”: it means *any transformation, any emergence of a qualitiatively distinct entity.* Burning rotten wood *produces* smoke. Neither of these is “alive,” but the relation of production is the expression of the Li, which I will venture to define as the Productive Compossibility, of the wood. for Li is the center as what makes the two extremes possible and *possible together,* and it is “in” either extreme as the possibility of the other extreme coexisting with itself.

Basically, any event that *occurs* is an example of “ceaseless production and reproduction” 生生不息. The rotten wood does not “intend” to produce, it has no living “intention” or “impulse” to produce (*sheng yi* 生意), but it has the potentiality to produce; to exist is to have this potential to produce a certain effect, and requires that this entity was something that could come into existence, could be produced, in tandem with everything else that exists. To have a Li is to be something that can be generated by whatever is already existing, and to participate in this process of ceaseless production and reproduction by in turn having the capacity to produce something else beyond itself. This is why I translate Li in this way for Zhu Xi. The Song Neo-Confucians often use the term in its everyday sense to mean “possibility,” as when they say something could possibly exist with the phrase *youcili* 有此理*,* or when something is impossible, *qiyoucili* 豈有此理*.* This can apply to things like the existence of spirits, or telepathy, or the recitation of Du Fu’s poetry by a person in a fever: those things *can exist* because they *fit in* with what else exists in a way that is consistent both with their being produced by them and by them continuing the process of production within the context of the total matrix of relations that exist, and this interrelation of all beings is considered to be intrinsically productive, even where the “impulse” of production is lacking. Li is a kind of *coherence which is productive,* a way in which things join together so as to continue the process of production and reproduction, the continuation of the process of creativity which is the cosmos.

We thus venture to suggest as a translation of Li the term “Productive Compossibility,” The “co-“ in “compossibility” denotes this possibility of coexistence, a harmonious coherence, and this already implies a kind of *value*. Coexistence is itself a *value*, a kind of unity among produced entities that allows them to all exist without obstructing each other, without excluding each others’ production. We see this in the Neo-Confucian tropes of Humaneness (*ren* 仁), the most direct manifestation of Li,as primarily manifested in (though not identical to) unbiasedness (*gong* 公) and as sensitivity (*jue* 覺). All of these terms suggest a kind of extension beyond any given boundary to include and connect and respond to whatever else exists, which is also the key characteristic of production and reproduction: non-limitation within a given determinate sphere, the continuation of one thing into something else, the expansion into and the generation of otherness: growth, but in the sense that also includes any non-living *event* as well, even that of firewood turning to smoke.

Defining Li as “Productive Compossibility” helps us understand one of the most distinctive and puzzling features of Zhu Xi’s metaphysics: the simultaneous oneness and manyness of Li. For Zhu Xi is very clear that Li is at the same time one Li (the Taiji) of all things, and at the same time is, in its entirety, all the many individual mutually differentiating “principles” and “patterns” and natures of things (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊). Note well that the *fen* here does *not* mean that only a portion or division of Li is present as the specific principle which is the nature of any individual thing: the entire Li is present *as* the specific principle of production and growth of each thing. For the “compossibility”—i.e., the possibility of coexistence, of two items, A and B--would be described in just this way. This reconfiguration of singular and plural is precisely the biggest difference between “possibility” and “compossibility.” The “possibility” of A is something entirely different from the “possibility” of B, and the “possibility of the coexistence of A and B” is yet a third thing. But the “compossibility of A with B” is exactly “the compossibility of B with A,” which is none other than the compossibility of A and B. Analogously, for Zhu Xi, the Li of a chair is the Li of a table, and this is the same as the Li of the world that has table and chair. And yet the compossibility of A and B can never be reducible to a featureless unarticulated “Oneness”: it specifically delineates the possibility of A and the possibility of B as two separate and definite aspects. The possibility of A is the compossibility of A with all other things (abstract and concrete, human and natural); this is different from the possibility of B, which is the compossibility of B with all other things. But the compossibility of A *is* the compossibility of B, while maintaining this specific difference.

Li for Zhu Xi is thus coherence qua compossibility, or to put it more strongly, the copotentiality of production of all things. We can see this quite clearly in Zhu Xi descriptions of specific Li. For example, speaking of the Li of a chair or a fan, he says

Clothing, food, activities are just things, while their Li is Dao. It is impermissible to call the thing the Dao. For example, this chair has four legs, and can be sat on: this is the Li of the chair. If we take away one of the legs, it will be impossible to sit on it, and thus it will have lost the Li of a chair….Or take this fan, which is a thing, but has the Dao, the Li, of a fan. How the fan is made, and how it should be used, is the Li of the fan that is above its form.

衣食動作只是物，物之理乃道也。將物便喚做道，則不可。且如這箇椅子有四隻脚，可以坐，此椅之理也。若除去一隻脚，坐不得，便失其椅之理矣。…且如這箇扇子，此物也，便有箇扇子底道理。扇子是如此做，合當如此用，此便是形而上之理。[[48]](#footnote-48)

Dao (Li) is how the chair is constructed (it has four legs cohering in a certain way to form a whole) and what can thus be done with it (people can sit on it). These are both obviously coherence: how the pieces fit together, and how it fits in with other entities, i.e., human desires to sit down. It is coherence as productive compossibility, i.e., it is possible for these pieces of wood to coexist with each other and with the world in such a way that the pieces of wood can be put together in this way so as to make possible another thing, the sitting down of a person. Of course this facilitates human flourishing, production and reproduction, and so on—a little piece of Ren, which is Impartial, which is the Copotentiality of all things. The greater coherence of the chair with the rest of the world—its use, the way it fits together with things which are not chairs nor what the chair depends on—is the direct content of the Li. Li is a double coherence, a second-order coherence necessarily also involving those among human desires that are themselves coherent with each other, i.e., “harmonious,” i.e., remaining expressive of the Center (humans are, after all, the finest and most sensitive Qi, the most balanced and complete representation of Li or Taiji in any concrete entity), an enabling of further coherences, a compossibility of planks of wood and the human desire to sit which together are productive of a new situation: humans sitting on chairs. These compossibilities precede the chair, and the chair depends on it, in the sense that no chair would occur without this compossibility. Simply to describe it as “coherence” arguably muddles the sense in which it might precede its concrete existence. But by redescribing this sort of coherence as Productive Compossibility and even Productive Copotentiality,[[49]](#footnote-49) we see immediately in what sense it is still the standard idea of coherence (internally and externally), but with the extra sense of its place in the total context of all existing and all future things, the role it is able to place among whatever already exists to help maximize the unity of things, the interconnection of things, the production and reproduction of things, the balance of things, the coexistence of maximal things, the maximization of functions, of life, of impartiality, of mutual non-numb sensitivity of one thing to another—in short the impartiality and oneness-in-manyness which is Ren, which is Li.

Ti/Yong in Zhu Xi

We can now see the specific role played by the more familiar *ti/yong* model in Zhu Xi’s thinking. In general metaphysics, for the Taiji and Yinyang relation, we have the radicalized Huayan *ti/yong* model of immanence and transcendence used but subordinated to the Tiantai Center/periphery model of immanence and transcendence. For moral psychology, we have an application of *tiyong* that is unique to Zhu Xi, and which we shall address below. But in the horizontal relations between one phenomenal thing and another, we have the *ti* role being played by whichever element is *productive* of the other, serving in that situation as the “carrier” of the Taiji or Li (Productive Copotentiality), i.e., as the agent triggering transition, reversal, production. Yin and Yang are mutually *ti* and *yong* to one another, roots of each other, reversibly so. On the first level of existent Qi-things, yin and yang are *ti* to each others’ *yong*. On the next level, *yin* is the *ti* and yang is the *yong* of any existent thing, and *both ti* and *yong, the reversible ti-ing and yong-ing of any two horizontal empirical elements,* are what are enabled by the Taiji. As Zhu Xi remarks, in his “diagrammic” commentary to the *Taijitu*, that the semi-circle to the left, yin within yang, the Li trigram, is “the motion of Yang, and that whereby the *yong* of [empty circle, the Wuji/Taiji] proceeds,” while the semi-circle to the right, yang within yin, the Kan trigram, is “the stillness of Yin, a that whereby the *ti* of [empty circly, the Wuji/Taiji] is established.”[[50]](#footnote-50) This suggests that we cannot unilaterally look at the Taiji as *ti* and motion and stillness as *yong*. The Taiji is the *benti* that enables the motion that produces Yang and the stillness that produces Yin, but neither mixed with them nor separated from them; it is an *aspect* of the yin-yang combination, the circle that is present in their center and brings them together, their enabling Copotentiality which is identical to each specific figure in the diagram but also identical to all the others, and itself beyond any single one of them. Thus the diagram well illustrates that “it is precisely the Yin-Yang, but pointing to their original substance.”[[51]](#footnote-51) What we are looking at is this same circle we see above, but now with the two trigram figures in it. This new figure can be looked at as an internal mitosis of the original figure, which still preserves the entire figure if we care to focus on that aspect: it is there as the circle circumscribing them and also as the circle in the middle. This is what “controls” *zai* 宰 their relation, the Center which is also brings them together inside itself, bringing them into relation so that they form a whole. We can view the whole as the center, or the center as the whole—and yet the center has a special function in bringing about the relation between the sides which makes them the whole, which governs their reversals, which defines their Productive Copotentiality.

It is the Productive Copotentiality of these two aspects is what is manifest on the phenomenal level as the *ti/yong* relationship—not just as *ti*, but as *ti* always functioning, and all functions having a *ti*, i.e., the inseparability of motion and rest. As in Tiantai, the *ti/yong* model on that Qi level is reversible—at the most abstract level (simple Yin and Yang), straightforwardly and symmetrically so, but at the “lower” levels of Qi interaction as well (moving further down the *Taijitu*), we find Zhu Xi very alert to and interested in aspect-related reversibilities of *ti* and *yong* on many levels, developed with considerable ingenuity. This complexity may be regarded as a result of the initial reversible *ti/yong* relation at the basic level of Qi existence, the Yin-Yang relation described in the second and third lines of the *Taijitushuo* and its exegesis, which give the basic nature of all Qi as reversibility of *ti* and *yong*.

So in the global sense we should be a bit wary of simply stating that Dao and things, or Li and Qi, stand straightforwardly in a *ti/yo*ng relationship for Zhu Xi, but it can be used freely and indeed as a supple indicator of the reversibility relationships of an ontology of universal production and reversal within a dynamically Centered whole. We may see this clearly by reconsidering Zhu Xi’s chair example cited above. Dao (Li) is how the chair is constructed (it has four legs cohering in a certain way to form a whole) and what can thus be done with it (people can sit on it) so that it is productive of a new situation which is itself productive of continued new situations. The Li here is not hidden or obscured; it is out in the open, operating as the obvious function of the chair and the way it is constructed. The Li is not in any way of a continuous substance with the Qi, it is another level of entity altogether, in no way exchangeable with Qi. The Li does not grow into Qi nor does it materially support it. The sense in which the chair is dependent on its Li to be a chair is not the sense in which a branch is dependent on its root to be a branch, nor the way in what an image in a mirror is dependent on the coextensive bright reflectivity of the mirror. In all these ways, the relation between the Li of the chair and the physical chair has little in common with a straightforward *ti/yong* relationship. Most of all, the greater coherence of the chair with the rest of the world—its use, the way it fits together with things which are not chairs nor what the chair depends on, so as to produce further situations—is the direct content of the Li, but not of the *ti* in a *ti/yong* relation. On the contrary, that would be part of the *yong*. So for physical things, we seem to always have a complex relation of *ti* and *yong* which stresses reversibility and internesting, where Li cannot be simply equated with *ti* in any unilateral way. The entire *ti/yong* structure in individual material things is rather a way of instantiating Li as Productive Copotentiality, where *ti* is the potentiality and *yong* is the production, but both are included in the Productive Copentiality which is Li.

Comparisons of Moral Psychology of Huayan, Tiantai and Zhu Xi

I said above that Zhu Xi’s case lies interestingly between Huayan and Tiantai. This is particularly evident in his doctrine of the *ti/yong* structure of the Nature and the emotions, constituting and unified in the mind. In Huayan and later in Chan, mind is indeterminate Li and *ti*, while all determinations of the perceived world are *shi* and *yong*, in the coextensive relationship of wetness and waves, or bright reflectivity and images. In Tiantai, both mind and world are *shi*, and each is directly reversibly the *ti* and *yong* of the other, with this reversibility being the manifestation of Li, the Center. While something similar to this Tiantai structure seems to inform Zhu Xi’s description of physical things like chairs and fans, as seen above (though mutatis mutandis, since the emphasis is now on production and reproduction as intrinsic value), Zhu’s moral psychology takes a somewhat different approach. There, mind is the controlling unifying totality (*tong* 統) of *ti* and *yong,* of the unmanifest Nature (*xing,* which is itself *li, taiji*性，理，太極) and the manifest emotions （*qing*情）—and even the “human desires” (*renyu*人慾*)* which are these same emotions when they have departed too far from the Mean (or Center). For Zhu Xi, the Nature is both Li and *ti*, and the emotions are both *shi* and *yong,* as in the Huayan and Chan cases. But as in Tiantai, this is still the relationship between two phenomena, in this case Qi-phenomena, two *shi*, rather than directly between Li itself (which just *is* mind in later Huayan and Chan—as later in Wang Yangming) and Qi. This is because for Zhu Xi the human mind is a unique kind of Qi-phenomenon, one that possesses a uniquely complete manifestation of the Taiji which is the Li of each thing, but which is here simply the Nature of mind, the Heaven-and-Earth nature manifesting through the Qi-endowment, present as the substance of mind, the everpresent but not specifically determinable Center before the emotions emerge (*weifazhizhong* 未發之中). The Nature as embodied in the human mind is both Li and Qi in a way that the emotions, its functions, are not because it completely reflects the centrality of the Center in the way they do not unless they are perfectly harmonious. Hence there can be no reversibility of the Tiantai kind between *ti* and *yong* here, in spite of the fact that mind and its activities are two phenomena rather than noumena and phenomena. In Tiantai, both mind and its activities (i.e., in this case, all possible and actual experienced worlds) are each both noumena and phenomena. In Zhu Xi, the mind is both Nature and emotions, with Nature as noumena/phenomenon and the emotions as just phenomena unless perfectly harmononious, in which case they can perfectly manifest Li while still being fully phenomenal. This is what makes Zhu Xi a robust moralist with a single moral program, while Tiantai writers employing a similar *ti/yong* structure are not, being rather radical pluralists in moral matters. Finally, different from both the Tiantai and the Zhu Xi models, in Huayan and Chan, and arguably in Wang Yangming as well, the mind is noumena and its activities qua the experienced world are phenomena, but always allowing that this can be redescribed to say mind includes its phenomena and hence is both, and its activities include mind, so they are also both—yet without ever eliminating the one-way dependence relationship we discussed in the section on Huayan in this chapter.

What Zhu Xi gets from Tiantai (or at least has in common with Tiantai) is reversible asness in the one-and-many structure of Li, denying that Li is simply one and *shi* are simply many. This allows both Zhu Xi and Tiantai to affirm the existence of multiple different Li that are nevertheless in some sense all one and the same Li. This goes hand in hand with the dyad-around-a-center model of what Li actually is. Each Li is every other Li as this Li, both one and many Li. In Huayan, properly speaking, there is only one Li, which is no Li at all: Emptiness, which is Mind (wetness, reflectivity). Also, as a result, we see the basis of Zhu’s notion of moral practice: investigation of things as increased clarity of any one Li is simultaneously the means to clarity about the “other” Li which are in a sense also the initial Li itself, manifest *as* these others, and with the Li of the mind which thus knows them, brings them together, actualizes their coherence, realizes their Productive Copotentiality. (We will return to this point in the intercultural comparative considerations at the very end of this paper.)

The work of moral transformation differs accordingly in the three traditions. In Huayan, it seems to me, the practice of contemplation is the realization of interpenetration itself, often simply as philosophical reflection on its various complex inter-nested vicissitudes, cultivated an expanded and fine-grained beatific vision of the implications of the simple idea of Li/*shi* coextensivity. The Huayan *ti/yong* model of the mind as the direct *ti* of all experiences would thus be well served by the Chan model of meditation, seen already in Shenhui and Zongmi, but constantly reiterated in Chan texts when they talk about meditation technique at all: “When a moment of experience arises, be aware of it. Once you are aware of it, it is nothing” (*nian qi ji jue, juezhi ji wu* 念起即覺，覺之即無). [[52]](#footnote-52) This is an artful handling of both the immanence and the transcendence involved in this conception. When any function of the mind arises, that is entirely the substance of mind—the Non-Dwelling nature, the reflectivity of the mirror, the wetness of the water. It is the Buddha-nature, awareness, itself; realizing this only requires remembering that all experience is awareness, and this is just being aware of experience as coming from awareness, and staying within awareness, so that the awareness never changes. This is done by not following the contents of the thought, but attending only to its quality of awareness: ignore the shape and color of the image, just notice that it is image qua image, which is to say, that it is always pure brightness. That is to make the wave go away, both literally (unelaborated, the karma is not fed to continue) and metaphysically (even just as it is, the image is now known entirely as brightness rather than image). In this way, no image is clung to, and thus even unwholesome images are soon stilled, since it is attachment that stirs them new images up. So by affirming even the unwholesome images as entirely Buddha-nature, one is freed of their influence immediately, and diminishes their future propensity to arise again.

The Tiantai method boils down to “contemplation of inherence,” (*guanju*觀具). That means noticing each thought that arises, not as a direct manifestation of the awareness that is the Buddha-nature, but as boundaried, finite, biased, deluded. This is also a kind of seeing finitude as finitude, image as image, but here this means attending to the way it is situated and defined by its relation to everything that it is not: what preceded it in time, what is outside it in the world, what contrasts to it qualitatively or conceptually. Then these boundaries are seen to be incoherent when closely examined, applying Nagarjunian dialectical reductions: they are seen to be incoherent, to be literally impossible. But though impossible, they are still appearing. This changes the nature of the object defined by these boundaries, the specific qualitative moment of experience. Now it is seen that it can only exist in this “miraculous, numinous” (*miao* 妙) way, as both inside and outside its boundaries, as the world positing itself as these boundaries. This means to see it as active and responsive everywhere, taking infinite forms, omnipresent and eternal. This is to see the whole *ti* of the Threethousandfold Devilnature (*et alia*) subsumed into but inalienably present in the Threethousandfold Buddhanature (*et alia*), compassionately acting as the Threethousandfold upayic functions, responding dyadically to the same Threethousandfold individual karmic situations (for their error is merely one-sidedness, bias, which means each is remedied by some diametrically opposed other bias: making them all simultaneously available to each other is thought to bring the remedial diametrical opposite to activate as function through a kind of dyadic elective affinity), the universe seeing and feeling itself in all possible ways. So here too, even an unwholesome experience is used as a vehicle of amelioration, but the process is quite different and the end result is quite different. The unwholesome quality itself is seen to be omnipresent; it is not only let go of but also expanded, relinquishing attachment to it makes it in a special sense all the more present, but this dual character of absence and omnipresence is precisely what makes it unconditional, both compassionate and nirvanic, and precisely making it so is the goal of practice.

For Zhu Xi, the Taiji is immanent in us as our Nature, the *ti* of the emotions which are its *yong,* both contained in and controlled by the mind, which thus always necessarily has contact with and access to both the good Nature (Equilibrium, Center, Copotentiality of all the emotions and of this totality of emotions with all things) and its sometimes not-so-good emotions. The Nature, though quiescent, is fully present in its emotional functions, “as a body uses an arm, as an arm uses a hand.”[[53]](#footnote-53) The mind is this bothness of body in arm, arm in hand—an asness relation. It is this bothness that allows it to be “master” of the emotions, to bring them into contact with the Center which, though manifest, serves as their proper boundary, their standard and measure, their *ji.*  As emotions arise from the unseen Center which is this nature in its quiescent state, that nature is filtered through the Qi-endowment. If that Qi-endowment is perfectly clear and balanced, they will emerge in perfect harmony, meaning they will rotate around the Center, like the motion of a pendulum: anger will not go so far as to be incapable of returning to the center and hence to joy, nor will joy swing so far in the other direction. At their extreme points (*ji* 極*)*, they reverse, and these extremes are precisely the standards (*ji* 極*)* that carry the nature (*taiji* 太極*)*. That virtual contact with the Center is what allows each of the emotions to be properly controlled, to be brought into harmony. If that Qi-endowment is not so clear or straight, then a lot of emotions will miss this measure, and become excessive agitations and desires, oriented not toward the unexpressed inner Center, the Equilibrium, but following along with external things. These external things are also Qi-endowments fully carrying their own immanent Li, which is itself also the entire Taiji; those Li and the Li which is the nature of the mind are neither one-nor-different: they are each the entire Taiji, but “playing its many different roles.”

This oneness-and-difference is crucial for Zhu Xi’s moral psychology: it is why external things can be a disturbance to my Li (that is, if I follow *only* the Taiji as *their* Li, letting it subsume or subordinate my nature to their Li, which are indeed that Li itself but *as* something quite different—a center, the Center, yes, but the center of different vortices, and necessarily ones that are less complete than the human one). That will make the emotions that arise from my nature lose their proper measure and harmony. But this oneness-and-difference is also what makes moral progress possible: if I can investigate those other Li, rather than following and subordinating myself to them, rather than thinking they in their one-sided form are the sole authoritative standard (even though in a certain sense they are in fact the entire standard itself), then I can join them into a coherence, see their productive compossibility with my own Nature, which encompasses all of them because it is the Taiji as manifest through the most balanced and clear type of Qi-endowment. To study them until they become coherent with my mind is thus to realize my own nature, and to subordinate them to that larger coherence, that more balanced and productive coherence, which is the Taiji in the form of human nature, as opposed to the Taiji in the form of any individual material thing or set of things.

This process is to be combined with introspecting on my own emergent impulses and finding the ways to makes these fragmentary, unbalanced bits and pieces cohere with each other and with the larger coherence of Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality as present in my own Nature. As Zhu Xi says

Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality (*tianli* 天理) is never in all the ages extinguished in any human being; no matter how it is covered over or confined, Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality is always constantly there just as ever, emerging from within selfish desire at every moment without cease—it is just that human beings are not aware of it. It is exactly like [fragments of] bright pearl or of a large shell mixed in together with sand and gravel, successively flashing forth here and there. Just recognize and gather these scattered pieces of the Network of all Copotentialities (*daoli* 道理) right where they appear, joining the fragments until they gradually become an integral whole. After your own good intentions grow and increase by the day and the month, Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality will naturally become pure and firm in you. What you formerly called selfish desires will naturally retreat and scatter, until finally they no longer sprout up at all.

蓋天理在人，恆萬古而不泯；任其如何蔽錮，而天理常自若，無時不自私意中發出，但人不自覺。正如明珠大貝，混雜沙礫中，零零星星逐時出來 。但只於這箇道理發見處，當下認取，簇合零星，漸成片段。到得自家好底意思日長月益，則天理自然純固；向之所謂私欲者，自然消靡退散，久之不復 萌動矣 。[[54]](#footnote-54)

Sprouts of the full Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality which are Truly Integrated (*cheng* 誠*)* as my human nature are continually arising, scattered among those bits that are already subordinate to other Centers. All I have to do is gather them together, make them cohere, by attending to them and the way they fit together, and they will come to subsume what were formerly the impulses subordinated to other Centers—for after all, those other centers are just more partial expressions of the Coherence that is more fully expressed as my own Nature, together forming a total network of Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality. So the difference of all Li is what makes things go wrong, and that these are all ultimately also the same Li is what makes moral progress possible.

The one-many asness relation of Li and Taiji is thus crucial to Zhu Xi’s solution to the problem of evil. The mind steps in with ways to retether them to that equilibrium, that unexpressed Center: remembering it is there, and nourishing it, gathering its scattered unharmonious bits and pieces back into compossible harmonies, with respectful attention (*jing* 敬) and True Integration (*cheng* 誠), with the investigation of things （*gewu*格物）, which finds the central principles, the compossibilities and copotentials, of all things, especially of sagely actions in the past, but also politics and nature. It also presumably finds the principles of unwholesome moral psychology itself, i.e., the centers that those excessive and inharmonious emotions and desires really do belong to, what makes them productively compossible (namely, the centers in things rather than the center in myself, their natures rather than my Nature, or rather my nature-as-their-natures rather than their-natures-as-my-nature), filling in enough dots to reach a sudden comprehension, where they all cohere with each other and with the Center which is one’s own nature, the Unexpressed Equilibrium, now seen as the Inherent Cosmic Productive Copotentiality of all things, Ren, generation and regeneration, true integration. Thereafter the harmonious connection to the Center becomes effortless. So here, although the Center is immanent in everything as its source and what makes it compossible, seeing this and how it expresses itself, even in evil things, is part of the necessary process of amelioration. Thus we see that for Huayan and for Tiantai and for Zhu Xi, there is a kind of inescapable immanence of the good in all things, and with it an omnipresent pre-existence of a kind. This is what they share. But this goodness and its manner of pre-existence are conceived differently and applied differently in each of the three cases.

Comparison More Generally

Let us compare Zhu Xi more closely to Huayan. As in Huayan, for Zhu Xi the entire Li is fully present in each *shi*. In Huayan, this Li is both transcendent and immanent: transcendent because it is the negation of all the determinate contents of the *shi*, immanent because it is coextensive with the *shi*, and enables its existence, and is expressed by it. Only an aspect shift is required to shift from referring to one to referring to the other. They are two senses which share the same referent, but the senses have a strict dependence relationship between them. All this is true for Zhu Xi as well. But the Li in Huayan is like the wetness of the water: it is genuinely identical, in its totality, in each thing. In Huayan there is only one Li, though it is a weird one: the absence of any determinate nature, which entails also the absence of any ability to obstruct or exclude any determinate nature. For Zhu Xi the same total Li is also different Li in each particular configurations of *Qi*: it is like the circles in the Taiji diagram. Each thing is a circle, and thus each is structured around a center which unites, and triggers the interactions of, its opposed parts, of its *ti* in its quiescent state and its *yong* as active state, and also among its various *yong*. But the circle has different contents in each case, has undergone genuine mitosis and development. It is a constancy of form into which many things can be put, rather than a specific content or contentlessness (the latter being also a kind of specific content). We may say that wetness too represents transcendence and immanence only as relationship and interconnection in Huayan, and this is all that is the same in each case. The Center in Zhu Xi is also transcendence and immanence only because it is interconnection, Copotentiality. But there are two differences. One, for Zhu Xi the immanence is manifested as *limit*: not as openness but as determinacy and rule and closedness. Two, and for that very reason, the interconnection in question is always dyadic. It is not just that the Taiji itself is itself in a sense dyadic, though it is: the statement *wuji er taiji* , “the most formless of all and yet the Supreme Ultimate Pivot of All,” is equivalent to the Huayan Emptiness as neither Emptiness nor Being, or simultaneous Emptiness and Being, the Exclusive Mean, which is the One Nature in Huayan. But that which it interconnects, the contents, are also always necessarily dyadic and dialectical, cohering precisely through their mutual limits rather than through their inherent limitlessness, through the normative restrictions of their Productive Copotentiality. This is not the case in Huayan.

However, something similar is in some sense the case in Tiantai, where not only the Three Truths but also the Ten Realms have an oppositional, dyadic, dialectical structure: the first three realms (purgatories, hungry ghosts, animals) are opposed by the next three (asuras, humans, gods), all of which are negated by the next two (“Hinayana” saints), which is negated by the next (bodhisattva), which is negated and included by the next (Buddhahood), and all this is, according to Zhanran, a “synonym” for the Three Truths, whose inner structure is precisely contrasting and identical opposites around a Center. Both Li and *shi* have this dyadically arranged, oppositional structure of mutual limitation and negation. In this structural feature, Zhu Xi shows a Tiantai resemblance. In a broad way, the other distinctive point also has some Tiantai resonances: for the immanence of the Three Truths as each phenomenal thing is also purely in the limits, the defining boundaries, of those things, making them present, thus Provisional, thus Empty, thus Central. But limit is not here conceived of in the sense of *standard*. On the contrary, limitation, and finite determination derived therefrom, is viewed simultaneously as suffering and as compassion, as the positing of determinations and limited views first as deluded karma and also compassionate upayic response to that suffering. Here the two views diverge.

Pre-existence and the Good in Cross-Cultural Perspective

“All things come from the Good” is a claim made, in some form, in certain strands of Western thought as well. But the Good in these three Chinese schools is in no case a crypto-theistic Good ala Plato’s description of *nous* as *arche* in the *Phaedo* or *Timeaus* or the Hebrew Bible’s *Genesis*, with someone arranging things according to a single conscious plan of what is best, on the model of human consciousness. The model is rather human coherence, *ren* 仁, generation and regeneration, spontaneity and effort combined, as unexpressed equilibrium, as impartiality, as mutual sensitivity of all parts, as the seed of all growth and generation, Productive Copotentiality. In all the Chinese cases, the basic solution to the problem of evil is one or another variation of the Guo Xiang solution: everything is good in its origin, in itself, in its innerness, in its own spontaneous activity. And yet almost everything is messed up. Why? Because of the *mutual interferences* of many things which are each themselves right. In Tiantai, two wrongs make a right (biases are mutual upayas to each other, restoring the Center); in Zhu Xi and in Huayan, however, *two rights make a wrong* (in Zhu Xi, two different manifestations of the whole Taiji interfere with one another, the mind lets itself be misled by its response to things, and that is the source of wrongness, although both are in their way right; in Huayan, two phenomena, each the entirely of Li, because Li must take infinite shapes, come into conflict, obstruct each other: two waves crash into each other). For both Zhu Xi and Huayan, the solution lies in seeing that these were all along right in a particular sense, and thus not in conflict after all. In the Huayan case, that means seeing the waves as water, and thus intermelding even if they seem to be crashing; they merely appeared to be conflicting, actually, because each is the total wetness, they are wetness hitting wetness. In Zhu Xi’s case, the less inclusive coherence of the thing must be made coherent with the more inclusive coherence of human nature, manifest in the mind, though investigation of things, and preserving and nourishing the nature. This is also a way of reclaiming their original rightness, but through subordinating them to the greater (more complete) coherence of the human over the non-human, subsuming the non-human Li into nature, seeing that they are one and the same Productive Copotentiality but that this is most comprehensively expressed as the Productive Copotentiality of the Human being rather than the Productive Copotentiality of the thing. It is as it should be that there is Qi, and that Qi is varied. That is in balance with there being Li itself, as the uppermost two levels of the *Taijitu* show. There being the Taiji, there must be its motion and rest, alternating and seeding each other, and producing all kinds of variations of things; so since there is Li (and Li is just what there is when everything is gone, “the least present of all), there must be Qi in Yin/Yang forms, and so on down the line. So when we say “Everything is Good” here, we must remember two crucial premises. First, the “everything”: to be an identifiable thing at all is to be an integration of diverse (dyadically opposed) parts, not a simple substance. It is a coherence, which means many of the elements of a good “thing” may not be good. (Think Hexegrams, Wang Bi and so on.) Second premise: Good is not *Phaedo* good, Anaxagoras good, *Timeaus* good, *Genesis* good, monotheism good. It is the statistical, integrated good of each whole qua whole. This is not a micromanaged conscious operation, it is a general detritus-scattering spin of the potter’s wheel. Moroever, none of these individual different forms, of whatever quality of Qi, can exist without being balanced and actualized by their inborn Taiji, their Li, their Productive Copotentiality (with other things, and the copotentiality of its own parts as coherence around a center, conceived usually dyadically). This is like the repeating circles in the *Taijitu*: the Five Phases, the individual things, all are circles, all are Taiji. But when the perfectly good Li hits the as-it-should-be Qi, a diffraction takes place, and the outputs no longer “accord” with their source. They come from it, but no longer resemble it. We may think here, in the Neo-Confucianism of the Northern Song, of Cheng Hao’s metaphor of pure water flowing into both pure and impure streams, or Zhang Zai’s vision of the palpable things, including the physicality that sometimes leads to imbalances, on the model of ice cubes forming from the pure water of the Great Vacuity. Qi is right, Li is right, but the filtering of Li through Qi is sometimes not right—i.e., not in accord with the Li at the origin (even with the Li of there being varying Qi), which is to say the Li of the whole, which is what is “continued” and “completed” (*jizhi* 繼之*, chengzhi* 成之) as the Li of human beings, the unexpressed Center (*weifa zhi zhong* 未發之中), Human Nature.

We now have a fairly straightforward way of understand how Zhu Xi might say both that there is in one sense a temporal priority between a given Li and its manifestation Qi and in another sense there is not. The so-called conceptual priority is an entirely different question; there, we have unambiguous priority in the sense that any Qi depends on its Li in a way that is in no wise reversible, in spite of their eternal temporal simultaneity. The case is the same as in the Huayan model: *shi* depends on Li, Li does not depend on Shi, as images depend on the light but not vice versa. But that is not a question of “before” and “after,” and I believe that when Zhu Xi prevaricates on this issue, he is talking purely about the temporal issue. We must treat these separately.

As for the asymmetrical vertical relation of dependence between Li and Qi, always referring not to Qi as a whole, but to a particular determinate manifestation of Qi, it is simply the relation between the Supreme Ultimate Pivot and Yin and Yang, which carry it as the reversal nodes of motion and stillness. (I hesitate to call this a simple “logical” or “conceptual” priority in the usual sense, though, because it is predicated on a very specific sort of holism, and it might be argued that conceptual priority presupposes an atomism at least of concepts: one concept simply *is not* another concept, they are mutually external to each other, so that when an inherence of one concept in another is discovered, which should really mean they are not actually two different concepts at all, it is instead described as the “conceptual priority” of one concept over the other.) Nor does it imply that Li is something “non-physical” in any robust sense. It is virtual, it is omnipresent, but it is continually stressed that it is not “some other thing.” Nor is it recognizable apart from the two extremes.

The Center is the compossibility, the Productive Copotentiality, of the two extremes. That is, the Center is what makes it possible for Yin and Yang to coexist. It is the fact that neither of them excludes the other, that the existence of one is not a threat to the other’s existence but rather a condition and result of the others’ existence. Possibility has slightly unusual properties within a strict holism, in a system that admits of no atomism, where there are no smallest units of which the world is composed, where wholes are not built up by assembling pre-existing parts. To speak of the presence of the Center in Yin is to speak of Yin’s compossibility with Yang. The same applies vice versa. In this sense we can say that the Center is everywhere. Yin is itself only possible because it is compossible, and the same is true for Yang. In a holism, to be possible is to be compossible, and all the diverse individual compossibilities of various things are the same universal compossibility of all the various things.

In the temporal sense, we can say that “this Li” literally precedes “this Qi” because Li is precisely compossibility. That means “this Li” is always already present before “this Qi” actually appears: it is present *as* “*that* Li”! That is, the compossibility of previous Qi manifestations is itself both one with and different from the compossibility of the subsequent Qi manifestation. For this is the relation of compossibilities, of Li: they are all one compossibility, and yet they are equally the specific different compossibilities of each individual things, both one and many, both the one Taiji and each Li as that Taiji in its entirety. There is an asness relation of one and many between Li; all Li are different, and yet all Li are one Li. Li is one, the roles it plays are many.

This Productive Copotentiality is identified with Ren 仁 which is the Coherence of oneself with all things, and simultaneously the Coherence of Benevolence with all the other virtues which express and develop it, even when they are apparently opposite to it, like Justice and Wisdom. The relation is like that between Spring and the other seasons: in one sense summer, autumn and winter are just further developments of spring, the impulse of growth, itself, flourishing, dying, going dormant and being reborn. This is again the pendulum flow. What all of these together make up when properly balanced and coexisting around the Center is Life, Integration, effortless and unceasing generation and regeneration.

This is everywhere, at the root of all generation. It is why things are so, and also how things should be. It is why there is Qi, and also how it should be. There has always been Qi and always will be Qi, even when heaven and earth disappear. There has always been Li and always will be Li, even when heaven and earth disappear. But Li has a certain priority, in that it is why and how Qi exists, *and* the temporally priorly existing why and how any particular concrete Qi thing exists. In any individual case, any concrete thing (including heaven and earth), there is *that* Li before there is *that* thing. Before any particular thing appears, the Productive Copotentiality of it is already there. Where? In everything else, precisely because it is a copotentiality with those already existing things. This is the relation between Li and Qi: not a *ti/yong* relation, but a compossibility/actuality relation, conceived on an axis/extreme model.

Finally we should stress that Cheng Yi’s breakthrough notion that “Productive Compossibility is one but the roles it plays are many.”　理一分殊 offers a unique solution to the pre-existence problem that distinguishes it from Platonic pre-existence, as well as from “conceptual” priority. Pre-existence of compossibility of X, even temporally, is not the same as eternal existence of all the Forms prior to the demiurgic formation of the world. In the Platonic case, and even in the derivative but modified Aristotlian case, each Form is a separate entity, a hypostatization precisely of a definition, i.e., of a way of distinguishing one entity from another. It is true that they all somehow depend on the form of the Good, which suggests that though they are many, they are in some other sense one, just as the instantiations of any form are many but, in the sense in which they are all instantiations of the same Form, are also one (as in the divided line parable in the *Republic*). But the speculation that a soul freed of a body could know the Forms more clearly could not occur in Zhu Xi, for there are no such minds. Li are therefore not the kinds of things that are knowable by such minds, and this tells us how they differ from Platonic Forms. Their pre-existence is always in Qi, which is as eternal as Li. The pre-existence of the compossibility (Li) of X, which is the nature of X, resides in the pre-existing nature already actual in Y. It does not require another realm of being that has any existence, accessible to any mind, prior to all Qi. If Y does not yet exist, that same compossibility exists as the nature of Z. Z might be entirely formless Qi in a period before or after the presently existing heaven and earth, in which case the compossibility of X will exist only as the uninflected Wuji/Taiji. But the two are in that case still coexisting, even though any given Li always precedes, even in time, its actualization.

In the case of Aristotle too, where matter is pure potentiality, and hence never knowable as such, being nothing in particular, we have form as actuality and as formal cause, coinciding with final and motive causes, resulting in pure individuation of the actuality. So the process of actualization always involves a progression from no identity to exactly one identity, excluding all others. The more perfect a thing is, the more it has actualized just this one form and no others. Form individuates, and even when it is still acting only as not fully realized formal cause, as a thing is growing from potential to actual, it is a force of separation and bordering, of articulation. The one-many asness structure of 理一分殊，form as coherence, Li as coherence of coherences, as compossibility, is entirely lacking. Potential here is not Copotential. For this reason, the Form of Forms, the Actuality of Actualities, God, has to be introduced to reunite them—but the forms are then united only externally: they are still ultimately different from one another, and different from the uniting God.

For Zhu Xi, Li as Productive Compossibility is thus already at once one and many, manifested in Qi as an actual entity that is more perfect as it is more “one body with all things,” i.e., actualizes the coherence with all other Lis, with the Taiji, and as its one is more fully also all the many, all the others, with which it is compossible, and whose compossibility is seen to be the same as its own compossibility. The more one thing is articulated in its determinate Li, as both that by which it is so and how it should be, the more all other Li are also articulated as coherent with it, as its own Productive Copotentiality.[[55]](#footnote-55)

1. T45.674a-b. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The same model is applied forcefully at the purely individual psychic level not only in Huayan itself but in early Southern Chan, which closely follows Huayan here. For example, this model is front and center in the claim attributed to Huineng in the *Platform Sutra*: “Suchness is the *ti* of thoughts, thoughts are the *yong* of Suchness.” (*zhenru shi nianzhiti, nian shi zhenruzhiyong* 真如是念之體。念是真如之用 T48.0338). This still stands as the premise of the further development of Southern Chan, which dumps *ti* altogether, inasmuch as it is phenomenologically unavailable, and collapses *ti* into *yong*. In the Huineng model, *ti* is wholly present in *yong*; in the later model (in works attributed to Huihai, Mazu, Huangbo, Linji, etc.), *ti* is wholly present *only* in *yong,* in each *yong,* and has no other form of existence, such that any specific idea of *ti* as opposed to *yong,* any fixed Ti, any role at all for *ti* within any theoretical account, drops out of discussion entirely. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Zhanran, *Shibuermen,* T46.703a. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Zhu Xi says, “Only mind has no opposite,” and “Mind combines the nature and the emotions”—even the Cheng brothers have no statement as insightful as these two dicta [of Zhang Zai’s].” 「惟心無對」。「心統性情」。二程却無一句似此切。Zhuziyulei….p. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “If we focus upon the fact that the [Track of the True Nature, which is Center] is neither moving nor emerging, then we can say [the substance of the One Vehicle] neither travels nor fails to travel. But if we focus on the fact that [the two peripheral extremes of] the Track of Contemplation and Reflection [which is *kong,* Emptiness] and the Track of Dependent Completion [which is *jia,* Provisional Positing] can move and emerge, then it is called traveling. But [since the Center is inseprabale from and ultimately identical to the two extremes,] precisely the motion and emerging is non-moving and non-emerging, and precisely the non-moving and non-emerging is moving and emerging. Precisely the function is what we mean when we talk about the *ti [*of the One Vehicle], so the motion and emergence are neither moving nor emerging. Precisely the *ti* is what is described as the function (*yong),* so the non-emergence and non-motion is emerging and moving. It’s just that the *ti* and *yong* are not two and yet two.” 若取真性不動不出。則非運非不運。若取觀照資成能動能出。則名為運。秖動出即不動出。即不動出是動出。即用而論體。動出是不動出。即體而論用。即不動出是動出。體用不二而二耳。T33.742c. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Zhuzi wenji, p. 274: “I formerly regarded the Supreme Ultimate Pivot (*taiji* ) as the *ti* and motion and stillness as its *yong,* but this way of putting the matter is definitely defective. Later I changed it to say, ‘The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is the original wondrousness, while motion and stillness are the mechanism it rides.” This gets close to covering it. Your recent communication raises doubts about the use of *ti yong,* and quite rightly, but the reasons for your doubts seem to be different from those that led me to change the passage. Speaking generally, The Supreme Ultimate Pivot contains both motion and stillness, and thus in this sense can be spoken of as their original body (*benti*). It is thus permissible to say that the Supreme Ultimate Pivot has both motion and stillness, speaking in terms of its flowing forth. But if you say that the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is itself motion or stillness, you make what is above form and what is below form indistinguishable, which renders the claim that ‘the Changes have the Supreme Ultimate Pivot” superfluous.”

   熹向以太極爲體動静爲用其言固有病後巳改之曰太極者本然之妙也動静者所乘之機也此則庶幾近之來喻疑於體用之云甚當但所以疑之之說則與熹之所以改之之意又若不相似然蓋謂太極含動静則可以本體而言也謂太極有動静則可以流行而言也若謂太極便是動静則是形而上下者不可分而易有太極之言亦贅矣. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Fazang, 華嚴一乘教義分齊章卷第四, T45.499b. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Seng Zhao, 般若無知論， T45.154b. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It is notably lacking in Tiantai until Zhanran adopts it from Huayan usages, and even then uses it quite sparingly; Zhiyi usually employs the much more intricate and convoluted categories of *ben* 本and *ji* 跡*,* with *ti and yong* appearing only as two of the five categories used in *xuanyi* 玄義commentaries to various sutra, i.e., *ming, ti, zong, yong , jiao* 名體宗用教—explanation of the name of the sutra, its “essence” (ti), its main source, its function, and its place in the classification of teachings. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Already in Wang Bi, *Daodejingzhu*, 38. But there this is a final trope in a much more complex exegesis involving a distinction between the verbal “use” of Non-Being as in *Daodejing* 11 and the “embodiment” of Non-Being taken as the pinnacle of sagehood, exemplified by Confucius and described in the first line of Chapter 38 of *Daodejing*, “The highest Virtue does not have Virtue,” (*shangdebude* 上德不德*)* which Wang interprets to mean that, unlike the “use” (*yong*) of Non-Being described in Ch. 11, those who “embody” it like Confucius do not know or speak of it, do not utilize it at all. This is then assimilated to the root/branch plant model and the Mother/Sons metaphor of *Daodejing* 52. The mutual exclusivity of the contents of *ti* and *yong* is here initially derived from a contrast between praxis and theory, or embodiment and objectification. Wang rather brilliantly brings this into the orbit of the more traditional root and branch metaphor, a commonplace of pre-Qin writings stressing proper sequence, prioritization and one-way dependence, in a way that stresses the one/many aspect and the negation aspect. So we may regard this whole cluster of ideas brought together into the classic *ti/yong* model to be Wang’s work. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In Wang Bi’s case, also as subjective realization in practice as opposed to objectification in theory; the case is modeled on his Confucius as one who has “embodied” Non-being and therefore does not speak of it, as opposed to the Daoists who merely “use” (*yong*) it and therefore always speak of it. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The kind of continuity, and even the weak but non-negligible sense of identity, that pertain to the living connection of root and branches as the *ti* and the *yong* in the classical (pre-Huayan) *ti/yong* model can be understood from Cheng Yi’s famous metaphors of a tree and its comparison to a system of roads. I use this only as a heuristic here, since of course this comes long after the advent of the Huayan model historically, and Cheng does not explicitly use the *ti/yong* language in this passage. In a famously difficult passage quoted by Zhu Xi and Lu Zuxian in the *Jinsilu,* Cheng Yi says, “Though in a state of total desolate emptiness, all the images of all things are already present. The [quiescent] state before responsive activation is not really earlier, the [determinate] state after responsive activation is not really later. It is like a hundred foot tall tree, all one continuity from root and trunk to branches and leaves. You cannot say that the formless and indeterminate [lower part—the non-articulated trunk and root] must await someone to bring back to it and arrange into it the [diverse] things on the top part [i.e., the branches and leaves]. When something is made to enter into a network of roads and tracks, since they are after all roads and tracks, it is all one road-track.” 沖漠無朕，萬象森然已具，未應不是先，已應不是後。如百尺之木，自根本 至枝葉，皆是一貫，不可道上面一段事，無形無兆，卻待人鏇安排引入來. 教入途 轍。既是途轍，卻隻是一個途轍。(Zhu Xi and Lu Zuqian*, Jinsilu*, Zhang Boxing compiler, (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1996), p. 19. ) Here, although one part is leafy and other is not, and they are spatially separated and non-coextensive, both are parts of an inseparable *living* whole, and thus in a certain sense we can say that the root and the branches are “the same thing,” as we might say “this is the same road as the one beginning in Minnesota” while standing in Louisiana and pointing to a section of Highway 61. The reason given for this in the Cheng Yi passage is *indivisible continuity of growth and life and activity*, as illustrated in the images of the tree and the system of roads. The idea seems to be simply that the root and the branches are not two different things, so if the branches are multiple and the leaves are leafy, I can legitimately point to the root and say, “*This, this thing right here,* is multiple, is leafy.” I should not regard the multiplicity and leafiness as something that has to be deliberately arranged or added externally to the singularity and leaflessness of the root and trunk: they are the root and trunk themselves, they are what the root and trunk themselves are doing. The leaves are not supplements or additions to the root: rather, what you call the leaves is just a partial designation for what is really root-trunk-branches-leaves, and root is equally merely a partial designation for the selfsame root-trunk-branches-leaves. Similarly, if I am on a road, since the nature of a road is to open one point in space to another, to be a way of moving from one to another, I shouldn’t call one of the places I reach one road and another place I reach thereby a whole different road; the various parts of the road, as interconnected aspects of a single enabler of journey to all its points, are all one indivisible whole. So if one part of the road is painted red, I should be able to point to another, non-red, part of the road, and say, “This thing right here has redness painted on it.” (See Zhou Xiaoping’s short film, “Hi, I’m China” (<http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5NjcxNzkxNA==&mid=204615016&idx=1&sn=a2c3183fc31d388385a173a31725a0b2&scene=2&from=timeline&isappinstalled=0#rd>) The English says, “This is China’s road; this is also China’s road…” Not “This is a road in China; this is another road in China.” See the effect of removing tense and articles and number from a language!) In this metaphor, which lays bares some of the structural features of the classical *ti/yong* model (although the terms are not explicitly used), the implication is that the nature of the whole in question is what allows for the claim of intensified identity between the two opposite aspects: if it were a genuinely static object, it could perhaps be legitimately divided into parts with separable characteristics of their own. But since a road is only a road if its parts are unseparated, and a living being is only a living being is its parts are unseparated, its parts cannot be considered separate entities at all; as separated, they are no longer the same things as they are when they are parts of this kind of whole. The integration of parts pertains to the essence of all characteristics of each part, and thus what appears to be true of any part is really only true of the whole, the sole real entity which can serve as a referent or possessor of qualities here, which means that in one sense what is true of any part is equally true of every other part. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See my *Beyond Oneness and Difference,* pp, 137-157. In the earliest usages, in Wang Bi’s commentary to *Daodejing* 38 for example, when the trope is just taking shape on the basis of a contrast to the usage of *yong* in *Daodejing* 11, the sharp sense of contrast between *ti* and *yong,* evident in items 3, 4, 5 and 6 above (ti as one, hidden, central, quiescent, as opposed to *yong* as many, visible, peripheral, active) is strongly emphasized, along with the sense of continuity evident in items 1 and 2 (causal basis and inseparability). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. T46.710a. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. T46.712c. The rest of the passage makes it clear why this is important for Tiantai notions of intersubjective *ganying* between Buddhas and sentient beings, between delusion and enlightenment, and thus for the entire soteriological project: 次明若生若佛各自遍融。又此性體非謂一性，蓋三千性也。以佛具三千方攝心生，生具三千方融心佛。心具三千，豈隔生佛？若心無佛性，豈能攝佛？佛無生性，何能攝生？故性體無殊之語有誰不知，一切咸遍之言須思深致。他解唯論融外歸內名不二者，一何局哉！一切咸遍，如何銷之？況餘九門皆歸一邊，全傷大體。”Everyone knows that ‘all things have no difference in terms of their nature,’ but the following line, that each of them therefore pervades all places, requires deep thought. If we just call all the external (matter) being absorbed into the internal (mind) ‘non-dual,’ [as the Shanwai exegetes do], how limited it is! How then do they interpret the sentence, ‘all things pervade all places’? Not to mention the way they make everything reducible to one side [of each pair of opposites] in each of the remaining nine gates, completely ruining the overall structure of argument....” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Compare to Fazang’s usage Zhiyi’s usage of the mirror metaphor in *Mohezhiguan*: “We should understand that each moment of experience is precisely emptiness, precisely provisional positing, precisely the Center. It is at once ultimate emptiness, the storehouse of the Tathagata [provisional positing of determinate multiplicity], and the ultimate reality [the Center]. These are not three though three, three though not three, not united or separated and yet united and separated, not non-united and not non-separated, not to be described as the same or different and yet both same and different. It is like a bright mirror: the brightness is Emptiness, the images are Provisional Positing, the Mirror is the Center. These are neither one nor distinct, and yet both their unity and their distinction are clearly present. They are not one, not two, not there, and yet they do not exclude oneness, twoness, threeness.” 當知一念即空即假即中。並畢竟空。並如來藏。並實相。非三而三三而不三。非合非散而合而散。非非合非非散。不可一異而一異。譬如明鏡。明喻即空。像喻即假。鏡喻即中。不合不散合散宛然。不一二三二三無妨。T46.9a. The focus is on the ambiguity of the image, rather than the paradoxical qualities of the brightness. I can always point to any image in the mirror and say, “This is formless light,” or “this is a particular formed image” or “this is mirroring—the last being the constant copresence of formless light and the specific formed image, the paradoxical Center *in addition to* the two extremes. The point is the ambiguity among these three views, their constant synonymity and their constant difference. (My interpretation, stressing the simultaneity of the image and the light, follows that of Keguan in his *Shanjia yiyuan,* X57.0956.76c.)

    [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. T39.90c. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 1） in that considered as Li, the Center as the Three Truths, implying omnipresence and unconditionality, it inherently includes what is not itself; 2） in that past karma as intentionality produces present and future effects, as well as enabling present on present effects, and 3） in that Buddhas and bodhisattvas produce upayic lures that the minds of sentient beings reproduce in their own experience。 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Zhanran, T46.293a. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Peter Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (), pp. xx. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Zhanran, *Zhiguan yili,* T46.451c. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. T34.936c. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Many apologies to newcomers to Tiantai for this confusing terminology! For when Zhanran ways “as Li,” here, he actually means precisely as *shi*!!!! Li here means “when their interpervasion and eternity and so on is merely potential, the first of Zhiyi’s “six identities” (六即) , namely,（理即）: that is, the ordinary experience of sentient beings. Zhanran knows this is amusingly reversible. Hence he dwells on it in the *Jingangpi:* 。應知眾生但理諸佛得事。眾生但事諸佛證理：”You must understand that sentient being have only [their Buddhahood, etc.] Li, whereas the Buddhas put it into practice in actual here-now experiences; and conversely sentient beings have only here-now experiences, while the Buddhas realize [all of these] as Li.”! He means Li here in the first sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. T46.703c. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. T46.715b. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 眾生三千諸佛三千同一祕藏是故一一皆具三諦。此等法門同居一念。T34.912c. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. T46.54a. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Zhanran, *Shibu’ermen*十不二門 (Ten Gateways of Non-duality), T46.703a. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. As Zhili explains this passage: “The first *xin* refers to any random moment of experience. The *zhi* is a grammatical auxiliary. *Sexing* refers to the Three Thousand as Properties of the Nature. The Integrated Teaching understands that the Nature, not being Principle-Only, is the Nature as Entailing the Three Thousand. This Nature perfectly intermelds, pervading and entering all that coexists in this moment of experience. This “mind as all minds and all matters” means that precisely this moment of experience alone is all three thousand minds and matters, like the ‘eight characteristics’ of an object so that there is no before or after, just as is described in the passage on the mind’s entailment of the Three Thousand in the *Mohezhiguan.*  Each and every one of these three thousand mental events and material things is eternally unchangeable, and that is why they are called the Nature. This sentence describes the whole and the parts with respect of Ultimate Principle: the originally entailed Three Thousand are the parts, while the one moment of experience is the whole. It is because the Three Thousand are just one Nature that any one moment of experience can serve as the whole that includes them all. The next line, ‘so even as it goes through the transformation of states [which are the experiencing of its experiences of putatively external objects], these are just the mind itself,’ refers to the above-mentioned moment of experience that is comprised of and entails the Three Thousand in its process of following pure or defiled conditions, transforming but not transforming, creating various states but not thereby creating anything anew, thereby able to become any of those Three Thousand events or characteristics as they exist in temporal phenomenal reality. Although the term ‘transformation’ is used in both the Integrated and the Separated Teachings, and the term ‘creation’ is used in all four teachings, their usage here such that precisely the entailing mind is itself its transformations and this transformation is all that is meant by creation is possible only in the Integrated Teaching, not in the other three teachings. These two lines describe the whole and the parts within phenomenal reality: the transforming and created Three Thousand are the parts, the one moment of experience is the whole. This is also because the Three Thousand are one Nature and thus can all reduce to any given moment of experience. ‘The experienced temporal *yong* [Three Thousand] are just the *ti* [Three Thousand] itself’ indicates that in the above described transformation and creation of all dharmas, it is the entire *ti* that gives rise to each *yong.* The previous mentioned moment of experience entails all the mental and material things, and transforms into and creates them according to conditions, all the mental and material things within phenomenal reality have the Three Thousand as the are within the Nature as their *ti,* with the Three Thousand as they are when arising within phenomenal reality as their *yong.* Thus the entire Principle-*ti* gives rise to each phenomenal *yong.* Only thus do we see the meaning of ‘following conditions’ in the Integrated Teaching.”

    初言心者，趣舉剎那也。之者，語助也。色心者，性德三千也。圓家明性既非但理，乃具三千之性也，此性圓融遍入同居剎那心中，此心之色心乃秖心是三千色心，如物之八相更無前後，即同《止觀》心具之義，亦向心性之義。三千色心一不可改，故名為性，此一句約理明總別，本具三千為別，剎那一念為總，以三千同一性故，故總在一念也。即心名變等者，即上具三千之心，隨染淨緣不變而變、非造而造，能成修中三千事相，變雖兼別、造雖通四，今即具心名變、此變名造，則唯屬圓不通三教。此二句則事中總別，變造三千為別，剎那一念為總，亦以三千同一性故，故咸趣一念也。造謂體用者，指上變造即全體起用，故因前心具色心隨緣變造，修中色心乃以性中三千為體，修起三千為用，則全理體起於事用，方是圓教隨緣之義。T46.0710b. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “The previous parts spoke of all phenomena as not losing their own character as the parts; now we show how they all together reduce to any one moment of experience as the whole comprised of them. They are always themselves without losing their own character, and yet also always together reduced to any one moment of experience. All dharmas as inherently entailed in the Nature are such that the whole and part are completely encompassing of each other, and the same is true of all phenomena as conditionally arising. It does not mean that the phenomenal events are the parts and the Principle is the whole. You should also know that both as events and as principles, it is a phenomenal moment of experience which serves as the whole, since sentient beings exist within phenomena and have not yet awakened to Principle, and thus use this to manifest the wondrous principles in accordance with the deluded aggregate of mind.”

    前約諸法不失自體為別，今明諸法同趣剎那為總，終日不失終日同趣，性具諸法總別相收，緣起諸法總別亦爾，非謂約事論別、以理為總。又復應知，若事若理，皆以事中一念為總，以眾生在事未悟理故，以依陰心顯妙理故。T46.708c. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, in Eight Volumes. Li Jingde 黎靖德, compiler. Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, third edition, 1973, p. 22a (juan 1, p. 3a). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., p. 22a-b (juan 1, pp. 3-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. “Q: There must be a certain Li for there to be a certain sort of Qi, but it seems like this does not allow for a separation of before and after. A: The main point is that Li must be prior. But that doesn’t mean we can say today there is a certain Li and tomorrow we finally get the corresponding sort of Qi. But there still has to be a kind of priority between them. If for some reason heaven and earth with all their mountains and rivers were to disappear, there would still after all be their Li here.”

    　問：「有是理便有是氣，似不可分先後？」曰：「要之，也先有理。只不可說是今日有是理，明日却有是氣；也須有先後。且如萬一山河大地都陷了，畢竟理却只在這裏。」

    Xu asked, “Before heaven and earth have divided, do all the different things of the subaltern world already exist?” A: It’s just that there is the Li of all of them already. For heaven and earth may be producing things for hundreds of thousands of years, but in all times it’s just these particular things and no others.”

    　　徐問：「天地未判時，下面許多都已有否？」曰：「只是都有此理，天地生物千萬年，古今只不離許多物。」

    Yulei, p. 52.

    Cf. “At the beginning of heaven and earth, when all was mixed in primal chaos and undivided, I think there was nothing but the two elements fire and water. The dregs of the water became the earth. For even now we can climb up to the high places and see that the mountains are in the shape of the waves like all kinds of water. We just don’t know when they coagulated. At first they were most soft, and only later became hardened.” Q: I wonder if it might be as waves arise and stir up sand? A: Yes. The most turgid part of the water became the earth, while the clearest part of the fire became the wind and thunder and lightning and the sun and stars and the like…” There is still clearly Qi around before heaven and earth are divided.

    「天地始初混沌未分時，想只有水火二者。水之滓脚便成地。今登高而望，羣山皆為波浪之狀，便是水泛如此。只不知因甚麼時凝了。初間極軟，後來方凝得硬。」問：「想得如潮水湧起沙相似？」曰：「然。水之極濁便成地，火之極清便成風霆雷電日星之屬。P. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See for example Zhuziyu lei, pp. 1286-1304. See especially p. 1301, where Zhu Xi is asked about the claim that Taixu, the Great Vacuity, is Qi. Zhu Xi had already stated that really this should be identical to the Wuji of Zhou Dunyi, and thus is really Li, not Qi. But what he says is, “他亦指理，” which I take to mean that, although this is Qi, it is *also* Li in its unexpressed state, or as present in that vacuous state of Qi before heaven and earth take shape. That is, Qi and Li are *always* together, and “the Great Vacuity” refers to the state of *both* in the Qi which is completely vacuous, before heaven and earth are divided, before there are any determinate things at all. Zhu Xi is quite critical of Zhang in these pages, especially on p. XXX?: “When Zhang Zai says the Great Vacuity is precisely Qi, he is referring to Li as the Vacuity; that seems not to be taking it as something in the realm of form.” Zhu Xi said, “Even if he is referring to the Vacuity as Li, how can he cram it together with Qi in one place?” 「橫渠云『太虛即氣』，乃是指理為虛，似非形而下。」曰：「縱指理為虛，亦如何夾氣作一處？」This *could* be read as saying Zhang should not have considered Li and Qi mixed together in one when speaking of the Great Vacuity as Qi, and I think this mixing is just what Zhu objects to—*not* because they are not in fact mixed and always copresent, but because Zhang mixes up his categories when he speaks in this way of Taixu as Qi, thereby directly equating Li and Qi. This is Zhu’s objection to Zhang. But Zhang’s idea that Qi is something to which a straightforward “being” or “non-being” is inapplicable is never anywhere questioned by Zhu Xi, which I think he would have to if he thought this was possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. |  |
    | --- |
    | If so, being faithful to Confucius’ dictum: 知之為知之，不知為不知，是知也: |

    “To regard what you know as what you know and what you don’t know as what you don’t know—that is knowledge.” *Analects* 2:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. E.g., “When we speak of the Nature of Heaven and Earth, we are speaking exclusively with reference to Li. When we speak of the Qi-constitution Nature, we are speaking of the same thing but with regard to Li and Qi mixed together. Before this is this Qi[-consitution] there is already this Nature. When [this[ Qi-[constitution] ceases to exist, the Nature will constantly be there.” 論天地之性，則專指理言；論氣質之性，則以理與氣雜而言之。未有此氣，已有此性。氣有不存，而性却常在。 Zhuzi yulei, p. 84, and passim. “Qi” in the last phrase really means the “this qi” 此氣 of the previous phrase. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Quoted already above in the Introduction to this chapter: ““I formerly regarded the Supreme Ultimate Pivot (*taiji* ) as the *ti* and motion and stillness as its *yong,* but this way of putting the matter is definitely defective.” 熹向以太極爲體動静爲用其言固有病後巳改之曰太極者本然之妙也動静者所乘之機也此則庶幾近之. Zhuziwenji…. See also Whalen Lai, “How the Principle Rides on the Ether: Chu Hsi ‘s Non-Buddhistic Resolution of Nature and Emotion,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 11 (1): 31-65 (1984), which deserves great credit for singling out this “turn” as key to understanding Zhu Xi’s thought. I follow Lai in this, although I agree with few of his further conclusions. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Miao* is a word with that literally means “minute, hard to see,” but is already used for the unmanifest and unnamed aspect of Dao in the first chapter of the *Daodejing,* and picked up in the *Yi* “Xicizhuan,” as a demythologizing replacement word for *shen* 神*,* the pre-philosophical notion of “spirit”: “Spirit is just a word devised to speak of the numinousness of all things.” 神也者妙萬物而為言也。 We should perhaps then also think here of all the other remarks about *shen* in the “Xicizhuan”: it is what arrives without traveling, accomplishes without working, what shows no sign of the process yet does the job “miraculously.” It is also “the unfathomableness of yin and yang” (or “what is not fathomable in terms of yin and yang”): all of these point to what is no palpable or formed, what is beyond dichotomous thinking, and yet what is most powerful and efficacious. We should think here also of Zhou Dunyi’s own cryptic remark: “What moves without being still and is still without moving is things. What moves without moving and is still without being still is spirit.” The latter applies quite neatly to the Supreme Ultimate Pivot and its relation to yin and yang as stillness and motion, whether on Zhou’s own interpretation (where the Axis is perhaps itself moving and still) or on Zhu Xi’s reading (where it is not). We might also note the significance of the term *miao* in Tiantai—the greater part of its main theoretical work, Zhiyi’s *Miaofalianhuajingxuanyi,* is several hundred pages of exegesis of this one character. Its basic definition there fits right into this discussion. It means “what cannot be conceived.” *Bukesiyi.* Things are the dyadic, the divided: the numinousness is what is at the same time one thing and another, inherently paradoxical, beyond sensory apprehension but also beyond determination as one thing or another, as either of any two opposites. It is, of course, the Center between them, enabling and uniting and relating them. See for example the explanation given by Zhu Xi’s student Cai Jiyong: “The master’s *Taijitujie* says, ‘motion and stillness are the triggers that carry it.” Cai Jitong was very intelligent,and could see what was meant there, and said, ‘This phrase is where the master is at his most precise and insightful. For it basically means that while the Supreme Ultimate Pivot is Li, and is above form, and Yin and Yang are Qi, and thus below form, although Li has no form of its own, the Qi reveals these specific traces of it. Since the Qi has motion and rest, how could the Li it carries be said to be devoid of motion and rest!’ He also quoted the “Motion and Rest Chapter” of Zhou Dunyi’s *Tongshu* in this connection: ‘What moves without being still or is still without moving is a *thing.* What moves without moving and is still without being still is *spirit* (*shen).* To move without moving or be still without being still is not to be devoid of motion and rest. Things are obstructed, but “spirit is the numinousness of all things.”’ Motion and stillness are the triggers that carry it!” 「先生《太極圖解》云：『動靜者，所乘之機也。』蔡季通聰明，看得這般處出，謂先生下此語最精。蓋太極是理，形而上者；陰陽是氣，形而下者。然理無形，而氣却有迹。氣既有動靜，則所載之理亦安得謂之無動靜！」又舉《通書．動靜篇》云：「『動而無靜，靜而無動，物也；動而無動，靜而無靜，神也。動而無動，靜而無靜，非不動不靜也。物則不通，神妙萬物。』動靜者，所乘之機也。Yulei, p. 1775. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Whalen Lai, *op. cit..*. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Zhuzi yulei, pp. 1289-90: “Someone asked about Zhang Zai’s dicturm, “Because of the Oneness, it is spiritual.’ Zhu Xi said, ‘Oneness means a single principle of Li, but it has its two ends, and thus it functions in different ways. It is like the Yin and the Yang: within Yin there is Yang and within Yang there is Yin, so when each reaches its extreme it produces the other, and this is why they can spiritually transform infinitely.”

    或問「一故神」。曰：「一是一箇道理，却有兩端，用處不同。譬如陰陽：陰中有陽，陽中有陰；陽極生陰，陰極生陽，所以神化無窮。」

    Q: What is meant by “Because of the Oneness, it is spiritual”? A: Zhang Zai put it extremely well here; you must read this very attentively and carefully. …Zhang Zai himself added a commentary to this line, saying ‘Because twoness is present in it, it is unfathomable.’ It is just this one thing, and yet it proceeds everywhere amongst all things and events—for example, Yin and Yang, contraction and expansion, coming and going, rising and falling, even in all the hundreds and thousands of different events, none are not just this one thing. This is what he means by saying “Because twoness is present in it, it is unfathomable.” For “Because of the twoness, it transforms,” he adds the comment, ‘Pushing forth the activity in the One.’ Nothing in the world that is solitary can transform; it is only twoness that can produce change. For example, only when there is one Yin and one Yang can the ten thousand things be produced through transformation. But although these are two things, the essence of them is how they push the activity through this Oneness between them. This explanation is extremely insightful, you must read it very carefully.”

    　　問「一故神」。曰：「橫渠說得極好，須當子細看。….『一故神』，橫渠親注云：『兩在故不測。』只是這一物，却周行乎事物之間。如所謂陰陽、屈伸、往來、上下，以至於行乎什伯千萬之中，無非這一箇物事，所以謂『兩在故不測』。『兩故化』，注云：『推行乎一。』凡天下之事，一不能化，惟兩而後能化。且如一陰一陽，始能化生萬物。雖是兩箇，要之亦是推行乎此一爾。此說得極精，須當與他子細看。」

    Lin asked, “What’s the principle behind Zhang Zai’s statement, ‘Because of the Oneness, it is spiritual’?” Zhu Xi said, “The Twoness is that whereby there is activity pushed forth in the One. Zhang Zai’s whole dictum is, ‘Because of the Oneness, it is spiritual, but because there is twoness in it it is unfathomable. Because of the twoness it transforms, pushing forth activity in the One.’ This means that it is because these two are present that the One even exists. This is also the meaning of ‘If the two were not established, the One would not appear. If the One were did not appear, the function of the two would just about cease.’ For example, an event has a before and after; so that as soon as the beginning appears, one can already anticipate that there will also be an end. This is what is meant by necessary twoness. So if there is the cold of winter, the heat of summer is also present within it, if there is day, there is also the night present within it. Thus is the Oneness lodged within them.”

    　　林問：「『一故神，兩故化』，此理如何？」曰：「兩所以推行乎一也。張子言：『一故神，兩在故不測；兩故化，推行於一。』謂此兩在，故一存也。『兩不立，則一不可見；一不可見，則兩之用或幾乎息矣』，亦此意也。如事有先後，才有先，便思量到末後一段，此便是兩。如寒，則暑便在其中；晝，則夜便在其中；便有一寓焉。」㝢。

    　　[Zhu Xi further commenting on this passage from Zhang Zai said]: “This One is in Yang and also in Yin. Without this One, the two would be unable to produce activity in it. The two are just this growth and shrinkage, which is just what transformation and the proceeding of activity mean. “ He also said, “This dictum of Zhang Zai is extremely insightful and precise, which is why Li Tong, my teacher, said, ‘Previously I couldn’t understand this passage, and I sat up all night in my chair thinking it over, personally going into it with my own body—only then could I see the idea clearly and stably. Every time we truly understand a principle should be like this.’ At that time

    　　….是在陽又在<2512>陰，無這一，則兩便不能以推行。兩便即是這箇消長，又是化，又是推行之意。又曰：「橫渠此語極精。見李先生說云：『舊理會此段不得，終夜椅上坐思量，以身去裏面體，方見得平穩。每看道理處皆如此。… [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Cited in Zhuziwenji, p. 315, to explain this passage: “Sudden qualitative changing over is what is meant by *bian*—as when Yin changes over into Yang, soft changes over into hard, cold changes over into warmth. When Yang transforms (*hua*) into Yin, it advances to its ultimate and then returns and thus retreats. When Yin changes over (*bian)* into Yang, the retreat reaches its extreme and thus becomes advance. Thus it is said, “Transformation and changing over is the image of advance and retreat.” Yang transforming into Yin and Yin changing over into Yang is what is meant by “transformation and changing over.” What makes them transform and change over is Dao. Dao is the original numinousness, while transformation and changing over are the triggers that carry it. Thus in the transformation and changing over of Yin and Yang the Dao is never and nowhere absent. ‘Because the twoness is there, it is unfathomable, thus it said that he who knows the Dao of transformation and changing over knows what spirit (*shen)* does!’—how true! Can it be understood thus?” [Zhu Xi said], “Yes it can!”

    突然改換者變也陰變爲陽柔變爲剛寒變爲暖是也陽化爲陰是進極而回故爲退陰變爲陽則退極而上故爲進故曰變化者進退之象也陽化爲陰陰變爲陽者變化也所以變化者道也道者本然之妙變化者所乘之機故陰變陽化而道無不在*兩在故不測故曰知變化之道者其知神之所爲乎*不審可作如此看否.亦得之.Everyhing up to the last three characters is perhaps Zhu Xi recounting the question of his interlocutor, Dong Shuzhong, while the last three characters are his approving comment on this presentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid: “When he says ‘Twoness is present,” it may be in Yin and it may be in Yang, but when it is in Yin it is entirely Yin, when it is in Yang it is entirely Yang. Transformation ，*言『兩在』者，或在陰，或在陽，在陰時全體都是陰，在陽時全體都是陽。* [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Zhuzi yulei, p. 1221. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid.:” 問「動靜者，所乘之機」。曰：「太極理也，動靜氣也。氣行則理亦行，二者常相依而未嘗相離也。太極猶人，動靜猶馬；馬所以載人，人所以乘馬。馬之一出一入，人亦與之一出一入。蓋一動一靜，而太極之妙未嘗不在焉。此所謂『所乘之機』，無極、二五所以『妙合而凝』也。」銖。That what matters here is specifically dyadic pairs and their reversal can be seen by a further glass Zhu Xi offers on the same page: “Motion and stillness are the triggers that carry it. Triggers are the incipient triggers of Qi itself. As the *Odes* says, ‘Riding upon the triggers of the atmosphere (qi) to enter and exit.’”「動靜者，所乘之機。」機，言氣機也。詩云：「出入乘氣機。」端蒙。This is further clarified elsewhere by a student’s summary: “’The Supreme Ultimate Pivot is simply Li. Li cannot be itself described as moving or still. But ‘when it moves it produces Yang, when it is still it produces Yin’—that means that Li is lodged in Qi, which cannot be devoid of the reversing triggers of motion and stillness. “Carry” here means something like how cargo is carried in a vehicle. The motion and stillness of Li referred to here are how it is carried on Qi: without realizing it, motion comes to an end and then stillness begins, and then stillness ends and motion begins again.’ Zhu Xi said, ‘That’s right.’” 太極只是理，理不可以動靜言，惟『動而生陽，靜而生陰』，理㝢於氣，不能無動靜所乘之機。乘，如乘載之『乘』，其動靜者，乃乘載在氣上，不覺動了靜，靜了又動。」曰：「然。」又問：「『動靜無端，陰陽無始』，那箇動， p. 1217 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Schopenhauer equivocates on this point: when he is speaking more strictly in delineating his metaphysics, he specifies quite clearly that “the Will” has no specific end, that it is blind in precisely the sense of wanting no particular object, just *wanting*. But in his more popular writings, or when discussing living organisms, or perhaps when he is being less careful, he does speak of a “Will to Life.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Here I take *shengli* 生理 to be an explicit explication of the meaning of the usually abbreviated and general term 理 itself, so I translate them the same way. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Zhuziyulei, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Zhuxi yulei*, p. 786. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In Zhu Xi, I believe, we see a shift from the immanent model of this kind of Center-as-coherence-making-coherence as immanent vertex to the more transcendent-sounding model of the Center. We may think of this as a shift from Productive Compossibility to Productive Copotentiality. What is the difference? Possibility and potentiality are almost synonyms; but potential implies something a little more determinate and self-standing, something that is real in the world and beyond the world and with a sense of its active readiness to become actual, while possibility suggests a mere logical condition of non-contradictoriness. Both are contrasted to actuality and can be spoken of in the absence of actuality—a thing can be possible though not actual, or potential but not actual. But when speaking of an actual thing, we can still ask what made it possible: it is actual because it is possible, and it remains possible even when it is actual. But potential is what it is when it is not actual. Once it becomes actual, it is not also, at the same time, potential. Potential suggests something that is hidden, non-apparent, in sharp contrast to what is actual. So the qualitative ontological jump that Zhu Xi seems to be insisting on, which makes him uneasy with merely speaking in ti/yong terms suggesting a continuity or coextensivity of substance, is perhaps well indicated by the term Copotentiality., suggesting more of a distinct force of its own, as opposed to merely a derivitave function of actualities. Considered as a positive force in one of two opposite extremes, the pull toward the balance with the other opposite, then, the Compossibility may be called Productive Copotentiality. As such it is distinct from the actuality of either extreme or indeed of both extremes considered together. The shift in translation is a way to indicate a more positive presence: Li in Yin is the productive copotentiality of Yang as Li in Yang is the productive copotentiality of Yin. Note that if we were speaking merely of “potentiality,” we could say that the potentiality of Yin is something completely different to, and opposed to, the potentiality of Yang. But the Productive Copotentiality of Yin is precisely the Productive Copotentiality of Yang. They are opposed but also identical, many but also one and the same. This is a key distinguishing mark of Zhu Xi’s metaphysics. Productive Copotentiality means these literally serve not only as possible coexistences with each other but as actively grounding each other, indeed actively producing each other, the roots of each other. It is what is always there in a sense “grounding” their actuality, and present in their actuality as the force pulling toward balance, i.e., unobstructed coexistence of opposite qualities. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Zhouzi quanshu, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Zhouzi quanshu, p. 2. 即陰陽而指其本體。 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. . Zongmi, 禪源諸詮集都序, T48.403a. For a good discussion of the centrality of this trope in Chan meditation, see Carl Bielefeldt, “Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse's Tso-ch'an I and the ‘Secret’ of Zen Meditation,” in Peter Gregory, editor, *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 4, University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 129-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Please find this citation in the Zhuzi yulei or…? [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. **朱子語類卷第一百一十七 朱子十四** [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. And on this particular point we do have a result that resembles the Tiantai result: “Whenever one of the Three Thousand becomes increasingly manifest, so do all the others become increasingly manifest,” i.e., the doctrine of *sanqian qizhang* 三千齊彰:。

    Compare Zhili:

    Moreover, you should realize that the six level of identity apply not only to our [always present but gradually realized] identity to Buddhahood, but to all beings, whether real or unreal: Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas, gods, humans and so on, al the way down to every last body and every last mind of even the lowest dung beetle in hell. For all of these we must distinguish all six levels of identity: we are identical to that dung beetle in principle, then in name, and so on, all the way up to our final fully realized ultimate identity with that dung beetle. Since the [Zhiyi] is now talking about the founder of the teaching [Sakyamuni], it spells out these levels of our identity only with the Buddha. But because the Ten Realms are all Li, the Omnipresent Nature, such that each of them is the entire universe, and each and every one of them is eternally unchanged, thus in our practice when we proceed to identity not only in principle but also in name and so on, it is not only our identity with the Buddha that is realized: the other nine realms are manifested proportionally at the same time. When we reach the state of fruition, ultimate identity with the Buddha, our identity with all Ten Realms is also ultimate, and all of them are the ultimate. Thus the six identities should be distinguished with respect to the dung beetle as well.

    又復應知。六即之義不專在佛。一切假實三乘人天。下至蛣蜣地獄色心。皆須六即辯其初後。所謂理蛣蜣名字乃至究竟蛣蜣。今釋教主。故就佛辯。以論十界皆理性故。無非法界。一一不改。故名字去。不唯顯佛。九亦同彰。至於果成。十皆究竟。故蛣蜣等。皆明六即。T37.200a. Would Zhu Xi agree? Yes and no. The interesting thing in comparing these schools of thought is working out in what sense yes and in what sense no. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)