

Editor's Introduction

The Day after Tomorrow—Zhu Xi's Posthumous Birth

As Nietzsche once suggested about himself in his forward to the *Anti-Christ*, some of us are destined to be born posthumously.¹ If Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) were of Nietzsche's mind, he might have written something similar of himself. But unlike the tradition in which Nietzsche found himself, the Chinese tradition would, as Roger Ames has stated, find things a bit differently from the need for such polemical style:

The Chinese intellectual tradition is generally characterized by a commitment to continuity. . . . In this traditional paradigm, a figure achieves prominence not from standing out in contrast to his historical influence but rather from the degree to which he embodies, expresses, and amplifies his tradition. (xii–xiii)

Zhu Xi was the embodiment of his culture and amplified the great natural, social, and intellectual culture that created him. Zhu Xi always remained a student, a *scholere*, our root for a scholar, of his culture and felt the continuity of the blood of its heritage as it flowed through him. So few scholars have made such an impact or such a significant contribution in the creation of the context in which they find themselves. Zhu Xi is what scholarship is all about: always to remain a student, yet always going beyond the horizon of what it means to just be a student.

Zhu Xi affected a momentous transformation in Chinese philosophy. He is often referred to as the *great synthesizer* who made, as Wing-tsit Chan once said, "Neo-Confucianism truly Confucian" (589) by overcoming Buddhist and Daoist influences and tendencies and returning, especially in the case of Buddhism, Chinese philosophy back to China; and in the case of Daoism, he turns the tradition back toward Confucius

and Mengzi. More than just a synthesizer, we wish to suggest in this book that Zhu Xi is a philosopher *par excellence*. All great thinkers find themselves in a particular context, and that context is always a historical one. There is no Aristotle without Plato, no Aquinas without Aristotle, and there is certainly no Nietzsche without any of them and so many more. Nietzsche was a student of his tradition, as Zhu Xi was of his, but unlike Zhu Xi, Nietzsche felt a deep-seated need to respond more forcefully to the dialectic tensions present in his tradition. Even Heidegger, who follows Nietzsche, needed to proclaim himself the heir to the "last metaphysician." Their need was justified in their contexts, but Zhu Xi's need was much different and was a more qualified gesturing to what he inherited. He needed to contend with the dominance of the presence of the perceived alien Buddhism of his day. Whether this is position is completely justified is irrelevant from our perspective because it presented the opportunity for one of the greatest Chinese thinkers to emerge. To be a philosopher is to be a scholar, but the transformation of a scholar to philosopher is, however, something quite unique.

It is to this uniqueness that we have put this book together. We do so to pay homage to one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived; we pay homage to one who has been often ignored by many of us devoted to Chinese philosophy. From Zhu Xi we received the Four Books; he wrote commentaries on them, engaged in textual exegesis, and offered interpretations on interpretations. He tendered new lenses through which to view his rich tradition and offered novel thoughts on what philosophy was all about by bringing what might be called *metaphysics* and *cosmology* in the West in attunement with ethical and social practice. His vision was a religious one, but one that went beyond being driven by just mere believing. His vision was a critical and intellectually rigorous one. It was vision about how to live in a transforming world of *li* 理, the emergent, immanent, and coherent patternings of the natural and human worlds. Zhu Xi fought against the corruption of his day and found himself facing execution with this political ignominy persisting until his death. It was only after his death that he was vindicated. Some are, indeed, born posthumously.

To pay homage to this great philosopher who saw all creativity as co-creativity, we have solicited some of the world's best Zhu Xi scholars from the English- and Chinese-speaking worlds. Some of our Chinese scholars have never been published into English before and it is our honor and privilege to bring them to an English readership. These are some of the best Zhu Xi scholars and philosophers in the Chinese-speaking world. We

are grateful to them for being a part of this volume: Zhang Liwen, Chen Lai, Liu Shu-Hsien, Meng Peiyuan, and Peng Guoxiang. Our translators have provided an invaluable service to this project and without them the project would never have come to fruition. To Andrew Lambert, Chen Kuan Hung, Eric Hanson, Eric Colwell, He Jinli, Daniel Coyle, and Yahui Anita Huang we extend our heartfelt gratitude. We are also appreciative of the efforts of Michael Ing who also worked on this project, but whose chapter needed to be withdrawn by its author for copyright reasons.

On the English-writing side we thank Joseph Adler, Yung Sik Kim, Kirill O. Thompson, Eiho Baba, John Berthrong, Stephen C. Angle, and Kwong-loi Shun for their dedication to Zhu Xi scholarship and superb contributions. Joseph Adler, Yung Sik Kim, John Berthrong, Stephen C. Angle, and Kwong-loi Shun are accomplished scholars who have devoted their lives to not only Zhu Xi's philosophy but to bringing Chinese philosophy to the foreground of the philosophical imagination in the West. Eiho Baba is a young and rising star and it is a delight on our parts to have him accompany such an august group of scholars. Kirill O. Thompson has likewise spent his life understanding and contributing his understanding of the Chinese philosophical tradition for Westerners. As my colleague and friend at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences at the National Taiwan University, I am most grateful for all he has done for me. To Huang Chun-chieh, the renowned Confucian scholar and dean of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, I am deeply grateful for his support, mentorship, and contributions of always understanding "Confucianism" in the richly diverse pluralism it truly is. He has honored me by his invitation to be a visiting scholar at the institute. Finishing this book was made possible by Dean Huang and the Institute. Likewise, I am appreciative of Kennesaw State University, my home institution, for providing me with time away from teaching and other professorial duties to accept Huang Chun-chieh's kind invitation. I am especially grateful to my chair, Alice Pate, for her support. My gratitude also extends to He Jinli for managing and overseeing the translations of the book's Chinese scholars.

Throughout the text we have followed the East Asian practice of name placement for those scholars who would be more easily recognized by placing their family name first; for others, we have used the State University of New York practice of name order and have placed family names second. In our selection of contributors, we have also allowed a shared scholarly context to drive us mostly because this is a direct

outcome of the nature of how Zhu Xi scholarship has developed in both China (and East Asia) as well as in the United States. The range of perspectives contained in this book is therefore somewhat uniform in the sense that we looked for contributions that would resonate together and celebrate a harmonious return to Zhu Xi's philosophy and scholarship. Our hope is that this returning, this turning again, to Zhu Xi's philosophy will foster a regeneration of interest in this great thinker's understanding of the natural and social worlds of humans and their others. Ours is a time when such a return is needed.

Given the various philosophical approaches in Western philosophy, the encounter with Chinese philosophy is bound to represent different angles or hermeneutical lenses of interpretation and philosophical application. Zhu Xi scholarship in particular (and neo-Confucianism in general), at least in the United States, has been relatively underrepresented in comparison to the more popular investigations of Confucianism and Daoism. This situation, for example, precludes having a more singular approach to Zhu Xi's philosophy. From the outset we were committed to interfering as little as possible with authors' voices, styles, and methodologies and wanted to be inclusive of any diversity that presented itself. We extended this same liberty to translators and their rendering of Chinese terms and the translation of chapters. In this regard, we tried to match translators with Chinese scholars who we thought would be most compatible given the content of their essays. The Chinese language is one of the most difficult of all languages to translate, so there will always be disagreements over how certain key terms should be rendered in English. Although we did consider requiring an absolute consistency of the translation of terms, we opted against this autocratic approach. We wished to avoid forcing translations into settings of contrivance and artificiality that might very well have deleterious consequences on the essays. A downside of this more open approach, especially to readers less familiar with the Chinese language, will be some variability and apparent unavoidable inconsistencies.

Finally, He Jinli and I are most grateful to Roger T. Ames for his introduction to this volume and for all the contributions he has made to the advancement of understanding Chinese philosophy and culture. He always conducts his scholarship in the creative spirit of Zhu Xi.

David Jones, Taipei

Notes

1. The full quote is: "Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some are born posthumously." R. J. Hollingdale. 1968. *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 114.

References

- Ames, Roger T. 1983. *The Art of Rulership: A Study in Ancient Chinese Political Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. 1963. *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.