

Qizhi zhi xing 氣質之性 and the Unity of Human Nature: Zhu Xi's Theorization of the Goodness of Human Nature

LEE Junghwan

Abstract

The thesis that “human nature is good” was a key doctrinal foundation of the *Daoxue* tradition since its beginning. Nonetheless, the process of verifying this thesis revealed intricate problems concerning the moral definition of human nature and its categorization. In particular, because of its implications of universality and pure goodness, this thesis seems to contradict the empirical facts of the occurrence of immorality and the individual disparities in moral characters. In order to address such problems, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1120-1200) adopted the ideas of *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性 and the unity of human nature from Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) and the Cheng brothers through re-conceptualizations.

First, Zhu Xi re-interpreted *qizhi zhi xing* in the sense of the mutual non-separability (*bu xiang li* 不相離) of the universality of human nature and the personal qualities of *qizhi*. Thus, he provided an explanation for observed disparities in moral character in the light of the influence of the personal quality of the endowed *qizhi* on the manifestation process of human nature. At the same time, from the perspective of the mutual non-fusionability (*bu xiang za* 不相雜), he confined the range of *qizhi*'s influence to the manifestation process alone, rather than to human nature itself, thus making human nature itself conceptually free from the influence of *qizhi* and theoretically capable of retaining its quality of pure goodness.

Second, to re-establish the thesis that human nature is good on a more solid ground, Zhu needed to redefine the relationship between human nature and sensory desires. Because the latter had been conventionally marked out as the primary cause of immorality, they could not be simply integrated into one concept. On the other hand, when separating them into two distinct

* LEE Junghwan: Assistant Professor, Department of Aesthetics, Seoul National University (leejunghw@snu.ac.kr)

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entities, this would divide the concept of human nature itself into the two subcategories as the distinct origins of morality and immorality, which also would make the moral definition of human nature ambiguous. To solve this problem, on the side of the all-embracing unity of human nature, Zhu included sensory desires into the category of human nature and explained their tendencies toward immorality as nonessential, accidental anomalies occurring in the process of the manifestation of human nature as the sole ultimate origin of all, rather than directly stemming from human nature itself.

By addressing these two remaining problems, Zhu eventually established Mengzi's thesis of the goodness of human nature as the orthodox view on this subject for the first time in Chinese intellectual history.

Keywords: *Qizhi zhi xing*, the Thesis that human nature is good, the unity of human nature, the mutual non-separability (*bu xiang li* 不相離), the mutual non-fusionability (*bu xiang za* 不相雜), Zhu Xi

1. Introduction

Mengzi's claim that "human nature is good" provoked continuous controversies about the moral definition of human nature. This thesis apparently contradicts empirically self-evident facts. Specifically, provided that human nature is morally good, from what source do widely observed immoral thoughts, feelings, and behaviors arise? Additionally, provided that morality is the universal quality of all human beings, why then are there wide disparities in moral character between individuals? In the Song 宋 (960-1279), despite their intellectual divergence, the *Daoxue* thinkers endorsed this thesis as the most fundamental doctrinal underpinning, but they had yet to resolve these interrelated critical questions. In so doing, they came up with diverse ideas, among which *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性 and the unity of human nature are particularly relevant to the questions.

In his book *Zhu Xi zhexue yanjiu* 朱熹哲學研究, Chen Lai 陳來 has confessed that he previously held the incorrect notion that in Zhu Xi' 朱熹 (1130-1200) philosophy, the concept of human nature is comprised of two distinct subcategories—the nature of the Heavenly Mandate (*tianming zhi xing* 天命之性) and *qizhi zhi xing*. This misunderstanding, according to Chen, arose mainly from another misunderstanding: That is, *qizhi zhi xing* in Zhu's philosophy was identical with "the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness" (*gongqu zhi xing* 攻取之性) in Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020-1077) terminology. He thus mistakenly presumed that "*qizhi zhi xing* [in Zhu's conception] refers to the attributes of physical constitution (*qizhi* 氣質; hereafter, *qizhi*) itself."¹ It seems that by "the attributes of *qizhi* itself," Chen means desires spontaneously arising from sensory organs towards external things and the patterns of such desires, as shown in the following description of Zhang Zai:

Tranquility and consistency are the original state of *qi*. Aggressiveness and acquisitiveness are the desires of *qi*. The mouth and stomach [tend] towards drinking and eating, and the nose and tongue [tend] towards good smells and tastes. These are all [examples of] the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness...²

In this explanatory scheme, sensory organs naturally tend to have the judgmental response of "like" or "dislike" (*hao wu* 好惡) in their interactions with external things, which also gives rise to corresponding desires. Such sensory desires show a general pattern of being inclined to acquire what they like and avoid what they dislike. Chen Lai concludes that it is inconsistent with Zhu Xi's idea to identify *qizhi zhi xing* with such

1 Chen Lai, *Zhu Xi zhexue yanjiu*, 165.

2 For translation, Kasoff, *The Thought of Chang Tsai (1020-1077)*, 73-74 with modifications.

sensory desires and, furthermore, to presume that it exists independently of the nature of Heavenly Mandate.

Chen is not alone. In the Ming 明 (1368-1644), Luo Qinsun 羅欽順 (1465-1547) also put into words that it took long time for him to recognize that it was wrong to dichotomize human nature into moral nature and the inborn tendencies of sensory desires as two mutually opposing, separate entities.³ The same problem is found in the writings of Chen Zhi 陳埴 (fl. ca. 1195), who had direct communications with Zhu Xi, thus confirming the chronic nature of this problem.⁴ Despite its critical importance in comprehending Zhu Xi's view on human nature, this allegedly wrong interpretation is still widely detected in modern scholarship as well.⁵

Zhu Xi proclaimed that the theory of *qizhi*, presented by Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), played a critical role in bringing an end to the prolonged debates over the moral definition of human nature involving Mengzi, Xunzi, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), and Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and reestablishing the Mencian theory of the inborn goodness of human nature on a more solid theoretical ground.⁶ This suggests that a proper understanding of *qizhi zhi xing* is critically important within the overall scheme of Zhu's theorization of human nature, particularly since he re-conceptualized this term to address the seeming contradiction between the thesis of the goodness of human nature and the empirical fact of moral disparities between individuals.

Persistent confusions regarding *qizhi zhi xing* are also correlated with an insufficient comprehension about the idea of the all-embracing unity of human nature, thus dividing the concept of human nature into two subcategories. First of all, such confusions stem from its literal meaning, which can be translated into "the nature of *qizhi*" or "[the inherent tendencies of] the *qizhi* as the nature." As discussed below, more intriguingly, this term was coined initially by Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi to indicate inborn features in distinction from human nature, but what they referred to by it was notably different. A more profound reason for confusions is that the tendencies of sensory desires were often contrasted with moral nature as two opposite, distinct entities within the category of human nature, and *qizhi zhi xing* was

3 Luo Qinsun, *Kun zhi ji*, vol. 1, 11a-14b and 34a-35a.

4 Chen Zhi, *Mu zhong ji*, vol. 10, 5a.

5 The same misunderstanding is often found in modern scholars' writings as well. For example, Zhang Liwen defines *qizhi zhi xing* as "natural biological attributes." (Zhang Liwen, *Zhu Xi da cidian*, 237) Lee Seung-Hwan described *qizhi zhi xing* as personal dispositions and personalities and identified each of *qizhi zhi xing* and *benran zhi xing* as a distinctive nature, thus dividing the concept of *xing* into two entities (Lee Seung-Hwan, "Juja suyangnon-eseo seong-gwa seonghyang," 141). Ōhama Akira alludes to the inseparability between *qizhi zhi xing* and *benran zhi xing*, instead of between human nature and *qizhi*, suggesting that like Lee Seung-Hwan, he also divides the concept of *xing* into two entities (Ōhama Akira, *Beomjuro boneum jujahak*, 184).

6 Li Jingde, *Zhuzi yulei*, chap. 4, 70.3.

often interpreted in this sense. Apparently, this contrast was sometimes drawn due to the perceived spontaneity, naturalness, and inborn-ness of sensory desires, which are the necessary attributes of nature. Further confusion on this issue may be due to the self-centered tendencies of sensory desires, which more likely than not bring about immoral outcomes. Therefore, as seen in Zhang Zai's description on "the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness," such sensory desires are conventionally juxtaposed with moral goodness within the category of human nature. This line of thinking not only would make the concept of human nature divided into two opposite subcategories but would also seriously undermine the Mencian thesis of the goodness of human nature. Therefore, explaining the relationship between moral nature and sensory desires without dividing the category of human nature was a critical issue for establishing the thesis of the goodness of human nature, and this problem was closely correlated with the initial creation of the term of *qizhi zhi xing*.

2. Ambiguity Surrounding *Qizhi zhi xing* before Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi overtly acknowledged that he adopted *qizhi zhi xing* from Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi. That which Zhang and Cheng referred to by this word, however, was distinctly different from Zhu's usage. Nor did Zhang and Cheng use the term in the same sense.

Zhang used the term within the "Chengming" 誠明 chapter of his *Zhengmeng* 正蒙.

Qizhi zhi xing comes to exist [only] after there is physical form. If a man successfully returns it (i.e., *qizhi zhi xing*) [to the original state of nature], the nature of Heaven and Earth is preserved. Therefore, a superior man does not accept *qizhi zhi xing* as his nature.⁷

It is notable that this passage is the only example of Zhang's reference to *qizhi zhi xing* throughout his works, suggesting that he used it as a casual term rather than a key notion, not to mention a philosophical concept. In the quotation above, *qizhi zhi xing* is contrasted with the nature of Heaven and Earth, and the former is associated with physical form, whereas the latter refers to human nature. The former is described as something unambiguously negative, which ought to be reversed or returned and should not be equaled with the latter. Nonetheless, Zhang insinuated that *qizhi zhi xing*, as is named a sort of *xing*, cannot be completely excluded from the category of human

7 Zhang Zhai, *Zhengmeng*, chap. 6, 23: "形而後有氣質之性。善反之則天地之性存焉。故氣質之性。君子有弗性者焉。" For translation, Kasoff, *The Thought of Chang Tsai (1020-1077)*, 75 with modifications.

nature. By this term, Zhang referred to the inborn features of sensory desires and their spontaneous inclinations. In so doing, he recapitulated a controversial statement of the *Mengzi* 7B.24 about the contrast between human nature and spontaneous sensory desires, which will be discussed below at greater length.

By *qizhi zhi xing*, Cheng Yi referred to a different aspect of inborn features, namely, personal moral character and its disparities between individuals. One of his concerns consisted in dealing with another controversial statement on human nature, that is, “By nature near together, in practice far apart” (*xing xiang jin, xi xing yuan* 性相近, 習相遠) in the *Lunyu*.⁸ Cheng replied to a question of “Granted that human nature is [the same] one, why, then, did Kongzi said ‘near’?”⁹ as follows:

The nature [in this phrase] refers to the nature in the sense of characteristic nature (*xingzhi zhi xing* 性質之性; also recorded, *qizhi zhi xing*), as in popular expressions such as “impetuous by nature,” “lax by nature,” and so forth. How can nature itself have [the characteristics of] laxity or impetuosity? The word nature in this phrase means that which [Kaozi called] “what is inborn is called nature” . . . [Nature in the phrase that] “human nature is good” refers to human nature as substance, whereas “what is inborn is called nature” concerns what is endowed.¹⁰

Like Zhang Zai, Cheng Yi did not use the term *qizhi zhi xing* as an established concept. In this passage, quoted from the *Henan Chengshi yishu* 河南程氏遺書, which was compiled and edited by Zhu Xi, the term appears as an alternative record (*yi zuo* 一作) of *xingzhi zhi xing*, and the expression *qizhi zhi xing* does not appear again anywhere in the *Henan Chengshi yishu*. Instead, the *Henan Chengshi yishu* posits that “[the nature] in the phrase ‘by nature near together’ refers to *shengzhi zhi xing* (生質之性: the nature of the inborn physical constitution),”¹¹ which is most likely equivalent to *xingzhi zhi xing* in the quotation above. By *xingzhi zhi xing* or *qizhi zhi xing*, Cheng meant mainly inborn moral character and its individual differences, thus distinguishing it from the universal and homogenous qualities of human nature in the Mencian sense. This shows that whereas Zhang Zai used the term *qizhi zhi xing* in the sense of sensory desires common to all human beings like “the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness,” Cheng referred to a fundamentally different thing by the same term. This discrepancy between Zhang and Cheng signifies that the term *qizhi zhi xing* was very rarely used, and moreover, that no strong consensus had been

8 For translation, Gardner and Confucius, *Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects*, 63.

9 Gardner and Confucius, *Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects*, 63.

10 Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Henan Chengshi yishu*, vol. 18, 207.2: 性相近也。習相遠也。性一也。何以言相近。曰此只是言性(一作氣)質之性。如俗言性急性緩之類。性安有緩急。此言性者生之謂性也。… 且如言人性善。性之本也。生之謂性。論其所稟也。 For translation, Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, 49 with modifications.

11 Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Henan Chengshi yishu*, vol. 8, 102.12.

developed regarding its meaning when it was used. What is common, however, is that this term was used in support of the Mencian thesis that human nature is morally good.

3. The Moral Definition of Human Nature before Zhu Xi

From the beginning, the *Daoxue* tradition was founded on its strong belief in the goodness of human nature. Nonetheless, during the period between the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, this belief had yet to be established on a firm theoretical foundation. Specifically, the long-lasting question about the relationship between human nature and immorality remained unresolved. Cheng Hao's 程顥 (1032-1085) statement quoted below evidently attests such a situation.

“What is inborn is called the nature.” When human beings are endowed with *qi* at birth, there are in principle both good and bad (or, there are in principle good persons and bad persons). Nonetheless, this does not mean that [people are] born with such two opposing elements present in the nature (or, good and bad stem from the two opposing qualities of human nature). Some are good from infancy, and other are bad from infancy. ... This [disparity] is due to the [difference in the qualities of] endowed *qi*. The good is originally the nature, but it cannot be said that the bad is not the nature.

Cheng Hao here reaffirmed the widely accepted empirical facts that individuals are different in terms of inborn moral qualities (i.e., some are born with more moral character, while others with less moral character) and that far from being purely moral, almost all people also possess both moral and non-moral inborn qualities in oneself. Like Cheng Yi, he also interpreted Gaozi's claim that “what is inborn is called the nature” in the sense of personal inborn moral character. He pointed to the endowed *qi* as the main cause of such differences and admixture. According to him, however, such phenomena do not prove that two distinct origins of good and bad co-exist in human nature. Particularly, what caused a series of debates and confusions afterwards is his concluding remark that “it cannot be said that the bad is not the nature.” This statement apparently involve two mutually contradicting claims: One is that human nature is good, and the other is that the bad is also related to human nature. This problem is more clearly detected in the following statement of Cheng Hao.

The good and bad in the world are both the Heavenly Principle. What is called bad is not originally bad, but it is due to either going too far or not far enough—for examples, [the errors of] Yang [Zhu] and Mo [Di].¹²

12 For translation, Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, 127 with modifications.

Cheng herein included the bad at least in the phenomenal dimension into the realm of the Heavenly Principle. Although he directly uttered that the bad does not stem from the existence of its distinctive origin, he did not provide a further explanation about that which, if not human nature itself, causes the effect of “too far or not far enough.” As will be discussed in detail, if the cause of the bad is ascribed solely to *qizhi*, it leads to a more critical question of whether *qizhi* should be regarded as something external to the realm of the Heavenly Principle or not. The Cheng brothers seem not to have an explicit solution to this problem.

Followers of the Cheng brothers also could not escape from this theoretical predicament. For example, Xie Liangzuo 謝良佐 (1050-1103) said:

Mengzi’s argument that human nature is good is absolutely right. It is not impossible that the nature becomes not-good, and this is already not the ultimate of the nature. It can be compared to [the tendency of] water to flow downwards. By striking or splashing it, [water] can be made to move upwards, but [this upward movement] is not [in accordance with] the nature of water. Although the nature can be made to be not-good, the good remains [unchanged].¹³

Similar to Cheng Hao, Xie Liangzuo here described human nature as something that has both mutable and immutable qualities. Human nature is originally good; it is subject to be changed into something not-good, but even so, the original goodness is immutable. Xie did not explain, however, how these two opposite states can be ascribed equally to the same human nature. What matters more in relation to the thesis of the goodness of human nature is his statement that human nature can “become not-good,” which Zhu Xi straightforwardly opposed.¹⁴

The reservation about the Mencian claim that human nature is good continued in the early Southern Song, as exemplified by Hu Anguo 胡安國 (1074-1138) and Hu Hong 胡宏 (1105-1161), two representative figures in the Cheng learning tradition at the time:

Someone asked about nature.

[Hu Hong] replied: Nature is that by which Heaven and Earth stand.

[He further asked]: Then, does it mean that the arguments about nature in terms of good and bad presented by Menzi, Xunzi, and Yang Xiong are all wrong?

[Hu] replied: Nature is the inscrutableness of Heaven and Earth as well as the spiritual beings. Therefore, the good is not adequate to fully describe it, to say nothing of the bad!

[Another man] asked: What do you mean?

13 Xie Liangzuo, *Shangcai yulu*, vol. 2, 13b: “孟子論性善。論之至也。性非不可爲不善。但非性之至。如水之就下。搏擊之。非不可上。但非水之性。性雖可以爲不善。然善者依舊在。”

14 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, chap. 11, 475.

[Hu] replied: I heard my father (i.e., Hu Anguo) to say, “The reason that Menzi stands out most prominently among all Confucian scholars consists in his [proper] understanding of human nature.” I asked, “What do you mean?” My father replied, “The word ‘good’ in Menzi’s statement that human nature is good is an exclamation of admiration, but [it is] not as the opposite of the bad.”¹⁵

Hu Anguo and Hu Hong discarded the previous approaches of defining human nature in terms of good and bad. They argued that because nature is the existential ground and ultimate source of everything in the world (“Nature is that by which Heaven and Earth stand”), good and bad, which are the values at the phenomenal realm, are inadequate to define nature. Similar to the case of Cheng Hao, however, such a transcendental approach to human nature also leaves unexamined the questions of why the good and bad occur in mixture in the empirical realm, and from what the good and bad come to happen, at the ontological level.¹⁶

Cheng, Xie, and Hu all showed an ambivalent attitude toward the moral definition of human nature, which had been the key issue since Mengzi. In particular, they reluctantly had to include the bad in the category of human nature, because they failed in making a clear analytical distinction between human nature and the cause of the bad. One of the principal reasons is related to a more sophisticated question of how to reconcile the belief in the sole ultimate origin of all with the undeniable empirical truth of a mixture of good and bad.

4. The Categorization of Human Nature before Zhu Xi

Inquiries into human nature in terms of good and bad are closely related to the question of whether or not spontaneously arising sensory desires should be included in the category of human nature. Since the time that Mengzi and Xunzi initiated discussions on human nature, sensory desires were consistently marked out as the main cause of immorality, largely because of their self-centered attributes as well as inborn-ness. However, the metaphysical positions of the *Daoxue* thinkers called this long-lasting view into question.

As seen in the introduction, Zhang Zai described sensory desires as “the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness” and distinguished them from the moral nature of Heaven and Earth. He thus divided the concept of human nature into two opposing subcategories of moral nature and inborn

15 Hu Hong, *Zhi yan*, vol. 4, 2b-3a: “知言曰。或問性。曰性也者。天地之所以立也。然則孟軻氏荀卿氏揚雄氏之以善惡言性也非歟。曰性也者。天地鬼神奧也。善不足以言之。況惡乎哉。或者問曰何謂也。曰宏聞之先君子曰。孟子所以獨出諸儒之表者。以其知性也。宏請曰何謂也。先君子曰孟子道性善善云者。歎美之詞。不與惡對。”

16 These questions are related to Zhu Xi’s criticism of Hu Hong’s ideas on this issue. For this see, Lee Junghwan, “‘Integration’ and ‘Discrimination’ in the Four-Seven Debate.”

features. Zhu Xi and Lu Zuqian inserted this remark of Zhang on the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness into the “Overcoming Selfishness” (*keji* 克己) chapter of *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Jinsilu* 近思錄). On the other hand, almost contradictorily, Zhang also expressed that “the desires to eat [when hungry] and to drink [when thirsty] as well as [the sexual desires] of men and women are all human nature. How is it possible to eliminate them?” in his *Correcting Youthful Ignorance* (*Zhengmeng* 正蒙).¹⁷ A similar statement is seen in his *Discussions on the Book of Changes* (*Yishuo* 易說).

[“The Appended Remarks” in the *Book of Changes* says,] “The common people use it in the ordinary course of their ordinary life without recognizing it.” In general, what they use does not deviate from the Way. The desires to eat [when hungry] and to drink [when thirsty] as well as [the sexual desires] of men and women are all human nature, but they simply do not give attention to it. From the dawn to the sunset, therefore, they always [but unconsciously] feel it in doing each and every action but do not recognize it.¹⁸

Zhang here unambiguously included basic desires within his conceptions of the Way and human nature. Zhu Xi straightforwardly rebutted this statement, saying that “[this statement of Zhang Zai] is similar to the arguments of Yang Xiong and Gaozi.”¹⁹ In the *Mengzi*, Gaozi once identified human nature with appetites and sexual desires, and Mengzi disputed against this view. In contrast to Mengzi’s argument, Zhang’s inclusion of such basic desires within the purview of human nature seems to blur the distinction between the moral qualities of human nature and spontaneous inclinations. In addition, he associated the phrase “the ordinary course of their ordinary life” (*riyong* 日用) with human nature, thus viewing “each and every action,” irrespective of its moral quality, as external manifestations of both human nature and the Way.

This approach aligns well with reservations expressed by Cheng Hao, Xie Liangzuo, Hu Anguo, and Hu Hong regarding the Mencian claim that human nature is good. As Zhu Xi also stated in his discussion about the human mind and the mind of the Way (*renxin daoxin shuo* 人心道心說), biological desires are morally justifiable in the sense that they are necessary for human beings to maintain their lives. However, as Mengzi contrasted “desires for life with the desires for righteousness” and placed the moral

17 Zhang Zai, *Zhengmeng*, vol. 17, 63.

18 Zhang Zai, *Hengqu yishuo*, 187: “百姓日用而不知。蓋所[以]用莫非在道。飲食男女皆性也。但己不自察。由旦至暮。凡百舉動。莫非感而不知之。”

19 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, chap. 11, 475. Zhu Xi herein quoted the passage that “To become bad by habits is also human nature, and desires for eating and drinking as well as sexual desires are all human nature” and attributed it to Zhang Zai. However, this passage is not found in Zhang’s writings.

nature above natural inclinations and desires,²⁰ the moral validity of biological desires are contingent on the way one pursues in satisfying them. Apart from morality, however, Mengzi also could not simply rule out sensory desires and their inclinations from the category of human nature, because they are natural and inborn, which are principal attributes of nature in definition. Concerning this point, *Mengzi* 7B.24 is particularly relevant:

(1) The mouth in relation to [good] flavors, the eyes in relation to [beautiful] sights, the ears in relation to [pleasant] sounds, the nose in relation to [flagrant] odors, the four limbs in relation to comfort—these are matters of human nature, but they involve mandate (i.e. their satisfactions are contingent on the Heaven’s mandate). A superior man does not refer to them as ‘human nature.’

(2) Benevolence in relation to father and son, righteousness in relation to ruler and minister, propriety in relation to guest and host, wisdom in relation to the worthy, the sake in relation to the Way of Heaven—these are mandated, but they involve human nature. A superior man does not refer to them as ‘mandate.’²¹

Irrespective of wide discrepancies in defining the concepts of nature and mandate, Zhao Qi 趙岐 (108-201) and Zhu Xi generally agreed in their interpretations of the passage quoted above, which makes a striking contrast with Mengzi’s general definition of human nature. Specifically, Part (1) closely resembles Gaozi’s view of “what is inborn is called the nature.” Additionally, in Part (2), Mengzi did not directly attribute the four virtues and the Way of Heaven to human nature, but firstly to mandate, which seems contradictory to his moral definition of human nature. Due to such conceptual intricacy, Zhu Xi confessed that it was not until he reached the age of forty that he first became able to reach a satisfactory understanding of this passage.²²

Concerning Part (1), Zhao Qi principally defined sensory desires as “those which human nature desires,” but he explained that Mengzi added the term “mandate” (*ming* 命) because satisfaction of the desires hinges on one’s fortune (*minglu* 命祿). He further argued that Mengzi concluded the passage with the admonition that “A superior man does not refer to them as ‘human nature’” in order to warn readers against the unrestrained pursuit of “the desires of human nature” (*xingyu* 性欲).” Concerning Part (2), Zhao Qi argued that because the consequential practicability of such moral values and virtues is contingent on the given condition, which is determined by one’s fortune, Mengzi first defined them as mandate; however, because such moral values and virtues are related to individual “inborn [moral] capacities”

20 *Mengzi* 6A.10.

21 *Mengzi* 7B.24: “口之於味也。目之於色也。耳之於聲也。鼻之於臭也。四肢之於安佚也。性也。有命焉。君子不謂性也。仁之於父子也。義之於君臣也。禮之於賓主也。智之於賢者也。聖人之於天道也。命也。有性焉。君子不謂命也。” For translation, van Norden, “Mengzi (Mencius),” 155 with modifications.

22 *Zhuzi yulei*, chap. 61, 1462.5.

(*caixing* 才性) as well, Mengzi also called them nature. Zhao also claimed that Mengzi concluded the passage by explaining that “A superior man does not refer to them as ‘mandate’,” because if one took one’s inborn [moral] capacities deterministically as one’s unchangeable fate, one would “not be willing to regulate nature” (*bu fu zhi xing* 不復治性).²³ In brief, like Gaozi, Zhao Qi identified human nature with the inborn-ness of sensory and biological desires, and he distinctly named *xing* 性 in Mengzi’s sense as personal “inborn [moral] capacities” (*caixing*).²⁴

In interpreting Part (1), Cheng Yi by and large concurred with Zhao, attributing sensory and biological desires to human nature. Cheng differed from Zhao primarily in the terms he used to explicate Part (2). Concerning the association between morality and mandate here, he stated, “[The disparity of] transparency and opacity (*qingzhuo* 清濁) in endowed *qi* brings about [the disparity of] superiority and inferiority (*houbao* 厚薄; lit., thickness and thinness) in inborn [moral] qualities (*caizhi* 才質),” which is determined by mandate. Like Zhao, Cheng also underlined the importance of moral cultivation, though with a difference. While defining the goodness of human nature as something that one can “thoroughly realize by learning and cultivation” (*ke xue er jin* 可學而盡) in line with the Mencian concept of “thoroughly realizing human nature” (*jinxing* 盡性), Cheng described the disparity in inborn moral qualities as something one can overcome by efforts.²⁵ In the *Collected Commentaries on the Mengzi* Zhu Xi adopted Cheng’s interpretation of Part (2) with little modification.

Apart from morality, Part (1) opens a question as to what extent inborn attributes, spontaneous inclinations, and natural desires can be included in the category of human nature. This question was critical for the *Daoxue* thinkers who were eager to conceptualize human nature on the ground of inherent moral qualities. In other words, as Yin Dun 尹焯 (1061-1132) distinguished them by means of defining inherent moral qualities as “the ought-ness (*dangwei* 當爲) of human beings” and characterizing spontaneous desires as natural facts,²⁶ the question of how to establish morality as ought-ness on the ground of the factual realm of human nature remained unsolved.

The *Daoxue* thinkers before Zhu were well aware of the significance of this theoretical issue, as the following statement of Yang Shi 楊時 (1053-1135) makes clear:

The mouth in relation to [good] flavors and so forth, [which are discussed by Mengzi,] are those which originally exist in human nature. Unless [they] were in human nature, how could [they] issue forth [in the first place]?²⁷

23 Jiao Xun, *Mengzi jingyi*, vol. 2, chap. 28, 990-1.

24 Jiao Xun, *Mengzi jingyi*, vol. 2, chap. 22, 742 and 757.

25 Zhu Xi, *Lun Meng jingyi*, chap. 14, 831.

26 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 14, 832.

27 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 14, 832: “口之於味等。性中本來有這箇。若不是性中有。怎生

Yang Shi here incorporated spontaneous inborn desires into the category of human nature with the intention of underlining the unity of human nature as the ultimate sole origin of all spontaneous manifestations. In response, Zhu Xi critically estimated Yang's remark to be inadequate, although not completely wrong, stating, "Overall, it is acceptable to trace back from what they come to be and [say that they] originate from human nature, but it is unacceptable to claim that [such desires] originally exist [in the form of human nature] and directly call [them] human nature."²⁸

As Mengzi himself discussed, inborn attributes and spontaneous inclinations by and large do not conform to morality. On this basis, Xunzi reversed Mengzi's theory and argued for the badness of human nature. The undeniable association between such desires and the concept of human nature was the most pressing obstacle in substantiating the Mencian theory of the goodness of human nature. As seen above, Zhao Qi attempted to address this problem by dividing the realm of human nature into two distinct entities: "the desires of nature" and "inborn [moral] capacities." From the Mencian standpoint, however, this approach cannot be a valid solution to the problem, for by qualifying each as an equally genuine part of human nature, it ultimately undermines the validity of the Mencian theory of the inherent goodness of human nature.

5. *Qizhi zhi xing* and the Moral Definition of Human Nature

Although similar terms are found in the *Henan Chengshi yishu*, the authentic provenance of *qizhi zhi xing* as a term before Zhu is Zhang Zai's *Correcting Youthful Ignorance* alone, and moreover, the term appears just once in that text. The preponderance of evidence, combined with the fact that Zhang and Cheng did not share a common definition of the term, clearly indicates that it was Zhu Xi who first established *qizhi zhi xing* as a key philosophical concept. His aim was to address the two interrelated problems discussed in the previous two sections, thus providing a fresh and firm philosophical groundwork for the thesis of the goodness of human nature. More broadly, a new paradigm was required to bring an end to thus-far ever evolving discussions on the moral definition of human nature.

Zhu Xi explained this new paradigm in the form of synthesizing the ideas of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073), Zhang Zai, and the Cheng brothers, thus ascribing this great philosophical achievement to his predecessors. He also recapitulated it in a chronological order. First, Zhou's *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Polarity*, according to Zhu's explication, illuminates the two seemingly contradictory facts. All living creatures are endowed with the "identical" (*tong* 同) nature from the sole

發得出來。”

28 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 14, 506: “蓋推其所自而本於性則可。以為本有而直謂之性則不可。”

ultimate origin, but the “disparities” (*buqi* 不齊) of nature between human beings and other creatures as well as between individuals at the empirical stage result from the disparities of *qizhi*, which occur in the process of the mixture of *Yin* and *Yang* and the Five Phases. Second, Zhu credited Cheng Yi with apprehending that “human nature is principle” and thereby made more concrete the universal and moral features of human nature. Finally, Zhu claimed that “the theory of *qizhi*” (*qizhi zhi shuo* 氣質之說) advanced by Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi verifies that “the goodness of human nature does not contradict the existence of not-good *qizhi* [of someone] (or not-good aspects in the *qizhi* of a person). The not-goodness of *qizhi* cannot vitiate the necessity of the goodness of human nature.” Zhu concluded his account with the high praise that their contributions to the advance of Confucianism as well as its benefits for the future generations were enormous.²⁹

What is notable here is that, overall, Zhu Xi underscored the importance of the theory of *qizhi* in relation to defending the thesis of the goodness of human nature. As seen above, Zhang Zai divided human nature into two categories—“the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness” and the nature of morality. In contrast, Zhu did not make such a division with regard to human nature. Instead, he made a clear conceptual distinction between human nature and *qizhi*. Zhu’s evaluation of the theory of *qizhi* implies that this theory made the conflicting ideas of the goodness of human nature and the empirical truth of the bad theoretically compatible, and more importantly, thereby further substantiated the thesis of the goodness of human nature. In other words, the theory of *qizhi* bridged a critical gap between Zhou’s exploration of observed moral “disparities” and Cheng’s idea of the universality of human nature. In order to accomplish this harmonization of seemingly contradictory ideas, Zhu had to get rid of remaining ambiguity about the meaning of *qizhi zhi xing*. In conceptualizing this term, he deliberately placed primary stress on the mutual non-fusionability (*bu xiang za* 不相雜) of human nature and *qizhi*.³⁰

By definition, *qizhi zhi xing* connotes the mutual non-separability (*bu xiang li* 不相離) between human nature and *qizhi*. In the *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*, Zhu Xi employed this concept twice. One is concerning the statement “By nature near together, in practice far apart” from the *Lunyu*, and the other is about the *Mengzi* 6A.6. In his commentary Zhu interpreted the concept in the sense that “nature herein refers to that which is combined (*jian* 兼) with *qizhi*,” and his interpretation offered an explication of the disparity of individual inborn characters. He

29 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 10, 478.

30 Liu Shuxian argues that Zhu’s emphasis gradually shifted from mutual non-separability to mutual non-fusionability as time went (Liu Shuxian, *Zhuzi zhexue sixiang di fazhan yu wancheng*, 197-216). However, all the writings of Zhu that Liu has presented as the evidence of this transition includes both ideas, casting a doubt on the validity of Liu’s claim.

argued that just as there is the mutual non-separability of *li* and *qi* in the physical world, human beings come into being as the result of the necessary combination between the universal features of human nature as *li* and the personal features of *qizhi*. In this process, despite the universal qualities of human nature, the disparity in the inborn qualities of individual *qizhi* necessarily brings about the disparity in inborn moral characters.³¹ The mutual non-separability alone would turn the goodness of human nature into a hollow thesis, for it might mean that human nature in its pure state could not exist or be manifested but must be conditioned by the quality of *qizhi*.

Zhu's explication, however, concluded with an emphasis on the mutual non-fusionability. A representative passage on the relationship between human nature and *qizhi* can be found in his *Catechistical Sub-commentary on the Mengzi*, which can be summarized as follows:

- A. Human nature cannot exist independently but must rely on *qi* in its embodiment.
- B. At the state of being combined with *qizhi*, human nature can "be restrained by *qi*" (*wei qi suo ju* 爲氣所拘).
- C. [Even at the state of being restrained by *qi*,] "the moral goodness [of human nature] as *li* is absolutely immutable."
- D. Emotions and personal capacities are affected by the endowed *qizhi* of each person. If the quality of the endowed *qizhi* is bad, emotions also tend to be not-good, and personal capacities are also likely to be not-good.
- E. Nonetheless, "the original state of the thing, which manifests as emotions and personal capacities, has never been not-good in the beginning."³²

The ultimate stress is placed on the mutual non-fusionability that the qualities of *qizhi* cannot alter human nature itself as well as its morally good qualities.³³ In this scheme, it is granted that *qizhi* is necessary for the embodiment of human nature and that the qualities of *qizhi* affect human nature in its manifestation. However, the necessary combination between *qizhi* and human nature (Part A) does not mean their fusion into one single entity, but human nature itself retains its original qualities (Part C). This explication makes a notable contrast with those of Cheng Hao and Xie Liangzuo, which attribute both the mutable and immutable qualities to nature. Instead, Zhu ascribed the mutable qualities solely and entirely to *qizhi* and thereby established a theoretical ground for contending the immutability and universality of human nature.

31 Zhu Xi, *Lunyu huowen*, chap. 17, 371. Luo Qinshun interpreted the relationship between universality and disparity in line with the idea of "the unity of the Principle and the diversity in its manifestations" (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊) and rebutted his previous view that *tianming zhi xing* and *qizhi zhi xing* were the two distinct and equal, but mutually opposite, entities. Luo Qinshun, *Kun Zhi ji*, vol. 1, 11a-14b and 34a-35a.

32 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 10, 477-479.

33 Zhu Xi, "Da Yan Shiheng" 答嚴時亨, *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 61, 3187.

Parts D and E of Zhu's argument seem mutually contradicting, which is reminiscent of the previously noted ambivalent descriptions of nature by Cheng Hao, Yang Shi, and Hu Hong. What is fundamentally different, however, is that Zhu made a clear 'conceptual' distinction between human nature itself and its external manifestation. In Part E, he described the latter as something that originally stems from human nature, which meant that it could not be essentially not-good. On the other hand, in Part D, he confined the range of the influence of *qizhi* to the latter only, or to be precise, to the process by which human nature is manifested into emotions and personal capacities. He thus posited human nature itself as conceptually free from the influence of the quality of *qizhi*, since if emotions and personal capacities are themselves manifestations of human nature in their initial state before the influence of *qizhi*, it follows that they also must maintain the goodness of human nature. In conclusion, Zhu ascribed the reason that emotions and personal capacities 'become' not-good at the phenomenological stage solely to the influence of "the quality of the endowed *qizhi*," which may, figuratively speaking, obscure or distort the manifestation process. According to this line of thinking, the relationship between human nature and personal *qizhi* should be construed from the perspective of the 'mutual non-fusionability,' rather than of the 'mutual non-separability.' Although the moral quality of its eventual manifestation is contingent largely on the quality of *qizhi*, the range of the influence of *qizhi* is theoretically restricted to the manifestation process and does not involve human nature itself. Therefore, human nature and its initial manifestations are not affected by the later operations of *qizhi* at all and remain the sole source of universal goodness.

In his commentary to the *Mengzi* 7B.24, Zhu Xi approached the relationship of mandate with the four cardinal virtues and the Way of Heaven in two distinctive ways. The first is based on Cheng Yi's explication, which defined the four cardinal virtues and the Way of Heaven as the essential quality of human nature. Individual differences about whether one can put them into practice or not are subject to the differences in the endowed *qizhi* of each person, which basically belong to the realm of mandate. As seen above, however, Cheng Yi stressed that such inborn disparities are not absolutely deterministic but surmountable through moral cultivation and learning.³⁴ The other approach taken by Zhu is based on Zhang Zai's explication that the practicability of the four cardinal virtues and the Way of Heaven is also contingent on given, predetermined relational conditions such as father and ruler. Because they are things that one cannot choose or change, they also can be called mandate.³⁵ Zhu used this line of thought to defend the thesis of the goodness of human nature by ascribing the causes of not-good phenomena exclusively to *qizhi* and mandate as given conditions.

34 Zhu Xi, *Lun Meng zhengyi*, chap. 14, 831.

35 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, chap. 14, 506.

Two conclusions can be inferred from the discussions above. First, *qizhi zhi xing* in Zhu Xi's conception does not mean the nature 'of' *qizhi* in the sense of the inborn-ness of sensory desires (like "the nature of aggressiveness and acquisitiveness" in Zhang Zai's remark) as ontologically distinct from human nature itself (*benran zhi xing* 本然之性). Nor does it refer directly to the inborn character, disposition, or personality of a person, which is close to *qizhi* in Zhu's terminology. Rather, *qizhi zhi xing* indicates the mutual non-separability of human nature itself and *qizhi* in reality, which also implies the possibility of the influence of the latter over the manifestation of the former. Second, contrastingly, Zhu conceptualized *qizhi zhi xing* in order to explain the mixture of good and not-good phenomena in the empirical dimension, which enabled him to contrast it with the pure goodness of human nature from the perspective of the mutual non-fusionability of *li* and *qi*. Differently speaking, previous varied forms of inductive reasoning about the moral quality of human nature are based on *qizhi zhi xing* as the combination of human nature and *qizhi* on the empirical ground rather than human nature itself. Unlike his predecessors who attempted to explain all inborn features through resort to the concept of human nature alone, Zhu distinguished inborn features into two categories of *qizhi* and human nature. Then, in line with his idea of the mutual non-fusionability, he ascribed the origin of the bad and disparities entirely to *qizhi*, thus reserving goodness and universality solely to human nature, thus supporting the thesis of the moral goodness of human nature. This is why he declared that "the theory of *qizhi*" verified "the not-goodness of *qizhi* cannot vitiate the necessity of the goodness of human nature."

6. Sensory Desires and the Unity of Human Nature

Concerning the problem of moral definition of human nature discussed in Section 3, Zhu's re-conceptualization of *qizhi zhi xing* was truly a crucial breakthrough. On the other hand, the concept also led to a more profound question. The reason that Zhu defined human nature not only as moral goodness but also as principle was to ground moral goodness on objectivity and universality. As discussed in Section 4, however, because of the all-inclusive aspect of human nature and the Heavenly Principle, this line of thought inevitably gives rise to a question of how to explain the relationship between sensory desires and human nature as well as the Heavenly Principle.

In his commentary to the section 7B.24 of the *Mengzi*, Zhu Xi explicated the relationship between sensory desires and human nature in Part (1) by indirectly resorting to the concept of *qizhi zhi xing*;³⁶ namely, he

36 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1461.1. An expression, *qibing zhi xing* 氣稟之性 instead of *qizhi zhi xing*, is also found in the *Zhuzi yulei*, but it seems there exists almost no semantic difference

held that nature in this passage does not refer to human nature itself alone but its state “in association with” (*jian* 兼) “endowed *qi*” (*qibing* 氣稟)³⁷ and “desires for [external] things” (*wuyu* 物欲).³⁸ In contrast, he held that nature in Part (2) refers to pure principle or “human nature as the Heavenly Mandate.”³⁹ Therefore, Zhu stated, one should not take sensory desires themselves as the manifestations of human nature itself and pursue them as “those which are self-evidently right” (*suo dangran* 所當然),⁴⁰ but should, instead, control or guide them in accordance with moral standards or *li*.⁴¹

This normative distinction between fact and oughtness, however, is not applicable to the ontological problem in relation to the category of human nature. In accordance with their mutual non-separability, the existence of sensory desires cannot be explained with *qizhi* alone but they must be viewed as the result of the combination of *li* and *qi*.⁴² Zhu also pointed out that because such sensory desires also do not “come to being by themselves” but must stem from an ultimate origin, this ultimate origin should be regarded as “so-of-itself of the Heavenly Principle” (*tianli zhi ziran* 天理之自然).⁴³ In this vein, Zhu Xi demarcated the bound of human nature as follows:

(a) Human nature is that which human beings receive from Heaven. (b) Its substance is nothing more than the principle of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. (c) Its manifestations including personal desires for food and sex also derive all from it (i.e., human nature).⁴⁴

Here, Part (a) as a definition of human nature suggests that all things that come from Heaven can be included in the category of human nature. In this light, personal desires for food and sex in Part (c) at their origin can be included in the range of human nature. In contrast, Part (b) limits the qualities of human nature to the cardinal virtues as *li*. A remaining question is how to explain the transition from Part (b) to Part (c).

Zhu occasionally encompassed sensory desires and their inclinations in the range of human nature, as in the following passage:

[Although such personal desires] are called human nature, they are, in fact, already not the original state of human nature. Nonetheless, the principles of such desires exist in human nature, therefore the mouth necessarily (*bi* 必) desires [good]

between them. For example, see *Zhuzi yulei* 61.1462.3 and 5.

37 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.1.

38 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.2.

39 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.1 and 5.

40 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.6.

41 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.5. Also see, *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1461.2 and 3 and 61.1465.1.

42 Zhu Xi, “Da Lin Dejiu 答林德久,” *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 61, 3167.

43 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1461.3.

44 Zhu Xi, *Mengzi huowen*, vol. 14, 505: “性者人之所受乎天者。其體則不過仁義禮智之理而已。其發則雖食色意欲之私。亦無不本於是焉。”

flavors, ... ; [these desires] naturally (*ziran* 自然) issue forth as such. Unless such principles existed, the mouth would not desire [good] flavors by itself (*zi* 自), ... the body would not desire comfort by itself.⁴⁵

In this statement, Zhu incorporated sensory desires into the range of principle, more specifically, the Heavenly Principle, and its reasons can be summarized as follows. The first is spontaneity. As seen in Yang Shi's account quoted in Section 4, sensory desires 'spontaneously' arise without the mediation of an agent's intention or will. Specifically, from the idea that the Heavenly Principle is the sole and ultimate origin of all naturalistic beings and functions of the entire world, it can be inferred that such spontaneous desires also stem from the Heavenly Principle. The second is universality. It is self-evident that such desires are universally common to all human beings, more universal even than morality, at least in the inductive sense. It was on this ground, in fact, that scholars in the Daoxue camp severely criticized Buddhist asceticism as a delusion. The third is necessity. As is discussed in the passage quoted above, the inclinations of sensory desires show a pattern of necessity, which resembles a natural law in its mode of manifestation. The fourth is logical validity. Not only are inclinations toward pleasant objects natural, but it is logically senseless to claim that one dislikes those which one feels favorable. The fifth is indispensability. Contrary to their self-interested aspects, desires for food and sex are crucial for the sustenance of a life and the continuance of human history. This line of reasoning suggests that sensory desires also can be understood within the category of the Heavenly Principle and its human counterpart, human nature.

Herein we have a seeming contradiction in relation to *qizhi zhi xing*. On the one hand, Zhu Xi adopted this concept to account for the mixture of good and non-good phenomena while defending the idea of the essential goodness of human nature. On the other hand, he incorporated sensory desires, which are essentially associated with *qizhi* in his scheme, into the range of principle and human nature. Such a mutually conflicting attitude toward human nature derives from the belief in the unity of human nature as the ultimate origin of all, which corresponds to the Great Ultimate. This belief is clearly attested in the following remark made by Cheng Yi:

In the world, there is absolutely nothing outside human nature (*wu xing wai zhi wu* 無性外之物). If one says that [the mind] has limit in its capacity, it means there can exist something outside human nature.⁴⁶

45 *Zhuzi yulei*, 61.1462.6: “這雖說道性，其實這已不是性之本原。惟性中有此理，故口必欲味，... 自然發出如此。若本無此理，口自不欲味，... 四肢自不欲安佚。”

46 Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Henan Chengshi yishu*, vol. 18, 204.1: 天下更無性外之物。若云有限量。除是性外有物始得。

Cheng here expanded the range of human nature infinitely. He identified it as a sole entity embracing all about the mind, which certainly includes sensory desires, emotions, and moral capacities of an agent. This idea is reminiscent of Cheng Hao's statement quoted in Section 3 that "it cannot be sad that the bad is not the nature."

Cheng Yi's idea of the all-inclusive unity of human nature seems inconsistent with the concept of *qizhi zhi xing*. Concerning the category of human nature, provided that a type of causal relationship between human nature and the bad is denied, a separate origin for the bad must be postulated, since the bad cannot come out of nothing. In addition, the origin of the bad should be posited outside the range of human nature as the sole origin of the good, because they are mutually incompatible. The most likely path taken by this line of thinking (including the path taken by both Zhao Qi and Zhang Zai) leads one to conclude that there are two co-existing origins, thus making human nature into a relative concept.⁴⁷ Therefore, in order to retain the perspective of the all-embracing unity of human nature, inborn sensory desires, which are responsible for the bad in the scheme of *qizhi zhi xing*, should be subordinated into the category of human nature. On the contrary, despite their qualities as principle, the non-moral tendencies of sensory desires cannot be simply equated with the manifestation of the goodness of human nature.

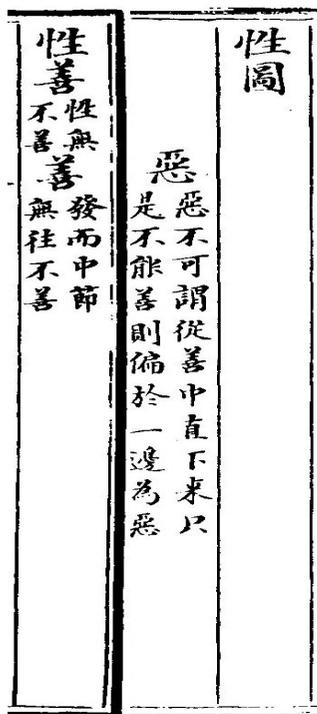
Furthermore, in relation to the thesis of the goodness of human nature, the idea of the unity of human nature seems to invoke an antinomy-like problem. In line with the concept of *qizhi zhi xing*, *qizhi* as the origin of the not-good is juxtaposed with human nature as an equal-status concept, and the former is not subordinated to the latter. As a result, the thesis of the goodness of human nature could be defended. Prior to Zhu's argument, anyone making the case for a fundamental unity of human nature would by definition have to include sensory desires within that unity, thus adulterating the pure goodness of human nature, since these desires had consistently been marked as the primary causes of immorality.

Nonetheless, Zhu Xi adopted Cheng Yi's idea of the all-embracing unity of human nature with little modification.⁴⁸ In the same vein, he also accepted Cheng Hao's controversial statement, "The good is originally the nature, but it cannot be said that the bad is not the nature." For him, the existence of moral disparities in accordance with disparities in the endowed *qizhi* did have place within "the principle of human nature" (*xing zhi li* 性之理), as he argued: "In the world, there is absolutely nothing outside human nature. Therefore, everything is good in its origin, but [more often than not] it comes to slant to the bad [in the manifestation process]."⁴⁹ Unlike his predecessors, however, Zhu Xi clearly recognized this problem and directly tackled it.

47 For this problem, see Zhu Xi, "Da Zhao Zhidao 答趙致道," *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 59, 3078-3079.

48 Zhu Xi, "Da Fan Bochong 答范伯崇," *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 39, 1808; *Zhuzi yulei*, 4.60.6.

49 Zhu Xi, "Mingdao lun xing shuo 明道論性說," *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 67, 3537-3538.

Figure 1: *Xing tu*

Zhu defended both the theses of the goodness of human nature and the unity of human nature by characterizing the bad as accidental anomalies, which arose in the process of manifestation only. As seen in the previous section, he restricted the range of the influence of *qizhi* to the manifestation process of human nature, and he claimed that it could not affect human nature itself. In a similar fashion, he identified the association between sensory desires and the bad as a matter of deviation in the manifestation process from human nature to conscious desires and the subsequent pursuit of these desires. He held that while sensory desires may bring about immoral consequences, sensory desires also contain the qualities as principle. Nor did he consider the bad to be an essential attribute of sensory desires.

Figuratively, Zhu contrasted this deviation with the direct manifestation of human nature. In the “Diagram of Human Nature” (*xing tu* 性圖) from Vol. 55 of the *Zhuzi yulei* (Figure 1: its author is not recorded),⁵⁰ the phrase of “human nature is good” (*xing shan* 性善) occupies the top,

and “the good” (*shan* 善) is placed right below it. In contrast, “the bad” (*e* 惡) is placed beside them with the note that “it cannot be said that the bad stems directly from the good [of human nature]; [in the case that the initial manifestation of human nature] cannot [eventually] be good but slants toward one side, [it] becomes bad.”⁵¹ In the same vein, concerning Guo Yong’s 郭雍 (1106-1187) “Diagram of Human Nature” (*xing tu* 性圖; also called *xing shan tu* 性善圖), Zhu commented that the diagram was wrong in juxtaposing the good and the bad below the words *xing shan* 性善, as if they equally stemmed from human nature; rather, the word “the bad” should be “placed beside” (*bangchu* 傍出) the good and “upside down” (*daoze* 倒著) “to show the bad is merely opposite to the good.”⁵² Zhu Xi thus contended that the bad has no separate origin but indicates a state of error that occurs in the process by which human nature becomes manifest (resembling the way that genetic mutations do not come into being from the

50 *Zhuzi yulei* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), 55.4b-5a.

51 *Zhuzi yulei*, 55.1308: “惡不可謂從善中直下來，只是不能善，則偏於一邊，為惡。”

52 *Zhuzi yulei*, 95.2429-2430. Also see, Zhu Xi, “Da Zhao Zhidao 答趙致道,” *Zhu Xi ji*, chap. 59, 3078-3079.

separate origin of mutation but from an imperfection or error in the process by which new organisms are generated.) In brief, he reconciled the seemingly contradictory theses of the goodness of human nature and the unity of human nature by way of re-identifying the bad associated with sensory desires as an inessential, erroneous occurrence.

7. Conclusion

Despite notable differences between them as individuals, the thoughts of Zhang Zai, Cheng Hao, and Cheng Yi merged into one intellectual tradition, called *Daoxue*, and the most fundamental underpinning of its doctrine consisted in the Mencian thesis of the goodness of human nature. Together with this doctrinal belief, however, Zhu Xi inherited diverse theoretical problems, which he had to address in order to reestablish the *Daoxue* tradition on a more solid foundation. Two interrelated issues were particularly prominent—(1) the wide disparities in individual moral characters against the universality of the goodness of human nature and (2) the category of human nature in relation to sensory desires, which were conventionally identified as the main cause of immorality.

Concerning the first issue, Zhu Xi placed far greater significance on *qizhi zhi xing* than Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi, the two thinkers who initially coined and employed the phrase. Zhu believed this concept was critical in verifying the thesis that “human nature is good.” From his perspective, long-lasting discourses on human nature up until then were fundamentally wrong in no small part due to their reliance on inductive approaches to human nature, which caused them reach different conclusions on the basis of differences in their observations. Mengzi was no exception. His claim was also grounded basically on fragmental empirical ‘clues’ such as “the four sprouts,” which he presupposed to be derived from human nature. From the beginning, therefore, it was inevitable that his claim was vulnerable to counterarguments based on counterexamples. In this light, Zhu observed that Mengzi’s argument lacked the necessary discussion of *qizhi zhi xing* and also pointed out that both Zhou Dunyi’s concept of the Supreme Ultimate and Cheng Yi’s equation of human nature with principle were insufficient in verifying the thesis of the goodness of human nature, since neither could provide a sufficient explanation for the vast empirical evidence of the occurrence of the bad.

For Zhu, *qizhi zhi xing* refers to the necessary combination of *qizhi* and human nature in distinction from human nature itself, which makes a notable contrast with Zhang Zai’s usage of it in the sense of the natural patterns of sensory desires. As Lee Sang Ik has accurately shown, Zhu’s conception of *qizhi zhi xing* is comprised of two parts: instinctive and sensory desires, on the one hand, and individual particularities and disparities, on the other. Of these two, Zhu’s focus falls more heavily on the

latter. This is largely because most previous discussions on human nature concentrated on defining it in terms of morality. In view of this tendency, Zhu found that the concept of *qizhi zhi xing* provided an appealing explanation for why disparities and particularities come to happen out of the universality of the goodness of human nature.⁵³ In Zhu's scheme, the concept of *qizhi zhi xing* enabled him to notionally 'confine' individual disparities and the mixture of good and bad to the empirical dimension of each person, thus redefining human nature itself as something beyond the phenomenological sphere as a whole.

Concerning the second issue, Zhu did not exclude sensory desires, which tend to slant to the bad, from the category of human nature and the Heavenly Principle. This view developed primarily from the process of unravelling the convoluted twists of the key concepts in the *Mengzi* 7B.24 and more immediately from his acceptance of Cheng Yi's claim that "there is absolutely nothing outside human nature." As seen above, sensory desires also could be characterized as the manifestations of human nature and the Heavenly Principle on the grounds of spontaneity, universality, necessity, logical validity, and indispensability. The critical difference between them lies only in morality, therefore this view tends to seriously undermine the thesis of the goodness of human nature.

Despite such a theoretical risk, Zhu Xi adopted the idea of the all-embracing unity of human nature from Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi and incorporated sensory desires into the category of human nature. Otherwise, he must have presupposed the existence of another distinct origin of sensory desires, which would eventually lead to the divide of human nature into two opposite subcategories, as Zhao Qi and Zhang Zai did so. While applying *qizhi zhi xing* to explain such mixtures as the good versus the bad, universality versus particularity, and perfection versus imperfection at the empirical level, Zhu defended the idea of human nature itself and the Heavenly Principle as the sole ultimate origin of pure goodness and all-embracing universality at the transcendental level. His strong belief in the sole ultimate origin is demonstrated in such ideas as the unity of human nature, the Supreme Ultimate, and the unity of the Principle and the diversity in its manifestations (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊).

In order to defend the idea of the unity of human nature, Zhu ontologically broke the conventional association between sensory desires and immorality and re-characterized the bad as accidental anomalies occurring in the manifestation process of human nature. As Lee Seung-Hwan has correctly pointed out, granted that human nature itself and the sensory desires stemming from *qizhi* both affect human consciousness and feelings although it is in opposite ways, and further granted that the influence of the latter appears in many cases to be more binding than the goodness of human nature, the focus of interpretation must be placed on the

53 Lee Sang Ik, "Juja gijil jiseongnon-ui yangmyeonseong-gwa toe-yul seongnihak," 78 and 93.

point that Zhu Xi identified the self-centered tendencies of sensory desires and their affects as variable nonessential features that can be regulated and changed through moral self-cultivation. Apparently, this line of interpretation cannot be completely free from the charge of confusion between fact and oughtness. Nonetheless, if such tendencies, which are correlated with the endowed *qizhi* of a person, are regarded as essential as human nature, this may lead to a sort of determinism in the sense that one's moral qualities and practices in life are largely predetermined by one's inborn qualities. In this vein, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi often concluded their discussions on *qizhi* and sensory desires with practical principles such as "thoroughly realizing human nature" (*jinxing* 盡性) and "preserving the Heavenly Principle and ridding personal desires" (*cun tianli, mie renyu* 存天理, 滅人欲). In their scheme, this view obtains its practical validity, because the changeable, nonessential qualities are attributed to *qizhi* and such tendencies.⁵⁴

In brief, as Kim Hansang has argued, both the ontological distinction between human nature itself and the non-essential features of *qizhi* and the immoral tendencies of sensory desires in Zhu's philosophy can be interpreted in the light of "distinctions in the levels of being."⁵⁵ In other words, what is important in relation to the thesis of the goodness of human nature is that the possibility of moral self-cultivation is postulated on the basis of the existence and function of the ultimate morality that empowers an agent to go beyond strong impulses arising from within and then guide them in the right direction. Therefore, Zhu Xi validated the possibility of moral cultivation on the ground of the incessant manifestations of the Heavenly Principle through human nature itself, which transcends the range of the influence of the personal *qizhi* but are directly connected to the ultimate source of all. He interpreted the phrase of "illuminating the luminous virtue" (*ming mingde* 明明德) as follows:

[The luminous virtue] may be restrained by the endowment of *qi* or concealed by human desire, so at times it will become obscured. Never, however, does its original luminosity cease. Therefore, the student should look to the light that emanates from it and seek to keep it unobscured, thereby restoring its original condition.⁵⁶

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54 Lee Seung-Hwan, "Inquiry on Zhu Xi's Theory of 'Transforming the Temperament,'" 139-167.

55 Kim Hansang, "Juhui seongnihak-ui hyeongisanghakjeok teuksaek-gwa hyeondae cheolhak," 57-85.

56 For translation, Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-Hsueh*, 89 with changes.

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氣質之性與一性論： ——朱熹的性善論論證

李定桓

中文摘要

孟子的性善論從發生初期就是道學最重要的理論基礎。盡管如此，道學內部對這一命題的論證過程還是體現出對於人的本性的道德規定與其範疇的複雜問題。具體來說，由於以普遍性和純粹道德性為前提，性善論看似與不善的發生和各大道德性的差異等經驗性的事實互相矛盾。為了解決這樣的問題，朱熹(1120-1200)重新概念化了張載和二程兄弟的理論：氣質之性與一性論觀念。

第一，朱子從普遍的人的本性和個人的氣質之間不相離的角度重新解釋了氣質之性的概念。通過這一解釋，朱子在個人稟賦氣質的差異對人的本性的發顯過程的影響觀點上，提出了對個人之間生得的道德資質的說明。同時，朱子從不相雜的觀點出發，把氣質的影響範圍限定在本性的發顯過程，而不及於本性本身(本然之性)。從而在概念上，使本性本身擺脫氣質的影響，由此從理論上論證性善論。

第二，為了在更堅定的基礎上重新樹立性善論，朱子有必要重新定義人的本性與感官欲求之間的關係。在傳統上，感官欲求被認為是不善的最重要原因。因此，兩者不能輕易包含在一個概念裏。一方面，如果把這兩者認定為獨立的兩個實體，這就將人的本性概念兩分為道德性和非道德性兩個獨立原因的下部範疇。這分明會弱化性善論。為了解決這個問題，朱子從本性外沒有一切事物的一性論的觀點出發，把感官欲求納入到人本性的範疇中，規定其特徵為：感官欲求的非道德傾向性不是從人的本性本身發生的，而是在其本性發顯過程中所發生的非本質的、偶然的、非正常的事態。

朱子通過對從道學初期持續而來的這兩個問題的解釋，最終在全中國知性史上首次對人的本性的道德性下了正論。

關鍵詞：氣質之性，性善論，一性論，不相離，不相雜，朱熹