

DOCTORAL THESIS

A reconstruction of Zhū Xi's religious philosophy inspired by Leibniz: the natural theology of heaven

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is aimed to set up a Confucian-style religious philosophy on the basis of Zhū Xī's ideas. It seeks to articulate and highlight what has existed previously in some form in Zhū Xī's Confucianism in a language which appears to be more precise for modern readers. Leibniz's interpretations of Chinese philosophy and culture, as well as many resources in his own philosophy and Christian theology, serve to promote the realization of this aim.

Zhū Xī's religious philosophy in our reconstruction is a philosophy containing a theology of Heaven at its core, and this theology is certainly not a revealed one. These following issues are covered: 1) a theology of deities, 2) a metaphysics of the supreme being (Heaven), 3) an appropriate treatment of the ontology of *lǐ*₂ and *qì* in relation to Heaven, and 4) a suitable interpretation of transcendence and immanence within human beings.

The dissertation has three major parts. The first part is to argue that the worship of Heaven is special and superior to any reverence contained in the "polytheism" (which is finally philosophized by Zhū Xī as the reverence towards manifold *pneuma*) revealed in the Confucian sacrificial system. At the same time, it explores how the faith in various spirits or deities can be consistent with a belief in Heaven.

The second part shows that it is fundamental to see Zhū Xī's Heaven as a substance, so that one is able to attribute to it qualities and properties, even before there is any decision about whether or not to regard Heaven as a person. Among Heaven's qualities, we choose its work (*gōng*) and virtuousness (*dé*) as its most prominent features to expound. In the light of Heaven's virtuousness, a theodicy of Heaven is constructed.

The third part is devoted to a discussion of the nature of human beings as well as of our fellows in the natural world, especially in relation to Heaven. Zhū Xī offers two perspectives for understanding humanness: one by studying the nature of *xīn* ("heart-mind"), and the other, the composite nature of *hún-pò* (or *guǐ-shén*, "souls"). We choose to plunge into the latter perspective, something comparable with Leibniz's theories of soul.

In the concluding chapter major features or facets of this reconstruction of Zhū Xī's religious philosophy and its relevance to modern times are stated in a concise and relatively bold way.

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