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Return to Unity: The Philosophy of Lo Ch'in-shun

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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Paul E. Devore for the Master of Arts in History were presented July 6, 1995, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Paul E. Devore for the Master of Arts in History presented on July 6, 1995.

Title: Return to Unity: The Philosophy of Lo Ch'in-shun.

After the fall of the Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.), Confucian thought did not become influential again until the end of the T'ang dynasty (618-907) and the beginning of the Sung dynasty (960-1279). Its resurgence in the Sung was accompanied by, if not completely driven by a newly conceived system of metaphysics. Although Sung Confucians honored and frequently referred to Confucius and Mencius, metaphysics was their central concern.

Lo Ch'in-shun, a Confucian in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), saw inconsistencies between traditional Confucian thought and the thought of Sung Confucians. He viewed himself as orthodox and thought it was his duty as a Confucian to fight heterodox thought, and to resolve the inconsistencies within Confucian thought and return it to unity. His philosophy was a product of his approach to these duties and is the subject of this study.

Lo's efforts to return to unity can be seen in his work *Knowledge Painfully Acquired* (K'un-chih chi). After

discussing Lo's social context, the following four questions provide a framework to examine his philosophy: 1) Given that there is only one Way, what is the Way that runs through the realms of heaven-and-earth and man? 2) Of what does human nature consist? 3) How is it that Mencius said that human nature is good and yet there is evil in the world? and 4) What is the mind(*hsin*), and how does a man cultivate it to enable him to become a sage? Comparing Lo's views with Confucian thinkers who preceded him provides answers to the questions, and assists in defining Lo's thought.

These answers and comparisons show the significant shifts away from Sung Confucian thought contained in Lo's philosophy, but they also show his desire to return to unity. He strove to return to unity not only for himself, but more importantly, for the ultimate good of Confucianism and society.

RETURN TO UNITY:
THE PHILOSOPHY OF LO CH'IN-SHUN

by
PAUL E. DEVORE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

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1995

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INTRODUCTION

The formulation and development of the Neo-Confucian metaphysics used by later Confucian scholars began in China in the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). Five Confucian scholars¹ were later recognized as the masters of the Sung and credited with the construction of the metaphysics. By the end of the Sung, two distinct schools of thought had emerged from within Confucianism. Those who followed Lu Hsiang-shan (Chiu-yuan, 1139-1193),² were grouped with followers of the Ming Confucian Wang Yang-ming (Shou-jen, 1472-1529)³ under the rubric of the Lu-Wang school. The other school of thought, the Ch'eng-Chu school, centered on the philosophies, writings, and commentaries of Ch'eng I (1033-1107) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200). The Ch'eng-Chu tradition, specifically Chu Hsi's commentaries on the Confucian classics, later became the established orthodoxy of the Chinese empire.

¹Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 588-9. The five masters of the Sung are Chou Tun-i (Chou Lien-hsi, 1017-1073), Chang Tsai (Chang Heng-ch'u, 1020-1077), Ch'eng Hao (Ch'eng Ming-tao, 1032-1085), Ch'eng I (Ch'eng I-ch'uan, 1033-1107), and Chu Hsi (Chu Yüan-hui, 1130-1200).

²Irene Bloom, trans., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired: The K'un-chih chi by Lo Ch'in-shun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 222.

³Ibid., 225.

The Lu-Wang school emphasized the mind, and held that the knowledge a scholar needed to seek was inherent within one's own mind. To obtain this knowledge one needed to concentrate on uncovering it within oneself, and not search for it in external things. In contrast, the Ch'eng-Chu school concentrated on things beyond the self--textual materials, human affairs, daily life and the like. The differences between the two schools are often spoken of as internal versus external, subjective versus objective, or "anti-intellectual" versus "intellectual." The two schools are conventionally identified as, respectively, Lu-Wang and Ch'eng-Chu, and while the division helps to discuss some of the differences within Confucianism it is important to bear in mind that they are heuristic devices and should not be taken as simple divisions with no common ground.

In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Lo Ch'in-shun (1465-1547)⁴ emerged as a important follower of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition. Lo's significance lay in his commitment to orthodoxy and in his philosophy and the changes it entailed. Orthodoxy for Lo meant a concern for the dispositions, purposes, and motives of his predecessors. His goal of returning Confucian thought to a unity caused him to make philosophical changes that would allow for unity. Two significant changes were in Lo's conception of the relationship of *li* (principle) and *ch'i* (material

⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

force), and his conception of nature.

Lo assumed the traditional Confucian goals of working within the government to help bring about a harmonious and orderly society and the necessity of self-cultivation to make that possible. Some orthodox scholars in the Ming may have lived and espoused philosophies within the perceived confines of the orthodoxy of their day, but did so only to further their goals of wealth, power, and status. Other orthodox scholars followed the teachings of their Sung predecessors diligently, but did so in a manner of blind obedience without questioning or thinking. Orthodoxy could be limited by adhering to the letter of the law according to Chu Hsi's commentaries for material gain or out of blind obedience, but Lo looked at the bigger picture and went beyond such a limited views. While Neo-Confucian scholars of the Sung still looked to Confucius, Mencius and the written classics, many were primarily devoted to speculative philosophy and metaphysics.

Lo thought it was his duty not only to continue the thought of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, but to develop it and to revive the significance of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), Mencius (371-289 B.C.?). Lo aimed to integrate the thought of the Sung with the thought of traditional Confucianism to restore a continuity to Confucian thought as a whole.

Focused on this goal of restoring a continuity to Confucian thought as a whole, Lo began to formulate his

philosophy. As his thought developed, he saw what he considered to be inconsistencies and problems in the philosophies of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. Lo thought highly of both men, but felt they had not been able to complete their philosophies and resolve the inconsistencies which would allow for total continuity. In attempting to remove these inconsistencies, Lo's philosophy shifted away some from the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, even though the final goals remained the same. Lo's thought differed from those he sought to follow not because his philosophy was an intentional shift away from theirs, but because he furthered the process they had begun in bringing a continuity to Confucian thought as a whole. Another way of stating this search for continuity is that his desire was to "return to unity." For Lo, this meant the establishment of a continuity from the thought of Confucius and Mencius through the five major Neo-Confucian thinkers of the Sung dynasty⁵ to his day.

Irene Bloom, who translated Lo's *K'un-chih chi* (Knowledge Painfully Acquired), writes of the prominence of the idea "returning to unity" or "recovering the ultimate unity" as the guiding theme throughout the work. She points out that, as an idea, this can be construed historically as

⁵Wm. Theodore deBary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and the Seventeenth Century 'Enlightenment.'" In Wm. Theodore deBary, ed., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 190.

well as metaphysically, epistemologically, and morally.⁶

In Lo's view, those who did not perceive the unity of all nature or the continuity of knowledge and morality inflicted a kind of conceptual injury on the oneness of things, which he sought through his philosophy of *ch'i*.⁷ The effort Lo exerted to "return to unity" himself was equaled by and driven by his desire to resolve all the contradictions which could be seen as dividing the Sung Neo-Confucians from Confucius, Mencius, and their forbearers in the classical past.⁸

Lo's attempts to recover the ultimate unity caused his philosophy to differ from those in whose footsteps he faithfully tried to follow. Yet he placed himself within the orthodox Ch'eng-Chu tradition, and believed that he was merely putting the finishing touches on what his predecessors had been unable to complete. His thought was not a departure from the orthodox tradition but more like the efforts of a filial son trying to put together a puzzle left to him by his ancestors. Understanding how he did this is the intent of this study.

Although information regarding Lo's life is relatively scarce, it is important to establish the context of his thought through the setting of his life, particularly his

⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 21.

⁷*Ibid.*, 46-7.

⁸*Ibid.*, 22.

intellectual influences and professional career. Chapter One deals primarily with the general social context of the Ming and how Lo fit into it. The chapter provides a brief summary of Lo's life in government service, Ming society and culture, Ming politics, and the role of scholar-officials. It contains some of Lo's views of government and what government needed to do, the significance of Buddhism and Taoism. Other Confucian scholars of Lo's day are discussed in order to frame what was distinct about his thought.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four discuss Lo's philosophy within the context of four basic questions addressed by eleventh century thinkers.⁹ Lo lived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the questions are relevant to Lo's philosophy because he needed to deal with issues of the Sung in order to "return to unity."

Chapter Two answers the first of Kasoff's questions and develops the basic foundation of Lo's philosophy. The question is, given that there is only one Way, what is the Way that runs through the realms of heaven-and-earth and man? The answer begins with Lo's monistic conception of *li* (principle) and *ch'i* (material force), with *li* being an aspect of *ch'i* and not separate from it. This was a significant shift away from the positions of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. The chapter continues by considering Lo's

⁹Ira E. Kasoff, *The Thoughts of Chang Tsai(1020-1077)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11. The four questions are ones proposed by Kasoff.

understanding of the phrase "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," and ends with a discussion of the Great Ultimate and *yin* and *yang*.

Upon this basic foundation of Lo's philosophy, chapter Three deals with the second question: of what does human nature consist? The answer involves central implications of Lo's philosophy, specifically his monism of *ch'i*. This chapter concerns his conception of the physical nature (*ch'i-chih chih hsing*) as being the same as heavenly nature (*t'ien-li*), not separate as was previously held. This position led to his view that feelings and emotions were natural and not inherently detrimental. The chapter also includes a brief discussion of Lo's view of equilibrium, and a discussion of his stance on the relationship of mind and the one nature.

Chapter Four deals with the last two questions. Kasoff's third question--how is it that Mencius said that human nature is good and yet there is evil in the world?--is examined first. Here I deal with Lo's conception of why evil exists in the world, and his view of the ultimate goal one seeks in overcoming evil, humanity (*jen*). The last question is what is the mind (*hsin*), and how does a man cultivate it to enable him to become a sage? The answer to this question lies in Lo's view of self-cultivation, his interpretation of the "investigation of things" (*ko-wu*), and the significance of sense knowledge.

The final chapter discusses the issue of Lo's orthodoxy. His reputation of being orthodox came not so much from his desire to "return to unity," but from a vigilant fight against heterodox thought, specifically that of Wang Yang-ming and Buddhism. Lo clearly saw himself as orthodox, but not all scholars have agreed. The chapter thus concludes with some of Lo's views of himself and his notions in regard to orthodoxy, as well as some opinions of twentieth century scholars.

CHAPTER 1

Lo Ch'in-shun and Ming Society

Lo Ch'in-shun was born in T'ai-ho county in Kiangsi province on December 25, 1465,¹ during the Ch'eng-hua (r.1465-1487) reign period.² He was the eldest of three sons born to Lo Yung-chün (d.1523).³ In his earlier years he was drawn to Ch'an Buddhism, and had a meditative experience consistent with those written about and called "enlightenment." He described it as a "vision" (*kuang-ching*).⁴ After this experience, though, he later returned to the Ch'eng-Chu tradition and developed his philosophy much along the same intellectual vein as Chu Hsi.⁵

¹Irene Bloom, "On the 'Abstraction' of Ming Thought: Some Concrete Evidence from the Philosophy of Lo Ch'in-shun." In Wm. Theodore deBary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 72.

²James B. Parsons, "The Ming Dynasty Bureaucracy: Aspects of Background Forces," *Monumenta Serica*, vol.XXII(1963): 402.

³*Ibid.*, 3. Lo's brothers were Lo Ch'in-te (1472-1550) and Lo Ch'in-chung (1476-1529).

⁴Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 74.

⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

To enter into service as a government official in the Ming, most participated in the civil service examinations. There were three steps or exams to the process: the provincial exam (*hsiang-shih*), the metropolitan exam (*hui-shih*), and the palace exam (*t'ing-chih*).⁶ Upon successfully completing the palace exam one received the *chin-shih* degree, and was guaranteed a position in service of the government. The extremely competitive conditions of the exams in the Ming can be seen from the statistic that only the an average of 276 passed the metropolitan exam each time it was administered, which occurred once every three years.⁷ This is quite a small number when compared to the 1393 population of 60,545,812.⁸ The number reflects those who passed the metropolitan exam and not the palace exam, which increases the significance of the statistic.

In 1492, Lo placed first in his provincial exam. Then after passing the metropolitan exam, he went on to pass the palace exam in 1493. Not only did he pass, but he placed

⁶Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 81.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Ping-ti Ho, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 10. Ho argues that the population was much likely higher than the reported numbers since the taxes for a given area were figured according to the reported population for that area. Kang Chao estimates that the population of 1592 was around 200 million. Kang Chao, *Man and Land in Chinese History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 41.

third, a rank formally honored with the title *t'an-hua*.⁹ The scholars that placed in the top three were automatically given positions in the Hanlin Academy, a scholarly institution closely tied to the highest levels of the central government. Placement within the top three also helped many to secure a position in either the Grand Secretariat or the offices of the Ministry of Rites,¹⁰ one of the six ministries at the highest level of the central government accessible to scholar-officials.

Lo's success in the palace exam led to an automatic appointment to the Hanlin Academy. The Hanlin Academy was responsible for drafting and editing work in the preparation of the more ceremonial imperial pronouncements, and for the compilation of imperially sponsored historical and other works.¹¹ Lo was initially granted the rank of Hanlin compiler, but his duties surely varied in the nine years from his initial appointment to the Hanlin Academy until he was promoted to a position outside of the Academy in 1502.

Lo was promoted in 1502 to the position of Director of Studies at the Imperial University in Nanking. While acting as the Director of Studies, Lo concurrently filled the

⁹James B. Parsons, "The Ming Dynasty Bureaucracy: A Supplementary Analysis," *Monumenta Serica*, vol. XXIX (1970-1): 470. The titles for the first and second place ranking in the palace exam are *chuang-yüan* and *pang-yen*, respectively.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Hucker, *Dictionary*, 223, #2154.

position of Chancellor of the university for a time until the appointed Chancellor finished observing his period of mourning.¹²

The position of Director of Studies was the second executive official of the central government's Directorate of Education and carried the rank of 6a.¹³ This office generally supervised the directorate's instructional programs, and dictated educational policy for all state supported local schools.¹⁴

It was during his time at the Imperial University in Nanking that Lo began an extensive program of readings of the classical texts, which gradually led him to his conclusions about the nature of reality and of knowledge.¹⁵ Although Lo only remained at this position until 1504, it was said of him and the Chancellor Chang Mou (1437-1522)

¹²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 2.

¹³Hucker, *Dictionary*, 459, #5821. The ranking system, known as the nine ranks, were categories into which all officials and the posts they occupied were divided for puposes of determining prestige, compensation, priority in court audience, etc. The lowerer the number used to designate the rank, the higher the position. Ranks from 4 to 9 were considered lesser ranks. Ranks were commonly subdivided into 2 classes (teng, chi, chieh), first class (*cheng*) and 2nd class (*ts'ung*); and the lesser ranks from 4 through 9 were often further subdivided into upper grades (*shang*) and lower grades (*hsia*), p.177, #1315. The subdivision of each rank into upper (first class, *cheng*) and lower (2nd class, *ts'ung*) is seen in the designation of a and b, respectively. For example the rank of 6 would be subdivided into 6a and 6b, p.4-5.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 74.

that, "Through personal uprightness they established their leadership, and the university flourished during this period."¹⁶

Lo left his position at the university in 1504 to return home and care for his father, who had become ill. Lo sent a memorial to the throne in 1505 to request an extended leave to care for his father until his death.¹⁷ The memorial was officially denied in 1507, but Lo elected to remain with his father anyway and submitted another petition.¹⁸ The memorial and Lo's disregard for the denial, angered Liu Chin, the eunuch in power at court at the time, and in 1508 Liu stripped Lo of his rank and office.¹⁹ This relegated Lo to the status of a commoner.

Liu Chin was executed in 1510, and Lo was restored to his post. In the next year, Lo was appointed Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices in Nanking.²⁰ The Court of Imperial Sacrifices was supervised by the Ministry of Rites, and was foremost in prestige among the courts of

¹⁶Julia Ching, ed., *The Records of Ming Scholars* by Huang Tsung-hsi, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 213-4.

¹⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 2.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 71. The eunuch Liu Chin also exiled the two prominent Ming thinkers Wang Yang-ming and Wang T'ing-hsiang (1474-1544).

²⁰Ching, 214.

the central government.²¹ The role of vice minister had a rank 3a.²²

In 1515, Lo received another promotion to the position of Junior Vice Minister of Personnel in Nanking. After arriving at this position in 1515, Lo remained in the Ministry of Personnel until he left government service in 1523. From 1515-1523, he received three more promotions, but all were within the Ministry of Personnel. In 1519, he became Senior Vice Minister of Personnel in Nanking, then in 1521 succeeded to Senior Vice Minister of Personnel in Peking, and finally was elevated to Minister of Personnel in Nanking.²³

The head of the Ministry of Personnel was considered the senior minister of all the ministers of the six ministries, and had ritual precedence over his counterparts.²⁴ The position of minister had a rank of 2a.²⁵ The duties of the Ministry of Personnel included: promotions, demotions, titles, and honors of civil officials and subofficial functionaries.²⁶ As a minister, Lo was one of the most eminent members of the general administrative

²¹Hucker, *Dictionary*, 476, #6145.

²²*Ibid.*, 427, #5278.

²³Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 71.

²⁴Hucker, *Dictionary*, 318-9, #3805.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 306, #3630.

²⁶*Ibid.*

hierarchy and directly responsible to the emperor, although ministers in general were subordinate to the Grand Secretaries.²⁷

Lo left office in 1523 to mourn the death of his father. Upon the completion of the mourning period, he was called to fill the position of Minister of Rites, which he refused. He then received the appointment to his former position of Minister of Personnel, but again he refused to return to service. According to the *History of the Ming Dynasty (Ming shih)*, Lo declined these positions because he did not want to be associated with the men who were influential at that time.²⁸ After these refusals, Lo was granted his request for retirement in 1527.²⁹

It was not until after Lo's political career was over that he became a productive scholar.³⁰ Since this was the case, there is little evidence to show how Lo's thought progressed and developed over the years.³¹ After being granted his request for retirement, Lo spent the last twenty years of his life at home in quiet study and reflection. These studies concentrated on the classical Confucian canon, the works of Sung Neo-Confucians, the writings of earlier

²⁷*Ibid.*, 410-1, #5042.

²⁸Bloom, *Knowledge*, 4.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

³¹*Ibid.*, 9.

Ming Confucians, and Buddhist texts.³²

Lo contributed various works to the Confucian tradition, but his major work, first published in 1528, was the *K'un-chih chi* (Knowledge Painfully Acquired). This work was a collection of reading notes and reflections on philosophy and history.³³ Since Lo was sixty-three when the work was first published Bloom describes it as a mature work; one that clearly displays the years of study and contemplation of a man of intense seriousness and incisive intelligence.³⁴

Lo wrote of, and primarily for, his contemporaries and the Confucian tradition,³⁵ as evidenced by the final note in a letter he wrote to Wang Yang-ming, which read,

When I first wrote this letter I had intended to reply to an invitation extended by Yang-ming in the past year for me to give a public lecture. Before the letter was sent out Yang-ming had died. Alas! My humble views are all stated here, and, feeling that our exchange was not a private matter only, I record this.³⁶

After the original publication of the *K'un-chih chi* in

³²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 71. Some of the writings of earlier Ming Confucians include those of Wu Yü-pi (1392-1469), Hu Chü-jen (1434-1484), and Ch'en Hsien-chang (1428-1500).

³³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, 13.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 188.

1528, Lo made additions to it in 1531, 1533, 1538, and 1546.³⁷ In the additions and supplements to his work, Lo did not make any substantial changes nor shifts in emphasis.³⁸ Bloom notes, though, that this continual study up until the time of his death strongly suggests his belief that intellectual and spiritual growth were achieved at the cost of diligence and painstaking effort.³⁹

Although the *K'un-chih chi* was Lo's major work, it was not the only scholarly work produced by Lo. Other of his writings were combined with the *K'un-chih chi* in 1622 to form the *Lo Cheng-an ts'un-kao* (Literary Remains of Lo Ch'in-shun). These remains were a collection of essays, poetry and occasional writings, which formed the *Lo Wen-chuang ho-chi* (Collected Works of Lo Ch'in-shun).⁴⁰

Shortly after his death on May 13, 1547, Lo was given the title Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent (*T'ai-tzu t'ai-pao*), and the posthumous name *Wen-chuang*.⁴¹ Then in 1724, Lo's tablet was placed in the Confucian temple.⁴²

Bloom writes that all accounts of his life reflect his intense seriousness and scrupulous sense of personal

³⁷*Ibid.*, 4.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

³⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 72.

⁴⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, 11.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 4.

⁴²*Ibid.*

integrity, qualities that seem to have guided both his intellectual life and his official career.⁴³ A confirmation of this can be found in a brief account of Lo's life and philosophy in the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an* (The Records of Ming Scholars). This work, written and compiled by Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695), also contains some thoughts written by Liu Tsung-chou (1578-1645).⁴⁴

Lo strove to return Confucian thought to unity as he himself sought to recover the ultimate unity, but according to the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an* he was not specifically affiliated with any other Confucians. Both Huang and Liu followed the thought of Lo's philosophical adversary, Wang Yang-ming. In the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*, scholars were grouped with their teachers and disciples, and yet twenty percent of those in the work, including Lo, were classified under the heading miscellaneous.⁴⁵ Julia Ching, the translator of the work, feels this displays the vitality of Ming thought and the independence of mind of many philosophers and scholars.⁴⁶

The miscellaneous category was constructed of those who learned from the classics but had no known teachers, those who relied upon friends for support but could not be classified with their friends, or those who flourished for

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Ching, 4.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

a time but had no disciples to carry on.⁴⁷ Despite Lo's view of himself as an orthodox Confucian, he does not seem to have had a single influential teacher, nor did he leave any significant disciple to carry on his thought. This was an interesting situation for one who attained positions of considerable political power, had a high reputation for his virtue, and strove to return Confucian thought to unity. Though Lo's actions, his orthodoxy, and his philosophical strivings were admirable, they apparently did not provide a style of life that appealed to others living in the Ming. He chose a difficult and demanding path to follow, one which was in step with the Confucian teachings, but out of step with the lifestyle and goals that were current in the Ming.

Ming Society and Culture

The founder of the Ming dynasty, Emperor Hung-wu(r.1368-1398),⁴⁸ came from a peasant background. From his origins, he grew in power through a Buddhist organization, and ascended the throne of the Chinese empire. In his rule, he accentuated the rustic simplicity of an

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁸Charles O. Hucker, ed., *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 1. The emperor's temple name was T'ai-tsu and his personal name was Chu Yüan-chang. Irene Bloom gives the reign dates for Hung-wu as 1368-1399, *Knowledge*, 219.

agrarian society,⁴⁹ set the tone for the dynasty. After acquiring the title of emperor, he also conducted a series of purges that affected the entire social elite from the imperial court to rural communities, with casualties that have been estimated to be over 100,000.⁵⁰

Largely because of these purges and the confiscations of the lands of the victims, the empire became a nation of small independent farmers.⁵¹ The emperor's peasant origins and his desire for a social levelling also can be seen in his desire to provide education available to all. He wanted no one to monopolize the benefits of education, and therefore he established community schools in every county.⁵² These schools provided functional literacy.

By 1465, attendance was voluntary for those who were impoverished,⁵³ but publishers and authors tried to attract semi-literate readers by lavishly illustrating their books, writing in an informal vernacular style, and adding explanations and keys to pronunciations for difficult

⁴⁹Ray Huang, *1587, A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 142.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 143.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Joanna F. Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought: The Reorientation of Lü K'un and Other Scholar Officials*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 25.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 25 n.55.

characters.⁵⁴

In an analysis of the Ming bureaucracy, James Parsons, notes that Ming society was so thoroughly peasant dominated so as to be described as "uni-class."⁵⁵ He further notes, though, that it was also the most socially mobile society in the pre-modern world.⁵⁶ It was a society which, because of the mobility, experienced extensive corruption. Those who succeeded in getting official positions in the government often acted corruptly because they knew that they might be the only members of their clan to ever attain an official position.⁵⁷ Wm. Theodore deBary points to the sixteenth century as the apogee of upward mobility for merchant families ascending into the bureaucracy.⁵⁸ Social mobility not only meant the possibility of ascending, but also descending. There were opportunities, but also insecurities, anxieties, and uncertainties.⁵⁹ There were constant changes in the political and economic fortunes of

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁵Parsons, 'Supplementary,' 472.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 476.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 477.

⁵⁸Wm. Theodore deBary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought." In Wm. Theodore deBary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 172.

⁵⁹Kristin Yü Greenblatt, "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism in the Late Ming." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 121.

people and their families.⁶⁰

Social mobility and educational developments gave rise to two popular forms of literature: encyclopedias and morality books.⁶¹ Encyclopedias were intended for those interested in taking the civil service examinations and consisted mainly of model essays, but many types of encyclopedias existed.⁶² They had existed in the Sung and Yuan dynasties but gained popularity in the Ming.⁶³ Morality books, however, were concerned with the daily lives of common people, and display the popular syncretism of the day.⁶⁴

By the late Ming, widespread literacy gave rise to associations engaged in literature, poetry, and drinking. There was a spread of high culture through the literary societies which sponsored the writing and printing of poetry in the classical *shih* form by merchants and artisans.⁶⁵ Another literary medium which helped to spread culture were plays, the heroes of which tended to be sentimental and

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Tadao Sakai, "Confucianism and Popular Educational Works." In deBary, *Self*, 331.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 332-3.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 338.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 344-5. The syncretism attempted to combine the thought of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

⁶⁵deBary, "Individualism," 172.

firmly attached to Confucian and romantic values.⁶⁶

The spread of literacy also meant competition for the attention of readers, which gave rise to simplified versions of the Confucian classics, practical household handbooks, and vernacular fiction.⁶⁷ The fiction dealt with the popular topics of religious salvation, and supernatural fantasies, tales of crime and passion, heroic adventures and erotic love stories.⁶⁸ Not only did competition for the attention of readers result in a variety of things to read, but it also meant more possible alternatives to choose from in how one lived one's life.

The spread of literacy and social mobility can be seen in a positive light, but the rise of popular literature and culture also reduced the impact of the traditional values of high culture. Lo's notion of achieving sagehood and the process that one must go through was a life-long one that took determination and serious effort. One of his common criticisms was of those that he thought were intimidated by the difficulties and sought shortcuts. Lo's approach could not have attracted many if things were as Joanna Handlin notes. She writes, whereas the traditional assumption that the goal of achieving sagehood or moral perfection was

⁶⁶C.T. Hsia, "Time and the Human Condition in the Plays of T'ang Hsien-tsu." In deBary, *Self*, 262.

⁶⁷Handlin, 26.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

difficult, as literacy spread this assumption gave way to the belief that learning should be widespread, pleasurable, and easy.⁶⁹

With the increased number of reading choices and the attractive lives found in fiction, it seems natural that few would follow the arduous path that Lo had chosen to travel. For Lo, the path to sagehood included numerous problems and hardships. For Wang Yang-ming and his followers who accepted the concept of *liang-chih* (innate knowledge), the streets were theoretically filled with sages. Handlin notes a general feeling of the times in the late Ming that in former times sages appeared only every few centuries, but now filled the streets. Students who were loathe to make sacrifices for their education were reassured that the road to enlightenment or sagehood was not blocked by wine, women, wealth, and passion.⁷⁰ These were ideas that had become popular by late Ming, but ones that Lo had feared and warned against.

Ming Politics

Despite the development of commerce, urban life, and popular culture, Ming China was predominantly an agrarian society whose government was structured to be simple, strict, and realistic. Ray Huang notes that Emperor

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

Hung-wu's rigid commitment to simplicity severely restricted its competence in dealing with a wide range of problems.⁷¹

Previous to his ascending to the throne, Emperor Hung-wu had been a Buddhist monk. When he first began to solidify his power, he appointed Buddhist monks who were well-versed in Confucianism to official posts until he earned more widespread support among the scholar-officials.⁷² Although he rose in power through a Buddhist group, his association with this group may have been more for the power it provided than because of religious devotion. He tried to limit the economic power and influence of both Buddhist and Taoist establishments, because he saw them as potentially subversive. He used ideas from each, but only the aspects that he thought supported the central government in maintaining social unity and order.⁷³ His suspicions led to constant scrutiny and control of Buddhist and Taoist groups.

Emperor Hung-wu not only tried to control religious groups, but also began to create an empire that was the exclusive domain of the emperor and his family, with little

⁷¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 143.

⁷²Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 47.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 48.

emphasis on the people.⁷⁴ His position was strengthened by the elimination of the old generals and officials who had helped him rise to power.⁷⁵ The growth of authoritarianism in the Ming led to what Robert Crawford considered to be the peak of imperial autocracy in Chinese history.⁷⁶

James Parsons divides the Ming into six periods.⁷⁷ Lo happened to live in the two periods described as the beginning of decline and decided decline, a fertile time for religious growth but not necessarily for a hard-driving advocate of Confucianism and the painstaking work it demanded. Derk Bodde describes the political situation of the period Parsons called the period of decided decline as an age of growing maladministration, corruption, internal oppression, and external weakness.⁷⁸ This situation gradually led to an abundance of cases of official corruption, legal injustice, and gentry oppression of the

⁷⁴Robert B. Crawford, Harry M. Lanley, and Albert B. Mann. "Fang Hsiao-ju in the Light of Early Ming Society," *Monumenta Serica*, vol.XV(1956): 318.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 324.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 318.

⁷⁷Parsons, "Aspects," 347. The periods are as follows: 1368-1402, the period of initial instability; 1403-1449, the period of greatest stability; 1450-1505, the beginning of the decline of the Ming; 1506-1566, the period of decided decline; 1567-1620, a time of moderate recovery; and 1621-1644, the final decline.

⁷⁸Sung-peng Hsu, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Han-shan Te-Ch'ing, 1546-1623*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), vii.

common people.⁷⁹

Lo praised the first emperor because of his understandings of Buddhism and Taoism, and the establishment of a Confucian based government.⁸⁰ Confucianism received a boost in 1415 when the government compiled an official anthology of orthodox Ch'eng-Chu writings.⁸¹ Not all emperors, though, favored Confucianism, nor trusted the scholar-officials.

The Emperor Cheng-te (r.1505-1521), who ascended the throne in 1505, when Lo was beginning his official career, played down Confucianism. Although he reigned until 1521, the peace and welfare of the state did not seem to be his primary concern. Instead of following the Confucian guidelines for a ruler, he surrounded himself with eunuchs, courtesans, lamaist monks, and magicians from other lands.⁸²

One of the biggest changes of the Ming government, one that shifted more power into the emperor's hands occurred in 1380. In that year, a failed attempt to usurp the throne drastically changed the ruler-minister relationship.⁸³

⁷⁹Greenblatt, 119.

⁸⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, 111.

⁸¹Berling, 106.

⁸²Huang, 76.

⁸³Frederic Wakeman Jr., "The Price of Autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Ch'ing Politics," *Daedalus*, 101(Spring 1972): 39.

In the early Ming and before, the Secretariat had been a primary part of the central government. In 1380, the Secretariat was abolished, and the powers were divided and given to the Six Ministries, which became the highest administrative body.⁸⁴ Instead of the ministers being in a role of moral equality to the emperor, the traditional understanding of their relationship, they were reduced to a role of servility, and further humiliated when the emperor revived the practice of public flogging of ministers in court.⁸⁵

The destruction of the Secretariat also gave rise to the positions of Grand Secretaries, who filled an administrative and policy-making function.⁸⁶ Their power, though, was severely limited because the eunuchs remained between them and the emperor, and the scholar-officials did not trust them because of the close working proximity to the eunuchs.⁸⁷ Although eunuchs could wield considerable power, they were susceptible to manipulation by the imperial family, palace women, and eunuchs.⁸⁸

Within the ranks of officials there were strong

⁸⁴Hanie Vanderstappen, "Painters at the Early Ming Court(1368-1435) and the Problem of a Ming Painting Academy," *Monumenta Serica*, vol.XV(1956): 317.

⁸⁵Wakeman, 39.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁸Hsu, 53.

elements of factionalism and regionalism, heightened by the move of the capital in 1403 from Nanking to Peking.⁸⁹ Much of the hostility was between officials from the north and those from the south. The south had become dominant both culturally and economically, but had been discriminated against by the north⁹⁰ despite a concentration of power in the south.⁹¹

One of the largest problems for the scholar-officials in exerting any political influence came not from factionalism, but from the power of the eunuchs. The first emperor had decreed that no more than one hundred eunuchs could hold positions in the palace.⁹² They were used to balance the power of the officials, were not allowed to become literate, and were not allowed to correspond with officials. Emperor Hung-wu gave them considerable power, but he did not depend on them.⁹³

Emperor Hung-wu had not been dependent on them, but that changed with the ascension of the third emperor, Yung-lo (r.1402-25).⁹⁴ Emperor Yung-lo usurped the throne, and because of this the scholars did not recognize him,

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 57.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹Parsons, "Supplementary," 459.

⁹²Wakeman, 40.

⁹³Crawford, 323.

⁹⁴Wakeman, 39.

which forced him to rely more heavily on eunuchs.⁹⁵ It was at this point that the power of the eunuchs began to grow.

Their power grew with the establishment of the Eastern Depot (*tung-ch'ang*) in 1420.⁹⁶ The Eastern Depot was charged to survey the regular secret police. In addition to this, the eunuchs maintained their own strategic garrisons separate from the military, and controlled important fiscal powers. They were, however, forbidden documentary literacy.⁹⁷ That, too, changed in 1432, with the establishment of their own clerical school within the palace.⁹⁸

Wing-tsit Chan describes the political situation of the fifteenth century to be a time of incompetent rulers who allowed eunuchs to usurp power and suppress scholars.⁹⁹ The power of the eunuchs can also be seen in the *Ming-shih* (History of the Ming),

The eunuchs in the Ming period were sent out in charge of military expeditions, to supervise the army and the Guards. They spied on officials and people and secretly controlled all great authority. All this began in Yung-lo's time.¹⁰⁰

It did not stop at the end of Yung-lo's reign, though.

⁹⁵Crawford, 326.

⁹⁶Wakeman, 40.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹Chan, *Source Book*, 657.

¹⁰⁰Crawford, 327.

In the years from 1471-1497, the eunuchs, who routinely shielded the emperor from external contact, did not allow one ministerial audience with the throne.¹⁰¹ Their power continued to grow. The initial limit of one hundred eunuchs set by Hung-wu grew until, by 1600, there were more than 70,000 eunuchs within the Forbidden City.¹⁰²

Scholar-officials

Previous to the Ming dynasty and in the early years of the Ming, scholar-officials held positions of status and power. The events of 1380 and the resulting political changes began to erode significantly the power of officials.

The Emperor Hung-wu, despite his own previous Buddhist associations, embraced Confucian doctrine for the state. His doing so, though, was motivated by the hope of a political consolidation of power. He adopted the Ch'eng-Chu commentaries on the classics for the civil service exams and declared them orthodoxy, but used them in a confining, neatly packaged, simplified, and digestible form.¹⁰³ The spiritual feeling of earlier Neo-Confucian thought, the idea of broad learning,¹⁰⁴ and other ideas of the Ch'eng-Chu

¹⁰¹Wakeman, 40.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Wm. Theodore deBary, "Introduction." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 15.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

tradition which encouraged an expansion of thought were discouraged. The significance and the problems of this were well-stated by Robert Crawford,

By making Neo-Confucian thought the state philosophy, and basis for examinations, T'ai-tsu drove the foundations of his autocracy deep into the very matter which gave the gentry its basic identity and its social position--ideology. He thus presented to the scholars individually and collectively, a conundrum which endured as long as the dynasty; that being orthodox and loyal entailed the loss of all their political effectiveness and of any ability to function as a class either positively in making administrative policy or negatively in resisting the growth of that centralism which was their undoing.¹⁰⁵

Despite the fact that Confucianism was state orthodoxy, the court officials and scholars lived a precarious existence.¹⁰⁶ With the ascension or usurpation of Yung-lo the hostility between the government and the officials grew, and the imperial government tried to divide the scholars and set them against one another to further limit their power.¹⁰⁷

The reduction of the power of the scholar-officials began in 1380, with the reinstitution of literary persecution, court-flogging, and a severe applications of laws.¹⁰⁸ Only a few years later they were looked upon not

¹⁰⁵Crawford, "Fang Hsiao-ju," 321.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 308-9.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 321.

as equals deserving of respect, but as slaves.¹⁰⁹

Scholars tended to become mere functionaries who were prevented from trying to find solutions to problems.¹¹⁰ Wang Yang-ming, who later became the dominant philosopher of the Ming, received forty lashes and banishment to the remote province of Kueichow for protesting the imprisonment of a scholar-official by a powerful eunuch.¹¹¹

Instead of the Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy being used to encourage the discovery of new insights and personal cultivation to achieve social harmony, it had generally become a mechanism of the government to instill a conformity to the details of the Neo-Confucian teachings.¹¹² The goal of social progress and personal cultivation, for many, though not all scholar-officials, was abandoned for the goals of worldly success in officialdom.¹¹³

Not all submitted to the limitations being imposed upon scholar-officials and chose instead not to participate in government but seek independence and freedom in moral cultivation outside of government.¹¹⁴ This situation

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 325.

¹¹⁰Chan, *Source Book*, 657.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²Wing-tsit Chan, "The Ch'eng-Chu School of Early Ming." In deBary, *Self*, 45.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

presented a fundamental conflict for many. Could one maintain one's own individuality and intellectual integrity and still fulfill their family responsibilities, or was it necessary to do whatever necessary in order to succeed in the world?¹¹⁵

There developed a tangible tension between the harsh realities of politics and the moral ideals of Confucianism. Many left official service because of corruption and political pressures.¹¹⁶ In this light it is easier to understand how some view this time as a period when learning had become pedantic and sterile, and how Wang Yang-ming generally criticized the pursuits of the Ch'eng-Chu school as fragmentary and trivial scholarship which neglected the fundamental moral values of mind and nature.

Not all members of the Ch'eng-Chu school submitted to such conditions. One example can be seen in Wu Yü-pi (1392-1469), a man seen as a model member of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition.¹¹⁷ He was viewed as an example of authentic "orthodoxy" because of his moral earnestness, serious attention to personal cultivation, his high standards of conduct, and purism.¹¹⁸ Instead of serving the usurper Yung-lo, he chose to pursue a life of scholarship and

¹¹⁵deBary, "Individualism," 189.

¹¹⁶Berling, 237.

¹¹⁷deBary, "Introduction," p.23.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

philosophical speculation with the intention of attaining sagehood.¹¹⁹ He became an example for many, including Lo.

Though the power of the scholar-official was declining, this status remained a desirable one and competition for official positions was increasing. By the third decade of the fifteenth century, the *chin-shih* degree had become essential for a significant political career.¹²⁰ The role of these officials, nonetheless, was changing from one of moral leaders to one of tending to the details of practical matters.¹²¹

Fed up with the political situation, some scholar-officials left government service, and contributed to the spread of literacy. Others remained in government and at least paid lip service to the idea in the *Great Learning* that one should strive both to cultivate the self and serve society.¹²² And still others, Lo included, believed that successful government and moral self-improvement were interdependent. One needed to be both a practical administrator and a moral teacher.

Lo's Views on Government

For Lo, serving in a correct manner was the only proper

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁰Parsons, "Aspects," 402.

¹²¹Handlin, 103-5.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 13.

thing to do. One should not serve only for the benefit of riches, nor should one leave service rashly either. Lo believed and tried to live the following:

"The gentleman takes office and performs the righteous duties belonging to it."(a) It is through carrying out my duty that I fulfill my humanity. One who abandons himself to wealth and status and forgets all restraints is certainly not worth talking to, but one who rigidly adheres to a particular form of propriety and considers this to be noble, is also not worthy to be engaged in discussion of the Way of humaneness and rightness.¹²³

The goal of the scholar-official, for Lo, was working toward sagehood and thus helping to bring the emperor to a humane way of governing and thus, the state to harmony. In this way, Lo stuck tenaciously to the traditional Confucian values as put forth in the *Great Learning*. By leaving service it was hard to bring about the gradual changes to right government.

Although he chose not to return to government service after he finished mourning his father, his publishing of the *K'un-chih chi* and his thoughts on government reflected in it all came five years after retiring from service. In this sense they show his continued faith in the ability of the Confucian Way to transform government, even in the worst of times. Times in which even he did not want to serve.

The transformation of government lay ultimately in the hands of the sovereign, but it had to begin with the

¹²³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 84. (a) *Analects*, 18:7:5.

scholar-officials. For the scholar-officials this meant personal cultivation, but even more immediate and urgent, Lo felt, was the government's need to cultivate talent.¹²⁴ In order to correct the mind of the sovereign, and thus attain the Way of governing, the government must cultivate talent.

For Lo, the cultivation of talent began in schools. He acknowledged that the schools were devoted to classical studies and generally said to be good, but because of the examination system, talent was lost.¹²⁵ Because of the exams, many scholars emphasized elegant language and form in their studies and not the cultivation of his own person and mind. One of the most restrictive and highly criticized portions of the test was the eight-legged essay. This essay form, established in the 1500s, was to be written by the examinee in a prescribed form of a sequence of rhetorical steps and a specified total number of words.¹²⁶ Putting the emphasis on the wrong aspects of one's studies, Lo thought, was the reason for the common complaints of a lack of talent.¹²⁷

The cry of a lack of talent and the consequent problems

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 85.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Hucker, *Dictionary*, 359, #4370. "Commonly considered a rhetorical straitjacket that led to overly disciplined, too uncreative writing and thinking among all educated Chinese."

¹²⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 85.

in the government, led Lo to say the following of the government,

When the ancients established government it was in order to enable the people to have plenty.(a) Now when the governments are established, it is only to enable the state to have plenty. As the government was run in former times, it served to transform people. As it is run now, there are some among the common people who criticize it. How can the people be transformed?¹²⁸

The only way to correct this situation was to put talented men into government positions.

In order to know men of talent, one had to study and understand men's words, and those responsible for putting men into office needed to be serious about their efforts to correct their own minds.¹²⁹ In choosing men, one had to know whether their outward appearances corresponded to what was in their minds, and that their humane and righteous acts did not conceal treachery.¹³⁰

The selection of the right men for officials would allow excellent discussion of laws and correct changes in them, which Lo thought were necessary for good government.¹³¹ Talented men were essential to this, because they could put the correct laws in place and then

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 85-6. (a) Alludes to *Analects*, 12:9.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

¹³¹*Ibid.*

uphold them firmly. In this way putting the right men in office would naturally lead to gradual changes in society and produce more men of genuine talent.¹³² Lo thought, "Discussion of the Way and deliberation concerning the laws are not mutually contradictory but are, in fact, mutually complementary."¹³³

With the wrong man in power, there would be nothing he could do to make people cooperate.¹³⁴ On the other hand, under a worthy man the people would be conscientious and united, for Lo thought, "The Way of governing is in no sense separate from the Way of virtue."¹³⁵ Only if the ruler himself practiced personal cultivation could his domain be at peace, and this meant surrounding himself with worthy men.

The process needed to start with finding worthy men. Lo felt that the talent was available, if only it was sought in the right way. One way, Lo pointed out, was Confucius' suggestion of recommending those that one knew for office as a way of finding talent.¹³⁶

Lo used the ancient ruler Shun as an example for rulers. It was through Shun's virtue and greatness that he

¹³²*Ibid.*, 87.

¹³³*Ibid.*

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 88.

employed the upright and dismissed the crooked. Lo felt that if others could only abide by this example, there would be good government in spite of any contingency.¹³⁷

The current government had abandoned the traditional institutions, which led to increasing strains upon the resources of the empire and the continued degeneration of customs.¹³⁸ Lo noted that the law was being defined in high places, and as a result he wrote, "Everything depends on the court, that is all."¹³⁹ In good times, Lo most likely would have said the same thing, but in this way his criticism was directed pointedly toward the court and the emperor.

Changes in the system needed to be made to ease the burden on the people so they would not need to resort to banditry. Lo suggested a redistribution of land to increase production,¹⁴⁰ and a better approach to managing resources.¹⁴¹ Lo specifically noted those in positions of power and influence who interfered with the distribution of rice, the frequent extortion of taxes, and the breakdowns in communication of financial dealings.¹⁴² At the end of

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 119.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 88.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 89-90.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

these criticisms, Lo again pointed his finger at the emperor, and asked, "What difficulty could there be for a heroic and perceptive sovereign?"¹⁴³

The problem was not entirely the sovereign's, for it was the duty of the Confucians to work on themselves and on the sovereign. Lo lamented the current state not only within the empire, but also those who thought of themselves as Confucian. He wrote,

In my experience, however, the term *tao-hsüeh*[learning of the Way] finds little favor in the world. Those who have pursued the study of it have not necessarily done so in such a way that the name and the reality have corresponded. Then too there have been those who have not managed to avoid arrogance and intolerance, which in turn gives rise to antipathy and invective. Now to study with the objective of seeking the Way is naturally our responsibility. It is certainly unacceptable to shun others on this account and worse yet to be arrogant toward them. . . . Therefore one who would be a scholar-official ought to put primary emphasis on cultivating real accomplishments, and one who seeks to employ scholar-officials must elicit their various strengths. In this way the talent of both great and small men will develop in due course. There will be no antipathy among them and mutual benefit will result. The good government of the empire will be virtually ensured.¹⁴⁴

The Confucian scholars, in Lo's eyes should continue their learning by all means, but they should serve in the

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 92-3. [] mine. *Tao-hsüeh* here refers generally to the learning of the Way, but it has also been used to refer more specifically to a fellowship of thinkers of the Sung closely related to the Ch'eng-Chu school. See, Hoyt Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

government, too, and not pursue scholarly pursuits exclusively.¹⁴⁵ Of this priority of service Lo stated, "This is an obvious benefit, having nothing to do with the empty talk that comes of plying the brush or the tongue."¹⁴⁶

Lo urged involvement in the government and daily affairs. Although scholars and military officers were not allowed to mix,¹⁴⁷ Lo felt that military matters, too, were the Confucians responsibility. This was an important statement to make in that military episodes could be found in most Ming plays,¹⁴⁸ the importance of the cult of Chen-wu (the god of War) in the Ming,¹⁴⁹ and the Ming's almost 2.5 million military men.¹⁵⁰ Lo wrote,

At present few Confucians will discuss military matters, but, essentially, grain and military equipment are both our responsibility. How can we fail to discuss these matters?¹⁵¹

The social and cultural situation of the Ming, and

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 93-5.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁴⁷Romeyn Taylor, "Social Origins of the Ming Dynasty," *Monument Serica*, vol.XXII(1963): 57.

¹⁴⁸Hsia, 268.

¹⁴⁹Anna Seidel, "A Taoist Immortal of the Ming Dynasty: Chang San-feng." In deBary, *Self*, 493.

¹⁵⁰Taylor, 1. Taylor points out that on paper the numbers are close to 2.5 million, but that the number was probably closer to 1.5 million, where military officers roughly equaled the number of civil officials.

¹⁵¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 95-6.

especially the political situation were important to Lo and affected him, but within the overall picture one of his largest concerns was with the influence of Buddhism and Taoism.

Buddhism and Taoism in the Ming

One of the biggest concerns of the Neo-Confucians in the Sung had been the prevalence and impact of Buddhism and Buddhist thought. When the Mongols ruled China in the Yuan dynasty, Tibetan tantrism had been the state religion. It was still popular in the early Ming,¹⁵² with many Tibetan temples and monasteries built in Peking in the Ming.¹⁵³

The first emperor of the Ming, Hung-wu, too, had come from a Buddhist background which gave Buddhism some status. The elevated status, however, led some monks to become arrogant at court, which provoked bitter criticisms from the Confucians.¹⁵⁴ After 1382, the state control over Buddhism and Taoism was increased, with government agencies developed and assigned for that specific purpose.

In the article "Taoist Self-Cultivation in Ming Thought," Liu Ts'un-yan deals at length with the influence of Taoism in the Ming. According to Liu, Taoism left an indelible tinge on Ming thought which was more significant

¹⁵²Hsu, 50.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 49.

than its influence on the thought of the Sung.¹⁵⁵ One of the main elements in which the tinge could be seen was upon the practice of self-cultivation. Instead of the cultivation of Confucianism oriented towards sagehood, the goal of Taoist cultivation was to become an immortal.¹⁵⁶ Liu pointed to Wang Yang-ming as one of the most heavily influenced by Taoism.¹⁵⁷ Anna Seidel's assessment of the Taoist influence on the Ming is in agreement with Liu's. She notes that Ming thought was strongly, though unconsciously, influenced by popular Taoist beliefs.¹⁵⁸ Despite this influence, Lo did not worry about Taoism, and concentrated his criticism more on Buddhism.

By the Ming, Buddhism, instead of being divided into individual schools with specific teachings as was more common previously, became divided into groups identified with contemplation (*ch'an*), textual study (*chiang*), and a strict adherence to the monastic code (*lü*).¹⁵⁹ Though deBary notes that there was no large challenge posed by Buddhism and Taoism to Confucianism in the Ming,¹⁶⁰ Huang

¹⁵⁵Ts'un-yan Liu, "Taoist Self-Cultivation in Ming Thought." In deBary, *Self*, 292.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁵⁸Seidel, 483.

¹⁵⁹Leon Hurvitz, "Chu-hung's One Mind of Pure Land and Ch'an Buddhism." In deBary, *Self*, 452.

¹⁶⁰Chan, "Ch'eng-Chu," 44.

Tsung-hsi stated in the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an* that the decline of Buddhism during the Ming was accompanied by an increased religiosity of Confucianism itself.¹⁶¹ It was precisely this point that worried Lo. Buddhism may have been in decline, but Lo felt many so-called Confucians had, in fact, adopted Buddhist methods. This would account for what Huang saw as a rise of religiosity in Confucianism.

The Confucian interaction with Buddhism and Taoism was more open and better informed in the Ming than ever before.¹⁶² Many Neo-Confucians, including Lo, also studied Buddhism and Taoism and a general tolerance of their ideas and practices allowed for their wide influence.¹⁶³ Lo's orthodox position did not mesh well with such a mixture of practices, or the overall situation, which Liu Ts'un-yan referred to as a general, prevailing heterodox trend of Ming thought as a whole.¹⁶⁴

Although it was not the case with Lo, many were of the opinion that if an idea, attitude, or practice helped one's personal cultivation it should not matter which tradition it came from.¹⁶⁵ The importance should be placed upon personal experience and practical accomplishment brought

¹⁶¹Ching, 15.

¹⁶²Berling, 55.

¹⁶³Liu, 308.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁶⁵deBary, "Introduction," 24.

about through the ideas, attitude, or practice, not the tradition in which it originated.¹⁶⁶

Syncretism

These attitudes were common and point to a general openness to a syncretism of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, especially in the early and mid Ming.¹⁶⁷ The impact of syncretism, according to Judith Berling, was more pervasive in the Ming than in any other period of Chinese history.¹⁶⁸ She writes specifically of Lin Chao-en (1517-1598). Professor Hsu Sung-peng points to Lin Chao-en as one of three important syncretic thinkers of the Ming, all three of which happen to be general contemporaries of Lo.¹⁶⁹

Not only did Buddhism influence Confucianism as Lo feared, but Confucianism also impacted the Buddhism of the Ming.¹⁷⁰ Lay Buddhism became more activist than contemplative, more moralistic than theological, it also

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷Berling, 236.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁹Hsu, 48. The other two syncretic thinkers pointed out by Hsu were Lu Hsi-hsing (1520-1607) and Li Chih (1527-1602). Li Chih is generally affiliated with Wang Yang-ming's thought.

¹⁷⁰Greenblatt, 131.

became more world-affirming than world-rejecting.¹⁷¹

The impact of syncretism and its popularity can also be seen in the morality books of the Ming. They represented a shift in emphasis from religious salvation in another world to man's conduct in this world.¹⁷² The books generally combined the social morality of Confucianism, the Buddhist reverence for life, and the Taoist moderation of desires in the effort to preserve one's health and vitality.¹⁷³ They were to simply and practically define exemplary behavior and warn against the common moral failings of the various roles and occupations of Chinese society.¹⁷⁴ Their popularity may be attested to by the participation of the imperial family in the writing and distribution of a number of morality books.¹⁷⁵

Many of the Confucian scholars were influenced by the general openness of the times to other kinds of thought, even if they did not openly embrace Buddhism or syncretism. Although it is doubtful that there was ever a point where all Confucians agreed completely on the teachings and ideas of their tradition, the Ming saw a significant shift away from the orthodox Confucianism of the state, which was based

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²Sakai, 346.

¹⁷³Berling, 57.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

on the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, to the thought of Wang Yang-ming and others who concentrated on the mind.

Confucian Scholars of the Ming

The Ch'eng-Chu tradition, which was established in the Sung, had a tremendous impact in the Ming. It provided the spiritual and intellectual orientation which produced the leading thinkers of the Ming, even though many chose to leave it.¹⁷⁶

From the philosophical basis of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, the social and intellectual climate of the time led Neo-Confucians to experiment, question, and seek new styles.¹⁷⁷ For Lo, this meant an attempt to return Confucian thought to unity. Since the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi had not been completed there may be some new aspects added, but the return to unity was the end goal. For others, the experimenting, questioning, and seeking new styles led them in different directions, often away from Confucianism.

Previously, the Ming has been seen by scholars as a time of decay and confusion in thought, but that view has changed. It is now more frequently seen as a time of vitality and diversity.¹⁷⁸ William Atwell states that,

¹⁷⁶deBary, "Introduction," 5.

¹⁷⁷Berling, 236.

¹⁷⁸Hsu, 4.

despite the government intimidation of scholars and its autocracy, the Ming as a whole must be regarded as a remarkable time of intellectual and social emancipation.¹⁷⁹ Intellectually, the period was marked by some trying to break free of Neo-Confucian "orthodoxy."¹⁸⁰

In the introduction to *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, deBary provides a description of a stereotypical orthodox scholar-official. The image he portrays is of a stern patriarchal figure, the embodiment and enforcer of a puritanical morality, who rigidly demanded conformity to a traditional pattern of conduct which did not allow the individual freedom or enjoyment in life. His role was to be the guardian of the established political order, to defend the interests of the dynastic system and resist change.¹⁸¹

Many have used such an image to denounce the effectiveness and relevancy of the orthodox Confucian, but deBary later notes that the changes of Ming Neo-Confucianism were due specifically to its vitality, strength and ability to engage in self-criticisms and withstand stresses and strains. He also notes that, in his opinion, it was not the inflexibility of the orthodox Ch'eng-Chu tradition that

¹⁷⁹William S. Atwell, "From Education to Politics: The Fu She." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 337.

¹⁸⁰Hsu, vii.

¹⁸¹deBary, "Introduction," 1.

drove scholars away, but the rigors of pursuing and attaining sagehood that they found too demanding,¹⁸² a position Lo took.

The general shift of early Ming Neo-Confucian scholars was away from metaphysical speculation to an interest more in the mind, its cultivation and preservation and seriousness (*ching*) as the means of achieving that goal.¹⁸³ In the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*, Huang Tsung-hsi made a distinction between Sung Confucianism and Ming Confucianism. Those of the Sung, he thought, started at the external universe, especially with questions of cosmology, and from there proceeded to the personal universe of the mind and nature. Those of the Ming, though, were more inner-oriented and thus began with questions of mind and human nature and moved from there to an understanding of the wider world.¹⁸⁴ Some of the characteristics that emerged from this were an emphasis on personal experience, inwardness, and practicality.¹⁸⁵ The shift basically was from metaphysical speculation to man himself.

This resulted in a growth of a new humanitarianism and

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 18. deBary points specifically to Wang Yang-ming and Ch'en Hsien-chang(1428-1500) as two Confucians who redefined sagehood so they could find it achievable.

¹⁸³Chan, "Ch'eng-Chu," 42.

¹⁸⁴Ching, 12.

¹⁸⁵deBary, "Introduction," 30.

individualism,¹⁸⁶ and what might be called a preoccupation with the self.¹⁸⁷ One of the results of this has been the accusation that those in the Ming who emphasized the mind and self did so at the expense of neglecting classical studies.¹⁸⁸ It was not necessarily a disrespect for books, but an effort to bring about a balance with moral cultivation and correct a one-sidedness of cultural activity and the accumulation of learning as ends in themselves.¹⁸⁹

For others, the shift was driven by the constantly increasing number of students and the limited number of official posts. The competition led many to study only for the purpose of attaining a position and thus it was not relevant to true learning.¹⁹⁰ In other cases students became frustrated with the discrepancy between the promise of personal enlightenment and the actual grind of philosophical study.¹⁹¹

Lo did not agree with the approach many took towards learning, aiming only for a government position without regard for cultivation, nor did he think that any could

¹⁸⁶deBary, "Individualism," 147.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁸⁸Edward T. Ch'ien, "Chiao Hung and the Revolt against Ch'eng-Chu Orthodoxy." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 292.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁹⁰Wakeman, 44.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*

succeed in cultivation by taking shortcuts. For him, it was only through long-term determined study that one could achieve sagehood. Yet the emphasis of the School of the Mind in Ming Confucianism led to a decline in the study of the classics.¹⁹²

Unlike the intellectual approach to knowledge that believed knowledge was found in books and could be accumulated, those who searched for knowledge within the mind sought moral or spiritual knowledge.¹⁹³ This knowledge of the mind could not be transmitted, and had to be experienced individually for oneself. It did not totally exclude scrutiny and study of the sages' teachings, because it was good to check one's experiences against them, but personal experience took priority over submission to the authority of books and sages.¹⁹⁴

This emphasis on personally realized knowledge had a pronounced spiritual slant. Huang Tsung-hsi wrote, "The persistent concern with cultivation or spiritual asceticism reveals a dimension of spirituality as a principal occupation of the Ming thinkers and scholars."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Araki Kengo, "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 53.

¹⁹³Yu-wen Jen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural." In deBary, *Self*, 81.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁹⁵Ching, 20.

The stress on the individuality of experience, spiritual transcendence, and intellectual detachment revealed a tension in Neo-Confucianism between seriousness and openness.¹⁹⁶ The searching and contemplation of the mind had the potential to provide a detachment from things and affairs which would free the mind from conventional views.¹⁹⁷ Whereas the orthodox thinkers were attached to social conventions, those who sought transcendence through knowledge of the mind and a detached point of view removed themselves from pre-conceived theories.¹⁹⁸ As the mind was seen as the master of everything for these Confucians, a teacher tried to inspire students to evoke and guide their own thinking toward their own self-acquired convictions, as opposed to a method of indoctrination of a set of ideas.¹⁹⁹

One of the methods that was used in cultivation in the Ming was quiet-sitting (*ching-tso*). It acquired a considerable emphasis in the Ming, and was almost considered a criterion for orthodoxy, but it was carefully and clearly distinguished from the Buddhist practice of meditation.²⁰⁰ Quiet-sitting was not a way to enlightenment, but a way to calm the mind to prepare for a breakthrough in which one's

¹⁹⁶deBary, "Cultivation," 188.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹Jen, 58.

²⁰⁰Berling, 106.

relation to the principle of things would become clear. It had no regulations and was not a means of transcending rational and ethical thought, but an aid to it and to study.²⁰¹ Many considered quiet-sitting a necessary part of cultivation. Lo was cautious about the value of it, and Wang Yang-ming and many of his followers abandon it as too passive, quietistic, and basically unrelated to life.²⁰²

Another aspect of Ming thought was a vital concern with action.²⁰³ One of the main proponents of this was Wang Yang-ming, who formulated the concept of a unity of knowledge and action. He held that knowledge was the beginning of practice and that practice was the end of knowledge. One could only be said to know something if he practiced it.²⁰⁴ Unless one practiced it, the knowledge would be purely intellectual and not complete. This unity and the necessity of practice did not allow for a realm of abstract knowledge apart from factual knowledge or practical action.²⁰⁵

The ideas of quiet-sitting, practical knowledge, and a few others were commonly found in Confucianism in the Ming.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 107.

²⁰²deBary, "Introduction," 17.

²⁰³Berling, 236.

²⁰⁴Ch'u Chai, "Neo-Confucianism of the Sung-Ming Periods," *Social Research*, v.18(1951): 390.

²⁰⁵Robert Crawford, "Chang Chu-cheng's Confucian Legalism." In deBary, *Self*, 367-8.

Other ideas were found in the orthodox Ch'eng-Chu school of Confucianism but not outside of it. Still other ideas could be found in those Confucians outside of the orthodoxy, but not among those within it. Despite those who struck out to pursue their own path outside of the established orthodoxy, Ch'eng-Chu thought remained the basis for the civil service exams and claimed the outward loyalty of almost all Ming Neo-Confucians.²⁰⁶

The orthodoxy of Ming Confucianism did not represent or create a sterile, obsolete but immovable fixture of the old order, though the government may have desired such an effect. Instead it allowed for a continuing dynamic and constructive process of thought.²⁰⁷ The early Ming Confucians of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition continued the legacy of Sung thought,²⁰⁸ and concentrated on the moral development of the individual nature.²⁰⁹ As the Ming progressed, those of the Ch'eng-Chu line began to favor education as a vocation and did not place as much emphasis on public service.²¹⁰

Lo strove to uphold orthodoxy despite his disagreement

²⁰⁶Chan, "Ch'eng-Chu," 43.

²⁰⁷deBary, "Introduction," 5.

²⁰⁸Ching, 12.

²⁰⁹Ian McMorran, "Wang Fu-chih and the Neo-Confucian Tradition." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 429.

²¹⁰Hellmut Wilhelm, "On Ming Orthodoxy," *Monumenta Serica*, vol.XXIX(1970-1): 6.

with some of the ideas of his time associated with it. He sought to uphold the truth of the orthodox teaching, while uncovering the errors of heterodox thought, especially that of Ch'an Buddhism and Wang Yang-ming. Later Confucians recognized his efforts as a defender of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition.

A seventeenth century scholar described Lo's *K'un-chih chi* as an immovable rock of integrity in the face of the on-rushing current of the day, a reference to Wang Yang-ming's influence.²¹¹ In the *Huang-Ming shi* (History of the August Ming), Lo was grouped with a few Ch'eng-Chu scholars, among who were Hsüeh Hsüan (1389-1464)²¹², Wu Yü-pi and Wu Yü-pi's student Hu Chü-jen. The thought of Hsueh Hsuan and Wu Yu-pi both influenced Lo.

Hellmut Wilhelm refers to Lo as a disciple of Wu Yü-pi, the great old master of Ming Neo-Confucianism,²¹³ though Wu died four years after Lo's birth. In the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*, Huang Tsung-hsi commented that Wu was the purest of the pure.²¹⁴ Lo thought that few could compare to Wu's love of learning or his dedication to moral principles, and praised

²¹¹William Theodore deBary, *The Message of the Mind in Neo-Confucianism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 103.

²¹²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 220.

²¹³Wilhelm, 19.

²¹⁴Ching, 54.

him for once declining an appointment by the emperor.²¹⁵

Lo also praised Hsüeh Hsüan for his thoroughness in examining every subject.²¹⁶ Hsüeh believed that *li* (principle) could only be found in *ch'i* (ether or material force), ideas that will be dealt with in detail below. Lo agreed with this idea of them being together, and also agreed with Hsueh's idea that all reality was embodied in *ch'i*.²¹⁷ Although their thought contained some similarities, Lo felt that Hsüeh's thought had dualistic tendencies. Lo praised his heart of loyalty and faithfulness to the state, his genuine and earnest practice, his diligence,²¹⁸ but Lo could not accept Hsüeh's idea that *ch'i* could be characterized by disintegration and that *li* could not.²¹⁹ Although Lo appreciated his orthodoxy and his emphasis on *ch'i*, his thought had still never gone beyond the duality of their predecessors.

There were Confucians Lo honored and respected, but even those whom he honored and respected had not been able to recover the ultimate unity of Confucian thought. Lo felt it was important for Confucianism and society that the unity be recovered, especially in light of the thought of Wang

²¹⁵Bloom, *Knowledge*, 146-7.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, 147.

²¹⁷deBary, "Cultivation," 202.

²¹⁸Bloom, *Knowledge*, 148.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, 147.

Yang-ming and Buddhism. He felt it was his responsibility as a Confucian to attempt to return to unity. This was to be accomplished primarily through his philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

The Foundation of Lo's Philosophy

Lo Ch'in-shun's years of active service in various positions of the Ming government allowed him little time to produce any scholarly works. After leaving the political life of government service, he began more academic pursuits. His most prominent work, the *K'un-chih chi*, reveals the fundamentals of his philosophy. Irene Bloom writes the following of Lo and the *K'un-chih chi*,

The tone is reflective; the choice of language is precise; issues are sharply defined. Lo is revealed here as a scholar of formidable erudition, given to meticulous accuracy in his textual research and rigorous development of his philosophical views. Yet, as the text also reveals, Lo was not merely rehearsing or recasting the views of his predecessors. For all of his immersion in the Neo-Confucian tradition, his concern with precision and consistency, and his attention to nuances of language and interpretation, Lo emerges in this work as a creative thinker who sets forth certain metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological positions which are both new and recognizably modern.¹

In this paragraph, Bloom captures many of the significant points of Lo's thought. Possibly the single word in Bloom's description that completely defines Lo is consistency.

¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 7.

Scholars typically divide Neo-Confucian thought into the two main schools of Ch'eng-Chu and Lu-Wang, with Ch'eng-Chu thought considered the orthodox thought of the Chinese empire since the early fourteenth century.² Although Lo's self-descriptions are characterized by candor and humility,³ Bloom describes him as the most prominent adherent of the Ch'eng-Chu school in the mid-Ming.⁴ John Meskill views Lo as a prominent critic of Wang Yang-ming and as an interpreter of the Ch'eng-Chu school.⁵

In Bloom's comments on Lo quoted above, she gives him an air of creativity and innovation, but also a strong grounding or immersion within the Neo-Confucian tradition. Meskill's view of Lo as an interpreter of the school echoes his basis in earlier Confucian thought but with the inclusion of a few additional new elements. Professor Abe Yoshio goes further and says Lo's philosophy is revolutionary.⁶ Bloom thinks this is a little strong and

²Chan, *Source Book*, 589. The Four Books and Chu Hsi's commentaries on them, one of the primary sources of Ch'eng-Chu thought, were the basis of the civil service examinations from 1313 until the end of the examination system in 1905. The Four Books include the *Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

³Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 72.

⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 1.

⁵John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China: A Historical Essay*, (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1982), 108.

⁶Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 77.

instead of using "revolutionary" offers the term "reformist."⁷ She feels that his orthodox spirit is revealed in his appreciation of those in the Sung, but that Lo saw their thought as unfinished.⁸ For Lo, the thought of his Sung predecessors was not sufficiently consistent with that of Confucius and Mencius. He retained certain intellectual and spiritual values which had their origin in the Sung, while other aspects of his views were closer to those of classical Confucianism.⁹ Bloom also notes, though, that Lo introduced elements which had little apparent precedent in the earlier tradition.¹⁰

The cornerstone for the consistency of Lo's thought and, for him, Confucian thought, was the relationship of principle (*li*) and material force (*ch'i*). These two terms *li* and *ch'i*, had become the basis for Neo-Confucian metaphysics in the eleventh century. The concepts of *li* and *ch'i* will be defined and clarified in the discussion that follows. Although there are definite exceptions, Neo-Confucian scholars in both the Sung and Ming identify *li* as the prime force in the universe.¹¹ In his search for recovering the unity of thought in the Confucian school, Lo

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Bloom, *Knowledge*, 1.

⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 76.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Chai, 384.

stressed that *ch'i* was the prime force of the universe. This shift appears to be radical, a fundamental shift. Yet it provides unity in that *li* was encompassed by *ch'i* and no longer separate at any point. It had repercussions throughout his philosophy, and it is because of this shift that some see him as revolutionary and not merely as a reformer. Professor Benjamin Elman refers to the research of Yamanoi Yū. Yamanoi, Elman writes, demonstrated that the Ming-Ch'ing transition saw a shift in emphasis to a philosophy of *ch'i*, which replaced the Chu Hsi philosophy of *li* as the dominant framework for analysis in Confucian scholarship. Yamanoi traced this development back to the thought of Lo Ch'in-shun, and he saw this development to be a turn from abstract, conceptual thought toward an emphasis on concrete verifiable ideas (*k'ao-cheng*). This shift further meant a return to a concentration on mundane human conditions instead of the transcendental philosophy of *li*.¹²

The purpose of Lo's shift was to reconcile problems in the thought of Chu Hsi, Ch'eng I, and other Confucian scholars. He would not have considered himself to be an innovator in the creative sense of a desire to produce something altogether new. He may have been appreciative of the description of being a transmitter, a self-description

¹²Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 44.

used by Confucius, but he truly was more a defender of tradition whose ultimate goal was to once again unite Confucian thought, to make Confucian thought from ancient times until his time consistent.

He may have been offended, on the other hand, at the idea of being thought a revolutionary, unless it meant throwing out concepts that did not allow unity in order to construct a comprehensive, unified thought based on ancient Confucian ideas. Lo would have been pleased with the return to mundane considerations in thinking mentioned above, for Confucius himself was much more interested in the things of this world, and disliked discussing the things beyond this world.

Given that there is only one Way, what is the Way that runs through the realms of heaven-and-earth and of man? In order to understand Lo's view of the Way, the foundation of his philosophy, *li* and *ch'i*, must be understood first. Following the discussion of *li* and *ch'i*, an understanding of Lo's conception of Ch'eng I's idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse"¹³ will help to provide consistency to Lo's overall thought, as well as his view of the Way.

Li and Ch'i

The concepts of *li* and *ch'i* are fundamental to all

¹³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 17-8.

Neo-Confucian metaphysics. The concept of *ch'i*, commonly translated as material force, usually refers to matter. *Ch'i* is similar to atoms in that it is the building block for physical forms, but in Chinese thought the idea of *ch'i* goes beyond physical forms. *Ch'i* can refer to the air that we breathe, or to energy in one's body or the earth. For Lo, everything was composed of *ch'i*. All reality was *ch'i*. Practically all schools of Chinese thought share the basic concept of *ch'i*, although it may be argued that the Neo-Confucian use of it was inspired by Taoism.¹⁴

The concept of *li* (principle) became prominent in Neo-Confucian thought in the Sung with Ch'eng I and Ch'eng Hao. Although it has been suggested by Wing-tsit Chan and others that the concept of *li* originated in Hua-yen Buddhism.¹⁵ The construction of the Neo-Confucian metaphysics in the Sung is often considered a response to the challenge posed by Buddhism. The use of the Buddhist concept, given a Confucian twist, may in fact have been an effective tool.

The thought of the Ch'eng brothers and Chu Hsi was based on the idea that *li* were immutable principles or norms that govern the process of change and growth. They were above the physical world, often referred to as "above form,"

¹⁴Wing-tsit Chan, "Synthesis in Chinese Metaphysics," *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*, (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967), 137.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

and thus were universal and not susceptible to change. *Li* formed a moral pattern or framework that was inherent in all things.

Since *li* was inherent in all things it provided an order in the world that was discoverable in the regularity of things. The order that *li* provided was a moral one, so it was man's duty to "investigate principle." By investigating *li* in things and regulating oneself, it was the goal to understand *li* completely and thus be able to spontaneously act and react morally and humanely at all times. To accomplish this meant one had attained sagehood. This approach to life reaffirmed the physical reality of things and provided a rational and moral order, two things that were opposed to the Buddhist view of the world as insubstantial and illusory.¹⁶

Chu Hsi, whose thought and interpretations became orthodoxy in the fourteenth century, held the view that *li* and *ch'i* could not be separate, but that *li* was "above form" and *ch'i* was within form. This separation of *li* as "above form" and *ch'i* within it resulted in the notion that since *li* was "above form" it was necessarily prior to *ch'i*. *Li* was not subject to change and therefore perfect, while *ch'i* was full of impurities. It also followed that *li* was permanent and enduring and that *ch'i* was finite. Despite the fact that Chu Hsi claimed that *li* and *ch'i* could not

¹⁶deBary, "Introduction," 12.

exist without one another, the structure of "above form" and "below form" made for a dualistic view of *li* and *ch'i*. Since *li* was perfect and permanent, the polar opposite of Buddhist thought, it was the original focus in the Ch'eng-Chu school.

Lo rejected these dualistic ideas of Ch'eng I¹⁷ and Chu Hsi, along with many of their other ideas that were based on this conception of *li*. Lo shifted the primary focus away from *li* to *ch'i*.¹⁸ Despite this shift, *li* maintained a significant, if not central role, in Lo's thought. Lo's conception of *li* differed from his Sung predecessors. Neo-Confucian metaphysics was constructed in the Sung partly as a response to the Buddhist idea of impermanence. Lo, living in the Ming, viewed things differently.

In his own life time, Lo considered Buddhism to be a significant threat, but the threat was seen to be different from the one it presented in the Sung. For Lo, change did not mean the impermanence of Buddhism. Change meant dynamism, vitality, and the constant process of renewal of the natural order.¹⁹ *Li* had neither priority nor

¹⁷Ch'eng I thought it was wrong to regard *li* and *ch'i* as two, but could not see them as one. See Bloom, *Knowledge*, 17. Wing-tsit Chan regards any dualism in Ch'eng I's thought as superficial. See Chan, *Source Book*, 544.

¹⁸Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 77.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 88.

permanence, "It was itself the immutably mutable, the phenomenon of regularity within process, the inevitability and reliability of change as it affects and conditions concrete things."²⁰ Lo could not comprehend *li* as separate from *ch'i*. *Li* was within form and constantly involved in the flux of concrete things. This placement of *li* within form and completely inseparable from *ch'i* has led many to describe his thought as monistic or leaning towards monism. For Lo, *ch'i* alone was the single substance of matter that formed everything.

Although he disagreed with Chu Hsi, he thought Chu had a balance in his views regarding dualism. Lo believed that, those who followed Chu, had lost any kind of resemblance of balance.²¹ Lo, in reference to Chu Hsi's idea that *li* produced *ch'i* and was obviously prior to it, suggested looking at the "Great Appendix" of the *Book of Changes* (*I-ching*) to varify whether or not this idea was supported there.²²

Lo sought to re-establish current Confucian thought in the context of the ancient Confucian tradition. In this sense, his shift in emphasis away from *li* to *ch'i* was a step towards recovering the unity of Confucian thought and was not revolutionary. Bloom notes that Lo's ideas are more

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 85.

²²*Ibid.*

similar to classical ideas than those of Chu Hsi.²³ Lo found problems with inconsistencies in the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, but felt that Ch'eng Hao's conception of *li* and *ch'i* had been handled satisfactorily. Ch'eng Hao made no distinction between what exists before physical form and what exists after, and wrote, "'Concrete things are the Way, and Way is concrete things.'"²⁴

Since Lo could not find a classical precedent for Chu Hsi's dualism, he put forth his conception of *ch'i* as the fundamental reality of the universe with *li* as its order.²⁵ Lo went to the "Discussion of the Trigrams" ("*shuo-kun*") and the "Appended Remarks" ("*Hsi-tzu chuan*") of the *Book of Changes* to formulate a view of *li* and *ch'i* that was in conformity with the ideas of Confucius, which would give him a foundation of classical authority and a philosophical cogency or consistency as well.²⁶ *Ch'i*, he felt, was reality, both physical and phenomenal. *Ch'i* was forever in a process of change and *li* provided the regularity, reliability, the spontaneous order for it.²⁷ Lo moved from Chu Hsi's view that *li* was perfect and the original cause of

²³*Ibid.*, 84.

²⁴Wing-tsit Chan, *Neo-Confucianism, Etc.: Essays*, (Hong Kong: Oriental Society, 1969), 204.

²⁵Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 84.

²⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 16.

²⁷*Ibid.*

the natural process to the idea that *li* was simply the pattern to be observed within that natural process.²⁸ Bloom emphasizes that Lo did not refer to the *Book of Changes* to refute the Sung conception, but instead that

"...Lo's understanding of principle was essentially naturalistic and that his discussions of *li* and *ch'i* in the *K'un-chih chi* reflect an impulse to reduce, simplify, and clarify the notion of principle so that it would be more in keeping with his own understanding of a more naturalistic concept of principle found in the *Book of Changes*."²⁹

Lo discarded most of what Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi's said about *li* and *ch'i*, but retained the terms as valid philosophical concepts.³⁰

Lo's shift away from the emphasis on *li*, to an emphasis on *ch'i* as the basis of reality, corresponded with a heightened interest in the complexity of concrete facts that occurred in the mid-Ming. Others, not necessarily in connection with Lo, began changing their emphasis to *ch'i* and away from Chu Hsi's stress on *li*.³¹ Joseph Levenson believed that the philosophy of *ch'i* did not emerge until the seventeenth century, and was the production of subjective-idealistic thinkers of the Lu-Wang school. Bloom disagrees completely, arguing that the philosophy of *ch'i*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 86.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 86.

³¹*Ibid.*

truly emerged in the early sixteenth century and out of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition itself.³²

Lo removed *li* from the "above form" realm of Chu Hsi, which shifted the focus from what was timeless and beyond change to the process of change itself.³³ *Li* was no longer prior to *ch'i*, nor superior to it. In the *K'un-chih chi*, part II, section 35, Lo writes, "*Li* must be identified as an aspect of *ch'i*, and yet to identify *ch'i* with *li* would be incorrect."³⁴ As if trying to inspire a would-be student more, he continues,

The distinction between the two is very slight, and hence it is extremely difficult to explain. Rather we must perceive it within ourselves and comprehend it in silence. It is one thing to speak of "identifying *li* as an aspect of *ch'i*" and another to speak of "identifying *li* with *ch'i*." There is a clear difference between them. If this is not apparent there is no point in explaining further.³⁵

Ch'i as the basis of reality was the material that gave shape or form to physical things. *Li*, on the other hand, was not a "thing" (*wu*), but a "term" or "designation" (*ming*) for the ways things are in actual fact, for the working of nature.³⁶ In this sense *li* was an aspect of *ch'i*, but could not be identified with it.

³²*Ibid.*, 82-3.

³³*Ibid.*, 91.

³⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 134.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 83.

Although *li*, as it was seen in the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, was abstract, it had specific characteristics that could be discussed. One could speak specifically of *li* at length and describe it as perfect, a priori, or as permanent. As a result of Lo's shift from emphasizing *li* to emphasizing *ch'i*, it became difficult to discuss *li* without also mentioning *ch'i*. In part III, section 3 of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo writes, "*Li* is only the *li* of *ch'i*. It must be observed in the phenomenon of revolving and turning *ch'i*."³⁷ *Li* no longer was as separate, and as such could not easily be spoken of out of the context of *ch'i*. Bloom says part II, section 11 of the *K'un-chih chi* was Lo's answer to the critical Neo-Confucian question "what is principle?" Note, though, that his answer begins with defining *ch'i*. Lo writes,

That which penetrates Heaven and earth, enduring from past to present, is nothing other than material force, which is unitary. Material force is originally one but follows an endless cycle of movement and tranquility, going and coming, opening and closing, rising and falling. Having become increasingly obscure, it then becomes manifest; through being manifest, it reverts to obscurity. It is the warmth and coolness and the cold and heat of the four seasons, and the birth, growth, gathering in and preservation of all living things. It is the people's daily life and social relations and the success and failure, gain and loss in human affairs. That which for all the multitudinousness and complexity cannot be disturbed, and which is so even without our knowing why it is so, is called principle. From the beginning principle is not a separate entity which depends on material force for its existence, nor is

³⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 173.

it something which "attaches to material force and thus operates."³⁸

The last sentence is a denial of two of the views Chu Hsi held of *li*. Lo thought that *li* could not be "above form" and thus not attached to *ch'i*. Lo stated, "There is nowhere that principle (*li*) is not fixed."³⁹

In contrast to the earlier conceptions of *li*, Lo saw *li* as vital and animated, and always right before us. Immediately, though, he followed this idea of vitality with the fact that it could not be augmented nor diminished in the slightest bit, nor could one raise or lower it by the slightest fraction.⁴⁰ This notion of not being able to alter *li* retained a bit of earlier notions. In Lo's interpretation, however, this small similarity ends quickly. Earlier Neo-Confucian thought approached *ch'i* as the cause of evil in the world, an issue that will be dealt with more fully below. *Li*, in this earlier view, provided the order of reality, but as it connected to *ch'i* in the formation of physical forms its order was obstructed by the impurities of the *ch'i*. Lo argued that *li* was not something that ensured the order of *ch'i*, as in earlier thought, but that *li* was the order of *ch'i*.⁴¹ Bloom describes Lo's interpretation

³⁸Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 83.

³⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 172.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 74.

of *li* as follows, "As the spontaneous order, the unregulated regularity to be perceived in natural and human events, *li* is the reliability, coherence, and unity that characterizes those events."⁴² Lo saw the operation of the principle of nature as all-pervasive, a regular, orderly process that does not permit confusion. It was the reason people were humane.⁴³

The fixed nature of *li* in *ch'i*, solved another problem that Lo had with the Neo-Confucian thinkers of the Sung. They, he thought, emphasized the accidental differences in *ch'i* in the phenomenon of individuation too much.⁴⁴ Within their conception of *ch'i* as impure, they thought that the degrees of impurity varied and were controlled by other natural factors (the sun, moon, seasons, weather, etc.). These varying degrees of impurity were the cause for why different people had different characteristics and personalities. Lo felt they emphasized this too much and did not show enough interest in *ch'i* in and of itself.⁴⁵ In the view of Sung Neo-Confucians, it was *li* that was important, but as *li* was "above form" it needed to be added to *ch'i*. In this sense, it was not part of one's intrinsic

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁴Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 94.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

nature.⁴⁶ Lo, on the other hand, felt that the qualities that serve to define a thing must be intrinsic to its nature, not external to it.⁴⁷

To differentiate between *li* and *ch'i*, Lo thought, was arbitrary and unnatural. The differentiation existed, in Lo's view, primarily to account for a person's ethical potential in terms of the varying quality of *ch'i*.⁴⁸ In making this distinction between *li* and *ch'i*, the Ming Confucian Hsüeh Hsüan stated that *li* and *ch'i* were inseparable, but *ch'i* was characterized by disintegration and integration while *li* was not.⁴⁹ Hsüeh was putting forth the traditional idea that *ch'i* was constantly changing, but that principle was permanent and unchanging. Lo did not agree with this dualism, although he would have concurred that *ch'i* was constantly changing and that *li* could not be changed, as it existed in *ch'i*. In part II, section 23 of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo discussed the idea that the formation of matter gave rise to the manifold diversity. Previously *li* had been responsible for the existence of different things. Man had its own specific *li*, as did each other thing. This idea of earlier Neo-Confucians is often compared to Plato's concept of forms, in which things as

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 147.

they exist in our reality are all imperfect copies of their ideal or perfect form. Lo, on the contrary, said that manifold diversity was produced in the formation of matter.

He wrote,

Through the integration of *ch'i*, there is life, and when there is physical form, there is existence. When there is this thing, there is *li*(principle). Upon the disintegration of *ch'i*, there is death, and ultimately the thing returns to nothingness. When there is no longer this thing, there is no longer this *li*.⁵⁰

This idea of *li* disappearing with the disintegration of *ch'i* was directly opposed to the traditional idea maintained by Hsüeh. By stating that *li* was not permanent, perfect, or "above form," Lo essentially removed *li* from the moral sphere, which had more implications throughout Lo's philosophy.

As Benjamin Elman pointed out, the Japanese scholar Yamanoi Yu traced the development of the emphasis on *ch'i* in the Ch'ing back to Lo, yet Wing-tsit Chan states that *ch'i* was primary for the thought of both Chou Tun-i and Chang Tsai. Lo would probably argue that *ch'i* had been thought of as primary since the *Book of Changes*, but that that had changed in the Sung.

Chung-ying Cheng describes Chang Tsai's thought as a philosophy with implicit, if not explicit, undertones of

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 126-7.

pragmatism, naturalism, and monism.⁵¹ Bloom notes, however, that Lo did not consider himself a follower of Chang and may have disagreed more with him than with Chu Hsi.⁵² Chang distinguished between types of *ch'i*, unlike Lo. For Lo, *ch'i* was unitary, the same everywhere. Chang thought that pure *ch'i* did not have form. *Ch'i* only had form if it was impure.⁵³ Chang took the diagram of Chou Tun-i and spoke of the Great Ultimate as divided into the Great Void and the Great Harmony. He stated that the Great Void was identical with pure *ch'i*. *Ch'i* went from the Great Void into form and upon disintegration back to the Great Void.⁵⁴ Lo did not agree with this distinction. He wrote,

The *ch'i* involved in human breathing is the *ch'i* of the universe. Viewed from the standpoint of physical form, it is as if there were the distinction of interior and exterior, but this is actually only the coming and going of this unitary *ch'i*.⁵⁵

Lo was more in agreement with Chang's idea that *ch'i* was the basic matter of the universe. Chang believed that *ch'i* was the one substance that provided the basis for the multiplicity of all things, and stated, "The *ch'i* of man

⁵¹Chung-ying Cheng, "Reason, Substance, and Human Desires in Seventeenth-Century Neo-Confucianism." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 472.

⁵²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 89.

⁵³Kasoff, 63.

⁵⁴Chan, *Source Book*, 501 and 503.

⁵⁵Bloom, *Knowledge*, 161.

unites him with all things in the universe as if they were his family."⁵⁶ Lo would have agreed that *ch'i* was indeed the basic matter of the universe, but would have made sure that one understood that it did not just underlie the multiplicity of all things, but caused the multiplicity of all things.

From this basis Chang went on to say that *li* was a property of *ch'i*.⁵⁷ Chung-ying Cheng agrees with Ira Kasoff's assessment and writes, "Such is the *ch'i* monism of Chang Tsai (1020-1077) in which *li* becomes the pattern of organization inherent in the substance of *ch'i*."⁵⁸ Lo's thought also resembled this aspect of Chang's thought. In the *K'un-chih chi*, nowhere did Lo attribute aspects of one's life to *li* or *ch'i* in the sense Chang did. Chang felt that life, death, and the longevity and brevity of life were due to one's *ch'i* and could not be changed, but that wealth and honor depended on *li*.⁵⁹

For both Ch'eng I and Ch'eng Hao, the Way could not be found outside of *ch'i*, and for this reason Wing-tsit Chan writes, "It should be apparent that while the Ch'eng brothers resemble Chang Tsai (Chang Heng-ch'ü, 1020-1077) in

⁵⁶Berling, 104.

⁵⁷Kasoff, 52.

⁵⁸Chung-ying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (Albany: State University New York Press, 1991), 209-10.

⁵⁹Chan, *Source Book*, 512.

emphasizing material force, with them it is no longer the basis of existence as with Chang but only the corporeal aspect."⁶⁰ Ch'eng I also differed from Chang in that he thought since the universe was a perpetual process of production and reproduction that *ch'i* was not reused.⁶¹ *Ch'i* did not disintegrate to be used again, but was a new fresh production each time matter was formed. Lo's thought came right down the middle on both these differences. Lo did not like Chang's term "Great Void," a term many thought too Taoist, and did not believe that dispersed *ch'i* would return to to the Great Void, as Chang believed. *Ch'i* was the basis of the universe, but just because *ch'i* may not have a current form it did not go somewhere else, as seen in the earlier quote of Lo's on breathing *ch'i*. So it did not return to the Great Void, nor did Lo see *ch'i* as impure when it was involved in the corporeal aspect, as Chang and the Ch'eng brothers did. Lo simply saw *ch'i* as the product of the constant alterations of yin and yang, which will be dealt with shortly. Lo also fell in between Chang and Ch'eng I in the integration and disintegration of *ch'i*. Lo believed, unlike Ch'eng I, that *ch'i* continually recycled through the process of integration and disintegration, but because of Chang's concept of the Great Void did not agree with him either.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 545.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

In his work *Ming-ju Hsüeh-an*, Huang Tsung-hsi was in agreement with Lo and stressed the fact that Lo had stated that throughout Heaven and earth and throughout ancient and present times there had been and was nothing but *ch'i*.⁶² Huang, who was also a monist but whose thought was more similar to that of Wang Yang-ming, thought Lo's discussion of *li* and *ch'i* was precise and accurate. It sufficiently clarified Chu Hsi's statements on the separation between *li* and *ch'i* so that no further argument was necessary.⁶³ Here the word "clarified" is important. In the discussion of Lo's views of *li* and *ch'i* above, there were a few considerable shifts in emphasis, all of which have further implications throughout his philosophy. Despite these apparent differences, it was Lo's intent not to react against the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, but instead to clarify their ideas to re-establish a unity in their tradition of orthodox Confucian thought.

"Principle is one; its particularizations diverse"

As *ch'i* provided the foundation for Lo's thought, the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" (*li-i fen-shu*) cemented his thought together. This idea also gave it a coherency and consistency.

Although this idea was prominent in the Confucian

⁶²Cheng, "Reason," 496.

⁶³Ching, 215.

thought of the Sung and became a fundamental tenet of Neo-Confucianism, Wing-tsit Chan suggests that it had its beginnings in Buddhism. Chan traces the origins to the Buddhist Tao-sheng (d.434), and writes,

Few realize it actually originated with Tao-sheng. To Neo-Confucianists, of course, the one principle and the many manifestations are equally real whereas to Tao-sheng the multiplicity is to be transcended by *li*.⁶⁴

To transcend the multiplicity and obtain *li* was the attainment of Buddhahood.

Despite its putative origins in Buddhism, this idea was incorporated into Neo-Confucian thought from its outset. Chou Tun-i, one of the thinkers responsible for the initial construction of Neo-Confucian thought in the Sung, developed the concept that "'Many are [ultimately] one, and the one is actually differentiated into the many.'"⁶⁵ Lo liked this idea as put forth by Chou and commented, "Here he illumines the wonder of creation in all its aspects."⁶⁶

The Ch'eng brothers, especially Ch'eng I, emphasized this idea of one, yet many. Ch'eng Hao commented on *li*, "It is many but it is essentially one, for all specific principles are but principle."⁶⁷ Although this was not the main point of emphasis in his thought, it was a significant

⁶⁴Chan, *Etc.*, 65.

⁶⁵Chan, *Source Book*, 460.

⁶⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 125.

⁶⁷Chan, *Source Book*, 519.

determinant in why he saw the world as a unity. Ch'eng I specifically stressed the doctrine that principle is one, but its manifestations many.⁶⁸

Chang Tsai does not seem to have used this idea in connection with his concept of *li*, but his thought contained a similar, if not parallel, idea. This parallel, though, was rooted in his conception of *ch'i*. He made the distinction between the pure *ch'i*, or undifferentiated *ch'i*, and impure *ch'i*, or condensed *ch'i*. The undifferentiated *ch'i* was perfectly good and the same in everything and everyone. The condensed *ch'i*, on the other hand, with its impurities was individual to each thing and person. These ideas of Chang were in no way compatible with the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," especially since condensed *ch'i* was impure, but some of the ideas to maintain unity were similar.

Lo disliked Chang's conception of *ch'i*, but was ecstatic upon realizing the importance of this idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse." Bloom comments on the idea, "This pregnant formula, generally thought to have originated with Ch'eng I, is reinterpreted by Lo to account for the fact of unity within phenomenal diversity, which had been and remained a central problem in Neo-Confucian ontology."⁶⁹ The reinterpretation went back

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 521.

⁶⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 18.

to the differences in the conception of *li* as discussed above. Ch'eng I viewed *li* as "above form," perfect, and the cause of the manifold diversity. Lo did not view things in the same way. He saw *li* as entirely coming from the same source, but since *li* was inherent in all things it was divided into many "particularizations." Ch'eng I and Lo both used the idea in similar ways, and Lo discovered the significance of the idea while trying to understand another of Ch'eng I's ideas, but still the philosophy behind the two thinkers' uses of the idea were considerably different.

Lo struggled over a long period of time trying to understand Ch'eng I's idea "nature is principle." It was through the concept "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" that Lo found he could maintain a consistency in his philosophy and accept the idea "nature is principle."⁷⁰ In part I, section 74 of the *K'un-chih chi*, he wrote, "The principle which is endowed [in all living things] is one...The principle of nature is one."⁷¹ In this same section he stated that the particularizations were introduced through alternations of yin and yang. Bloom notes that for Lo, *li* was universally expressed in all things and was therefore one, and not in the sense of many of his predecessors that *li* was one because it was identical

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 171.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 107.

everywhere in everything.⁷² *Li*, as manifested in particularizations, differed in that they assumed discrete forms and followed particular patterns of life.⁷³ Lo writes,

At the inception of life when they are first endowed with *ch'i*, the principle of human beings and things is just one. After having attained physical form, their particularizations are diverse. That their particularizations are diverse is nothing but natural principle, for the oneness of their principle always exists within diverse particularizations.⁷⁴

In another spot, he writes more specifically,

At the time they are first endowed with *ch'i*, the nature of a dog or an ox is always one with that of man, while after having taken on physical form, the nature of a dog or an ox is naturally not the same as the nature of man.⁷⁵

Bloom notes that Lo primarily used the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" in an ontological sense, while others used it other ways and contexts.⁷⁶ One of the other principle contexts would be the "investigation of principle" (*ko-wu*) which was a fundamental doctrine in Neo-Confucianism and will be treated in more depth later. To highlight the significance of the difference, though, a brief overview is necessary. In Sung

⁷²*Ibid.*, 18.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁶Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 95.

Neo-Confucianism, as *li* was generally seen as "above form," one was to investigate the *li* in things, most often in texts and human affairs, to understand the *li* in that thing. The investigation was driven by a search for the moral truth. Over time, one would theoretically investigate *li* in many things and ultimately understand that *li* was one and thus become a sage. This approach, though, did not tend to increase the awareness of concrete objects. Since Lo took *li* out of the moral sphere and emphasized *ch'i*, his view of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" was different. Bloom notes, "The reason that Lo's interpretation of the formula *li-i fen-shu* is so important is that his monism does not seek to erase the awareness of phenomenal diversity but actually to heighten it."⁷⁷

In response to Chu Hsi's dualism, Lo felt, "Only in 'principle is one; its particularizations are diverse' is everything encompassed, nothing left uncomprehended."⁷⁸ In this phrase he found consistency. Lo's wonder of the idea is evident in the following quote:

I submit that the wondrous truth of the nature and endowment is summarized in the expression, "Principle is one; its particularizations diverse (*li-i fen-shu*)."⁷⁹ This is simple and yet complete, concise and yet utterly penetrating. [The operation of principle] owes nothing to artificial constraint or compulsion, and by its nature it

⁷⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 22.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 67.

surely cannot be changed.⁷⁹

All of Lo's thought hinged on the idea of an ultimate unity of all things, but he did not de-emphasize the diversity because of his desire for unity. Each individual thing as part of its physical form had its own *li* which impelled it to complete its own life cycle or destiny.⁸⁰ Bloom writes, "In simplest terms, it is the propensity of all living things to conform to an orderly process of change and development."⁸¹ The diversity was important to Lo, but the most significant point in this idea was the ultimate unity. In part I, section 6 of the *K'un-chih chi* Lo gave his view of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" and ended by quoting *Mencius*.

Man is like other living things, and I am like other men. Could there be any difference in respect to our principle? But after physical form is complete, the particularizations of principle are necessarily diverse. Because of the diversity of particularizations, each has his own body. Because of the unity of principle "everything is complete in me."⁸²

The phrase "everything is complete in me" epitomizes the consistency and unity that drove Lo's thought. The source of this principle and of everything was *yin* and *yang*, and ultimately the Great Ultimate.

⁷⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 95.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 95-6.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 95.

⁸²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 53.

The source of ultimate principle is simply the two phases of activity and tranquility. As there is tranquility, there is unity; as there is activity, there is manifold diversity. This is the same in Heaven (or nature) and in man.⁸³

The Great Ultimate, Yin and Yang, and the Way

Lo's conception of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse" provided consistency to his thought, but it was only an aspect of the larger picture. One can see this to be a truth in the reality of the universe, but it was not the universe itself. Lo stuck with many of the conceptual basics of the understanding of the universe as they were set up by his predecessors in the Sung. He saw the universe as a constant process of change and transformation, and that "sending forth and nourishing all things" was the function and accomplishment of the creative transformations of the universe.

If one carefully reflects on this and grasps it, heaven and man, things and self, inner and outer, beginning and end, darkness and light, the lessons of birth and death, and the conditions of positive and negative spiritual forces(a) should perform and all pervading unity(b) with nothing left behind. Thus, when we speak of the myriad things, is there any that is after all external to our own nature?(c)⁸⁴

⁸³*Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 55. (a) "The circumstances of dark and light," "the lessons of birth and death," and "the conditions of positive and negative spiritual forces," are allusions to the "Appended Remarks" in the *Book of Changes*, 7:5b-6a. (b) *Analects*, 4:15:1. (c) In *Chu Tzu yu-lei* (Classified Conversations of Master Chu Hsi), 4:5b, Chu states that, "In the universe there is no single thing that is external to

The idea of the Great Ultimate in Neo-Confucian thought began with Chou Tun-i, although because of its similarities to Taoist diagrams it was and is often considered to be Taoist in origin. Wing-tsit Chan notes that though its origins may be debatable the diagram put forth by Chou discarded the fantasy and mysticism of Taoism and provided a basis for rational philosophy.⁸⁵ In *Diagram of the Great Ultimate Explained* (*T'ai-chi T'u-shuo*), Chou wrote, "The five phases are the one yin and yang; the yin and yang are the one Great Ultimate; and the Great Ultimate is fundamentally the Ultimate of Nonbeing."⁸⁶ Many Confucians disliked Chou's use of the phrase "Ultimate of Nonbeing" because of its Taoist undertones, but the basics of seeing the five phases as a product of yin and yang, and yin and yang being the Great Ultimate was generally accepted among the Confucians of his time. This conception of the Great Ultimate, despite discrepancies and disagreements over details, gives Neo-Confucianism an holistic philosophy. Chou held the belief that the Way of Heaven was to change and transform, in that way everything would obtain its correct nature and destiny.

our nature." Conrad Schirokauer notes also Hu Hung's statement in *Hu Tzu chih-yen* (Master Hu's Understanding Words), 1:6b: "There is no thing outside the nature and no nature outside things."

⁸⁵Chan, *Source Book*, 460.

⁸⁶Berling, 186-7.

Chang Tsai, like Chou, began with the conception of the Great Ultimate, but unlike other Confucians, split it into two parts. Most Confucians believed the Great Ultimate produced *yin* and *yang* and did not include anything else. Chang, though, divided the Great Ultimate into the Great Void and the Great Harmony. The Great Void held the perfect undifferentiated *ch'i*, while the Great Harmony was an agglomeration of *ch'i* in the harmony of *yin* and *yang*.⁸⁷

Chang did not see *yin* and *yang* and the five agents (same as Chou's "five phases" above) as the generative forces of the universe.⁸⁸ He thought things were generated in the process of *ch'i* moving from its undifferentiated state into form, and thus saw existence as a perpetual integration and disintegration.⁸⁹ As pure *ch'i* and impure *ch'i* came together, they united and gave rise to the concrete, producing everything.⁹⁰

Chang considered the Great Harmony and the Great Void as "above form." At first glance this may not be a problem, in that many considered the Great Ultimate to be "above form," including Lo. For some, the problem came from Chang saying the Great Void was full of *ch'i*, placing *ch'i* "above form." This was a problem for Lo, but another problem for

⁸⁷McMorran, 436.

⁸⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 495.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 505.

Lo in this idea was that it divided *ch'i*. An additional problem was that Chang conceived the Great Harmony to be the coexistence of the two polar forces (*yin* and *yang*) in a harmonious unity, which placed *yin* and *yang* "above form." In Chang's conception of the diagram of the Great Ultimate, he viewed the Way as the constant integration and disintegration of *ch'i*, which happened "above form." In his work *Cheng-meng* (Correcting the Unenlightened),⁹¹ Chang wrote,

All that is above form is called the Way. It is just that the place where being and non-being come together, the place of form and no-form, is difficult to understand. You must understand that *ch'i* originates here.⁹²

The Ch'eng brothers and Chu Hsi did not think *ch'i* existed in the "above form" realm. Ch'eng I criticized Chang,

Ch'i is below form. If the Great Void is *ch'i*, then it is below form. Being below form it cannot be used to describe the Way, which is above form.⁹³

Lo did not consider himself a follower of Chang, and may have disagreed with Chang more than Chu Hsi,⁹⁴ but he did not agree with Ch'eng I's idea either. Lo thought the Way was to be found in *yin* and *yang*, which was below form.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 496.

⁹²Kasoff, 40-1.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁴Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 89.

Ch'eng Hao did not agree totally with his brother either, and saw more of a unity, one that Lo thought satisfactory. Ch'eng Hao wrote the following,

What exists before physical form [and is therefore without it] constitutes the Way. What exists after physical form [and is therefore with it] constitutes concrete things. Nevertheless, though we speak in this way, concrete things are the Way and the Way is concrete things.⁹⁵

Another term that was found in the discussion of the Great Ultimate and *yin* and *yang* was *shen*. In discussing Chang Tsai's philosophy, Ira Kasoff translates *shen* as "marvelous." In her work on Lo, Bloom translates it as "spirit."

Chang notes that in ancient texts, *shen* was used to emphasize the inscrutable, wondrous aspect of Change, or the Way.⁹⁶ Chang thought the interaction of *yin* and *yang* was *shen*. He saw *yin* and *yang* as "above form," and everything invisible and "above form" was *shen*.⁹⁷

Ch'eng Hao, on the other hand, saw *shen* as immanent in all things and could not understand how Chang could place such a limit on it. Ch'eng Hao wrote,

Outside of *qi* there is no such thing as the marvelous and outside of the marvelous there is no *qi*. Someone [i.e., Chang] said the pure is marvelous. Does this mean that the impure is not

⁹⁵Chan, *Source Book*, 527.

⁹⁶Kasoff, 61.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 62.

marvelous?⁹⁸

Chang saw *ch'i* as one thing with two substances, because it was one it was *shen*, because it was two it was transformed. Lo used similar language, but the one, for Lo, was the Great Ultimate, and the two *yin* and *yang*.

The two translations of *shen* as marvelous and spirit show the difficulty in conceptualizing what was meant by it. Chang used *shen* as a name for the force behind the visible processes of heaven-and-earth, and to describe the fact that everything was one.⁹⁹ Lo's and Chang's philosophies differ greatly in parts, even in the context of what *shen* referred to, but these uses of *shen* were remarkably similar in their usage. Kasoff writes of *shen*, "...precisely because it was the term he used to describe the indescribable...Chang had difficulty conveying its meaning."¹⁰⁰

In the *I-shu* (Written Legacy of the Ch'eng Brothers),¹⁰¹ Ch'eng Hao wrote the following of *shen*,

The cold of winter and heat of summer are *yin* and *yang*. That by which they are moved and

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 63. Kasoff uses *qi* to make a distinction in his translation of Chang's thought. Because Chang saw undifferentiated *Ch'i* as different from condensed *ch'i*, Kasoff translates the former with a capitalized "C" and the latter with a lower case "c" and uses *qi* when both are included. As other thinkers do not make this distinction among *ch'i* as Chang did Kasoff uses *qi* to describe the more typical unitary view of *ch'i*.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 63-4.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 221.

transformed is the marvelous force.¹⁰²

He also wrote,

The marvelous is a word to express the wondrousness of the myriad things.¹⁰³

As with "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," Lo used the concept of *shen* in connection with the Great Ultimate and *yin* and *yang* to show the unity of everything. In part I, section 37 of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo made the following comment in regard to the idea "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," but the language closely resembles his discussion of *shen*. He wrote, "Principle (*li*) is one. Only in response to action will there be form."¹⁰⁴ In applying this quote to the idea of *shen*, the "one" could refer to the Great Ultimate, and action to the alternations of *yin* and *yang* which produce the concrete things. He continued, "Once there is action there is duality."¹⁰⁵ The duality referred to a division into particularizations, but could also, in regards to *shen*, refer to *yin* and *yang*. He finished, "Without duality, there would not be unity. Within heaven-and-earth, action and response are everywhere and therefore principle is

¹⁰²Kasoff, 63.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 82. The quoted sentences in the remainder of this paragraph compose the entire part I, section 37.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

everywhere."¹⁰⁶ Again the duality here mirrors the idea of yin and yang, which produced everything, but in that the duality still contained the unity of the Great Ultimate, therefore the Great Ultimate was everywhere.

The stretch from principle to the Great Ultimate and the duality to yin and yang in the previous quote may seem to be big, but in the next section Lo wrote,

Spirit (*shen*) and transformation (*hua*) are the mysterious functioning of heaven and earth. Were it not for yin and yang, there would be no transformation in the world, and were it not for the Great Ultimate, there would be no spirit. However to conclude from this that the Great Ultimate is spirit and that yin and yang are transformation would be invalid. For transformations result from the action of yin and yang, but yin and yang are not transformation. Spirit results from the action of the Great Ultimate, and yet the Great Ultimate is not spirit. The word "action" (*wei*) expresses what [Mencius] called, "that which is enacted without an agent" (*mo chih wei erh wei che*). (a)

Master Chang said, "Unity is the condition for spirit. Duality is the condition for transformation." (b) The word "transformation" here refers to movement and action, whereas the word "spirit" refers to permanence and abiding. Although transformation involves duality, its action is always unitary. Spirit is originally unitary, and yet is always present within duality. United we call it spirit; divided we call it transformation. Thus when one speaks of transformation spirit is included, and when one speaks of spirit, transformation is included. Yin and yang include the Great Ultimate, the Great Ultimate includes yin and yang. Unity implies duality and duality implies unity (*i erh erh; erh erh i*). The student must realize this so as to distinguish clearly between substance and function, for those who make the least error in this regard

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

seldom avoid drifting in the direction of Buddhism.¹⁰⁷

In the idea "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," people and things were all united as one, since everything contains principle. It is the same with the Great Ultimate. Lo stated above that *yin* and *yang* include the Great Ultimate, and in the process of production through the continual succession of *yin* and *yang*, the Great Ultimate was included in everything. So not only are all things connected in the concept of *li*, but also in the concept of the Great Ultimate. Lo quoted a passage from the *Book of Changes*-- "'There is in the changes the Great Ultimate'"-- which he believed meant that the Great Ultimate was everywhere and it was identical with "equilibrium,"¹⁰⁸ an important idea that will be dealt with below in more detail.

Others interpreted this idea that the Great Ultimate was present in the changes, to mean that there was a single controlling power amid the transformations of *yin* and *yang*. Lo did not think this was the case. He thought "change" referred to the two primary forces, four secondary forms, and eight trigrams,¹⁰⁹ and that "Great Ultimate" was a

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, (a) Mencius 5A:6:2. (b) Chang Tsai in *Cheng-meng*, "Ts'an-liang" sec., no. 2, in *Chang Tzu ch'uan-shu*, 2:5b.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁰⁹The two primary forces refer to *yin* and *yang*, which interact to produce the four secondary forms. "Yin and yang interact and generate the four secondary forms of Heaven; the element of weakness and the element of strength interact

collective name for all principles taken together.¹¹⁰ He thought that the Great Ultimate was the single source that through dispersal produced the manifold diversity.¹¹¹

The Great Ultimate assumed an important role in Lo's thought because it provided unity for all things as their source, but Lo wrote much more on *yin* and *yang* and change. *Yin* and *yang* were important because they were the Way. Lo wrote,

The transformations of heaven and earth, the life of human beings and other living things, the beauty of ritual, the mysteries of positive and negative spiritual forces, the passage of time, the metamorphoses of life and death, the circumstances of good and ill fortune, remorse and humiliation--the theories about them are endless. Yet they may be summarized in a single phrase: "Yin and yang succeeding one another is called the Way."(a)¹¹²

Lo felt that Ch'eng Hao had a correct understanding of *yin* and *yang* and the Way, but felt his younger brother Ch'eng I had made a distinction between *yin* and *yang* and the Way.¹¹³ Lo believed Chu Hsi's dualism of *li* and *ch'i* was

and generate the four secondary forms of earth; and consequently the eight trigrams are completed." From Wm. Theodore deBary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol.1, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 462. The eight trigrams are *ch'ien* ☰, *tui* ☷, *li* ☲, *chen* ☳, *sun* ☱, *k'an* ☵, *ken* ☶, and *k'un* ☷. From Fung, Yu-lan. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol.II. trans. Derk Bodde, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 456.

¹¹⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, 59.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 76. (a) *Book of Changes*, "Appended Remarks," 7:7A.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 59.

problematic, but quoted a line that he agreed with from a letter of Chu's to K'o Kuo-ts'ai. Chu wrote, "'Yin and yang succeeding one another in ceaseless alternation is the complete substance of the Way.'" ¹¹⁴

As *yin* and *yang* constituted the Way, they deserved close attention. Shao Yung, the last of the prominent Sung Confucians to be mentioned, used the phrase "consummate mystery" to describe the alternation of activity and tranquility. Lo wrote, "In this single phrase--consummate mystery--the principle of the nature and endowment is fully expressed." ¹¹⁵ In this, the principle of the nature (*li*) and the endowment (*ch'i*) were expressed through the continued succession of *yin* and *yang* as the producer of the myriad things. As things were formed in this process they received the *li* and *ch'i* together and were thus expressed. Lo saw the activity of *yin* and *yang* as causing man to be influenced by things, which resulted in men being active. ¹¹⁶

Yin and *yang* were in constant succession and therefore continually in a state of production. Because of this, *yin* and *yang* were synonymous with change, and change was the key to understanding. In the second section of part I of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo quoted a passage from the *Book of Changes*,

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 100.

"Appended Remarks," that read, "'The changes are the means by which the sage reaches the depths and studies the subtle activating forces [of all things].'"¹¹⁷ In emphasizing the importance of change, Lo later quoted the *ch'ien* hexagram of the *Book of Changes*, "'The Way of heaven works through change and transformation so that each thing receives its proper nature and destiny.'"¹¹⁸ Although a sage could not alter the transformations, he needed to understand the principles involved so that he could follow them, live in accordance with them and by doing so further human interests.¹¹⁹

By viewing *li* and *ch'i* as inseparable, Lo began to build a foundation for a coherent, consistent system of Confucian thought. Through the concept of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," he found a cohesive element to bring substance to his thought. And with his conception of the Great Ultimate and yin and yang he defined the Way, which ran through the realms of heaven-and-earth and of man. Lo found much in Ch'eng Hao's thought that he agreed with, but he thought the following was utterly incisive,

"The workings of high heaven have neither sound nor smell."(a) As substance it is called change; as principle it is called the Way; in its

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 115.

functioning, it is called spirit; as an endowment in human beings it is called the nature.¹²⁰

What is that endowment in human beings that is called the nature? What does it have to do with the Great Ultimate, yin and yang, the Way, and *li* and *ch'i*? With the fundamental metaphysical views of Lo laid out, the implications that resulted from his changes may be seen more clearly.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 126. (a) *Mean*, 33:6, quoting Ode 235.

CHAPTER 3

The Implications of Lo's Monism

Having discussed the fundamentals of *li* and *ch'i*, the idea "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," and the Great Ultimate in response to the first question posed by Kasoff, we can move to address the second question: Of what does human nature consist? To answer this question it is necessary to first understand Lo's conception of human nature and how it relates to the rest of the universe. From there the discussion can move to Lo's views on feelings and desires and how they fit into his conception of the existence of only one nature, and finally to what the relationship of the nature is to the mind. We begin with Lo's conception of human nature as it developed from his notions of *li* and *ch'i* and the Way.

One Nature, Not Two

As seen earlier, Lo did not agree with some of his predecessors' dualistic views of *li* and *ch'i*. Their dualism caused him great consternation as he struggled to reconcile his views of *li* and *ch'i* and human nature. The Sung Confucians that Lo followed and others after them used

different terms to describe the nature of heaven (*t'ien-li*) and what was the physical nature (*ch'i-chi chi hsing*). They associated the nature of heaven with *li*, which meant that the nature of heaven, or the original nature, was perfect and unchanging. Human nature (*hsing*) was associated with the nature of Heaven and thus originally good, but the physical nature, associated with *ch'i*, was impure and subject to error, evil, and hopefully, cultivation.

Lo thought this dichotomy of essential *li* and accidental *ch'i* (accidental because everyone received wide ranging variations of impurities that were restricted to one's own self alone) was unconvincing and unnatural.¹ So to maintain consistency with his view of *li* and *ch'i* as one, Lo discarded the distinction between an idealistic and a physical nature to make a single, more monistic and naturalistic, nature. Lo considered the nature of Heaven, human nature, and physical nature to be identical, though these specific terms may be used to refer to different manifestations of it.

Chang Tsai, who some have described as a monist, said the following of the nature of man,

Whether integrated or disintegrated, it is my body just the same. One is qualified to discuss the nature of man when he realizes that death is not annihilation.²

¹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 94.

²Chan, *Source Book*, 501.

This gives the impression of a single nature, but Wing-tsit Chan notes that Chang never made his idea of the nature clear, nor did he explain why some *ch'i* was more impure relative to other *ch'i*.³ Chang, however, did see human nature as having two aspects: the universal nature or nature of heaven and the physical nature. The nature of man, in Chang's thought, consistent with the ideas of Mencius, was invariably good.⁴ The physical nature naturally developed problems because only impure *ch'i* was used to give things physical form.

So, though his terms differ slightly from those of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, their views were similar in that it was *ch'i* that gave rise to physical form, and determined one's abilities, qualities, and personal weaknesses. These ideas also provided the opportunity for retaining one's goodness through being able to return and thus preserve the universal nature.⁵

It is, in light of the potential to return to the universal nature through cultivation, that Chang's following comment becomes understandable, "Nature permeates beyond the material force and destiny operates within the material force."⁶

³*Ibid.*, 504.

⁴McMorran, 442.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Chan, *Source Book*, 508.

Lo rejected the distinction between the nature of heaven and the physical nature. Bloom writes of Lo,

Here it must be observed that underlying his rejection of this distinction was his refusal to accept the notion that there was any such transcendent reality as the Supreme Vacuity, out of which finite reality emerged and into which it would ultimately be subsumed.⁷

Lo thought Chang's distinction between the universal nature and physical nature clearly demonstrated that Chang, too, had a dualistic tendency.⁸

The distinction between two natures in the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi was a primary point on which Lo felt their philosophies had not been able to "recover the ultimate unity."⁹ This was one of the points which Lo felt must be reconciled so that there would be more consistency in Confucian thought.

Like Chang Tsai, Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi both spoke of an original nature and a physical nature. For Ch'eng and Chu, the original nature was associated with *li* and was therefore perfectly good. Physical nature was bound up with one's endowment of *ch'i*, and was consequently tainted. Original nature was universal among things, but physical nature was particular¹⁰ to each thing due to the endowment of *ch'i*,

⁷Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 89.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 17.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

which varied due to the circumstances under which the thing received its endowment, or form. For Ch'eng and Chu it was possible through personal cultivation, an idea that will be discussed under Kasoff's fourth question below, that one could clear away the impurities of one's *ch'i* to allow original nature to be more fully expressed. Bloom comments,

In line with his monism of *ch'i*, Lo Ch'in-shun reflects the notion of two natures, insisting once again that it is without either classical precedent or philosophical justification. The nature is one.¹¹

Bloom also notes that the idea of a distinction between two natures does not depend on dualism, but that they do however fit well.¹²

Although Lo denied Ch'eng I's dualism and his conception of two natures, Lo did accept his idea "nature is *li*." Lo did not accept this idea readily, and only did so after agonizing over the idea for a lengthy period of time. He finally concluded that the subtle truth of nature and endowment were contained in the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse."¹³

Lo noted, that although, Ch'eng I wrote in the *I-shu* that it was wrong to regard the nature and *ch'i* as two, he could not see them as one either.¹⁴ In this same section

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo commented on Chang's, Ch'eng I's, and Chu Hsi's application of two names to a single nature. Lo quoted the *Doctrine of the Mean* to argue that there were not two natures, "'What heaven has endowed is called the nature. Following one's nature is called the Way.'"¹⁵ Lo argued that there should not be a distinction between original nature and physical nature. What was given by heaven should be followed. One should not have to forsake a so-called physical nature, or endowment of *ch'i*, to return to the original nature. Following this quote of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Lo wrote,

But when we speak of the nature endowed by Heaven, this already entails the physical being. And when we speak of the physical nature, isn't this the nature endowed by Heaven? To a single nature they applied two names, and, moreover, spoke of the physical being and the endowment of Heaven as if they were opposed, so that in the final analysis their argument turned out to be unclear.¹⁶

Lo did not agree with Chang Tsai's, Ch'eng I's, and Chu Hsi's views on nature, but Lo did approve of Ch'eng Hao's monistic tendencies and his complex view of human nature, which Lo felt avoided some of the problems found in the thought of the others.¹⁷ Ch'eng Hao thought that nature, what is inborn, was the same as *ch'i* and that *ch'i* was the

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁷Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 75.

same as nature.¹⁸ Lo accepted the idea, as noted above, that nature is *li*. In Lo's thought, however, since *li* was an aspect of *ch'i*, his idea and Ch'eng Hao's were comparable, but not identical. Ch'eng Hao's assertion was quite contradictory to his brother Ch'eng I's idea, who drew a clearer distinction between *li* and *ch'i*.

Lo's conception of a monism of *ch'i* and his search for ultimate unity and consistency led him to reject the notion of two natures in favor of a single nature. His fundamental shift in emphasis from *li* to *ch'i*, led to this important shift to a single nature, and also another fundamental move away from the conception of human nature commonly held in the Sung. The view of a single nature created a shift in the role and place of feelings and desires within human nature. This move away from Sung Confucian thought, Lo felt, shifted the emphasis back towards the more classical Confucian views and thus towards recovering the ultimate unity.

Feelings and Desires

The most significant result of Lo's denial of the idea of two natures, was the corresponding breakdown of the tension between the Principle of Nature (*t'ien-li*, nature of Heaven) and human desires (*jen-yü*).¹⁹ Within the framework

¹⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 527.

¹⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 20.

of two natures, human desires were an impediment to returning to and preserving of the original nature. So those who held the position that there were two natures also believed that one must rid oneself of desires.

Lo disagreed completely, and believed that desires and emotions were signs and expressions of human nature. They were natural and in conformity with *li*.²⁰ They needed to be regulated for the sake of oneself and others so they did not reach the extremity of selfishness, but they did not need to be repressed. Lo referred to the written work *Mencius* and the "Record of Music" in the *Book of Rites* to show that the ancients viewed the human emotional and appetitive nature as fundamental and worthy of cultivation.²¹

The negative view of the emotions began in Neo-Confucian thought as early as Chou Tun-i. Chou thought desires, emotions, and the distractions of external things harmed the unity and sincerity of mind. An idea similar to Buddhism and Taoism. They disrupted the quiescence of mind, which he considered fundamental to the basis of moral knowledge and thus to moral action.²² For Chou, tranquility came from having no desires.²³ He wrote,

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Berling, 104.

²³Chan, *Source Book*, 463.

"Feelings are not genuine but obscure. They change in a thousand ways."²⁴

Wing-tsit Chan points out that Chang's advocacy of having no desires is not an idea found in earlier Confucian thought, and that Mencius had suggested having few desires.²⁵ Lo agreed completely. Chan is of the opinion that Chou's insistence on eliminating desires was a Taoist influence.²⁶ Shao Yung felt similarly to Chou, and said, "Our nature is impartial and enlightened, but our feelings are partial and deceived."²⁷ In agreement with Chou and Shao, Chang Tsai felt that our good nature was blocked by human desires and emotions. Chang said, "Those who understand the higher things return to the Principle of Nature (*t'ien-li*, Principle of Heaven) while those who understand lower things follow human desires."²⁸ For Chang, the physical nature was the source of evil in man and the superior man necessarily denied parts of his physical nature, namely human desires, to be his original nature.²⁹

Ch'eng I also felt desires to be troublesome. Ch'eng Hao did not make distinctions between internal and external,

²⁴*Ibid.*, 479.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 473.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 492.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 509.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 511.

but Ch'eng I did. He saw external things as problematic because they gave rise to desires.³⁰ Ch'eng I wrote, "Seriousness is unselfishness. As soon as one lacks seriousness, thousands of selfish desires arise to injure his humanity."³¹ It is important to note that selfish desires could injure his humanity, for humanity, the ability to constantly, spontaneously act humanely, were an integral, fundamental piece of sagehood. Thus injury to one's humanity was a considerable setback in the Confucian journey towards sagehood.

Ch'eng I did not, however, necessarily advocate complete repression of feelings and desires. He felt the enlightened person controlled his feelings so that he did not deviate from the mean.³² His fear of the potential damage of desires however, pushed his thought much more towards the repression of desires, and further from Lo's idea of embracing desires as natural. Ch'eng I wrote,

In nourishing the mind there is nothing better than having few desires. Without desires, there will be no delusion. One does not need to be submerged in desires. Merely to have intention is already desire.³³

In another part, though, when speaking of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy, he wrote, "As they are aroused and attain

³⁰Berling, 119.

³¹Chan, *Source Book*, 556.

³²*Ibid.*, 548.

³³*Ibid.*, 553.

their due degree, they are good, no matter in what direction."³⁴

This idea of Ch'eng I's was much closer to Lo's view, apart from the fundamental difference between Ch'eng I seeing the desires as removing one further from his original nature and Lo seeing them as part of the nature and possibly taking one away from what was appropriate. Lo quoted a passage from the "Record of Music" in the *Book of Rites* to substantiate his view of desires,

Man is tranquil at birth; this is heaven-endowed nature. When, influenced by things, he begins to be active, that is desire arising from his nature.³⁵

Lo thought that some desires were necessary and could not be repressed and that some were appropriate and could not be changed. He wondered, if desires conform to the principle of what was appropriate, how could they not be good?³⁶ Lo did not agree with previous Confucians who had tried to eliminate or severely restrain desires. He wrote,

It is only heedlessly giving way to the passions, indulging desires, and not knowing how to turn back that is evil. . . .The desires, together with pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy, are qualities of the nature.³⁷

Lo viewed the principles of the seven emotions as each

³⁴*Ibid.*, 66.

³⁵Bloom, *Knowledge*, 121.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

rooted in the nature.³⁸ Even so, he also felt there was a need to regulate them. One could not follow one's desires to the extreme and justify such actions because the desires were rooted in the nature. Lo wrote, "The Way is everywhere, of course, but one must be in accord with moral principle and free of selfishness before it can be considered the Way."³⁹ In another spot he wrote of the need to regulate the desires in the following way,

Heaven (or nature) produces people with desires. By following their desires people find pleasure. From the flouting of them they feel anger. In fulfilling them they feel joy. And in finding them thwarted they know sorrow. Therefore the "Record of Music" only speaks of "The desires rising from the nature." The desires cannot be spoken of as evil. They may be good or evil depending solely upon whether or not they are regulated.⁴⁰

Lo was conscious of the problems associated with selfish desires even if the origin of those same desires were rooted in the nature. In part III, section 3 of the *K'un-chih chi*, he spoke of this in a way that paralleled the concept "principle is one; its particularizations diverse,"

Because the Way of nature is what is common to all, action and reaction are constant and unerring. As the human emotions cannot be free of the encumbrance of selfish desires, action and reaction may be inconstant and liable to error.⁴¹

³⁸*Ibid.*, 68. The seven emotions are desire, love, hate, pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 68.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 173.

Despite the intentions of many to eliminate desires, and the fundamental difference from those who held desires to be part of the physical nature, Lo's views of regulating the desires were similar not only to classical Confucian thought but to his Neo-Confucian predecessors as well. Lo quoted the following passage of Li T'ung (Yen-p'ing, 1093-1163) because he was in agreement with it, and considered it to be a well-established idea,

If at the time before the feelings have been aroused, the disposition is distinguished clearly, then in managing affairs and responding to things, one naturally regulates the feelings so that they attain due degree.⁴²

In another section, Lo took a position similar to the one stated by Li T'ung and supported it with a quote from *Analects* and an allusion to the *Book of History*. He wrote, "'Sincerely following the golden mean'(a) is the same as 'following the desires of one's mind without transgressing the bounds of decorum,'(b) and this is what the spirit of the sage is able to accomplish."⁴³

The idea of regulating one's desires so that one does not transgress the bounds of decorum, and the idea of sincerely following the golden mean, both begin at the point Li T'ung referred to in the passage quoted above by Lo, as the time before the feelings have been aroused. It was at

⁴²*Ibid.*, 70.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 51. (a)Alludes to the *Book of History*, "Counsels of the Great Yu." (b)*Analects*, 2:4:6.

this point, often referred to as equilibrium, that regulation began. The sage was capable of continually maintaining this point of equilibrium, which resulted in the ability to perfectly regulate his feelings, always act in accord with the golden mean, and thus spontaneously act and react to everything in a perfectly moral fashion.

Equilibrium

Lo felt that all people have equilibrium before the feelings were aroused, and in fact stated that not only men but all things have equilibrium, too.⁴⁴ He cited the *Doctrine of the Mean* to state the idea that equilibrium was "the great foundation of the world," and felt that although all have equilibrium only the sage through maintaining equilibrium was capable of establishing this great foundation of the world.⁴⁵ Lo wrote of his view,

Were there a distinction between those who had it and those who did not, how could it be that "all things are endowed with the entirety of the Great Ultimate?"(a) This idea is extremely refined and subtle and is definitely not subject to more than

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 80-1. The *Doctrine of the Mean* reads, "Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused it is called the equilibrium (*chung*, centrality, mean). When these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due degree, it is called harmony. Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish." In Chan, *Source Book*, 98.

one interpretation.⁴⁶

As if to show whether or not there was only one interpretation, Bloom suggests checking this idea against the thought of Wang Yang-ming as found in Wing-tsit's Chan translation of *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*. Indeed Wang wrote, "The nature of all men is good. They all originally possess the qualities of equilibrium and harmony."⁴⁷ Wang and Lo disagreed on many things, yet they both held that all men have equilibrium. It seems, though, that more than anything this shows how fundamental the idea of equilibrium was to Confucian thought.

Ordinary men may all have equilibrium, according to Lo, but these same men were generally confused and distracted because they got carried away by things. If men could respond to things according to their *li*, and not get carried away, then they would not be encumbered and be sages.⁴⁸

Chou Tun-i spoke of sincerity, and sincerity seems closely related to equilibrium. Chou saw sincerity as the foundation of the sage, the foundation of the five constant

⁴⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 81. (a)Chu Hsi in *Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 4:2a.

⁴⁷Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 51.

⁴⁸Bloom, *Knowledge*, 105.

virtues and the source of all activities.⁴⁹ Wing-tsit Chan, in speaking of Chou, uses the word incipience. For Chou it was at the point of incipience that good or evil emerged. It was at this point of incipience where existence, primarily external things, met nonexistence causing activity to start, but where it had not yet manifested itself into physical form.⁵⁰ In other words, it was at the point of incipience when one had experienced the effect of an external thing upon oneself, that moral nature would naturally react in one way, and one chose whether to act in that moral way or according to what one desired. Chou said of this point,

It is here and now that one must be absolutely sincere and true to his moral nature so he will not deviate from it either in going too far or not going far enough.⁵¹

For Chou, desires were negative in general since he thought they should be eliminated. For Lo, the idea of incipience was the point at which one had the opportunity to regulate whether or not one's desires were in accord with what was proper or not.

Lo felt that equilibrium was difficult to discuss in a general way, and wrote, "One must observe it attentively and

⁴⁹Chan, *Source Book*, 465-6.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 467.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

comprehend it in silence."⁵² In another section he quoted Ch'eng Hao,

"Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world."(a) It is the correct principle of all under heaven which is central and straight.⁵³

Lo equated the tranquility at birth with equilibrium. For Lo, equilibrium was the state before the feelings had been aroused and the reality of nature, which was unitary.⁵⁴ Equilibrium in Lo's thought maintained the general notion that was current in Neo-Confucianism, but not because it was the general notion nor because it was the currently accepted conception of it. It was because of its basis in the *Doctrine of the Mean* that Lo held the view he did. It was the state before the feelings had been aroused, the place to maintain the balance of the golden mean, and the exact point where one experienced the reality of the Great Ultimate and thus one's unity with all things.

The Relationship of the Mind and Nature

Lo rejected the dualism of *li* and *ch'i*, and as a result also rejected the notion of two natures. Why then does he maintain a distinction between the mind and nature? This point has been a virtual magnet for those arguing against

⁵²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 84.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 83-4. The quote is one of Ch'eng Hao from the *I-shu*, 11:11a. (a) a reference to the *Mean*, 1:4.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 100.

the consistency of Lo's thought.

Part of the problem arises from Lo's position that nature is *li*, and that the mind was not. Another point that was also problematic was the notion that nature was prior to the mind, a specific idea that Lo had attacked in the dualism of his predecessors when they viewed *li* as necessarily prior to *ch'i*. Bloom notes that the success or failure of Lo's position of nature as *li* without sacrificing the consistency of his monism of *ch'i* has been a matter of considerable controversy.⁵⁵

One of the first prominent critics of Lo, in regard to his consistency of his view of mind and nature, was Huang Tsung-hsi, the author of the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*.⁵⁶ Huang felt Lo was not theoretically consistent. Lo's view of *li* and *ch'i* did not agree with the views of Chu Hsi, but his views of mind and nature did.⁵⁷ Huang, who happened to be partial to the thought of Lo's main target of criticism among his contemporaries, Wang Yang-ming, said the following of Lo,

Lo thought that man's Heaven-endowed nature originates when life is first engendered, but that consciousness arises only after one is born, and that consciousness is mind and not nature.⁵⁸

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 221.

⁵⁷Ching, 217.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 216.

Huang broke down Lo's views on nature and mind. He noted that for Lo, nature originated before man was born, and was therefore tranquil. The mind, in comparison, was active, as it moved when aroused by external things. The nature was the principle of heaven-and-earth and the myriad things, and was common to all. The mind, though, was what one personally possessed, and was particular to oneself. Huang thought this analysis clearly showed that Lo's thought put the nature as prior to the mind and therefore was master to it, a problem reminiscent of *li* being prior to *ch'i*. Huang felt the two concepts as Lo held them were mutually contradictory, and wrote,

That which in heaven is *ch'i*, in man is the mind. And that which in heaven is *li*, in man is nature. What is true of *li* and *ch'i* will also be true of the mind and nature, for there is definitely no question of difference between them.⁵⁹

Huang could not accept that nature was a separate entity that existed prior to the mind and that attached to it.⁶⁰

Huang's basic arguments have appealed to others since they were put forth, but contrary to Huang's views, Lo's thought maintains a consistency within his own system, and also in its relationship to the thought of Confucius, Mencius, and traditional Confucianism.

Mind was seen as *ch'i* and nature as *li*, but Huang made

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 215.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 216.

a direct correlation, saying, since *li* could not be prior to *ch'i* neither can nature be prior to mind. As nature was endowed at the beginning of life as *li*, it was necessarily in connection with *ch'i*. Therefore the physical basis for the mind was not endowed after the endowment of nature, it was simultaneous. The problem arose in the definition of mind. So, although the physical basis of *ch'i* was present for mind, mind was not seen to exist until consciousness, which occurred at birth.

In Huang's analysis, he compared the mind and nature. At one point he stated that nature was common to all, but that the mind was particular to each. In Lo's thought, the mind would be particular to each, but precisely due to the fact that the nature endowed to each was different. Nature was *li*, and thus subject to the notion "principle is one; its particularizations diverse." As nature was endowed in each person, it represented a particularization unique to that individual, and consequently the mind was also particular to each.

Huang also asserted that the nature was the master of the mind in Lo's thought. It was not the master, but instead the pattern which provided the basis for the mind. Lo wrote, "The place where principle resides is called the mind. . . . That which the mind possesses is called the nature."⁶¹ Although Lo perceived a distinction between

⁶¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 104.

mind and nature, he did not consider them to be separate either. Lo's position will become more clear as it is laid out in more detail.

The first entry of Lo's work the *K'un-chih chi*, stated the following,

The teaching of Confucius was entirely devoted to the matter of preserving the mind and nourishing the nature. Though he never clarified this, it was clarified by Mencius. Mind is the spiritual intelligence of man. The nature is his vital principle. The place where principle resides is called the mind. That which the mind possesses is called the nature. The two must not be confused and considered one. . . . The two are always inseparable, yet they should not be confused.⁶²

The basis of thought for Lo had to be compatible with the comments of the sages. If one could conceptualize an enlightening concept, it was groundless, irrelevant, and most importantly not Confucian unless it coincided with the ideas of Confucius, Mencius, and those ideas found in the classic Confucian texts. Much later in the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo wondered, "When Mencius discussed the mind and the nature he distinguished them clearly, so why should it be that scholars often mistakenly identify them?"⁶³

Lo saw the original substance of the nature as still both in activity and tranquility. The mind, though, in Lo's conception varied in accordance with the circumstances of

⁶²*Ibid.*, 49.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 104.

activity and tranquility.⁶⁴ Lo saw the two as separate, but inseparable as one's nature resided in the mind. If one could learn to maintain one's mind so that it did not vary in accordance with the circumstances, then one could spontaneously act and react in accordance with the mean, and become a sage. Lo was adamant that mind was not principle, but if one successfully brought one's mind into a constant state of equilibrium, then Lo thought,

The sage turns mind into nature, so that his mind is principle, and principle is his mind. Its original substance is always naturally clear and without the slightest difference whether in activity or tranquility.⁶⁵

In striving to recover the unity in Confucian thought, Lo tried to be faithful to the original ideas of Confucianism. As Huang Tsung-hsi stated, though, Lo's views of mind and nature were similar to those of Chu Hsi and Ch'eng I. Chu Hsi also thought nature was *li*, and thought that mind was the function of human nature.⁶⁶ Lo saw the key to perceiving the difference between mind and nature in Chu Hsi's comment, "'The human mind possesses consciousness. The substance of the Way is inactive.'" ⁶⁷ Chu Hsi's idea concurred with Lo's distinction between the mind's activity and the nature's stillness. Despite the distinctions made

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Chan, "Ch'eng-Chu," 42.

⁶⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 108.

here, Ch'eng I argued that that distinction did not preclude an ultimate unity,

What is inherent in things is called principle. What is endowed in man is called nature. And as the master of the body it is called the mind. In reality they are all one.⁶⁸

In comparing Lo to Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi on this point, Bloom cites A.C. Graham's assessment that Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, although to a lesser extent than Ch'eng I, saw nature as a substance. Bloom states that Lo saw nature less as a substance and more as a veridical, genuine object.⁶⁹

Ch'eng I's conception of the idea nature is *li* had strong ethical implications.⁷⁰ Since *li* was perfect, in identifying nature as *li*, Ch'eng I stated that the goodness of nature existed as an ideal substance within individuals. Because men had this ideal substance within, they could recover it through striving to do so.⁷¹

Lo's different view of *li* also altered his conception of nature is *li*. Instead of *li* as a perfect unchanging substance within men, it was, for Lo, the dynamic aspect of *ch'i*.⁷² *Li* as it was endowed into man became a particularization which caused a dynamic pattern

⁶⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 567.

⁶⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 96.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Ibid.*

characteristic of individual beings rather than as an ideal essence within them.⁷³ As the nature it meant the spontaneous tendency of all beings to follow the internal dictates of one's own individual nature.⁷⁴ The structure of Lo's views regarding the relationship of mind and nature thus derived much from the words and concepts of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, but the substance of his views carried different meanings and implications.

Lo saw mind and nature as inseparable, yet it was important that one understood the distinction he repeatedly drew in the *K'un-chih chi* that the mind was an active subject and the nature as its veridical object.⁷⁵ He relied heavily on Mencius in making this distinction. In part II, section 41, Lo quoted Mencius to stress that the function of the mind was to think, and that Mencius clearly stated that the ability to think was the most important part of upholding the nature.⁷⁶ Upholding the nature in this context meant to recover the ultimate unity for oneself, or the ability not to stray from the equilibrium.

In this same section Lo wrote, "That which is capable of thought is the mind. What we apprehend through thought

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 139.

is the principle of nature."⁷⁷ Nature was not a disposition to moral goodness, it was a reality which could be known.⁷⁸ Moral goodness was not inherent because of *li*, it resulted from an objective awareness of *li* which united oneself and others.⁷⁹ This conception of *li* fueled the necessity and importance of the "investigating things" and probing principle to the utmost.

This view of *li*, nature, as a veridical object and the mind as an active subject showed nature as substance and mind as function. The mind possessed nature. Nature resided in the mind, and nature as an objective reality was accessible to the mind but was not identical with the human mind.⁸⁰ Nature was to be the object of the mind's reflection and investigation. They could not possibly be one.

Lo associated mind with consciousness, and consciousness was the awareness of the nature and things in general. So nature was, besides being the object of the mind's reflection, necessarily prior to the mind as life itself precedes consciousness.⁸¹ Though this distinction seems quite sharp, it belies the truth that they were

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*

ultimately one. Lo wrote,

They may be called two things, and yet they are not two things. They may be called one, and yet they are not one. If one does away with the mind, there is no nature, and if one does away with the nature, there is no mind. It is only when a distinction is made within a single thing, allowing two things to emerge, that one can speak of "knowing the nature."⁸²

While trying to grasp the relationship of the mind and nature, another division may seem like an added distraction, yet Lo also divided the mind. The mind was one, but, as seen in a previous quote, he felt that only by making a distinction within a single thing and thus allowing two to emerge could one speak of "knowing the nature." Dividing the mind for explanation purposes, into mind of Tao and human mind will help one to understand the relationship of the mind and nature.

Mind Divided into the Mind of Tao and the Human Mind

In a few of the earliest sections of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo spoke specifically of the mind of Tao and the human mind. In part I, section 3, the mind of Tao was described as quiet, still, perfect, and because it could not be seen, subtle. In the same section, the human mind when stimulated, penetrates, was most changing, could not be fathomed and was therefore insecure.

In section 4, Lo continued by saying the mind of Tao

⁸²*Ibid.*, 153.

was the nature and the human mind was the feelings. At this point it is important to remember that the mind is one. For Lo the feelings were part of the nature. Feelings were inherent in the nature, but he divided them in speaking of the mind of Tao and the human mind by looking at the feelings after birth as they were active as a part of life.

Lo wrote, "The mind is one, but one speaks of it as two because of the distinction of activity and tranquility and the difference of substance and function."⁸³ Lo saw the mind of Tao as tranquil, whose substance was most perfect because it was the nature. The human mind was active and because of the feelings most changing. It is important not to equate changing and active with negative ideas such as imperfection. The nature was tranquil and most perfect, and the feelings were part of the nature but in functioning in life were changing. Changing, though, did not have any negative meaning for Lo. It was only a description of how feelings operate.

The idea of stillness and activity and their importance was addressed in this same section by Lo. He wrote, "When tranquility controls activity, it is auspicious."⁸⁴ It was auspicious, because if tranquility was controlling activity it meant that one was maintaining one's state of equilibrium even in the midst of activity. If one could follow one's

⁸³*Ibid.*, 51.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

mind without crossing the bounds of decorum, one was maintaining the golden mean, fulfilling one's nature, and this was naturally auspicious.

Lo followed with, "When activity results in confusion about returning, it is inauspicious."⁸⁵ It was not following one's feelings that was inauspicious, but getting carried away in the activity without thinking and without exerting an effort of returning to the mean. So if one was to heedlessly follow the activity without regulating oneself as to avoid selfishness and avoid violating the bounds of decorum, Lo thought one was surely heading for trouble.

Lo thought the human mind's substance was pure spirituality. Originally the human mind was all-encompassing, but could be blinded by selfishness and egotism.⁸⁶ Lo stated, "It perceives what is small but neglects what is great."⁸⁷ The neglect came from not being sincere, which meant not maintaining the golden mean. By not being sincere one was headed for trouble and neglected what is great. Without continued effort one could tend to favor the human mind and neglect the mind of Tao, which was nature.

Lo used this division to show the necessity of investigating *li* so one could know the mind of Tao and thus

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

know the nature. Of this Lo stated,

Seeking the lost mind is only the preliminary work; fully developing the mind is the culmination of the process. In between what is most important is to probe principle to the utmost. Probing principle to the utmost necessarily entails gradual stages. But fully developing the mind and knowing the nature takes place at once, and there is no longer a question of priorities.⁸⁸

For Lo, *li* was not perfect or morally relevant, as it had been with Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. *Li* was to be investigated so one could increase one's knowledge in gradual stages, until one realized the unity of all things and thus knew the nature. Through the investigation of *li* one developed one's mind until one knew the nature and thus had also fully developed the mind. Therefore, the process of investigating *li* helped one to unite the division of the mind of Tao and human mind, fully develop the mind, know the nature, and thus, as the quote stated above, turn the mind into nature so the mind would become principle and one would become a sage. The distinctions and divisions spoke of help one to grasp the overall process of recovering unity and make it easier to discuss things, but ultimately one comes to understand that there has always been unity.

Criticism of Lo's Division of Mind and Nature

Liu Tsung-chou commented on various scholars in Huang Tsung-hsi's *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*. In this work, Liu saw Lo's

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 104.

strength as seeing the moral mind (mind of Tao) as nature, and his identification of this with the state of mind before the stirring of emotions.⁸⁹ The idea of the human mind as emotions after being stirred goes along with this. Liu, however, criticized Lo. He felt that since mind, nature, and emotions all referred to the same person that there should not be a distinction between that which was prone to error, the mind, and that which is subtle not being the mind.⁹⁰ Liu, like Huang, was sympathetic to the thought of Wang Yang-ming, who held the position that mind was *li*. Liu wrote,

The problem is that Lo firmly believed that to hold consciousness to be nature is Buddhistic, since, for him consciousness belongs to [the state of mind] after emotions are stirred and hence refers to emotions and not to nature; indeed, the mind that concerns the root of all things is only the mind that is prone to error, while there is no [such thing as the] mind that is subtle.⁹¹

Liu felt Lo had pushed the subtle outside the mind and thus had to be sought in the appearances of heaven-and-earth and the myriad things. Liu thought Lo had almost pushed nature outside of oneself, that it was something external.⁹² As a result Liu thought that Lo did not really perceive the nature, and criticized Lo for distinguishing

⁸⁹Ching, 63.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²*Ibid.*, 64.

between the mind and nature.

As Liu stated, Lo did believe that to hold consciousness as nature was Buddhistic. It was for this reason that he could not accept the idea that mind is *li*. Liu went astray, though, in his criticisms of Lo when he thought Lo had pushed the subtle outside. Lo had made the distinction between mind and nature, but considered them inseparable.

By saying that nature resided in the mind, Lo maintained the subtle in the mind. Liu felt Lo used the mind, which was prone to error to pursue the root of all things. In Lo's thought, it was through the human mind, which could err, that one thought and investigated *li*, but the human mind was only part of the mind. Lo's discussion of the mind of Tao and the human mind, which were truly one mind, provides answers to Liu's criticisms.

Since Liu sought the nature within the mind, Lo's thought relative to his own seemed to push the nature out of oneself into an external position. Lo did advocate that one investigate external things, but it was through the external investigation that one came to the realization that everything was ultimately one, so one knew the nature, which had been within oneself the entire time.

Lo thought it was necessary to search externally to establish the entire context of reality that could lead to knowing the nature. Lo was critical of those who did not

search externally. Bloom writes of Lo, "Consciousness has many objects and modes, but the consciousness of principle involves awareness of what it is that is common or shared among all living things and consistently and reliably true in their life processes."⁹³ This awareness of what was commonly shared by all was the ultimate object of knowledge. Teaching this unity was complex, and thus Lo considered it knowledge painfully acquired.⁹⁴

The Problem of Emphasizing Mind

Lo was critical of those within Confucianism who concentrated their efforts on the mind specifically, and often considered their approaches to be Buddhistic. Lo's criticism of Lu Hsiang-shan provide an example of his fundamental problems with emphasizing the mind. In part II, section 41, Lo quoted Lu's view that as the mind exists principle will illuminate itself. In Lu's thought, since mind was *li*, one would naturally act compassionately, feel shame and dislike, be yielding, be capable of discriminating between right and wrong, be generous and compliant, and be bold and resolute all when it was proper to do so.⁹⁵

Lo referred to Mencius' emphasis on thought and the mind's function of thinking in the apprehension of knowledge

⁹³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 22.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 139.

to show the error of Lu's view. Lo wondered, in Lu's statement, what was the need for thought?⁹⁶ Lo found it conceivable within the spiritual consciousness of the mind to naturally act as Lu described, but thought when it came to a matter of discretion and judgement, one could not help but be either excessive or deficient.⁹⁷ Lo concluded that to concentrate on the mind and hold its spiritual consciousness as the ultimate Way could only be called Ch'an Buddhism.⁹⁸

Lo admitted the difficulty of being clear about the mind and nature, but thought Lu, and by implication others who agreed with Lu that mind is *li*, outwardly eschewed the name of Ch'an, but inwardly employed its substance.⁹⁹ Lo felt that Lu, although he often had quoted the sages to support his views, had in fact used them out of context merely to promote his own theory of the mind, which was in conflict with the views of the sages.¹⁰⁰ Lo quoted Ch'eng I to show the point that Lu went astray. Ch'eng I stated,

All the words of the sages and worthies are designed to lead man to get hold of his lost mind and cause it to return and reintegrate with his body. Having accomplished this, he will be able to direct his inquiries to a higher plane and "through

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 141.

study of lower things advance to the higher."¹⁰¹

In quoting Ch'eng I and his reference to Confucius, Lo tried to show that Lu got enchanted at the point of returning and reintegrating with one's body, but neglected the most important step of advancing to the higher plane through study of lower things.¹⁰²

The following quote clearly shows Lo's positions on the relationship of mind and nature, and the necessity of his position being consistent with the Confucianism of the ancients. Lo wrote,

When our Master(a) compiled the *Book of Changes* he spoke repeatedly about the nature. He said, "The Way of *ch'ien* works through change and transformation so that each thing receives its proper nature and endowment."(b) He said, "That which brings to completion is the nature."(c) He said, "The sages made the *Book of Changes* so that it would be in conformity with the principle underlying the nature and destiny."(d) He said, "[The sages taught] probing principle to the utmost and fully developing one's nature until the destiny is fulfilled."(e) If only one dwells on these statements, it will be clear that the nature is principle.

He also spoke repeatedly about the mind. He said, "The sages cleansed their minds by means of this."(f) He said, "[The gentleman] composes his mind before he speaks."(g) He said, "[The sages] were able to rejoice in their minds."(h) Thus he said of the mind that one cleanses it, one composes it, and one rejoices in it. With respect to cleansing the mind, he said that it is "by means of *this*[knowledge of the changes]." If one dwells on these statements, is it valid to say that the mind is principle? Moreover, Mencius said, "Moral principles are as agreeable to my mind as the flesh of grass- and grain-fed animals is to my mouth."(i)

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

This is extremely clear and easy to perceive.¹⁰³

By examining the ideas of Confucius, Mencius, Ch'eng I, Chu Hsi, and other Confucians, Lo constructed his view of the nature. With the goal of maintaining ultimate consistency in Confucian thought, Lo denied the notion of a separation between an original nature and a physical nature, arguing that they formed one nature. He included feelings and desires within the nature, and showed the necessity of distinguishing the mind from the nature. For Lo, these were basic components of human nature.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 144. (a) i.e., Confucius. (b) *Book of Changes*, ch'ien hexagram, 1:4a. (c) *Book of Changes*, "Appended Remarks," 7:7b. (d) *Book of Changes*, "Discussion of the Trigrams," 9:2a. (e) *Ibid.* (f) *Book of Changes*, "Appended Remarks," 7:16a. (g) *Ibid.*, 8:8b. (h) *Ibid.*, 8:13b. (i) *Mencius*, 7A:7:8.

CHAPTER 4

Acting and Reacting in the World

Within Lo's conception of *li* and *ch'i*, "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," the Great Ultimate, the nature, etc., how does one account for the existence of good and evil in the world? Now that the basic foundation of Lo's thought has been established, Kasoff's third question can be discussed: How is it that Mencius said that human nature is good but yet there is evil in the world? Due to Lo's shifts away from some of the philosophical positions held by his Sung predecessors, Lo's answer to this question was also different from theirs.

Evil in the World

Amongst Sung Neo-Confucians, many of the theories of the existence of evil begin with the endowment of *ch'i*. Chou Tun-i, as discussed earlier, stressed the importance of sincerity, so as not to stray too far from equilibrium. Chou thought human nature was originally good, but that good and evil appear as one came in contact with external things.¹ This would not fit in well with Lo's thought,

¹Chan, *Source Book*, 467.

which strongly advocated investigating external things, but Chou did not blame the things themselves. Evil arose from how man chose to deal with those external things, an idea that does not necessarily correspond with Lo's but has similarities.

Chang Tsai's view was much different. He did not blame evil on *ch'i*, but more on the process of it assuming physical form. Chang believed in undifferentiated *ch'i*, which was pure, and condensed *ch'i*, which was not. Evil arose from the meeting of the two, which produced physical form. These imbalances gave rise to positive and negative traits and evil.²

Chang, though, did not necessarily like the terms good and evil, and preferred to see the idea of good as the nature which completes the Way and evil as the imbalances that obstruct the natural pursuit of the Way and its resulting loss of Harmony.³ As people naturally received different imbalances in life, these created opposition, discrimination, and conflict.⁴ These conditions did not allow for harmony. Similar to Chou Tun-i, Chang did not see the physical nature as evil in itself, but the occasion for evil. The imbalances led man to deviate from the mean or equilibrium. The imbalances provided situations

²McMorran, 442.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Chan, *Source Book*, 511.

of potential opposition and conflict, and evil arose from how one reacted in these situations. The external things were not evil, but how one chose to react to them could be. Chang Tsai's idea for the basis of evil in the imbalance of *ch'i* in physical form differed from Chou Tun-i's, but the fact that evil arose from one's choice was similar to both of them.

Ch'eng I's position was considerably different. He thought one's nature was naturally good, but the potential for evil arose from one's capacity.⁵ Capacity for Ch'eng I meant one's endowment of *ch'i*, which varied in degrees of clarity. The variance in degree of one's capacity determined whether one was generally good or evil. Ch'eng I stressed the perfect goodness of *li*, and the imperfect *ch'i* which obstructed *li*. Chu Hsi's views on evil were basically those of Ch'eng I. For Chu also saw *li* as perfect and impure *ch'i* as the source of selfish human desires and potential evil.

Lo's monism of *ch'i* rejected the dualism of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, and consequently their explanations for the existence of evil, which he considered to be the original reason for the construction of their dualistic system. Lo's view of evil did not agree with Chang Tsai's either because of Chang's view of two natures, but Lo's notion of evil did resemble both Chou Tun-i's and Chang's in that evil arose

⁵*Ibid.*, 567.

out of the choices of man.

Yamanoi Yū thinks that those who advocate a philosophy of *ch'i* have a problem with the established Mencian idea of the nature as good.⁶ Yamanoi sees Wang T'ing-hsiang, another monist of the Ming, as having advocated the idea that the nature contained both good and bad. Bloom thinks that Lo, in effect, leaned toward a view similar to that of Wang T'ing-hsiang, but cast the whole problem within the framework of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse."⁷

Lo saw the nature as good in its original unity, but through the division into particularizations the possibility for evil arose. Ch'eng Hao thought that some *ch'i* was good and some evil, and this was responsible for why some men were good and others evil.⁸ As Ch'eng Hao saw this to originate with the endowment of *ch'i* at birth, Lo thought that Ch'eng was referring to the diversity of particularizations.⁹

Ch'eng Hao thought that human nature in its original tranquil state was neither good nor evil, and wrote, "The distinction arises when human nature is aroused and manifested in feelings and actions, and when these feelings

⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 20.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 528.

⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 100.

and actions abide by or deviate from the mean."¹⁰ Lo agreed that evil arose from deviation from the mean, but not necessarily that the original, tranquil state was neither good nor evil. Lo wrote, "The equilibrium before the feelings have been aroused is 'the moral sense bestowed by the Lord.'"¹¹

Moral goodness for Lo lay in the ultimate unity of *li*, and one's realization of this fact. It lay in knowing the true nature of things. As this unity existed only in equilibrium, until one recognized it, how could he have realistically held that this original, tranquil state was neither good nor evil? Lo's disagreement with Ch'eng Hao and his agreement on the other part can be seen in the following quote from Lo,

It is only that the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy arise but are not necessarily regulated so as to attain their due degree, and this is why there is the distinction between good and evil. Regulation refers to the oneness of principle as it exists within diverse particularizations, while attaining due degree refers to not losing Heaven's endowment as it originally is.¹²

The existence of evil in the world and how to deal with it can be generally said to be a universal concern of thinkers and philosophers. Neo-Confucians had several

¹⁰Chan, *Source Book*, 521.

¹¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 67.

¹²*Ibid.*

explanations for its existence and for how to return to the good, with some general trends. Despite the "duality" of some Confucian thinkers and the "monism" of others, Confucianism and specifically Neo-Confucianism can be said to be organic. Lo saw the Great Ultimate as the single source, and that all things were ultimately united in *li*. When one gathers enough knowledge to understand this unity and know the nature of things, one can be said to be a sage.

In Confucian terms the sage was the embodiment of humanity (*jen*), or of the cardinal virtues in Confucianism. Another phrase that came to be used in Neo-Confucianism that encompassed this idea of unity and humanity was "forming one body with all things." Wing-tsit Chan comments that the extension of *jen* from living things to cover the whole universe resulted in the concept of forming one body with all things (the universe).¹³ As one realized the unity of all things and as a result realized that one was not separate from things, then one naturally could overcome the potentials for evil and practice humanity towards all things like one would towards one's own self.

Jen/Forming One Body With All Things

Though Confucian thinkers varied greatly in their opinions and approaches, the significance of *jen* was common to all. Even for Lo, who took *li* from the moral sphere as

¹³Chan, *Source Book*, 499.

seen in the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, the ultimate unity was synonymous with moral goodness and humanity.

One of the most famous expressions of the idea of *jen* can be seen in Chang Tsai's Western Inscription. Chang saw the universe as one and the manifestations many. In the Western Inscription, he wrote of heaven-and-earth as universal parents, and through this relationship there was the idea of love for all:¹⁴

Heaven is my father and earth is my mother,
and even such a small creature as I find an
intimate place in their midst. Therefore, that
which extends throughout the universe I consider as
my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters,
and all things are my companions.¹⁵

In commenting on Chang's views and others who agreed with the general idea the Western Inscription, Lo said, "As to others who saw humaneness as impartiality(a) or love(b) and the like, everything can be understood if we infer from the idea of 'forming one body.'" ¹⁶

Most Confucians could agree with the general emphasis of the Western Inscription, but beneath it lay a philosophy that others had problems with. As discussed earlier, Chang

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 495.

¹⁵Berling, 104.

¹⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 77. (a) Refers to Chou Tun-i, who in *T'ung-shu*, ch. 21 and 38 discussed humaneness in terms of impartiality (*kung*). (b) Hsieh Liang-tso, who himself discussed humaneness in terms of consciousness (*chüeh*), was somewhat wary of a tendency to discuss *jen* in terms of love (*ai*) and asked (in *Shang-ts'ai hsien-sheng yü-lu*, A:7a): "If one concentrates on love, how will one understand *jen*?"

split the Great Ultimate into the Great Void and the Great Harmony. Chang thought tranquility was the basis for goodness, an idea that fits well with the idea of equilibrium. Yet Chang went on to state that voidness, an idea many disagreed with, was the basis for tranquility. Thus, for Chang, it followed that voidness was the source of humaneness.¹⁷ Chang saw heaven as nourishing all things equally because it was void and therefore impartial and disinterested.¹⁸

Though others may not have liked Chang's ideas of voidness, the general idea of unity was important. Ch'eng I thought, similarly to Chang, that the humane man regarded heaven-and-earth and the myriad things as one body.¹⁹ So despite what many have seen as dualism in his thought, ultimately Ch'eng I thought there was nothing that was not part of the self. In a statement that shows Ch'eng I's view of things ultimately being one, he wrote, "'Things and self are governed by the same principle. If you understand one, you understand the other, for the truth within and the truth without are identical.'" ²⁰

Ch'eng Hao's thought differed from that of his brother on some points, but Ch'eng Hao strongly emphasized the unity

¹⁷Kasoff, 58-9.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁹Berling, 104.

²⁰Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 79.

of things. In describing the point when one realized the full knowledge of nature and the unity, Ch'eng Hao stated, "'When external and internal are both forgotten, then a state of non-differentiation and peace is attained.'" ²¹

Ch'eng Hao saw the universe chiefly characterized by the idea of production and reproduction, ²² an idea Lo agreed with fully. Because of this idea, Ch'eng Hao saw the spirit of life in all things, and equated this creative quality of the universe with *jen*. ²³ Lo felt that only Ch'eng Hao truly understood the concept of *jen*. To show Ch'eng Hao's understanding, Lo pointed to Ch'eng Hao's phrase in the *I-shu*, "forming one body with all things without any differentiation." ²⁴

Lo also agreed with Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng I's conception of the five virtues. They felt that rightness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness were all contained in humaneness. ²⁵ Lo compared this conception of the virtues to the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse." Lo wrote of the virtues,

Thus all the distinct particularizations are brilliantly clear, and not one is omitted. It is precisely because not one is omitted that all in

²¹Berling, 151.

²²Chan, *Source Book*, 521.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 77.

²⁵*Ibid.*

their wholeness and entirety constitute this one thing.²⁶

In this same vein of thought, later in the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo stated that *li* was one, but that there were four designations that applied to its virtues. Lo spoke of its aspects. As *li* was integrated and whole, it was called humanity. Decorum was the name for its aspect of clear order. Its aspect of resolute forbearance was called rightness, and wisdom was its aspect of incisive discrimination.²⁷ Though these were described as four items, Lo thought in reality they were one, and wrote, "The aspects of clarity, resolution, and incisiveness all figure into the integration, and this is why humanity encompasses the four virtues and constitutes the complete substance of the nature."²⁸

In speaking of one's separation from the knowledge of reality that everything was one, Lo thought,

Heaven and man do not represent a duality in any fundamental sense. It is only because man has this substantial form that he is on a different level from heaven. When this substantial form is discarded, he is entirely merged with heaven. How can this substantial form be discarded? It is only by overcoming my egoistic sense of personal identity that it can be discarded.²⁹

The idea of discarding the "substantial form" to be

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 174.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*, 131.

able to realize the unity of all things and embody *jen* was the goal of investigating things and learning. These provide the answers to Kasoff's fourth and last question.

Ira Kasoff's last question was, what is the mind, and how does a man cultivate it to enable him to become a sage? The idea of what the mind was for Lo and its general role in apprehending *li* was discussed above, but what was important in the process of self-cultivation that led one to sagehood?

Self-Cultivation

The purpose of the process of self-cultivation in Neo-Confucianism was to become a sage. By becoming a sage one would be able to bring harmony to society. As with other points in Neo-Confucian thought, approaches to self-cultivation varied, though the goal was always sagehood.

Chang Tsai saw the process of self-cultivation as the process of restraining one's tendency to excess and the restoration of the balance of the *ch'i* of which one was formed.³⁰ Chang thought learning was a necessary part of removing the evil and completing the good.³¹ Learning enabled one to transform one's own physical nature.³² Those who came after Chang Tsai had differing views, but

³⁰McMorran, 442.

³¹Chan, *Source Book*, 513.

³²*Ibid.*, 515.

many similarities as well. Lo's ideas agreed with restraining oneself from excess and the importance of learning. Ch'eng I's and Chu Hsi's ideas were similar as far as the importance of learning and the ability to transform one's own physical nature. Learning was central to most of the approaches of self-cultivation, but what to learn and how to go about it often varied.

For Lo the goal of cultivation was to study and investigate *li* so one eventually would know the nature and realize the unity of all things. His learning, though, began with a Buddhist experience of enlightenment, which he described in the *K'un-chih chi*. Following a written description of his experience he continued,

Later when I held office at the Imperial University in Nanking, I never put the books of the sages and worthies out of my hands for even a day. I entered into the spirit of the books and savored them over a long period of time, gradually realizing their truth. Only then did I understand what I had perceived on that former occasion was the mysterious activity of the mind's pure spirituality and not the principle of nature.³³

His realization of the differences between his two experiences led him to his distinction between mind and nature. He felt that one not only needed to learn, but needed to think during the process of learning or one would not be capable to apprehend *li*. Only through the apprehension of *li* in things could one know the nature and the Way, a position which led him to disparage those who

³³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 138.

concentrated on the mind. He said, "Thus getting a hold of the spiritual consciousness and considering this to be the ultimate Way can only be called Ch'an."³⁴

Despite his position against concentrating on the mind, the development of the mind to the fullest was the goal of self-cultivation. Since the substance of the human mind was the substance of heaven and originally one, the full development of the mind restored it to unity with heaven and all things.³⁵

The process of cultivation, as Lo saw it, took a long period of time and much diligence. Lo said that he spent decades of earnest effort before he even had grounds for self-confidence.³⁶ The matter of cultivation lay not merely in the investigation of things, but also in the preservation of the mind. In preserving the mind one needed to "reach its depths" and "study its subtle activating forces," which one did so as not to neglect the rectitude of the nature and feelings.³⁷ One needed not only to investigate the *li* in things, but maintain a watch over one's inner-self and the mean. This combination, notes Wing-tsit Chan, which sums up the whole of Ch'eng-Chu doctrine was stated by Ch'eng I, "'Self cultivation requires

³⁴*Ibid.*, 144.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 135.

³⁶Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 74.

³⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 50.

seriousness, the pursuit of learning depends on the extension of knowledge.'"³⁸ Lo agreed that seriousness was necessary for learning. He stated, "One must 'reflect on oneself and be sincere'(a) if one is to create 'the learning of all-pervading unity'(b) of the school of the Sage."³⁹

Seriousness, for Lo, was central for one to pursue the true course of cultivation. Seriousness meant one needed to maintain one's thoughts and actions at all times in line with what was right. Lo commented,

Confucius once explained seriousness as "straightening the inner life."(a) When this mind is always held fast and preserved, there is no longer any room for selfishness. Without expecting one's inner being to be straight, it is naturally straight of itself.⁴⁰

Lo felt if one did not expect one's inner being to be straight, and assumed that it would not be, but earnestly tried to handle each situation correctly then one would gradually, naturally improve. Through earnest, serious practice at all times one's inner being would straighten itself.

Seriousness was to be applied to everything, and only by constantly maintaining this seriousness could one hope to

³⁸Wing-tsit Chan, "The *Hsing-li ching-i* and the Ch'eng-Chu School of the Seventeenth Century." In deBary, *Unfolding*, 550.

³⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 130. (a) Alludes to *Mencius*, 7A:4:2. (b) Alludes to *Analects*, 4:15:1.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 77-8. (a) *Book of Changes*, k'un hexagram, 1:16a.

find the Way and attain sagehood. As a practical example that scholars might encounter, Lo gave the following,

One who is committed to the Way must bypass the two barriers of wealth and status, honor and glory, before he is able to enter. Failing this he will be here while the Way is over there, with a strong fence and a thick wall between them and the separation growing greater by the day. . . .The sages and worthies were not lacking in rewards and fame. But all that they did, being in accordance with the dictates of principle, had to be done and was not done for any ulterior motives. As to wealth and status that were not gained in accordance with the Way, they would not even accept them much less have sought them.⁴¹

Lo's emphasis on dedication and earnest effort can be seen in the writing of Huang Tsung-hsi in the *Ming-ju hsüeh-an*. Although Huang found what he considered to be flaws in Lo's philosophy, he was complimentary about Lo's character and his seriousness in the process of cultivation. Huang wrote,

When he dwelled at home he arose at dawn everyday, dressed himself correctly, and went up to the Hall for Study of Antiquity (*Hsüeh-ku lou*), followed by his disciples. After receiving their greetings and obeisances, he sat in a dignified posture and engaged in study. Even when he dwelled alone, he was not careless in his demeanor. He was frugal in his diet, had no pavilions or garden houses, and employed no music when he entertained.⁴²

Seriousness (*ching*) and one's efforts were crucial in Lo's opinion. The only reason one might fail to comprehend

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 78-9.

⁴²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 72.

was due to the deficiency in one's efforts.⁴³ When struggling to understand Ch'eng I's idea of nature is *li*, Lo quoted a passage of Mencius that provided him with inspiration. It read, "'Although one is dull, he will [through unremitting effort] surely become intelligent.'"⁴⁴

The idea of seriousness applied not only in maintaining one's thoughts and actions in accord with what was right, but also to the process of learning, as evidenced by the previous quote and the title of his book *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*. Lo did not deny the spiritual aspect of learning, but tended towards the intellectual aspect as the spiritual aspect differed from those who considered *li* as perfect and prior to *ch'i*. Benjamin Elman points out that Bloom's assessment of the *K'un-chih chi*, as a compilation of reading notes and thoughts which displayed the meticulous accuracy in his textual research, is quite a contrast to the writings of the majority of Sung and Ming Neo-Confucians which had been records of spiritual quests.⁴⁵

Lo's approach to learning followed what he found to be a scholarly rigor in the orthodox tradition and a conviction of the indiscerptible relation between intellectual and spiritual concerns.⁴⁶ He thought these two ideas of

⁴³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 105.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁵Elman, 174-5.

⁴⁶Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 75.

scholarly rigor and the relationship between the intellectual and spiritual were vital to the proper process of learning and cultivation. Lo found in Chu Hsi a wonderful example of scholarly rigor.⁴⁷ John Meskill points out the emphasis Lo put on hard work as the essence of learning in an inscription for the Pai-lu-chou Academy. In the inscription Lo stressed the notion that unless one was a sage, one must be diligent without relaxation both in learning and in one's behavior.⁴⁸

For Lo, the relationship between the intellectual and spiritual in one's learning was that through intellectual endeavors one cultivates and perfects one's spiritual awareness. Previously, in the thought of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, since *li* was perfect, the investigation of *li* as a process was moral. For Lo, the investigation of *li* was not moral, but it led to a moral awareness that was perfected when one came to know the nature and one's unity with all things. In Lo's view, the intellectual achievement provided the basis for a necessary objectivity which should allow one to attain an accurate perspective on the self and the natural world as a whole.⁴⁹ For Chu Hsi, *li* as the primary object of knowledge had both ontological and ethical reality with an emphasis on goodness more than truth.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸Meskill, 129.

⁴⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 9.

Seeking knowledge of *li* led to the key to moral judgements and actions.⁵⁰ With Lo's monism of *ch'i*, the ethical value was not in the nature itself, but in knowledge of the nature.⁵¹ deBary comments on Lo's view of learning as a basis for a thoroughgoing objectivity achieved through self-transcendence. He notes that Lo's approach was almost a "'value-free objectivity,'" but under another aspect its mirrorlike receptivity was understood to reflect perfectly the value-full nature of heaven-and-earth.⁵²

Lo felt that one must first have knowledge and comprehension before one could comprehend humanity and become humane oneself. He noted, though, that in order to be successful one had to be wholehearted and careful or one would miss the truth if it was incomplete.⁵³

Lo thought the way of the sage lay in the three hundred rules of ceremony and the three thousand rules of demeanor, since they all pertain to human affairs.⁵⁴ His belief that the way of sages lay in these was directly in opposition to those who concentrated on the mind. Lo wrote, "Thus if one carries on his studies without reference to the classics and is utterly arbitrary and opinionated, it is inevitable that

⁵⁰Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 79.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 96.

⁵²deBary, "Cultivation," 186.

⁵³Bloom, *Knowledge*, 103.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 54-5.

he will be misled."⁵⁵ Lo followed this comment with the addition that it was wrong to be misled, but even worse to mislead others, a notion that represented his desire to stay within the orthodox tradition and the dangers of not doing so.

In emphasizing the importance of the classics, Lo cited Ssu-ma Ch'ien's writing that Confucians read the *Book of Changes* so many times that the leather stays on the bindings broke three times. Lo commented on this and said, "If he had found that it was not suitable to expound learning that would serve the world, why would he have read it so much?"⁵⁶ Lo referred to Confucius' use of the text in such a way as to defend the interpretation of the *Book of Changes* in light of *li*, as opposed to its use for divination.⁵⁷ Other scholars stressed the purpose of the *Book of Changes* as a tool for divination, a use that Lo felt a gentleman would never depend on.⁵⁸ Lo depended heavily on the *Book of Changes* and read it numerous times. Lo felt that the classics in general were important, but in part II, section 3 of the *K'un-chih chi*, he stated his belief that all principles in the world could be found in the "Appended

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 144-5.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

Remarks" of the *Book of Changes*.⁵⁹ His fondness for the *Book of Changes* can be seen in his following comments,

In recent years I deeply love to read the *Changes*, but my spirit is gradually becoming deficient, and it has become difficult to be thoroughly steeped in the text. All those who read the commentaries on the *Book of Changes* should certainly devote thought to the points on which they agree and those on which they differ.⁶⁰

Lo did not feel such fondness for all of the classics. Regarding the *Book of History*, parts of which he thought were hard to understand, he wrote,

One really does not need to waste his mental effort on these because if one forces oneself to achieve an understanding, it may not necessarily be right. If one can learn something from a thorough reading of those parts that are clear and readily understandable, the benefit will be inexhaustible.⁶¹

It's interesting to note that Lo worried about forcing an understanding, which may be wrong, but felt that an understanding would develop naturally, an idea he repeated in speaking of how to read the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He suggested that one should not make simplistic or superficial observations, yet excessive probing could cause one to miss the true idea.⁶² He felt,

If only one has an open mind and a relaxed disposition and tries again and again to enter fully into the spirit of the work and to avoid

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 115.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 117.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 120.

being confused by different theories, one should naturally be able to achieve some understanding.⁶³

He added that the commentaries in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* should not be dismissed, but that one should not consider them to be reliable either.

Lo strongly emphasized learning, but also felt that learning and action should assist each other.⁶⁴ One could not wait until one's knowledge was perfect to act. In learning, the efforts to extend knowledge and earnestly practice had to be simultaneous.⁶⁵ Lo stated, "Everything depends on exerting oneself. What good is it to engage in consulting and deliberating which will merely result in idle talk?"⁶⁶

Lo generally warned against all extremes in learning whether one's learning led to complete quietism or the other extreme of neglecting the internal. Lo recognized that students were individuals and that their endowments and abilities naturally varied. Despite these differences it was necessary for all to maintain balance. Concerning this Lo wrote,

But when it comes to the Confucian teaching of the *Great Learning*, the Way cannot be changed, and the requirement that the student should enter through this Way cannot be repudiated. In

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 176.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

departing from this, some are caught up in boastfulness and carried away by ostentation, in which case they drown in the external and are neglectful of the internal. Some detest complexity and delight in shortcuts, in which case they confine themselves to the internal and neglect the external. To be confined to the internal and neglectful of the external is the learning of Ch'an.⁶⁷

This referred primarily to how one approached learning, but Lo thought that the balance one found by following the mean should be applied to all aspects of one's life. To abide in seriousness, one must be constantly careful and watchful.

Lo strongly emphasized the intellectual aspects of cultivation, but cultivation meant one needed to devote oneself to the teaching of the mean. Only through devotion to this as it concerned the cultivation of the Way could one become a gentleman and fulfill one's nature.⁶⁸ As Lo noted the importance of balance, he favored cultivation that included appropriate attention to both quiet-sitting and textual study.⁶⁹ Lo worried, however, about how scholars used quiet-sitting and that some overemphasized it. He worried that an overemphasis of quiet-sitting would lead to concentrating on the internal and neglecting the external. In criticizing Ch'en Hsien-chang (1428-1500),⁷⁰ a Confucian

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 178.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 74.

⁷⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, p.218.

who Lo thought excessively emphasized quiet-sitting, Lo referred to the four beginnings of virtue and wondered how they could be developed through quiet-sitting and disengagement from events and things.⁷¹

As a result of his own first hand knowledge of enlightenment through a meditative experience, Lo worried that quiet-sitting would enchant many to follow this path to the exclusion of the external. He referred to his experience as a "vision" (*kuang-ching*),⁷² which was elusive and unreliable. He worried that others would experience a similar "vision" of oneness of all being and not go on to realize a more sustained intellectual apprehension of an objective reality of oneness in nature itself.⁷³

Lo practiced quiet-sitting on occasion as a means of personal cultivation,⁷⁴ but his desire for balance and fear of scholars being distracted by quiet-sitting led him to stress intellectual cultivation. Lo used the following

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 159. Mencius stated that the "four beginnings" of virtue--namely, the sense of pity and commiseration, the sense of shame and dislike, the sense of modesty and yielding, and the sense of right and wrong--were innate and could be developed into the four virtues of humaneness, rightness, decorum, and wisdom. Ch'en Hsien-chang left studying with his master Wu Yü-pi after he felt he had failed to achieve any results, and kept in seclusion and cast aside the complexities of Wu's method and exclusively practiced quiet-sitting. In Fung Yu-lan, *History*, 594.

⁷²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 8.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁴Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 74.

passage from Mencius to demonstrate his view,

If one's learning is not extensive and one's discussion is not detailed, his vision will be limited by the confines of his own mind, and however he may wish to be free from error, it will be impossible.⁷⁵

Lo wanted to be free from the confines of one's mind, error, and to increase his knowledge. As was generally true with Neo-Confucians, Lo thought knowledge was to be acquired through the "investigation of things" (*ko-wu*) and the probing of principle. The probing of principle was important but can generally be seen as a complementary part to the "investigation of things."

Investigation of Things

The idea of the investigation of things came from a passage in the *Great Learning*.⁷⁶ It was the first and most important step towards sagehood, and thus the ability to help others bring about social harmony. Though many Confucians would agree on the necessity of the investigation of things to become a sage, how one interpreted the phrase

⁷⁵Bloom, *Knowledge*, 106.

⁷⁶Chai, 386. The passage reads, "Those ancient princes who wished to enlighten complete virtue throughout the empire first ruled well their own states; in order to rule well their state, they first regulated their own families; in order to regulate their families, they first cultivated their own persons; in order to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts; in order to rectify their hearts, they first made their purpose sincere; in order to make their purpose sincere, they first extended their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge [*chih chih*] depended on the study of things [*ko-wu*]."

varied widely. The two most dominant views were: one, to investigate external things, and two, to rectify the mind.⁷⁷ The "wu" in *ko-wu* has generally been translated as "things," but it typically referred to human affairs and not material things. The Ch'eng-Chu school, whose emphasis on intellectual cultivation Lo followed, advocated the investigation of external things.

Of the numerous definitions of *ko-wu*, Wing-tsit Chan notes that the four most prominent ones all were ethical, and stressed the point that knowledge was to be achieved by the mind without the aid of external things, until Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi taught that one should investigate all things that one came in contact with.⁷⁸

Liu Tsung-chou, who followed the view that the purpose of the investigation of things was to rectify the mind, criticized Lo for wasting several decades on investigating things when he should have concentrated his efforts on the mind and nature.⁷⁹ Lo, in a letter to Wang Yang-ming, who also thought the investigation of things meant to rectify the mind, once wrote,

If one wanted to regard learning as a task that does not depend on searching outside of oneself, that requires only the effort of self-reflection and inner examination, then the words "sincerity of intention" and "rectitude of

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 562.

⁷⁹Ching, 17.

mind" should contain everything, and there would be no more need of burdening[the student] with the effort of investigation of things at the beginning of his quest.⁸⁰

Liu thought Lo was burdened by the investigation of things not only at the beginning of his quest, but throughout his entire life.⁸¹

Lo thought that approaching the investigation of things as the rectification of one's mind was one-sided. To refute this imbalance Lo quoted Ch'eng I, who wrote,

To seek in our own nature and feelings is indeed to be concerned with our own person. But every blade of grass and every tree possesses principle and should be examined.⁸²

The Ch'eng brothers explained the concept of the investigation of things to combat the influence of Ch'an and to assist the students who were neglecting the principles of heaven-and-earth and the myriad things. Lo thought their efforts helped to save students from their errors and guide them into the great mean.⁸³ Lo wrote of them, "Their intention was that students should achieve corresponding illumination of things and the self, perfect interfusion of inner and outer, and complete integration of subject and object."⁸⁴

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 64-5.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 65.

⁸²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 55.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 56.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 55-6.

Lo thought that one could not complete this integration by concentrating on the mind. In order to achieve insight into the mystery of the unity of all being, one had to realize that since all things proceeded from unity without artificial contrivance then in returning to unity there was no room for selfish manipulation.⁸⁵ Lo wrote of the need to consider the external,

Thus to "seek within oneself" one must begin with one's own nature and feelings. One then goes on to extend to other things what one has perceived in oneself, and if it is found to be inconsistent, it is not ultimate principle.⁸⁶

In Lo's view, the perception that the investigation of things could mean rectification of the mind was directly contrary to the purpose of the process of the investigation of things. For Lo, the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge were the beginning of knowledge, which was completed when one subdued the self and returned to propriety.⁸⁷ It was only when one completely dispelled the self-conscious ego that the ultimate unity of *li* could be realized.

Lo felt that the Way was inherent in man, but one could not realize this because things and self were contraposed, which resulted in people only realizing that there was the

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 56.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 74.

self.⁸⁸ To increase the consciousness of oneself drew one further and further from the Way. Only in perceiving the *li* in things could one subdue the self and realize the unity of all things. It was through reading the Confucian classics while at the Imperial University in Nanking, that he came to new conclusions about the nature of reality and of knowledge,⁸⁹ and the dangers of concentrating on the mind.

Lo's approach to the investigation of things was heavily influenced by Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. The emphasis on the investigation of things was a cardinal concept in Ch'eng I's thought, a concept that Ch'eng I understood to mean the inductive and deductive study of things, events and handling of human affairs.⁹⁰ Ch'eng I wrote,

To devote oneself to investigate principle to the utmost does not mean that it is necessary to investigate the principle of all things in the world to the utmost nor does it mean that principle can be understood merely by investigating one particular principle. It is necessary to accumulate much and then one will naturally come to understand principle.⁹¹

Lo referred to nine items of *ko-wu* put forth by Ch'eng I, and felt that if one could successfully investigate *li* in

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁰Chan, *Source Book*, 545.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 551.

only one of these areas that was enough.⁹² In a sense, for Lo, one must pay attention to and be ready to investigate everything, because, ". . .there is nothing that is not a 'thing.'"⁹³

For Ch'eng I, everything contained *li*, and one needed to investigate things in order to comprehend this *li*. Chu Hsi, for the most part, followed Ch'eng I's approach. For Ch'eng and Chu, *li* was the basis for moral action, so the goal of comprehending *li* was to know what to do.⁹⁴ The investigation of things was a moral endeavor, and not an investigation of the natural world as an object of

⁹²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 53-4. Bloom, in regard to Ch'eng I's "nine items," refers to Wing-tsit Chan, who put them as follows: (1) to read books, discuss doctrines, and elucidate principles, to deliberate on people and events of the past and the present and distinguish their right and wrong, to handle affairs and to settle them in the proper way, and to investigate a thing one day and another the next day; (2) to investigate the principles in all things, from one's own person to the ten thousand things; (3) not to investigate extensively all the principles in the world nor to investigate intensively the principles of only one thing but to investigate more and more and thus to accumulate; (4) to investigate either the easy or the difficult according to one's capacity; (5) to realize that every thing has its principle and should be investigated; (6) to know that the investigation of the principle of filial piety means to practice it; (7) to realize that every blade of grass and every tree has its principle and should be investigated; (8) to know where the highest good is to be found; and (9) to examine principle in one's own person.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁴Willard J. Peterson, "Fang I-chih: Western Learning and the 'Investigation of Things.'" In deBary, *Unfolding*, 377.

interest.⁹⁵ Though one needed to be aware that *li* existed in all things, the investigation of things primarily took place in textual study. Yu-wen Jen points out that Chu Hsi thought all moral principles could be found in the classics.⁹⁶ As Lo did in his own thought later, Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi both emphasized not only the investigation of things in the external world, but the need for seriousness, reverence, and ethical self-reflection.⁹⁷

Chang Tsai had emphasized the investigation of things as a purely internal process, while Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi sought a more objective basis for the relation of an inner and outer reality.⁹⁸ Lo pushed the shift in emphasis further by looking for the truth of oneness as a factual reality characteristic of nature itself and not limited only to consciousness.⁹⁹ The dangers of becoming absorbed in the mind led Lo to an almost exclusive emphasis on the investigation of things, which meant observation of the external world.

Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi's approach to the investigation of things influenced Lo heavily, but it was another area impacted by Lo's shift in the emphasis from *li* to *ch'i*.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶Jen, 72.

⁹⁷Berling, 105.

⁹⁸Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 105.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi's goal was to apprehend *li* as a moral endeavor in and of itself. Lo's apprehension of *li* was more a matter of accumulating knowledge until one realized the unity of all things due to this accumulation of knowledge, and only then could one understand moral goodness.

Li became the object of the mind's inquiry and reflection more in a sense of empirical investigation than in an attempt to recover one's original nature or moral goodness. Unlike the Ch'eng-Chu notion of the gradual clarifying of *ch'i* that resulted in increasing moral goodness as one accumulated knowledge of *li*, Lo's moral goodness or *jen* came when one realized the unity of all things. For Lo the probing of principle came in gradual stages, but the full development of the mind and knowing the nature both took place at once.¹⁰⁰ In a sense, one may become more moral as one gains knowledge and can maintain the equilibrium more consistently, but any increase in the morality of one's actions had nothing to do with clarifying one's *ch'i*.

Although Lo felt one should act even though one's knowledge was not complete, it was not until one's knowledge was complete that one's thoughts could be sincere. Only when one's thoughts were sincere, at which point one did not distinguish between subject and object and was thus perfectly humane, could one correctly govern the state and

¹⁰⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, 104.

consequently bring peace to the world. When one had finally brought peace to the world, only then could it be said that there was an all-pervading unity.¹⁰¹

Lo followed an approach to the investigation of things similar to those of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, and the end goal of ultimate world peace was the same, but there were differences. One difference was the conception of *li* and thus the perception of the progress of moral goodness. Another difference of Lo's monism of *ch'i* as it affected the investigation of things was in regards to sense knowledge. By declaring that the feelings were not negative, but in fact a part of one's nature, he increased the significance of sense knowledge. Previously, when *li* was the imperceived truth within things, knowledge of *li* was necessarily above and beyond the senses. So in order to apprehend the highest knowledge, that of *li*, scholars were reluctant if not opposed to the use of sense knowledge.¹⁰²

To employ the senses to pursue knowledge of the concrete things of the world, for Lo, was a legitimate pursuit in itself and an essential prerequisite to higher forms of integration.¹⁰³ As everything consisted of *ch'i*, *li* had to be identified within the context of *ch'i*. So instead of *li* being in the realm beyond the senses as for

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁰²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 101-2.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 102.

Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, it was necessary to use the senses to apprehend *li* in Lo's system. Like Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, Lo felt one needed to investigate everything, from a blade of grass, an insect, a plant, etc., but the idea took on new implications. Bloom notes that Lo's process of confirming the *li* one has found in one's nature and feelings through observing the external reality and of confirming the realities of nature in one's own personal experience, suggests that Lo was more intellectually assured in confronting the phenomenal diversity of nature and had a more critical attitude toward the process of understanding *li* than had his predecessors of the Sung.¹⁰⁴ Sense knowledge played an important role in this closer observation of the diversity of nature.

Sense Knowledge

Of the Sung Neo-Confucians, each may have had a little something different to say about the senses and the knowledge one could get through them, but none gave that knowledge much positive emphasis.

Chang Tsai referred to the Mencian idea of innate knowledge to state that knowledge gained through enlightenment, which was the result of sincerity was the innate knowledge of one's natural character.¹⁰⁵ Knowledge,

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰⁵Chan, *Source Book*, 507.

on the other hand, gained through what one heard or saw was small knowledge. Because this was knowledge obtained through contact with things, it was not knowledge obtained through one's moral nature. Knowledge obtained through one's moral nature could not originate from seeing or hearing.¹⁰⁶

Other Sung Neo-Confucians felt similarly. Many felt that uncontrolled exposure to external influences and sensory knowledge was distracting and disturbing.¹⁰⁷ Chang Tsai stated,

The mind of ordinary people is limited to the narrowness of what is seen and what is heard. The sage, however, fully develops his nature and does not allow what is seen or heard to fetter his mind.¹⁰⁸

Chu Hsi agreed, in that, he felt one should not rely much on sense knowledge as a means of understanding "things in the world."¹⁰⁹

Lo thought that the distinction between the ideas of knowledge gained through the moral nature and that of sense knowledge was arbitrary.¹¹⁰ When Lo denied the concept of two natures and thus included feelings as part of one's nature he also did away with the possibility of

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 515.

¹⁰⁷deBary, "Cultivation," 167.

¹⁰⁸Chan, *Source Book*, 515.

¹⁰⁹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 80.

¹¹⁰Bloom, *Knowledge*, 22.

distinguishing between these two types of knowledge. Lo could not dismiss sense knowledge or consider it distracting as those of the Sung had. Though this seems like another break from thought of the Sung Neo-Confucians, Lo saw himself as returning to an earlier tradition and not going in a new direction.¹¹¹ His view of one nature gave new validity and importance to sense knowledge and sense experience. He could not accept the idea that there were modes of thought independent of and qualitatively superior to sense knowledge, and that the only epistemological issue was the care and discernment with which one used their senses.¹¹²

As Lo's conception of *li* had changed from that of the Sung and earlier Ming, the change had implications throughout his thought as has been evident. One of the repercussions can be seen in his view of sense knowledge, and as a result the nature of knowledge in general. Bloom notes that his questions about the nature of knowledge and his monism of *ch'i* helped to lead him to develop a few preliminary steps towards a critical epistemology.¹¹³ Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi had looked at knowledge to see whether it was profound or superficial, morally edifying or

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 40-1.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹³Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 77.

stultifying.¹¹⁴ In switching from a dualistic view to a monistic view Lo's view of knowledge differed from that of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. The criteria of knowledge for Lo was generality, consistency and verifiability.¹¹⁵

Bloom notes the lively skepticism of the *K'un-chih chi*, an example possibly of Ch'eng I's idea that a student must first of all learn to doubt.¹¹⁶ Lo's skepticism, view of sense knowledge, and desire for consistency led him to a critical appreciation of things. A few examples of textual scholarship show his critical approach. In part II, section 10 of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo compared a passage of the *Book of History* and a passage of the *Book of Changes* which had similar meanings, but Lo pointed out a slight difference. One saw man and *li* as different and the other saw them as one.¹¹⁷ In part II, section 13, Lo pointed to different editions of the *Tso-chuan*, in which a five character phrase was different in different editions. Only one character had been placed differently, but Lo wrote, "One of the characters having been transposed, the nuance and meaning are completely different. Not infrequently mistakes pile up in this way."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 99.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶Chan, *Source Book*, 570.

¹¹⁷Bloom, *Knowledge*, 117-8.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 120-1.

CHAPTER 5

Lo's Orthodoxy

The significance of Lo's contributions as a thinker can be highlighted by examining his disagreements with Wang Yang-ming. In particular, Lo's approaches to knowledge and to critical textual study differed from those of Wang Yang-ming. Wang challenged Chu Hsi's version of the *Great Learning*, and Lo felt that only on the basis of textual evidence could the problem be mediated and settled.¹

This, though, was not the only problem Lo had with Wang Yang-ming and his thought. Lo saw Wang as a thinker whose ideas and teachings often ran contrary to Confucian thought as Lo perceived it. Wang posed a more significant threat to orthodoxy than did Buddhism. Both, Lo thought, needed to be discredited philosophically in order for Confucianism to continue to survive.

Wang Yang-ming

Lo's views of the investigation of things, sense knowledge, and critical methods helped to give him a reputation as a prominent critic of Wang Yang-ming. Wang

¹deBary, "Cultivation," 198.

was the dominant thinker of the Ming, and left behind more writings from different periods of his life than Lo. Wang's dominance in the Ming and the fact that he and Lo were contemporaries have led some to view Lo's thought as a reaction to Wang's thought. Bloom suggests that Lo's philosophy of *ch'i* was not in reaction to Wang at all, but an attempt to resolve the problems left to him by his Ch'eng-Chu forbears.²

Lo and Wang Yang-ming had met personally, and carried on friendly correspondence, but they disagreed on fundamental points. Wang Yang-ming's fundamental doctrines and ideas can be found, according to Wing-tsit Chan, in Wang's work, *Inquiry on the Great Learning*. Chan lists them as follows: the man of humanity forms one body with all things and extends his love to all, the mind is *li*, to investigate things is to rectify the mind, the highest good is inherent in the mind, the extension of innate knowledge is the way to discover the highest good and perfect the moral life, and, the idea (Chan felt was implied) of the unity of knowledge and action.³ Lo and Wang agreed on the first idea listed, but after that their differing conceptions of the mind led to two different stances.

Unlike Lo, Wang identified mind with *li*, which led Wang to emphasize the idea of innate knowledge (*liang-chih*), a

²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 106-7.

³Chan, *Source Book*, 666-7.

term used by Mencius. For Wang this meant that all things were in one's mind, and all that which was moral was also in one's mind. One just had to realize it. Like Lo, Wang wanted to remove the distinction between *li* and *ch'i*, but Wang did so by identifying *li* with the mind.⁴ As with *li* and *ch'i*, Wang tried to unite inner and outer, theoretical and practical, and other things.⁵

Lo felt that Buddhists had some understanding of mind, but not of nature and thus considered nature as consciousness. Lo thought this was the same problem in Wang's thought. *Liang-chih* and the idea of mind as *li* forced Wang to regard consciousness as nature.⁶ As a result of this view, Lo felt that there also was a distinction made between *liang-chih* (innate knowledge) and sense knowledge, a distinction that reminded Lo of a similar distinction made in the *Lankavatara Sutra*.⁷ Ou-yang Te (1496-1554), a native of Lo's area but a student of Wang Yang-ming, argued that the two were not distinguished and that one could only realize *liang-chih* through the senses and reflection and deliberations. It could not be realized in isolation.⁸

Another problem that Lo had with *liang-chih* was that

⁴Chan, "Synthesis," 138.

⁵Ching, 14.

⁶*Ibid.*, 123.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, 124.

one would concentrate on the mind and not pay attention to or discuss the principles of heaven-and-earth and the myriad things. This would eliminate one's ability to realize a penetrating and unitary understanding of all reality.⁹ This criticism shall be more evident below, yet it should be noted that, though Wang's thought emphasized the mind, he did not stress quietism as the emphasis on mind and Lo's frequent comparisons to Buddhism might suggest. Wang did see mind as *li*, but he also identified knowledge with action. Moral knowledge could not be realized through reflection before hand, but only through action.¹⁰

Although Wang stated the belief that mind is *li*, he also tried to get rid of distinctions and dualities. deBary notes that those in the Wang Yang-ming school spoke of *li* and *ch'i* in the same terms of *hsin* (mind) and *ch'i* and used them interchangeably to represent the vital force in man and the universe in the phrase, "Throughout Heaven-and-earth all is *hsin/ch'i*."¹¹ In relation to Lo's monism of *ch'i* and Wang's view of mind as *li*, it seems ironic that it was scholars from the Wang school who became forerunners of the trend towards a monism of *ch'i* in the seventeenth century.¹²

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Berling, 108.

¹¹deBary, "Cultivation," 195.

¹²*Ibid.*

Wang's view of moral principles as innate and understood through personal experience led to a moral relativism and individualism in the sixteenth century.¹³ Many Confucians saw a few of Wang's followers' actions to be of serious concern. Yu Ying-shih sees Lo as part of the intellectualism of the Ch'eng-Chu school and Wang Yang-ming as part of the anti-intellectualism in the tradition of Lu Hsiang-shan, with the biggest difference being the respective attitudes towards book learning and the transmission of knowledge.¹⁴ It may be appropriate to use the terms intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, but was this the result of the different views of the mind and thus their approaches to cultivation? Or, was it their respective personalities that led to them to theories and positions that defined them best? It is hard to say which came first, but their views, nonetheless, were different; and these differences come down to their view of the mind and the resultant approach to the investigation of things.

Lo not only criticized Wang Yang-ming's positions, but also worried about the potential effects of his teachings. Lo wrote,

Now you wish to save people from drowning in vulgar learning, but you have not yet curbed the incipient development of Ch'an. This may cause those who are committed to the learning of the sages and worthies to be confused about their

¹³Handlin, 28.

¹⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 25.

course, and I cannot help feeling the utmost concern in this regard.¹⁵

Lo criticized Wang for being insufficiently thorough in research, for arbitrary theorizing,¹⁶ and for taking selected pieces of Chu Hsi's ideas out of context to support his ideas.¹⁷ Although the letters suggest a friendly tone, some of Lo's criticisms of Wang were direct. Lo felt that the study of the Way was difficult to apprehend and so one naturally should not neglect the study of it, but he felt Wang had neglected it and followed what he himself thought to be right and not the teachings of the sages and worthies. Lo wrote to Wang, "I am afraid that one cannot be satisfied with his own view and immediately regard it as the ultimate standard."¹⁸

Lo worried that Wang's approach, which he thought was at the expense of intellectual cultivation, would undermine the Confucian commitment to intellectual understanding of the objective world.¹⁹ Lo thought that Buddhism was dangerous, but that those Confucians, Wang included, whose primary concern was moral wholeness and an inner sense of being in control of oneself, were worse. The Buddhists, at

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 14.

least, were overt in their beliefs, but these Confucians, Lo felt, had made serious concessions to Buddhism in their approach to knowledge and understanding of nature, yet maintained that they were Confucian.²⁰

Wang Yang-ming's view of mind as *li* led him to a view of the investigation of things that varied from that of Lo. Lo criticized Wang for his view of the investigation of things as the rectification of the mind, an approach which Lo saw as exclusively internal and in opposition to the investigation of things external to oneself. Lo felt that Wang's approach separated him from things, and therefore he could not come to understand the ultimate unity of all things. Because of this Lo wrote to Wang,

From my standpoint, external things are definitely "things." From the standpoint of principle, I too am a "thing," altogether merged in the unity of all being. Where then is the distinction of internal and external?²¹

For Lo, the purpose and value of the investigation of things was that it was a way to perceive the unity of principle in all its diverse particularizations, a goal that could not be reached if one only concentrated on the mind. Lo saw Wang's use of the ideas "investigating things" and "extending this knowledge," as only a way to conceal his methods of "clarifying the mind," a phrase Lo used in

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 177.

speaking of Ch'an.²² Lo saw many who adhered to Wang's ideas as only trying to avoid the painstaking work of cultivation by taking shortcuts. Lo wrote,

The tasks of the student are broad learning, careful inquiry, sober reflection, clear discrimination, and earnest practice.(a) Not one of these can be dispensed with. By proceeding on the basis of these five one may arrive at what is easy and simple. But if one dislikes the complexity involved in scholarship and yearns for a shortcut to the realm of ease and simplicity, this can hardly be called the ease and simplicity of principle.²³

Lo's view of Wang Yang-ming's thought can be seen to some degree in a letter from Wang to Lo. Wang wrote,

Your honor is skeptical about my theory of ko-wu because you undoubtedly believe that it affirms the internal and rejects the external; that it is entirely devoted to self-examination and introspection and neglects the work of explanation, study, and discussion; that it concentrates on the over-simplified fundamental principles and leaves out the full details; that it submerges itself in the extremes of Buddhist and Taoist lifeless contemplation, emptiness, and silence, and fails to take full account of the changing conditions of human affairs and the principles of things. If that were really the case, it would not only be a crime against the Confucian school and Master Chu Hsi; it would be a perverse doctrine to delude the people and a rebellious teaching to violate truth, and I should be punishable by death.²⁴

Lo did not suggest that these horrible possibilities were what Wang desired, but what was possible within the realm of

²²*Ibid.*, 56.

²³*Ibid.*, 57. (a) *Mean*, 20:19.

²⁴Wei-ming Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth(1472-1509)*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 176.

Wang's ideas.

Wang, on the other hand, felt that the view of the investigation of things that Lo held led not to perceiving the unity, but to fragmentation. To investigate *li* in external things was both debilitating and fruitless.²⁵ Wang saw the traditional Ch'eng-Chu version of the investigation of things as diverting people away from the basic principles of things and the fundamentals of life.²⁶

Wing-tsit Chan points out that Chu Hsi shifted the chapters of the *Great Learning* to place the investigation of things before sincerity of the will, and that Wang Yang-ming reversed this order to return it to the arrangement as it was originally found in the *Book of Rites*. Chan views this as indicative of Chu Hsi's intellectual approach and Wang's moral approach.²⁷

Wang thought that the original substance of the mind was one's nature (or *li*), and that it was originally correct. Incorrectness was the result of one's thoughts and will. His opinion of Lo and the Ch'eng-Chu approach to the investigation of things was clearly stated in the following,

Later generations fail to realize that the highest good is inherent in their own minds, but exercise their selfish ideas and cunning and grope for it outside their minds, believing that every event and every object has its own peculiar

²⁵Berling, 67.

²⁶Chan, *Source Book*, 655.

²⁷*Ibid.*

definite principle. For this reason the law of right and wrong is obscured; the mind becomes concerned with fragmentary and isolated details and broken pieces; the selfish desires of man become rampant and the Principle of Nature is at an end.²⁸

Instead of being concerned with external things, which he thought of as fragmentary details, he emphasized moral values.²⁹ Although he spoke of not being concerned with external things, he did stress active involvement in human affairs.³⁰ Like Lo, the goal was to form one body with all things, but his approach was different. Wang's approach was well summarized in the following few sentences of his,

Therefore, the extension of knowledge must consist in the investigation of things. A thing is an event. For every emanation of the will there must be an event corresponding to it. The event to which the will is diverted is a thing. To investigate is to rectify. It is to rectify that which is incorrect so it can return to its original correctness. To rectify that which is not correct is to get rid of evil, and to return to correctness is to do good. This is what is meant by investigation.³¹

Lo and Wang began with different fundamental ideas about the mind and consequently also differed in the approach to the investigation of things, but they both worked toward the idea of forming one body with all things and the concept of *jen*. Bloom offers the opinion that it could also be argued that both Lo and Wang eased the tension

²⁸*Ibid.*, 661.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 655.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 658.

³¹*Ibid.*, 665-6.

between the ideal world and the real world of ordinary experience.³² Both saw their Sung predecessors to have left unfinished business, which needed to be revised and brought to completion.³³ Despite these similarities, their differences were significant and Lo often painted Wang Yang-ming as Buddhist.

Lo thought Wang Yang-ming's views and methods were too similar to those of Buddhism, and as a result many of Lo's criticisms of Wang's thought were the same as his of Buddhism. The conception of Lo as a defender of orthodox Confucianism developed out of his criticisms of Wang and of Buddhism. The later Confucian Kao P'an-lung (1562-1626),³⁴ a member of the seventeenth century *Tung-lin* school, said the following of Lo,

Lo inquired deeply into Ch'an and demonstrated the reasons for its differences[from Confucianism]. From the T'ang until the present no one has been so clear and thorough as he in refuting Buddhism. His contributions were extraordinary!³⁵

Buddhism

Although Buddhism may be argued to have been in decline in the Ming, it retained a significant intellectual and

³²Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 98.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 221.

³⁵Ching, 217.

spiritual influence.³⁶ Lo conceded that there were some genuinely useful things to be found in Buddhism, but felt its subjective thought was a danger. Because of this, one of Lo's highest priorities was to expose what he thought to be the errors of Buddhism and demonstrate the "disastrous legacy" it had created for Confucians.³⁷ Some of its influence, Lo felt, could all too readily be seen in the thought of Wang Yang-ming.

Lo said little about Taoism, but the meaning of the following passage that he wrote about Taoism also held for his view of Buddhism. He wrote, "In my ignorance I also thought a lot about these things in my early years, and it was only later that I came to see through them."³⁸ His concern about Taoist thought seems minimal, but his feelings about Buddhism were clearly stated in this one sentence,

The evil that comes of their truth,
half-truth, extravagance, depravity, and
evasiveness(a) is such that, were a sage king to
appear, he would certainly seize upon the strategy
of Han Yu(b) to attack them with fire.(c)³⁹

Lo felt strongly about the problems he saw in Buddhism. Not only did he criticize it on specific philosophical

³⁶Bloom, *Knowledge*, 13-4.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 165.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 166. (a) Alludes to *Mencius*, 2A:2:17. (b) Han Yu(768-824), the great statesman, poet, and leader of the Confucian assault on Buddhism in the T'ang. (c) I.e. to burn their books.

points, but he also criticized the Buddhist sutras as generally being products of the Chinese translators and not as they were in their original texts.⁴⁰

Lo thought that Ch'an learning was superficial,⁴¹ and fundamentally different from Confucian learning in that Buddhists referred to the nature as consciousness while the Confucians saw nature as principle.⁴² Lo pointed to Chang Tsai, Ch'eng I, Ch'eng Hao, Chu Hsi, and himself as ones who had all studied Buddhism, but who, through the Confucian Way, had come to understand the errors of Ch'an and gave it up.⁴³ Lo strongly fought against Buddhism but did not totally discount the significance of it. He wrote,

What we Confucians have apprehended is certainly a genuine perception, and what is apprehended by the adherents of Ch'an is also a genuine perception. It is only that what is perceived is different and that judgements concerning right and wrong, gain and loss are made on this basis.⁴⁴

This was the danger of Buddhism. Because their perception of things, according to Lo, was limited, their decisions based on this limited view of reality could only lead to trouble eventually.

The main point of criticism for Lo was the Buddhist

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 169.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 136.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 135.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 137.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 152.

view of reality as mental. They saw things as illusionary and untrustworthy, which went directly against the traditional Confucian fundamentals and thus Lo's thought. The Buddhist view of reality naturally leant itself to concentrating on the mind and potentially extreme subjectivism. Lo thought heaven-and-earth and the myriad things were reality, and as such needed to be investigated, not ignored as illusionary. The Buddhist concentration on the mind and neglect of external things, Lo felt, limited their perception and thus their ability to ever realize the unity of all things and *jen*.

Lo pointed to his own Buddhist experience of enlightenment, which he found elusive and unreliable, to demonstrate his own personal knowledge of the dangers of Buddhism. This experience led him to the understanding of the limitations of Buddhism and its meditative discipline, and to his commitment to the intellectual cultivation he pursued in Confucianism.⁴⁵ It was also because of his personal experience that he could comment on the attraction of Ch'an, "The evidence they offer is so clear and the inner coherence so compelling that even those with good powers of discrimination are usually unable to break free."⁴⁶ Lo found Buddhism to be philosophically unsatisfying and he thought that Buddhists did not understand the ultimate

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 142.

truth.⁴⁷ His views of Buddhism did not lead him to emotional diatribes, but instead to intellectual and philosophical critiques of Buddhist doctrines.⁴⁸

The typical criticisms of Buddhism in the Sung were of its quietistic practices, apathy in regards to politics, and the selfishness of its attempts to escape suffering.⁴⁹ Lo's interests dealt more with the nature of knowledge and of material reality.⁵⁰ These two themes were fundamental to the *K'un-chih chi*, but also to Lo's criticisms of Buddhism.

Lo sought a reliable order of approach, something he felt was not part of the ultimately unproductive notion of Buddhist enlightenment. Bloom notes that his insistence on a reliable order of approach was worked out in considerable detail in the process of developing his critique of Buddhism.⁵¹ After working out the essentials of his philosophy through his deliberations on the classics and Neo-Confucian writings of the Sung, Yuan, and early Ming, Lo went back to reexamine parts and aspects of Buddhist philosophy which had long interested and troubled him.⁵²

⁴⁷Berling, 55.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 14.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

⁵¹Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 103.

⁵²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 9-10.

Lo's main critique of Buddhism, as with Wang Yang-ming, was the concentration upon the mind and the idea that the mind was nature. Lo wrote,

Generally speaking, the Buddhists have insight into the mind, but lack insight into the nature. But considering theirs to be the supreme and mysterious Way, they are unaware that there are truths they cannot discover in an entire lifetime. Thus they presume to advance their theories, thereby misleading later generations so that they abandon human relationships and destroy the principle of nature. Can the pernicious influence of this disastrous legacy be expressed in words?⁵³

Though Lo saw the problems with Buddhism to be philosophical, specifically their view of mind as nature, he also thought these philosophical problems resulted in serious social problems. Lo felt that one had to understand the oneness of *li* from the standpoint of its diversity in particularizations before it could truly and thoroughly be perceived.⁵⁴ Buddhist concentration on the mind, to the exclusion of things(particularizations), necessarily limited their understanding. For this reason the Buddhist could come to a partial understanding of reality, which Lo felt could allow others to think their ideas correct when they were actually wrong.⁵⁵

Lo related this partial understanding and the need to consider external things in the following way, "The Way is

⁵³*Ibid.*, 51-2.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

constituted of principles shared in common by heaven and earth and all things and is not something that I alone possess."⁵⁶ Lo was using this in contrast to the comment commonly attributed to Buddha, "'Above heaven and below, I alone am to be revered.'"⁵⁷ Lo felt that was a ridiculous idea, as well as dangerous. In order to truly understand the unity of all things and *jen*, one had to consider all things. Bloom points out that it was this same point of excessively emphasizing the mind that led the Ch'eng brothers to revive the doctrine of the investigation of things from the *Great Learning*.⁵⁸

The emphasis on the mind as nature, a philosophical basis for Buddhist practice led to results that were seen in daily life. A traditionally Confucian criticism of Buddhism was the practice of severing one's ties with family. Lo wrote of this, "The Buddhists sever the root, so that the source of production and transformation is cut off, and yet they still vociferously contend that is they who perceive the nature."⁵⁹ In this practical way, the Buddhists, by leaving the family and not marrying, theoretically cut themselves off from having children. Thus they cut themselves off from one of the most fundamental natural

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 104.

⁵⁹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 78.

processes of production. Since the Way was one of constant production and reproduction, the Buddhists had severed themselves from the nature and the Way. By severing themselves from the nature, Lo wondered how they could be in accordance with the naturalness of principle. Lo felt that if they could leave the family and thus reject the five relationships, what would they not neglect?⁶⁰

Lo's views and criticisms of Buddhism were necessarily philosophically based. Lo began and pursued a consistent philosophy that not only would provide a metaphysics that showed the ultimate unity of reality, but also would produce an ultimate unity of Confucian thought. As Buddhist doctrines varied from the reality of nature as Lo saw it, and as these Buddhist doctrines could distract others from the true Way, they impeded the arrival of social harmony and thus had to be thoroughly discredited.

A Position of Orthodoxy

Lo saw himself as an heir to a constantly evolving tradition, one in which Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi each represented a constructive response to the challenges of Buddhism and Taoism as they encountered them in their lives.⁶¹ Lo did not consider Confucian thought to be a closed system. An orthodox Confucian had man and society at heart and provided socially

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 107-8.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 1.

constructive responses to the challenges not only of Buddhism and Taoism but also of those within Confucianism who had strayed. Lo wrote, "To attack heterodox doctrines and expose heretical views is the traditional role of the Confucian school."⁶²

Despite the philosophical differences between Lo and his predecessors Chu Hsi and Ch'eng I, Lo continued to consider himself a proponent of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition. The commitment to a specific metaphysical doctrine was not as crucial to the continuity of the Neo-Confucian tradition as the perspective on man and society which was at its heart.⁶³ This was especially important since Lo did not feel that either Ch'eng I or Chu Hsi had been able to recover the unity in their thought.

Lo did not dare to quickly disregard the thoughts and concepts of Ch'eng and Chu. He patiently tried to reconcile the concept that nature is *li* for an extended period of time. After coming to an understanding through the idea of "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," he felt, "Finding that it was consistent in every instance, I began to feel overwhelming self-confidence and knew that the words of these two gentlemen[Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi] would certainly not lead me astray."⁶⁴ Bloom suggests, though, that without the

⁶²*Ibid.*, 53.

⁶³Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 108.

⁶⁴Bloom, *Knowledge*, 172. [] mine.

concept "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," that Lo may not have been able to remain within the Ch'eng-Chu school.⁶⁵ Blo's suggestion has merit, but remains moot due to the existence of the concept.

Lo valued the ideas and writings of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, which he thought probed the furthest depths and attained the utmost subtlety, yet he did not feel that either had been able to reach a final integration.⁶⁶ Lo's search to recover that ultimate unity and that final integration led him to concentrate on and value the thoughts of the ancient Confucians as much as his immediate predecessors.

In this drive to return to unity, Lo's ideas in the end, were more similar to the classical ideas than to those of Chu Hsi.⁶⁷ An example of this may be seen in Lo's emphasis on the significance of sense experience, which was a clear break from the thought of the Sung, but was more a returning to the earlier tradition.⁶⁸

As a Confucian within the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, Lo highly respected and valued the work of his predecessors. At the same time, as a Confucian, he felt it was his duty to clarify and solve problems regarding the pursuit of the Way. He knew the dangers of such a task and assumed full responsibility for

⁶⁵Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 95.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 84.

⁶⁸Bloom, *Knowledge*, 40-1.

his actions and views. He wrote,

I do not presume to discuss our Confucian predecessors lightly. But if I do not correct his error, then the Way will not be perceived, (a) and if anyone wanted to blame me, I could not be excused.⁶⁹

Lo's opinion that Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi had not been able to achieve a final unity centered primarily upon their dualistic view of *li* and *ch'i*.⁷⁰ Lo said of Chu's view regarding *li* and *ch'i*, "This is precisely what I mean by suggesting that I doubt he finally achieved unity."⁷¹

Since they had not been able to do so, Lo felt that he must try to find a way to reconcile them and recover the ultimate unity.⁷² Such a process of reconciliation and recovery, in Lo's mind, could only be accomplished by one who genuinely honored and trusted Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi.⁷³ Lo saw himself as just such a person, and this was why he devoted all his mind to this task and dared not be neglectful.⁷⁴ His compulsion to confront certain problems within their thought, thus was not one of an outsider attacking a tradition, but one driven by fidelity to his own tradition.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 145. (a) Quoting *Mencius*, 3A:5:2.

⁷⁰Meskill, 16.

⁷¹Bloom, *Knowledge*, 69.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 59.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

Lo did not feel that orthodoxy meant the stagnation of blindly accepting received doctrines, but that it was a necessity to draw upon the strengths of the tradition while also contributing actively to its life.⁷⁵ Lo felt he could offer suggestions in the hope that they would help to recover the ultimate unity, without thinking that they would be the final additions. As an introduction to some of his ideas at one point, he wrote, "In the hope of recovering the ultimate unity, I have set forth the following points."⁷⁶

Lo criticized Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, but was even more critical of those in the early Ming who adopted their ideas and neglected their duty of dealing with their philosophical inconsistencies. It was necessary to carefully work through these inconsistencies in order to recover the ultimate unity.⁷⁷

Although Lo agreed with much of Ch'eng Hao's thought and felt his thought often showed an understanding unequalled by Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, he criticized Ch'eng Hao for having often made slight mistakes.⁷⁸ One of the most worrisome for Lo was some of Ch'eng Hao's comments which Lo thought were extremely Buddhistic. In part II, section 38 of the *K'un-chih chi*, Lo worried about these comments because,

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 15-6.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 122-3.

though, they appeared to obviously resemble those of Buddhism, Ch'eng Hao did not see that they did.⁷⁹

Who better than those who attempted to follow the teachings of another to offer criticisms and possible improvements? Lo wrote, "Shouldn't those who study his[Chu Hsi's] teachings seek a means to reconcile them and recover the ultimate unity?"⁸⁰ Lo said of another Confucian scholar who attempted to reconcile Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi's interpretations of the *Book of Changes*, "He may be described as one who was earnestly dedicated to honoring and trusting Ch'eng and Chu."⁸¹

Lo, as a defender of orthodoxy, thought those who followed the prevailing trend of Wang Yang-ming and disparaged Chu Hsi, displayed only their lack of exploration into the matter in depth and their "own meanness" which could not hurt "Master Chu" in the least.⁸² In the same vein, Lo stated,

It has long been time that those who are committed to the learning of the Way(*tao-hsüeh*) have all honored and trusted Ch'eng and Chu. Recently those who prate about the learning of the Way arrogantly place themselves above Ch'eng and Chu, yet if one considers their attainments, they are things that the Ch'engs and Chu learned in their earlier years and later discarded. Isn't it

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 135.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 109. [] mine.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 114. The scholar Lo was speaking of was Liu Pao-chai (Ting-chih, 1409-1469).

⁸²*Ibid.*, 62.

mistake to devote one's entire life to seeking the Way only to collect what able and virtuous men of an earlier day discarded, considering this as one's personal treasure and turning around and criticizing them?⁸³

Ch'eng and Chu were men who certainly never considered their learning complete,⁸⁴ and as such may have been seen as superior to those who so arrogantly disparaged them.

The Question of Orthodoxy

Lo certainly saw himself as orthodox, as a defender of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, more importantly the Confucian tradition, but modern scholars have not all agreed that his philosophical views allow him to remain within the Ch'eng-Chu tradition. Despite his earlier established reputation as a defender of Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy, his placement within or outside of the tradition remains a point of contention.

The placement of Lo as orthodox or not depends largely on the definition of orthodoxy. If one defines orthodoxy to be a fixed set of doctrines handed down from generation to generation which requires strict devotion and adherence, Lo's philosophical attempts at returning Confucian thought to a unity make it difficult to include him as a dedicated follower of Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy.⁸⁵ On the other hand, if

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 22-3.

the heart of orthodoxy can be defined as a concept of tradition which provides stability and capacity for growth instead of rigid, stagnant doctrines, Lo can more readily be seen as orthodox.⁸⁶

Lo approached orthodoxy with a concern for the dispositions, purposes, and motives of his predecessors.⁸⁷ Bloom notes of Lo's view of himself and orthodoxy, that even though he made significant shifts in the emphasis on Ch'eng-Chu philosophy, ". . .he could without any sense of ambivalence or contradiction consider himself to have remained faithful to the tradition in terms of its underlying intellectual and spiritual orientation."⁸⁸ A conception of orthodoxy that gives this ability and allowance of criticism from within, Bloom further notes, truly is evidence of the vitality and flexibility of the tradition.

In a letter to Lo, Wang Yang-ming gave testimony that though orthodoxy may be flexible, the flexibility had limits. Wang noted that he had trouble bringing himself to contradict Master Chu, but could not deceive himself either. Wang further commented on the gravity he felt in opposing Chu Hsi's ideas and the grief he felt as a result of doing

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Bloom, 'Abstraction,' 75.

so.⁸⁹

In speaking of orthodoxy, deBary looks back to the Neo-Confucians of the Sung. They insisted on orthodoxy, and yet at the same time exercised the right to question and reconsider the established standard of orthodoxy on the basis of both new experience and fresh evidence.⁹⁰ With such a framework, they put forth the doctrines of Ch'eng and Chu, but also created a model that allowed critical review, and reinterpretation. In this way, there was a higher value in orthodoxy placed upon inner-reflection and rational judgement than on mechanical adherence to established formulations or accepted views.⁹¹ deBary's definition of Neo-Confucianism as originally embracing a critical method and spirit of doubt allow one to include Lo within the orthodox tradition.

A few modern scholars have viewed Lo as orthodox. In the early 1940s, in his work *Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih* (A History of Ming Thought), Jung Chao-tsu characterized Lo as a "latter-day stalwart of the Chu Hsi school," an opinion that Yü Ying-shih agreed with.⁹² Both Jung and Yü viewed Lo as a defender of the Ch'eng-Chu tradition and critical of

⁸⁹Tu, 161.

⁹⁰deBary, "Introduction," 25.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²Bloom, *Knowledge*, 23.

Wang Yang-ming and those who held similar ideas.⁹³ In the midst of the dominance of Wang Yang-ming, Jung notes, it was Lo who clung to and upheld the older style of learning from the Sung.⁹⁴

Japanese scholars seem to view Lo's position differently. In his 1961 article "Ra Kinjun to Ki no Tetsugaku" (Lo Ch'in-shun and the Philosophy of *Ch'i*), Yamashita Ryūji describes Lo's thought as a reaction against the thought of Chu Hsi and not a defense of it.⁹⁵ The scholar Abe Yoshio, although primarily concerned with Lo's influence in Japan, emphasized his perception of Lo's break with the Ch'eng-Chu tradition.⁹⁶ In an article in 1951, Yamanoi Yu concentrates on Lo's monism of *ch'i*, and concludes that this represents a decisive break from the established orthodoxy,⁹⁷ a point that Yamashita agrees with. Abe, too, agrees that the emphasis on *ch'i* led to doubts of Chu Hsi's concentration on *li* and that Lo's stance was a clear departure.⁹⁸

Some mainland scholars have taken a different approach to Lo's thought. In 1957, Zhang Dainan wrote of Lo as one

⁹³*Ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 24-5.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

of two of the most important materialist philosophers of the Ming, whose achievement lay in debating the "objective idealism" of the orthodox Ch'eng-Chu school and the "subjective idealism" of the Lu-Wang school.⁹⁹ Within this framework, Lo could not be orthodox. Zhang's assessment is common among Marxist scholars who view intellectual history as one of constant clashes between idealism and materialism.¹⁰⁰ As a proponent of a monism of *ch'i*, Lo is seen by these scholars as a materialist, who naturally would be in opposition to both Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming. Although the Marxist scholars may see Lo as a materialist, they also point to Lo's view of human nature as an unfortunate link to those of the Sung, Confucius, and Mencius.¹⁰¹

Bloom contends that the differences in the opinions of these scholars varies little and is primarily due to the different problems they approach in their research and thus their perception of where Lo stands.¹⁰² As a result, they tend to come down on either one side or the other of his position in relation to orthodoxy.¹⁰³

The arguments and rationales of the scholars may never

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 23.

be decided one way the other, but neither do they have any impact on how Lo perceived himself. Among other scholars of the Ming and Ch'ing, Lo had established a reputation of orthodoxy, and in his own view his motivation to return Confucianism to unity was purely driven by loyalty to Confucianism and the orthodox tradition he saw himself a part of. Despite his intentions, desires, and efforts, Lo did not feel he had succeeded in putting together the philosophical puzzle left to him. In a letter to Wang Yang-ming he wrote,

Truly the Way is not easy to apprehend, but surely the study of it cannot be neglected. I am afraid that one cannot be satisfied with his own view and immediately regard it as the ultimate standard. I am not one who knows the Way, but I have put forth effort to seek it over the course of many years. In my rapidly declining years I realize that I have accomplished nothing. Still, I desire to discuss learning with the best of this generation.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 184. The significance of Lo's feelings here may be discounted by many factors--a politeness in correspondence, the factor that he lived twenty-years after this, the *K'un-chih chi* was not published until eight years later--all of which many have altered his true feelings of the statement, but it shows his diligence, humility, and desire in the end to reach his goal.

CONCLUSION

Lo's reputation as an orthodox Confucian came from his dedication to Ch'eng-Chu thought, and his mission to discredit Wang Yang-ming and Buddhism. These were the manifestations of his desire to return Confucian thought to unity. The changes Lo made in Confucian philosophy had a significant impact on others, and his philosophy can be attributed to his loyalty to Confucianism and his desire for its return to unity.

Lo's orthodoxy could be the single most important factor in his life and thought, if one can truly be singled out from a person's life. His orthodoxy was not limited to a strict adherence to the definition put forth by the Ming government, the civil service exams, or only to the thought of Sung Confucians. Many only claimed "orthodoxy" as a means to the end goals of status, wealth, and political power. These men followed the external dictates of orthodoxy without internalizing the humanitarian motivations. Others considered themselves orthodox, and followed only the thoughts and views that had been established in the Sung. Orthodoxy for Lo needed to include Confucius, Mencius, and their latter day interpreters. He attempted to draw together the Classical Confucian thinkers with the thought of the Sung Confucians. His fidelity to

the Confucian tradition motivated his search to show its continuity and its ultimate unity. To achieve an ultimate unity of Confucian philosophy would further the cause of Confucianism and thus improve social mores.

One aspect of Lo's task was the necessity to show the weaknesses and limitations of the thought of Wang Yang-ming and Buddhism. This was not the focal point for Lo, but rather an outcome of the development of his thought and the contradictions that Wang and Buddhism posed in relation to Lo's thought.

Chapter One provides context for Lo's life and the distinctiveness of his thought. His time was not conducive to his dedication to Confucian thought and practice. His adherence to Confucian values was noted by his contemporaries, who praised his virtue in and out of office. The events of his day highlight his determination and unswerving loyalty to Confucianism.

The next three chapters deal with the four questions posed by Kasoff. They are ordered so the answers to each question provide a framework which gradually builds a foundation of understanding. The foundation begins with the fundamentals of Lo's philosophy, moves to some implications of his thought, then to how these things fit into the big picture of one's life, one's goal in life, and finally how to achieve that goal.

Chapter Two begins with the foundations of Lo's search

for unity. The shift in emphasis from *li* to *ch'i* provided a basis for understanding unity at the most basic level. *Ch'i* composed everything and displayed the unity of all things. *Li*, as it was originally one, also showed the unity of all things as did Lo's conception of the Great Ultimate. This chapter includes significant changes he made in the thought of his Sung predecessors, but it was precisely these changes that evidence his orthodoxy and his drive for unity. The discussion of Lo's conception of *li*, *ch'i*, the idea "principle is one; its particularizations diverse," the Great Ultimate, *yin* and *yang*, and change establish the starting point of understanding Lo's philosophy and its significance.

Chapter Three answers the second question by discussing some important implications of Lo's monism. His notion of one nature as opposed to the Sung conception of two natures, helped to move Confucianism closer to unity. This conception of one nature resulted in the reestablishment of the importance of feelings and desires and their natural existence as part of the nature. Probably the most controversial aspect of Lo's thought, the relationship of mind and nature, was shown to be one of interdependence but distinction. The distinction was necessary to combat the possible negative consequences that could be seen in Buddhism if one confused mind with nature. This distinction was not contrary to unity, but allowed one to conceptualize

the ultimate unity and realize it for oneself without being limited by concentrating exclusively on the mind.

The second and third chapters provide the pieces that make up the framework of Lo's philosophy. Chapter Four answers the last two questions and provides the purpose and motivation of Confucianism and the path to get to the end goal of sagehood. The answer to the third question discusses Lo's conception of why evil existed in the world and the end goal one needed to reach to help overcome that evil for oneself, the ruler, and society. To realize the ultimate unity for oneself, become a sage, embody the virtue of humanity, and help bring harmony to society was the goal of all true Confucians. The last question concludes Lo's approach. The answer to this question deals with how the Confucian needed to pursue sagehood.

The last chapter, Chapter Five, returns to discuss the outward manifestations of Lo's orthodoxy: his battles against Wang Yang-ming and Buddhism. These battles are the easiest way to see Lo's orthodoxy and desire for a return to unity, but they are only one aspect of his orthodoxy. The main evidence of Lo's orthodoxy is found in his philosophy and his effort to return to unity within it; but, underlying his philosophical strivings to return to unity and its necessary battles with Wang and Buddhism, was his loyalty to Confucianism and his desire to return Confucian thought to unity.

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