

Articles

Freedom, Agency and  
the Primacy of *Li* in Zhu Xi's  
Neo-Confucianism (*Seongnihak*)

Hansang A. Kim

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## Introduction

Free actions, if there are any, are not deterministically caused nor are they caused by random processes of the sort countenanced by quantum physicists or complexity theorists. Free actions need to be caused by me, in a non-determined and nonrandom manner.<sup>1</sup>

The theory of agency avoids the absurdities of simple indeterminism by conceding that human behavior is caused, while at the same time avoiding the difficulties of determinism by denying that every chain of causes and effects is infinite. Some such causal chains, on this view, have beginnings, and they begin with agents themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Without free will we seem diminished, merely the playthings of external forces. How, then, can we maintain an exalted view of ourselves? Determinism seems to undercut human dignity, it seems to undermine our value. Some would deny what this question accepts as given, and save free will by denying determinism of (some) actions. Yet, if an uncaused action is a random happening, then this no more comports with human value than does determinism. Random acts and caused acts alike seem to leave us not as the valuable originators of action but as an arena, a place where things happen, whether through earlier causes or spontaneously.<sup>3</sup>

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200 CE), the progenitor of the Song-dynasty and later on, the Joseon-dynasty Neo-Confucian school of “nature and principle” (Ch. *lixue* 理學, Kr. *Seongnihak* 性理學), postulates a mind that is uncoerced and undetermined by antecedent psychological and physical conditions, and ‘uncaused’ by external factors, meaning having a will that is not related in a uniform way to the agent’s character, motives and circumstances, in the pre-intentional and universal realm (*weifā* 未發) before actual feelings are aroused. In this sense, his view on the freedom of the mind that is undetermined by antecedent causal factors resembles that of the advocates of the compatibility of free will and determinism, and perhaps even that of those arguing for libertarian free will. There are certainly echoes of libertarian views in Zhu Xi’s

1. Owen Flanagan, *The Problem of the Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 135.

2. Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 56.

3. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 291-92.

moral philosophy, in that he believes persons can choose between alternate possibilities of action and can be held morally accountable for their actions. Libertarians seem to assign special meaning to human agency, claiming that for human actions to be neither determined nor random, human agency, unlike other events in nature, has to be subject to an explanation that is different from that used in explaining causal relationships. As Roderick Chisholm points out, to solve the dilemma of the metaphysical problem of human freedom “we must make somewhat far-reaching assumptions about the self of the agent—about the man who performs the act,” if we are to view human beings as responsible agents.<sup>4</sup> Zhu Xi has a distinct approach to establishing a vision of the self of the agent that involves linking the mind (*xin* 心) with principle (*li* 理) within the particular framework of the dual *li-qi* 理氣 metaphysical conception of the world found in his Neo-Confucian philosophy.

### **Mind (*xin*), Psycho-physical Endowment (*qizhi*) and Moral Self-Cultivation**

Zhu Xi inherits Mencius' theory that human nature is good and sets up his thesis, “(Human) Nature is Principle” (*xing ji li* 性即理). This equation of human nature with inherent moral principle leads Zhu Xi's theorem to adopt a form of dualism in explaining the makeup of the mind that corresponds to his dual *li-qi* metaphysical conception of the world. This is in line with Mencius' theory of human nature which manifests a form of dualism, in that humans are seen to possess two inclinations. One inclination represents the desires emanating from the physical body, and the other represents the volition of an inherently good moral nature. Mencius uses the following dichotomous scheme to illustrate his point: the greater body-lesser body (*dati-xiaoti* 大體小體), and the faculty of the mind-physical organs. The greater part of the self would usually, under normal circumstances, exercise a guiding control over the lesser parts of the self. Mencius regards the ‘greater body’ (self) or the mind as the origin of the good, and the feelings and desires issuing from the ‘lesser body’

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4. Roderick Chisholm, “Freedom and Action,” in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Keith Lehrer (New York: Random House, 1966), 11.

(self), which are not under the effective guidance and control of the mind, as the origin of evil in human beings.

In the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Classified Conversations of Master Zhu), Zhu Xi posits the existence of *xing* 性 or human nature that is inherently good, and argues that this nature acts as a norm for, and in turn is subject to, the agency of the mind (*xin*, often translated as ‘heart-mind’). Our individual human character as organic living beings is also seen to depend on the quality of our given psycho-physical endowment, or *qizhi* 氣質. While the purpose of Confucian self-cultivation is to overcome the limitations posed by the impediments of this material endowment that makes up our physical, organic selves to achieve sagehood (*shengren* 聖人), Zhu Xi argues that if there were no inherently good nature *xing* to begin with, there would be no point in striving to overcome the impediments posed by the psycho-physical endowment *qizhi*. Not only is changing one’s *qizhi* exceedingly difficult, but the realization of morality does not fundamentally depend on changing it. *Qizhi* is able merely to influence the degree to which the exigencies dictated by *xing* are carried out, but not able to influence the overall integrity of the autonomous self implied by the existence of *xing*.

The theory of *qizhi* in Neo-Confucian literature is often misunderstood as a crude form of determinism, and is often forwarded as sufficient evidence for denying the possibility of free agency in Neo-Confucian philosophy. However, if we follow Zhu Xi’s own arguments closely, we discover that the crux of his argument lies in the belief that human beings are able to act in accordance with the inherent moral principles that are present within (*xing*), in spite of and regardless of the impediments actually presented by one’s limited, turbid and distorted psycho-physical endowment, however severe they may appear to be.<sup>5</sup>

Zhu Xi’s views may become clearer upon examination of those of his contemporary opponents belonging to the Neo-Confucian Hunan School, namely Hu Hong 胡宏 (1105-1161) and Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180). The Hunan School subscribes to a theory of reflective consciousness (*zhijue* 知覺)

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5. Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi yulei* [Classified conversations of Master Zhu], ed. Li Jingde et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, [1270] 1986), *Juan* 59, Section 113 (hereafter denoted in the following abbreviated form, *Zhuzi yulei*, 59:113). “操則存，舍則亡。”程子以爲操之道，惟在“敬以直內”而已。如今做工夫，卻只是這一事最緊要。這“主一無適”底道理，卻是一箇大底，其他道理總包在裏面。其他道理已具，所謂窮理，亦止是自此推之，不是從外面去尋討。”

that has as its base a monistic world-view, encompassing only the realm of *qi* 氣. According to this theory the substance of the mind is 'empty,' without prior orientation of any kind, merely reflecting the conditions in the outside world and neutrally receptive to sense data. This is the view of the mind to which some philosophers of the pre-Qin philosophical period in China subscribe; and this view is in turn taken up later by the Song-dynasty scholars of the Hunan School, who maintain that the substance of the mind can neither be characterized as good or bad.

This view is reminiscent of the naturalistic *qi*-monism of Zhang Zai 張載 and his views on the human mind. Zhang Zai describes mankind as originating from the Great Void or *taixu* 太虛, and goes on to posit the substance of both nature and human mind as "empty of any self-definition." Just as the Great Void gives rise to all kinds of transient phenomena (*kexing* 客形), so too all sorts of momentary feelings and desires (*kegan* 客感) arise from the human mind. Thus the *taixu-kexing* cycle in nature is also seen to apply to the case for human mind. Human beings are also temporary, transient phenomena which result from the movements of the Great Void. Humans therefore also manifest both aspects of the *taixu-kexing* mode. Human mind in the *taixu* state is in a rarefied state of dissipation, unable to detect through sense perception, quiet and empty of any definition. This contrasts strongly with Zhu Xi's understanding of the mind in the original state, which encompasses the view that the mind is characterized not just by its cognitive functions, and that it is not a passive reactive entity that responds to outside stimuli, but an active repository of moral nature or moral principles. The mind, despite the impediments posed by the individual psycho-physical endowment of persons, is able in this view to manifest active and spontaneous agency. The agency of the mind is in turn made possible by the objective existence of moral principles, *li*, which are fully present in the mind.

The theory of reflective consciousness of the Hunan School also sees the phenomenon of the mind solely in the context of its response to and relations with outside stimuli and objects. It does not regard original human nature as the initiating point of active moral conduct. Zhu Xi regards the pre-intentional and universal realm (*weifā*) of the human mind as involving the existence of the plenitude of *li* or principles. As such, the human mind cannot be determined or limited by the material endowment of the body. All human beings possess this mind which in its *weifā* state is the repository of all principles, regardless of one's character or psycho-physical disposition. The *weifā* state of the mind is a given

condition for all humans without fail, from sages to ordinary people.

[Zhu Xi said:] ‘The equilibrium in the pre-intentional and universal realm of the mind (*weifā*) before the feelings are aroused is not a depiction of a state characteristic of the sages, but is a general depiction of the fact that ordinary humans are also in possession of it.’ [Someone asked:] ‘Is the *weifā* realm as it pertains to the sage different from that of the ordinary person?’ [Zhu Xi said:] ‘The *weifā* realm is just that for all. Otherwise, there would be no fundamental basis for things, and the principle of the Way would be cut off.’<sup>6</sup>

[Someone said:] ‘If one talks of the occasion of the *weifā* realm of the mind, the mind of an ordinary person cannot be the same as that of a sage.’ [Zhu Xi said:] ‘How can it not be the same? If one speaks in that manner it would seem that heavenly principles were to be found in another, separate place.’<sup>7</sup>

Thus for Zhu Xi the *weifā* realm obtains in the same manner for all. This implies that the *weifā* realm of the mind is present a priori in the mind as a universal standard for human beings and that humans are able to refer to it as a common and objective bearing for moral judgment. It also implies that there is no realm which is not encompassed by heaven-ordained principle (*tianli* 天理). Although the mind comes across actual impediments in the process of self-cultivation, due to the limitations of the psycho-physical endowment, it is nevertheless characterized by a freedom that is undetermined by antecedent causal factors, and is able to actively initiate moral action. Such a stance seemingly excludes determinism.

For Zhu Xi, selfish human desires and desire for goods (*renyu* 人欲) emanate from the material physical endowment and are related to it.

In the *qi* which is endowed to each being, there is not a uniformity, as there are diverse modes of clear, turbid, pure and mixed-up *qi*. In the case of a clear-minded and pure person the *qi* and *li* form a harmonious whole and

6. Ibid., 62:115. “喜怒哀樂未發之中，未是論聖人，只是泛論衆人亦有此，與聖人都一般。”或曰：“恐衆人未發，與聖人異否？”曰：“未發只做得未發。不然，是無大本，道理絕了。”淳。

7. Ibid., 97:122. “然論未發時，衆人心亦不可與聖人同。”曰：“如何不同？若如此說，卻是天理別在一處去了。”可學。

there is no impediment or concealment caused by the desire for goods. Those belonging to grades below that cannot escape the inevitable bounds of the endowed *qi*.<sup>8</sup>

Here Zhu talks of the relationship between impediments posed by a relentless desire for goods and partiality, bias or deviance in the endowed *qi*.

Human mind is originally good, and when one seeks to do good, it provides a clue to the manifestation of the original mind. However, as soon as it issues forth, the desires for goods due to material endowment act to conceal it. One must therefore strive to realize this fact and seek to keep and nurture the original mind. This is seemingly the biggest moral effort of all.<sup>9</sup>

The naturally inborn character of the people points to an original goodness, which makes one cognisant of the imperative that one must seek to do good when the mind issues forth, and in no case does one actually not do so. Only the coarse and crude quality of the endowed *qi* and the corresponding selfish desire for goods harm it, interfering with one's will to sincerely do good and resulting inevitably in self-deception.<sup>10</sup>

Thus it is incumbent on each and every person to take note and carefully monitor particular deviant traits in one's psycho-physical endowment. If this is not carried through properly, one will end up deceiving oneself. Only through such a process of self-awareness can one escape the bounds of the endowed *qi* and outward-oriented desire for goods. It is in such a context that Zhu discusses 'changes in one's psycho-physical endowment' or *bianhua qizhi* 變化 氣質. It is important to take note that *bianhua qizhi* refers to the possibility of the actualization of moral principle, by overcoming the impediments posed by limitations in the psycho-physical endowment of the person, through the active agency of the individual making the moral effort, and not, as is commonly

8. Zhu Xi, *Zhu Xi ji* 朱熹集 [Collected works of Zhu Xi], eds. Guo Di and Yi Po (Sichuan: Sichuan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, [1265] 1996), 15-1:572. “經筵講義 然又以其所得之氣 有清濁純駁之不齊也。是以極清且純者 氣與理一 而自無物欲之蔽 自其次者而下 則皆已不無氣稟之拘矣。”

9. *Zhuji yulei*, 13:50 “蓋人心本善，方其見善欲為之時，此是真心發見之端。然纔發，便被氣稟物欲隨即蔽錮之，不教它發。此須自去體察存養，看得此最是一件大工夫。” 廣。

10. *Zhu Xi ji*, 15-1:572. “民之秉彝 本無不善 故人心之發 莫不知善之當為 而欲為之 惟其氣稟之雜 物欲之私 有害之，是以為善之意 有所不實而不免為自欺也。”

understood, to a literal transformation of one's actual material makeup or one's psychological traits. 'Changing one's endowed *qi*' means not letting go of one's vigilance against the selfish tendencies of the desire for outside goods, and further entails the proper 'keeping' and nurturing of heaven-ordained principle, so that moral ends might be achieved through active human agency. The key here is the focus on the importance of subjective moral effort in making manifest the original mind that is good.

Zhu Xi admits that the mind is not always able to carry out the dictates of the heaven-ordained principle in a perfect manner. It does so in myriad diverse degrees. Through study and moral effort (*gongfu* 工夫) the mind comes to realize the dictates of *li* more and more naturally. Thus the limitations of the material and psychological endowment are seen to be overcome through subjective application of the will.

### **Principle (*li*), the Pre-intentional and Universal Realm of the Mind (*xin zhi weifa* 心之未發) and Freedom**

Zhu Xi introduces the concept of principle *li* or the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) that exists a priori because he feels that these concepts are essential for establishing a proper base for morality and for the correct analysis of human moral experience. For order or value to exist, some constraints and limitations must be placed on abstract possibilities. Value can only be experienced when prior limits or standards exist to guide its evaluation. Principle or *li* in Zhu Xi's metaphysical system exists in tandem with the material world, but claims a logical priority to it. It is present in human beings as a heaven-ordained reality in the form of human nature, and each individual person needs to expend moral effort in order to bring about its dictates.

The existence of an a priori moral principle in Zhu Xi's metaphysics points to several facts. The first is that Zhu recognizes that there is a beginning point for his ethical system. The point of departure for ethics is the heaven-ordained principle which has an ontological priority (*lixian qihou* 理先氣後). 'Beginning' also implies origin, and also has connotations of fundamental ground. The *li* (L. *principium*) espoused by Zhu Xi provides a point of departure, an origin (Gk. *archē*). Individual human beings, when engaging in moral effort, orient and ground themselves based on this inherent principle. Consciously taking recourse

to this principle by exercising human agency seems to imply a certain break from natural causal relationships and from physical necessity. In other words, subscribing to the dictates of innate principle seems to entail a certain leap away from the inevitable and the determined.

In Zhu Xi's integral metaphysical and ethical scheme 'active cognitive and moral consciousness' (*zhijue* 知覺) and active human moral agency exist in connection with the a priori existence of *li* or innate moral principle. The subjective agency of the mind in Zhu Xi's philosophy is grounded in an awareness of *li*.<sup>11</sup> Humans are in possession of this active cognitive and moral consciousness, by means of which they are able to discern *li* and orient their action, thought and feelings in accordance with it. By doing so they are seen to be able to deal appropriately with whatever situation they find themselves in. If one is not to be swayed by random subjective impulses or inclinations emanating from one's physical endowment, it is essential that one is first cognizant of the presence of this *li* in one's own nature.

For Zhu Xi, the mind encompasses both the dynamic and quiet phases (*dongjing* 動靜), and is both present in a pre-intentional, universal state (*xin zhi weifa* 心之未發) before the actual feelings are aroused, and manifest in a post-intentional, phenomenal state (*xin zhi yifa* 心之已發) after the feelings issue forth. According to Zhu, even in the *weifa* state, the mind's active cognitive ability does not cease. In fact, the *weifa* state is vitally important for his theory of self-cultivation as this is the venue for the 'nurturing' and 'growth' of innate moral principle within oneself. The mind in its pre-intentional and universally-oriented state is characterized by the fact that specific thought intentions have not sprouted forth, and yet active cognitive and moral consciousness is operative in such a way as to ensure mind's readiness to react to all possible future situations. In this state, private or selfish motives for action are absent, and a certain impartiality and universality is proffered by the presence of the entire corpus of *li* to which humans need to take recourse in order to live successful, integral and fulfilled lives. Moral effort encompassing both these realms is necessary for effective self-cultivation, according to Zhu Xi. To act in accord with the various *li* in an appropriate fashion, one needs to apply oneself

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11. Yeon Jaheum, "Ju Hui cheolhak-e isseoseo 'jigak'-ui uiui" [The meaning of active cognitive and moral consciousness in Zhu Xi's philosophy], *Hanguk Cheolhak Nonjip* 18 (2006): 209.

to studies of factual information through everyday exchanges and encounters with other members of the community, and of texts (namely the classics), and also to engage in various means of ‘nurturing’ and ‘keeping’ the innate principle within oneself (*hanyang gongfu* 涵養工夫): quiet meditation (*jingzuo* 靜坐) and other exercises are also part of this larger program, but such exercises are part of an integral whole, and cannot be divided into separate categories of activity.

When one sits in quiet meditation, sometimes one is without thought, and sometimes one engages in thinking of moral principle. There does not exist two separate ways, each representing a meditation-time method and a reading-time method respectively. When one sits in quiet meditation, one is in fact engaging in an examination of the innate moral principle, and thinking it out thoroughly. This is what is meant by nurturance and growth of the moral principle within oneself. One does not get rid of evil and desultory thoughts by purposively waking oneself and consciously striving to invoke principle. When one thinks of the moral principle, desultory thoughts naturally do not arise.<sup>12</sup>

It is up to each individual to carefully nurture this ability through constant learning and moral effort, which will enable each person to overcome the natural impediments due to limitations in the material physical endowment of the person. This is what is meant by ‘*hanyang*’ 涵養 or growth and nurturance of the moral principle within oneself. Contrary to many current academic writings on the subject, sitting meditation does not aim simply to quiet down or calm the mind as an end in itself (just a physical exercise aiming at physical well-being), but forms part of a larger program of self-cultivation to enable human moral virtues to fully flourish in an integral manner.

## Agency, Choice and Responsibility in Zhu Xi’s Ethical System

In the modern discourse on free will, the issue of choice often comes to the

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12. *Zhuzi yulei*, 12:142. “人也有靜坐無思念底時節，也有思量道理底時節，豈可畫為兩塗，說靜坐時與讀書時工夫 迥然不同！當靜坐涵養時，正要體察思繹道理，只此便是涵養，不是說喚醒提撕，將道理去卻那邪思妄念。只自家思量道理時，自然邪念不作。” 簡。

fore. For there to be freedom of agency, the agent needs to be able to choose between various real alternative possibilities. There is also the critical issue of individual moral responsibility. As a Confucian philosophy, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian thought posits the idea of individual moral responsibility for cases where someone is not diligent in the pursuit of moral effort, whatever the limitations posed by their psycho-physical endowment. With regard to choice and responsibility as they pertain to the agent, interestingly, there are parallels between Zhu Xi's model and that of certain ancient Western models of free will, which we might do well to briefly take note here.

Donald Munro points out that St. Augustine refers to 'the will' as a function that mediates between reason and desire in human beings.<sup>13</sup> Ideally, the will acts in the capacity of confirming the choice preferred by reason and taking the side of reason in this setup. With the will being promoted as the organ reflecting the goodness of God and as the repository and guarantor of individual moral responsibility, it comes to claim a status for itself commensurate with its independent role. The mind is then seen to have a third function or organ, namely the will, which takes its place alongside reason and desire in the tripartite division of the mind.<sup>14</sup> According to Munro, this scheme also resembles that of Plato's three-level division of the mind.<sup>15</sup>

It could be argued that in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian philosophy of the primacy of *li*, the subjective agency of the mind comes to be promoted in a similar way due to a dualistic opposition of heavenly principle (rational dimension) and human desire (affective dimension) within the human mind. Although the mind (heart-mind) as described by Zhu Xi does not have an independent status such as that enjoyed by St. Augustine's and Plato's will, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian heart-mind is also the locus of a dualistic distinction between two opposing tendencies. The heart-mind both encompasses and mediates between human nature and human feelings and exercises subjective agency with regard to these two categories (*xin tong xingqing* 心統性情). It can also be argued that Zhu Xi, in inheriting the Mencian theory of the goodness of human nature, sets up a scheme of human physical desire in opposition

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13. Donald Munro, *Images of Human Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 176.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

to innate heaven-ordained principle, in which the mind makes human desire follow the dictates of heavenly principle. In this way the agency and the autonomy of the mind is seemingly affirmed.

In his Preface to *The Annotated and Rearranged Chapters to the Daxue* (*Daxue zhangju* 大學章句), Zhu Xi distinguishes pure good intention based on the heavenly principle and physical corporeal desires and sets them in opposition to one another.<sup>16</sup> In turn, this is represented by the terms ‘original nature’ and ‘actual nature due to the endowed *qi*.’ When stimuli are applied from the outside, both these natures can respond. The interesting issue revolves around which responds first, as that which responds before the other will gain hegemony. There is no doubt that the degree of one’s self-cultivation, which is entirely up to the effort made by each individual, determines the outcome. According to Zhu Xi in the Preface to *The Annotated and Rearranged Chapters to the Zhongyong* (*Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句),<sup>17</sup> the mind can steer one to “regard the ‘Dao-faculty’ (pure good intention based on the heavenly principle) as one’s master and make the ‘human-faculty’ (physical corporeal desires) follow its commands each time,” thus enabling one to reject a passive existence in favour of an active life of moral effort.

Insofar as humans are able to cast off subjective urges and selfish desires emanating from the ‘actual nature due to the endowed *qi*’ and are thus able to act in accordance to the dictate of moral principle within, humans have freedom. Galen Strawson argues that genuine or ultimate freedom is linked to genuine responsibility.<sup>18</sup> Genuine responsibility for one’s choice and action requires one to be responsible not only for how one chooses and acts but also for “how one is.” For Strawson, one should be self-determining not only in one’s choice and action but also in one’s character in order to be a fully responsible moral agent.<sup>19</sup> Whether Zhu’s notion of freedom represents such ‘genuine or ultimate’ freedom is a subject that well merits further discussion.

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16. Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe; Hefei shi: Anhui Jiaoyu Chubanshe, [1265] 2002), 6.13.

17. *Ibid.*, 6.29.

18. Myeong-seok Kim, “Choice, Freedom, and Responsibility in Ancient Chinese Confucianism,” in *Determinism, Moral Responsibility and Asian Philosophy: International Conference on East-West Comparative Philosophy* (Seoul: Seoul National University, October 15-16, 2010), 88.

19. Galen Strawson, *Freedom and Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 26-29, quoted in Myeong-seok Kim (2010, 89).

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**Hansang A. Kim** (andrewfr@mju.ac.kr) is an assistant professor of philosophy at Myongji University. His academic interests are focused around East Asian and comparative philosophy.

## Abstract

Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE), the progenitor of the Song-dynasty Neo-Confucian school of “nature and principle,” postulates a mind that is uncoerced and undetermined by antecedent psychological and physical conditions, and ‘uncaused’ by external factors, meaning having a will that is not related in a uniform way to the agent’s character, motives and circumstances, in the pre-intentional and universal realm (*weifā* 未發) before actual feelings are aroused. In this sense his view on the freedom of the mind that is undetermined by antecedent causal factors resembles that of the advocates of the compatibility of free will and determinism, and perhaps even that of those arguing for libertarian free will. The theory of psycho-physical endowment or *qizhi* in Neo-Confucian literature is often misunderstood as a crude form of determinism, and is forwarded as sufficient evidence for denying the possibility of free agency in Neo-Confucian philosophy. However, if we follow Zhu Xi’s own arguments closely, we discover that the crux of his argument lies in the belief that human beings are able to act in accordance with the inherent moral principles that are present within (*xing*) however severe the impediments due to *qizhi*.

**Keywords:** freedom, agency, primacy of *li*, the pre-intentional and universal realm of the mind (*xin zhi weifa* 心之未發), psycho-physical endowment (*qizhi* 氣質)