From Transcendance to "Rule of Principle" – The Formation of Zhu Xi's Political Thought in Light of His Early Poetry

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Abstract: Over the centuries, "rule of principle" 以理治国 has been seen as the essence of the political thought of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) from Song dynasty China, the most important stage that influenced later political discourse. In order to better examine the formation of this political thought, this paper takes an interdisciplinary perspective from poetry, the texts most reflective of the writer's inner mind and personal feelings, aiming to rehabilitate poetry production of Zhu Xi as an individual literatus' reflexive response to the outer world rather than treating it simply as a Neo-Confucian's featured verse and reducing characteristics of poetry to the influence of his philosophy, or the intension to better serve the propagation of his philosophical ideas.

Keywords: Zhu Xi, poetry, Neo-Confucianism, rule of principle

In his writing of the history of Song poetry, Michael A. Fuller linked the features of the poetry of being less embellished and more philosophical to the influence of Neo-Confucianism of the time, because of Neo-Confucians' awareness of the importance of more interpretable and self-consistent Confucian canons. As for the role Zhu Xi 朱熹 played in that history, Fuller argues that it was Zhu Xi's requirement of the transparency of texts, coming from his

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hermeneutic for reading the canon which left no room for extraneous crafting, that influenced the views of literary writing among the next generation of writers: "writing of high moral seriousness must find its form spontaneously and must subordinate literary features to the articulation of the Way, or writing is just a pastime."[2] I think this is an interpretation of literature influenced by mainstream stereotypes. If we seek for understandings of Zhu Xi's literary views from a different approach, namely going back to close readings of his poetry that amounts to more than 1400, and doing detailed comparisons between his works and those of other renowned poets, especially if we start from paying special attention to Zhu Xi's poetry at his early age when he was not devoted to Neo-Confucianism, we are very likely to disentangle a different type of aesthetic experience from the biased "truism" that "literature declined with the rise of the Learning of the Way".[3]

We know that Zhu Xi is not only one of the most influential philosophers in the Song, but he is also a prolific literary critic. There are two volumes of his literary criticism in *Classified Conversation of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类).[4] In addition, his thoughts on literature in general, and on the *Odes* (*Shi jing* 诗经) and *Elegies of Chu* (*Chu ci* 楚辞) in particular, appear throughout the complete collection of his work.[5] Despite the quantity and quality of his literary achievements, however, scholars are mostly left with the dominant impression that Zhu Xi held that composing literature harms the learning of the way.[6] This also affects people's conventional conception of Zhu Xi's poetry production. People do not generally consider Zhu's poetry important because according to the standard of literature that we understand today and the fact that Zhu Xi is much better known for his philosophy, his writings tend to be doctrinal teachings

[2] Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). P. 490.

[3] Chang and Owen 2010, P. 477.

[4] See Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类, ed. Li Jingde 黎靖德, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986). P. 3297-3340.

[5] See Zhu Xi et al., *Zhuzi quan shu* 朱子全书, (Shanghai, Shanghai Guji Press, 2002).

[6] For example, in Stephen Owen's two monographs on traditional Chinese literature, there is barely any mention of Zhu Xi and his literary thought, only except for a few lines about his exegesis for *the Book of Songs* from the stance of a defender of the authoritative of the Confucian canon. See Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics : Omen of the World* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).; Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, 30 (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992). For another example, James J. Y. Liu, in his *Chinese Theories of Literature*, simply concludes Zhu Xi's literary view as "regarding literature as subsidiary or even detrimental to the Way". He argues that this is a pragmatic concept of literature shared by most of the literati groups of the time and the differences between Zhu Xi and other groups are just that "how much attention one should devote to literature as a means of propagating the Way, and of what kind of pragmatic purpose literature should primarily serve, whether moral or political." See James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). P. 128.

rather than belles-lettres.[7] I think the best way to break these entangled stereotypical links is to see closely the poetry of a young Zhu Xi, before he formally began to follow the teachings of Li Tong 李侗 (1093-1163), and to find out to what extent the unique feature of his poetry can be differentiated from what was influenced by his later partisan thought.

Moreover, there is also this oversimplified argument that early poetry of Zhu Xi suggest he was immersed in Daoism and Buddhism at his young age.[8] So poetry in this case naturally become the repository of all relevant evidence of Daoist and Buddhist influence on his Neo-Confucian philosophy.[9] This is also what I aim to examine in this paper. Over and above what the poet seemingly referred to in the poetry, it is always important to see the inner dynamics of a poem as a poem that reflects the poet's aesthetic experience on encountering the concrete varieties of the outer world, rather than just philosophical discourse with narrative forms and languages.

1. Overview

Zhu Xi wrote more than 1400 poems throughout his life; a fact that runs contrary to the common conception that Neo-Confucians despise literature. Over and above the influences from particular events in Zhu Xi's life, which, I think in most cases only affected the contents of poems rather than the deep structure, my aim in this paper is to consider in detail the emotional pattern or inner tensions between the poet's inner and outer worlds presented in Zhu Xi's early poetry, because only in this way the genuine inner self of Zhu Xi on dealing with the outer world can be distinguished from the persona of a poet or philosopher.

It is important to emphasize that I do not consider my close reading of the poetry as literary criticism in its narrow sense. Questions like whether Zhu Xi is a good poet, and whether he is

[7] On introducing poetry of the entire Song dynasty, Yoshikawa briefly mentions a couple of Zhu Xi's poems after detailed illustration of works of other renowned poets of his time. Seen from the poems he picked up and his phrasing of the discussions, it was a difficult job for him to find these poems that only just match our current understanding of the meaning of the word *literature*, so not to miss the undeniable fact that Zhu Xi did write large amounts of poetry during the time his book covers. This aptly manifests how much Zhu Xi's poetry weigh in modern studies. However, Yoshikawa's difficult job of choosing what he believes to be good poems according to a unanimous standard that he holds for the whole period, I would say, is just beside the point. See Kōjirō Yoshikawa and Burton Watson, *An Introduction to Sung Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). P. 167-168.

[8] See for example, Shu Jingnan 束景南, *Zhuzi da zhuan* 朱子大传 (Fuzhou: Fujian Jiaoyu Press, 1992), P. 77-115.

[9] See for example Julia Ching, *The Religious Thought of Chu Hsi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).152-189. Also see Johanna Lidén, 'Buddhist and Daoist Influences on Neo-Confucian Thinkers and Their Claim of Orthodoxy', *Orientalia Suecana,* 60 (2011), P. 163-184.

superior or inferior to other poets are not major concerns of mine, because I think this involves a different conception of literature.[10] This will be further elaborated in the following comparisons between the works of Zhu Xi and other poets: instead of revealing or presenting what a thing is, Zhu Xi tended to pay more attention to the relationship between the thing and his internal mind. What he actually shows his potential readers is his conception of the perception of the outer world, or the process of exploring the right way of dealing with the relation between man and nature.

In this paper, I consider the poems in the period when Zhu Xi first started to compose, which, according to Guo Qi's chronology,[11] was between 1148 and 1158 when Zhu Xi formally had Li Tong, the Neo-Confucian master as his teacher and began to devote himself to investigating Neo-Confucian thought. I shall explain that a detailed analysis of all the poems of this time suggests that one of Zhu's primary concerns at that time was how to rid oneself of anxieties coming from worldly affairs. Writing of these anxieties used to be one of the most important themes of Tang poetry. In order to solve the problem (without resorting to the traditional escape into nature and living a reclusive life as reflected in poetry of Wei and Jin dynasties represented by Tao Qian 陶潜 (365-427) and Xie Lingyun 谢灵运 (385-433), Zhu Xi appealed to different types of *transcendence* that were inspired by both Daoism and Chan Buddhism but strictly speaking pertained to neither.[12] Furthermore, to the disappointment of Zhu Xi, there are many contradictions between these different types of transcendence, and more importantly between what he intended to do and what he actually did. In all, I shall prove in this paper that instead of having his heart and soul *indulged* in Chan Buddhism and Daoism as asserted by Shu Jingnan,[13] essentially, in poetry at the early age of his life, Zhu Xi had been

[10] Martin Kern has a thorough discussion on the transition of the meanings of *wen* 文 and *wenxue* 文学 in early China. See "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of Wen in Early China." *T'oung Pao* 87.1-3 (2001): P. 43-91. David Wang, in his narrative of Chinese literature from 1841-1937, also fully illustrated the process during which Chinese literature experienced unprecedented rise and development, as well as drastic, often vehemently contested, experimentation to become "literature" as we understand the meaning of the word today. See Chang and Owen. P. 413-564.

[11] See Guo Qi 郭齐, *Zhu Xi shi ci biannian jianzhu* 朱熹诗词编年笺注 (Chengdu: Bashu Press, 2000).

[12] Transcendence as a philosophical term could be complicated in both western and eastern philosophies. In most cases in this paper, unless otherwise clarified in the context, I am using the word in the sense that Zhu Xi wished to go beyond the limits of the finite time and space and his material experience, so that his worldly attachments which caused his annoyances could be got rid of, and he would therefore gain the pleasures of mind unobtainable by involving in societal activities and viewing objects of culture. I would argue that at his early stage, it is difficult to tell if he was actually seeking for a transcendent union with the Dao, the everlasting process of nature, or with the Buddha, the being of the pure land devoid of material experience. It is more of a literary translation of the Chinese phrase *chao* 超 or *chaoyue* 超越, which, as I will articulate later, had already become a generic word with the most general philosophical taste but complete deliverance from any partisan connotations by the Song period.

[13] See Shu Jingnan 1992, P. 79.

struggling to find a solution to the contradiction between earthly annoyances and a tranquil mind, or further, a proper relationship between people's inner mind and the outer world.

2. The position of objects in Zhu Xi's poetry

According to Guo Qi, there are about 160 poems written by Zhu Xi during this decade. An encounter with the outer world appears to lie behind most of these 160 poems. At least this is what Zhu Xi would like us to believe when he placed the titles very specifically in time, locale and context. For example 'Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain' ('Chen qi dui yu ershou' 晨起对雨二首). Among these 160 titles, there are only 52 that do not obviously refer to natural objects or scenes, like 'Eight Poems Imitating the Ancients' ('Nigu ba shou' 拟古八首), but these are still context specific. And among these 52 poems, there are less than 10 that do not involve any relation with the outer world, being pure inner reflections or thoughts gained from reading. Other than that, it is fair to say that the natural environment constitutes an indispensable part of his early poetry.

However, this does not mean that Zhu Xi's poems are either spontaneous (as most Tang poems were considered to be) or faithful responses to the outer world (as will be shown later in Song poetry, e.g. Su Shi's 苏轼 (1037-1101) poems). Rather, Zhu's poetry demonstrates considerable tensions between the inner and outer worlds – the emotional patterns we see are often inconsistent or even contradictory.

3. Ambivalence towards the outer world: with a close reading of poetry on the rain

3.1 Abbreviated scenes: the rain unfelt

Among all the natural images that appear in Zhu Xi's poetry of this period, rain is certainly the most frequent one, as the titles clearly show. There are 15 titles indicating rain as the main object described, for example 'On Facing the Rain' ('Dui yu' 对雨), 'Autumn Rain' ('Qiu yu' 秋雨) and 'In the Rain at Jianshan Pavilion' ('Jianshan ge yu zhong' 兼山阁雨中). Rain also appeared in his other poems as a constituent of the scenes. Within so many occurrences of a

single image, however, instead of trying to depict as many characteristics of the image as possible, so to present rhetorical variety and rich sentiments, the angles that the poet applies to see the object, the rhetoric devices that he prefers, the images that he uses to help represent the rain, and even the emotional patterns of different poems are largely similar. Consider, for instance, 'Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain after Getting up in the Morning':

Disconsolate and frigid the year nears the end	*凄冽岁云晏，*
Rain and snow mingle in the morning	*雨雪集晨朝。*
Just getting up after a good night's sleep,	*高眠适方起，*
I look around only to find a desolate scene.	*四望但萧条。*
The remote cold vapor is veiled in whiteness,	*远氛白漫漫，*
And the forest fog lifts when wind comes.	*风至林霭消。*
Accumulated flowing water covered barren roads	*流潦冒荒涂，*
The clear river is still far away	*清川亦迢迢。*
Looking afar my thoughts cannot exhaust	*遐瞻思莫穷，*
Living as usual my mind transcends naturally	*端居心自超。*
Surveying things while my thoughts are not placed on them	*览物思无托，*
In such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered.	*即事且逍遥。*

Getting up in the morning I look into the facing mountain range	*晨起候前障，*
White mist is vaguely floating above the forest top	*白烟眇林端。*
The signs of rain is yet to disappear	*雨意方未已，*
Whenever will the earth dry out?	*后土何时干。*
Leaning against the bamboo I listen to the rustle in the air	

	倚竹听萧瑟，
Leaning over the ravine I listen to the startling torrent	*俯涧闻惊湍。*
How could the scenery not be fine?	*景物岂不佳，*
I sigh that the year is coming to an end	*所嗟岁已阑。*
Holding onto the way without being enslaved by things	*守道无物役，*
In this tranquil moment, I temporarily linger	*安时且盘桓。*
In seclusion, I formulate this principle	*翳然陶兹理，*
Poverty and sorrow are not what I bemoan	*贫悴非所叹。*

Despite the author indicating specifically that both poems were dedicated to the rainy scene in the morning, not a single detailed description of the natural environment appears in the poems. Both the first and the second poem inevitably involve images taken from nature, like the weather, rain, snow, cold air, wind, and forest fog, but none of them was depicted in realistic detail. The weather is just frigid, the cold air is white and just remotely veiling on top of the forest, and the wind blows away the fog. These are very general and cliché descriptions of rainfall. The cold weather and the wind cannot be felt, the fog cannot be seen, and there is no indication of the intensity of the rain. Without much detailed description of the imagery and not being experiential, the feeling is different from that in other poets' descriptions of similar situations. For example in Su Shi's 'Two Poems on the Rain at the Cold Food Festival' ('Han shi yu er shou' 寒食雨二首), he wrote

The spring river is about to flow through my door	*春江欲入户，*
Rain keeps coming and will not stop	*雨势来不已。*
The little lodge is like a fishing-boat	*小屋如渔舟，*
Among the vast and hazy water and cloud	*蒙蒙水云里。*

Another poem of Su Shi, entitled 'Torrential Rain at Youmei Hall' ('Youmei tang bao yu' 有美堂暴雨), wrote:

A sound of thunder rolls out beneath the wanderer's feet *游人脚底一声雷，*
A stubborn bank of clouds will not break *满座顽云拨不开。*
A black wind from far heaven blows to roil the sea *天外黑风吹海立，*
Fast-flying rain from eastern Zhe[14] *comes sweeping across the river* *浙东飞雨过江来。*

Instead of sketching all relevant scenes with plain and straightforward narrative expressions, as Zhu Xi did for the rain, Su Shi tended to focus on particular scenes, with detailed description and various rhetorical devices. The first poem presents the scene in which the rain is continuously heavy so to cause the rising of the river level with the little lodge almost inundated. In this situation, Su compared the house to a small boat stuck in the mixture of water and cloud. All the individual natural images become supportive here to help form a detailed and vivid depiction of a rainy scene. What was described in the second poem is not necessarily one glance of the scene from a single angle, but it is still with more details and subtleties as compared with Zhu Xi's writings. The thunder rolled out of the ground beneath the wanderer's feet (which could also imply that the visitor was scared). The clouds were too dense to be broken up so that it deserved the personification of being stubborn (which could also imply a furious moving picture with the thunder). And the wind was so fierce as to become a black storm coming from the sky and blowing a heavy torrent of seawater. These close-ups within the scenes are realized with the help of a range of rhetorical devices, like the metaphor of the fishing-boat, the personification of stubborn clouds, as well as the exaggeration of far heaven, black wind and the sea being aroused. For Zhu Xi, there is barely anything like this, making the view hardly real enough to re-appear before the reader, not to mention having the reader experience and appreciate it.

3.2 Repeated scenes: unchanging objects

Despite a very brief adumbration of the view in a loose fashion and uncharacteristic of the outer world, the images Zhu Xi used could be imposed on the readers if all the poems sharing the same subject are read throughout, because they tend to be predominant and repeated again and again in different poems of different occasions, which becomes another characteristic of Zhu Xi's description of natural environment. Again this shows that nature presented in his poetry is

[14] River Zhe 浙, ancient name of a river that refers to current Qiantang 钱塘 river and its upper reaches.

less vibrant, or that he was indifferent to it. As can be seen from the previous two poems, images that Zhu Xi applied to describe the rain were mostly the same, and the same kind of usage, especially the imagery of vapor (*fen* 氛), fog (*ai* 霭), mist (*yan* 烟), and cloudy air (*yun qi* 云气) floating on top of forests or mountains can be also found in a number of other poems with or without the same subject. For example in 'Listening to Rain in a Guest House' ('Ke she ting yu' 客舍听雨), Zhu Xi wrote: "Spring fog rises from the forest, and a full sky of chilly rain begins" (春蔼起林际，满空寒雨生). In 'On Facing the Rain', he also wrote: "Misty fog gathers on top of the forest, vast and becoming boundless" (烟霭集林端，苍茫欲无际). In some poems that are not about rain, there are also descriptions following this pattern, such as 'Look out at Dusk' ('Wan wang' 晚望): "Clear frost hardens on green trees and setting sun covers layers of hillocks" (清霜凝碧树，落日翳层丘). These poems contain no hint of rain, but the images and scenes presented are similar, with slight variations in sentence structures and wordings. It is sufficient to say that vaguely floating clouds and remote mountains had (by this stage) become a stock scene in Zhu Xi's poetry of this time.

We can compare this with the poems of Zhu Xi's contemporary Su Shi and the Tang poet Du Fu who was admired by Zhu Xi. Within the oeuvres of these two poets, there are 60 and 52 poems respectively with titles referring to rain. But neither follows patterns of convention with stock scenery. There are all sorts of types of rain imagery. As the previously introduced two poems partly show, for Su Shi, the descriptions of rain tend to be vivid and with very different characteristics in different occasions. There is fast-flying heavy rain as appearing in the aforementioned "Fast-flying rain from eastern Zhe comes sweeping across the river", eloquent misty rain as depicted in "misty rain buried in deep wild woods" (深榛烟雨埋),[15] lovely light rain as in "light rain with fine weather on the west lake, rippling and glittering, making the spring lotus to grow" (西湖小雨晴，滟滟春蕖长),[16] romantic night rain as expressed in "overnight rain persuades people to stay and drink until sleep" (晚雨留人入醉乡),[17] and winter hailing rain as presented in "Hailing rain comes as plum blossom at night, making the red to die and the green to fade, for which I sadly sigh" (夜来雨雹如李梅，红残绿暗吁可哀).[18] Just as Su Shi himself

[15] Su Shi, *Su Shi shi ji* 苏轼诗集, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982), P. 14.
[16] Su Shi 1982, P. 81.
[17] Su Shi 1982, P. 430.
[18] Su Shi 1982, P. 625.

proclaimed in his essay *Self-Assessment Writing (Zi ping wen* 自评文), he had been following the principle of "forms being determined by objects" (*sui wu fu xing* 随物赋形)[19] while producing literature, which means there is no such thing as repeated form or established pattern, a style so different from Zhu Xi.

Interpretations of the differences between Zhu Xi and other poets are multifarious. However, what we can say with confidence is that on encountering nature with a variety of images, what went into Zhu Xi's mind was limited and stylized. What he perceives in nature seems to accord with his pre-existing conception of the world around him. Some of these bear some resemblance to one of the traditional themes of Chinese poetry: transcendental roaming (*you xian* 游仙), which is mostly about the protagonists' imagined journey to the celestial world. The haunting images and stock scenes shown above, for example, are also what appear frequently in conventional roaming poets' characterizations of the immortal celestial land, as what Zhu Xi described in verses "Going out I fancy the world of immortals. Raising my head (I see) the clouds embraced peak being dark green" 出门恋仙境，仰首云峰苍.[20] This type of poetry enables poets to fantasize about a solitary escape from the mundane world into a pure land of eternal bliss, which in turn could have echoed Zhu Xi's aspiration of breaking through the limitations of time and space and acquiring a sense of relief and delight. Perhaps at this early stage of his life, he might have been interested in transcendental roaming in a general sense to seek distraction from worldly attachments. Within this mind-set, his response to nature may still have been spontaneous, but his perception of it was undeniably fixed and narrow – despite the different occasions on which his responses were formed and the different faces nature showed him. Overall what is worth noting here is that we cannot deem that the protagonist presented in Zhu Xi's early poems a true Daoist, absorbed in self-cultivation, simply because of his imagination of an interstellar journey and his search for immortality, as Shu Jingnan has claimed of the young Zhu Xi.[21] As I will argue later, we can see in Zhu Xi's lament on the passing of life and time, his concerns with what he called "the mundaneness", and most importantly in the contradictions in his mind apparent in his poetry, that the transcendental roaming and the stock

[19] Su Shi's essay *Self-Assessment Writing* starts with "My writings is like tens of thousands of vessels of waterfalls. It does not need to choose where to come out. It surges and rolls on the flat ground, without any difficulty of traveling for a thousand miles a day. When it comes to the twists and turns of mountains and stones, the form is determined by objects and cannot be known". See Su Shi, *Su Shi wen ji* 苏轼文集 (Collection of Literary Works by Su Shi) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), P. 2069.
[20] Guo Qi 2000, P. 103.
[21] See Shu Jingnan 1992, P. 77-115.

scenes are concerned not so much with Daoist philosophy as with literary imagination that reflected his non-partisan but wandering mind as an escapist.

3.3 Long-range perspective

Apart from the realization that his scenes are mostly distant and vast, there are also a number of other obvious references to his perspectives in the poems, for example, “looking around”, “remote cold vapor”, “looking afar”, “inspecting things” in the first poem and “looking into the facing mountain range” in the second one. These are also predominant in other poems with or without the same subject. For example the poem ‘Writing on Arriving Once Again’ (‘Zai zhi zuo’ 再至作) starts with: “As I get a brief view of the barren city, the sunset glows on the city gates” (荒城一骋望，落景丽谯门), ending with: “Straining my eyes, I return late; with whom can I discuss this feeling?” (极目归来晚，兹怀谁与论). Just as the way the poet managed to present the images and scenes, the same type of angle of seeing things and similar wording appears repeatedly in the poems, reflecting clearly some settled pattern in his mind of perceiving and responding to the outer world.

3.4 Distance (*yuan* 远) and a different perception of poetry

Along with the overwhelming usage of the long-range perspective from a high place, we can infer, from his poetry, that Zhu Xi tended to appreciate the spiritual realm of being remote and surpassing, expressed in traditional terms in the poems as *yuan xing* 远兴 (distant interest), *yuan yun* 远韵 (distant charm), or *xuan yuan* 玄远 (mysteriously distant) etc. For example he wrote in ‘Overcast and Rainy on the Winter Solstice’ (‘Dongzhi yinyu’ 冬至阴雨) that “Living as usual I leave behind the official paperwork, in distant thoughts I long for solitude and purity” (端居遗簿领，远意怀幽洁), and in ‘In Illness, Writing in My Studio’ (‘Bing gao zhai ju zuo’ 病告斋居作), there are verses like “Living loftily I develop distant interests; spring things overflow the open field” (高居生远兴，春物弥平野), and “Free from worries the scenery begins to harmonize; matters are far away but feelings cannot be discarded” (虑旷景方融，事远情无舍).

The notion of *yuan* 远 (distant) has been widely used in traditional critical appraisals of

literati and literary thoughts ever since the Wei and Jin dynasties.[22] Verse 25 of the *Laozi* says "Greatness means passing off, and passing off means remoteness" (*da yue shi, shi yue yuan* 大曰逝，逝曰远),[23] and the interpretation of Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) reads "*Shi* means to go. It means not keeping to a general substance. There is nowhere that the great cyclic principle cannot run, so it is called *shi* (passing off). *Yuan* means extreme. There is nothing that cannot be fulfilled to its extreme within the great cycle. It is not confined to one movement".[24] Here the meaning of *yuan* has already been extended beyond its original connotation of being far away in time and location, referring to the distance or situation surpassing time and space where the best condition of everything can be realized. It has become the status or realm that is idealized and represents the highest pursuit of Daoism. Also in *Laozi*, in vol.65, both the text and Wang's annotation say "the immanent virtue is deep and distant" (玄德深矣，远矣). As far as we can tell from context, "distant" in this case most likely means "profound", which adds to the Daoist ideal realm another dimension of being spiritually transcendental. When applied in poetic thought, this becomes a particular style of poetry that reflects the poet's mind being tranquil and surpassing. The Tang monk Jiao Ran summarized 19 characters to describe different types of poetry styles in his literary criticism entitled *Forms of Poetry (Shi shi* 诗式), among which there is *yuan*. He defined it as "It does not mean overlooking the wide expanse of water or looking out on the mountain from a far distance. It means being remote in mind".[25] It is worth mentioning that the identity of this literary scholar as a Buddhist monk shows that both Daoism and Buddhism accept the notion of *yuan* as one of their spiritual pursuits.

In this context, now we understand that for Zhu Xi, the adoption of the viewing angle that is often far away from and higher than the objects not only presents his preference for broad pictures, but also indicates his metaphysical pursuit of unlimited spirit. By drawing the reader's

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[22] In *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons,* Liu Xie concludes eight main writing styles during that time as "when summarizing the ultimate approaches, there are eight styles to the end: one is called refined and elegant; one is called distant and profound; one is called succinct and to the point; […] So-called distant and profound refers to the ones with fragrant expressions and refined writings, taking the classics as principle and the mysterious learning as pursuit." See Huang Shulin 2000, P. 380. Zhong Rong comments on poetry of Lu Ji (261-303) in *Ranks of Poetry* that "the twelve poems by Lu Ji is soft and beautiful in writing, is sad and distant in meaning, and is profoundly affecting. This can almost be called 'a single character is worth a thousand pieces of gold'". See Chen Yanjie 1961, P. 17. He also thinks Ji Kang's writings to be "fresh and distant in metaphoric meanings, with differentiation and cutting. It is not falling down from first class". See Chen Yanjie 1961, P. 32-33.

[23] Wang Bi 王弼, annotation, *Laozi Dao de jing zhu jiao shi* 老子道德经注校释 (Annotations, Corrections and Exegesis of Laozi Dao de jing) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008), P. 63.

[24] Wang Bi 2008, P. 63.

[25] Li Zhuangying 李壮鹰, annotation, *Shi shi jiao zhu* 诗式校注 (Corrections and Annotations of Forms of Poetry) (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Press, 2003), P. 71.

sight over vast distances through broad and vague depictions, Zhu Xi meant to lead the mind to a level without limits, where aloofness from the crowd and an unfettered life style could be achieved. And this kind of spiritual status is characterized both in the Daoist sense of *wu* 无 (nonbeing) --- i.e. that the possible is infinitely richer than the real, and nonbeing is infinitely vaster than being --- and in the Chan Buddhist sense of *wu* 无 (emptiness) --- i.e. that all things are equally empty, being devoid of definite nature, character, and function, and one should not be attached to anything. It is because Zhu Xi described the vast natural environment as a symbol of a transcendental and profound spirit, he tended not to care much about detailed depictions of the natural world, including delicate usage of rhetoric devices and novel selection of images and angles. Therefore, his poems convey the feeling of being far away from and indifferent to nature and present a sense of detachment from the outer world. One typical and direct representation of this pursuit of him can be found in his poem 'Six Poems on Reading Daoist Books' ('Du dao shu zuo liu shou' 读道书作六首) where he wrote "the ultimate pleasure is within the mind, whereas mountains and rivers are not what entertain (me)" (至乐在襟怀，山水非所娱)[26].

Furthermore, compared with the aforementioned poems of Su Shi of the same subject, we can now say that in writing poetry, instead of trying to present images like rain with a vividness to be directly felt and to express his immediate feelings to gain emotional resonance with the reader, Zhu Xi tended to pay more attention to the exploration of what suits his spiritual world and ways to treat its relationship with outer objects in a variety of occasional contexts. This allowed him more space within the limited structure of a poem to share with the reader his experience of pursuing an ideal inner mind, but in the meantime inevitably confined his perception of the colorful outer world to the repetition of some stock scenes and patterned perspectives. This is because what he aimed at was something unitary, a proper worldview and an appropriate way to deal with the relationship between the inner and outer world.

3.5 Difficult disengagement from the outer world

If we take a closer look at his poems, it appears that the idealized situation of being disengaged from the outer world was not easy for Zhu Xi to realize. In his poems, the subjective involvement of the poet with the outer world is predominant and overwhelming, when compared

[26] Guo Qi 2000, P. 42.

with, for example, the Tang poet Wang Wei 王维 (701-761) who is famous for his poems of natural sceneries like mountains and rivers, and who successfully managed to keep an appropriate distance from the objects so to let them present themselves in their original form and without significant subjective distortion. In Wang Wei's best-known poem 'Deer Park' ('Lu chai' 鹿柴), he wrote:

Empty mountain: no one seen,	*空山不见人，*
Yet the echoes of human voices can be heard.	*但闻人语响。*
Returning rays enter the deep woods,	*返景入深林，*
And light up the dark-green moss.	*复照青苔上。*

Wang Wei presented the natural scenery here to be completely disengaged from the self and without any trace of the self. There are no emotive qualifiers that smuggle in subjective overtones, there is no semantic bias toward nature, and there is no reference to a responsive self enjoying the scene. He did not step into the poem, instead letting the scenery speak and act for itself – keeping himself entirely *outside* of the outer world.[27]

On the contrary, in Zhu Xi's poems, first, many personalized adjectives, serving as emotive qualifiers, are imposed on the objects and environment. For example in 'Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain', he used the word *qi lie* 凄冽 (disconsolate and frigid) at the very beginning to describe the scene at the end of year which transmits an abstract feeling of sorrowfulness coming from nowhere but the poet's subjective mind. This also appears frequently in other poems of this period. In 'Two Poems at Autumn Eventide' ('Qiu xi er shou' 秋夕二首), he wrote "How desolate are the cold leaves, woefully lamenting among the trees in the courtyard" (凉业何萧萧，悲吟庭树间). And in 'Presented to Zijin on a Rainy Zhongyuan Festival' ('Zhongyuan yu zhong cheng Zijin' 中元雨中呈子晋), he portrayed the shaking trees in courtyard as elegant and remote, to fit them with his own idealized spiritual realm.

Second, the direct involvement of the self is also apparent in occurrences of performative

[27] For more analysis of this poem and its potential Buddhist overtones, see Eoyang, Eugene, "Moments in Chinese Poetry: Nature in the World and Nature in the Mind", in *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Ronald C. Miao, vol.1 (San Francisco: Chinese Material Centre, Inc. 1978), P. 105-128; Yip, Wai-lim, *Hiding in the Universe: Poems by Wang Wei* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), P. xi; Seaton, Jerome P., "Once More, on the Empty Mountain", in *Manoa*, Volume 12, Number 1, 2000, P. 126-133.

verbs indicating first person subject and in descriptions of the self enjoying or interacting with the scene. The previously analyzed verbs implying mostly long-range perspectives is one of the most typical cases in point, like *kan* 看 (look), *wang* 望 (look over), *zhan* 瞻 (look up), *lan* 览 (inspect), *guan* 观 (view), *tiao* 眺 (look afar), etc. And there are also other verbs like *xun* 寻 and *mi* 觅, generally translated as looking for or seeking for, referring to what the poet was expecting from nature.

Apart from this, scenes in which the poet was interacting with nature by different means are also pervasive. The first example at hand is from the *Two Poems*: "Leaning against the bamboo I listen to the rustling; leaning over the ravine I listen to the startling waves", which reflects the poet enjoying things in the woods. Rather than appreciating the experience in nature, there were other kinds of engagements that made him not at ease because of the conflict between his inner and outer world. For example in 'The Ninth Day' ('Jiu ri' 九日), he wrote "Mist and clouds, late in the year, add to the grief of separation" (风烟岁晚添离恨) and "Unworthy of the fragrance of yellow flowers filling the hat" (辜负黄花满帽香). Finally, the context provided in titles of his poems mostly gives a strong indication of the closely entangled relationship between the self and nature.

Hence, for Zhu Xi, neither the pursuit of detachment from the outer world in order to reach the ultimate realm of being spiritually free, as proposed by philosophical Daoist thought, nor ridding the self of earthly annoyances which Chan Buddhism suggests as simply illusions, can be easily achieved. This means he needed to transcend his inner self, or at least his emotional attachment with the environment before he could transcend the outer world, because the thing presented tends to be so distorted by the self and stamped by his personal emotions. This is also why mostly in the second half of his poems, the transition and summing up parts in classical poetry writing,[28] the emotions and thoughts disclosed are usually entangled and contradictory, which does not match his expectation and bothered him immensely.

[28] It is commonly acknowledged by traditional Chinese literati that there are four steps in the composition of an essay or poem, called *qi* 起 (introduction or opening), *cheng* 承 (developing or elucidation of the theme), *zhuan* 转 (changing or transition to another viewpoint) and *he* 合 (concluding or summing up). Its earliest occurrence can be found in *Poetry Rules of the School (Shi fa jia shu* 诗法家数) and Correct View on *Poetry Rules (Shi fa zheng lun* 诗法正论) in Yuan dynasty, and it has become prevailing since Ming and Qing. It is also convincingly argued by Wu Zhenglan that people has begun to think of poetry writing in generally the same way since Song and its very origin can be traced back to the Five Dynasties or even earlier. See Wu Zhenglan 吴正岚, "Songdai shige zhangfa lilun yu 'qi cheng zhuan he' de xingcheng" 宋代诗歌章法理论与"起承转合"的形成, in *Journal of Nanjing University*, No.2, 2003. Vol. 40.

4. Contradictions in Zhu Xi's mind

In most of his scenery poems of this period, the transitional and concluding parts tend to convey a keen desire to be spiritually transcendent of worldly affairs. However, if we take a closer look at each ideal situation that Zhu Xi described in his scenery poems, it turns out that there are essentially different types of transcendence that he had been pursuing. This led Shu Jingnan to simply conclude that Zhu Xi had dedicated himself to Daoism and Buddhism learning before he began to follow the teachings of Li Tong.[29] However, a close reading of his poetry yields a more complex picture.

Not only do different poems express different philosophical ideas. There is no consistency in the way Zhu Xi saw his relationship with the outer world and the realm he longed for or the thing he pursued – even within a single poem. This shows the paradox of Zhu seeking emancipation from any constraints on the one hand, and on the other hand his incapability of detaching from the outer world and the concomitant worrisome concerns of earthly affairs. Ultimately, he could only play around and switched from time to time between different modes of perception, seeking for an escape into nature and transcendence that was only temporary and very narrow.

Again, this is apparent in the 'Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain'. First of all, as previously shown, Zhu Xi intentionally used a long-range perspective and broad delineations to deal with the outer world, so as to give the impression of an alienated relationship between inner and outer. This fits well with his mindset of appreciating a world that transcends all outer objects and where he can find inner peace and spiritual freedom. But in the meantime he imposed a considerable amount of subjective adjectives stamped with his own worldly emotions on the outer world that he encountered and described, so that what he actually presented tends to be a confined nature with projection of the self, rather than the Daoist ideal outlined in the *Zhuangzi*: "he treats things as things, and is not a thing to them"[30] or what the sixth Chan patriarch Hui Neng 惠能 (638-713) taught: "do not develop your mind within the phenomenal

[29] See Shu Jingnan 1992, P. 77-115.

[30] *The Tree on the Mountain (Shan mu* 山木) in *Outer Chapters (Wai pian* 外篇), *Zhuangzi*. See Guo Qingfan 郭庆藩, ed., *Zhuangzi ji shi* 庄子集释 (Collected Annotations of Zhuangzi) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1961), P. 668.

world".[31] This reveals the fact that at least in Zhu Xi's scenery poems, he was not able to disengage from the outer world so to realize the transcendence in either the Daoist or Buddhist sense. This entangled situation is a representation of his inner world where, as expressed mostly in the second half of the poems, it is filled with inconsistencies and contradictions.

4.1 Ambiguous usage of philosophically suggestive expressions

There is not an obvious Daoist, Buddhist or Confucian context for readers to ascertain the *dao* 道 and *li* 理 that Zhu Xi advocated "holding onto" and "formulating" at the very end of the second rain poem. All the philosophies speak of both *dao* and *li* as their core concepts and endow them with broad scope and extraordinary depth of meanings; these meanings both overlap and conflict with each other.[32] Apart from *dao* and *li*, most other seemingly philosophical expressions in these poems are also ambiguously used without any hint of their original meanings. One example is the notion *chao* (transcendence 超) in the verse "living as usual my mind transcends naturally". Tracing the possible sources of this notion, we can find it in both Daoist scriptures and Buddhist sutras prior to Zhu Xi's time.[33] This situation here echoes the argument made by David W. Tien in his dissertation on the religious thought of Tang dynasty scholar-officials. He asserts that religions in Tang subtly borrow discursive resources from one another, so it would be difficult to get at the objective origins or at a conclusive judgment for one side or another. He believes that a more effective framework to interpret Tang religious history is to treat the various terms, phrases, concepts, images, and other such elements as resources that

[31] See Xu Wenming 徐文明, annotation, *Liuzu tan jing* 六祖坛经 (The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch) (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji Press, 2006), P. 43.

[32] More discussions on the original meanings of *dao* and its divergent developments, see Chung Chung-ying, "Dimensions of the Dao and Onto-Ethics in Light of the DDJ", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 2004. 31 (2): P. 143-182.

[33] In Daoist texts, the entry of *chao* first appears in the sense of being transcendence of time and space so to get rid of worldly annoyance in *Xu wu gui* 徐无鬼, in *Miscellaneous Chapters (Za pian* 杂篇) of *Zhuangzi*, as "spurning the dust" 超轶绝尘. See Guo Qingfan 1961, 819. And then in *Daodejing*, as "although he may have brilliant prospects to look at, he quietly remains (in his proper place), indifferent to them" (虽有荣观，燕处超然). See Wang Bi 2008, P. 69. After that it has become prevailing in works of religious Daoism since Wei and Jin dynasties. For instance there are a large number of occurrences of this notion in various forms in the Eastern Jin book *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, a summary of all the theories of immortals since Warring States period. See Zhang Jiyu 张继禹 ed., *Zhonghua Daozang* 中华道藏 (Beijing: Huaxia Press, 2010), 8: 13, 45: 2; 45: 14; 18: 158-169. In Buddhist sutras, there is the expression of "transcending the Buddha and surpassing the patriarch" 超佛越祖 in vol.17 of T*he Record of the Transmission of the Lamp in Jingde (Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德传灯录), meaning surpassing the ultimate realm of Buddha, not being obsessed by any matter so to reach the absolute freedom. See *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辞典 (Taibei: Foguang Press, 1988), P. 5281. And earlier than that, there is also the cultivation method called "transcending the three samadhis" 超越三昧 noted in vol. 81 of *Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom (Da zhi du lun* 大智度论) translated in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. It is composed of two reverse direction cultivation methods called "going into the three samadhis" (*chao ru sanmei* 超入三昧) and "going out of the three samadhis" (*chao chu san mei* 超出三昧), meaning Buddha or other well-cultivated men can transcend heaven and earth and travel freely in the deep meditation. See *Foguang da cidian* 1988, P. 236, 3174, 4842, 5284. So the concept of transcendence is also deeply rooted in Buddhism teachings.

can compose repertories, which people employ to help them meet the vicissitudes of life and to make sense of the world.[34] As for the situation in Song dynasty, he also found evidence of people consciously or unconsciously using free-floating discursive resources in their vocabulary and thinking without any clear origin. Now we can see that the same is true of Zhu Xi. He just used the notion of *chao* here as a free-floating resource. The difference is that instead of laying claims and counter-claims of authority over this resource because of the involvement in the socio-political, intellectual, and cultural dynamics at play, Zhu Xi's use of it is not subject to any particular discursive context and without any clear intention of referring to any content or meaning other than an ambiguous spiritual realm. This indiscriminate use of discursive resources in his early work contrasts with later, when he very consciously refused to use the expression *fuxing* 复性 and denied that its proposer Li Ao 李翱 (772-841) was part of the Confucian orthodoxy because Zhu was unsatisfied with the phrase's involvement in Buddhist teachings. This shows that Zhu Xi's mind was unclear and non-partisan at that time. He had some vague idea of an ideal spiritual state, yet without knowing its specific content and how to realize it.

4.2 Contradictions within types of transcendence

Moreover, no matter in what sense he meant to use "my mind transcends naturally", it contradicts the first half of the line where the writer moved from natural scenery to his inner thoughts. The whole line is "Looking afar my thoughts cannot cease; living as usual my mind transcends naturally". He described his mind as being with ceaseless thoughts in the first verse, and having realized an accompanying spontaneous transcendence in the second verse of the line. If he used the notion of transcendence or the character *chao* here in a Daoist style, I would say that the logic and the status of mind shown here is utterly incompatible, because Daoism teaches that spontaneous transcendence can only be realized after people get rid of various kind of thinking. Zhuangzi proposed in the *Ingrained Ideas (Ke yi* 刻意) chapter that "'The life of the sage is (like) the action of Heaven…His life seems to float along; his death seems to be a resting. He does not think or indulge any anxious doubts;[35] he does not lay plans beforehand".[36] And in

[34] Tien, David W., *Discursive Resources and Collapsing Polarities: The Religious Thought of Tang Dynasty Scholar-officials*, doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009.

[35] Here James Legge translates *bu si lü* 不思虑 as "does not indulge any anxious doubts". But according to *Gudai hanyu cidian* 古代汉语词典, both the compound *si lü* and the word *lü* have an indispensable meaning of si, meaning to think, and referring to the behavior of thinking in a very broad and mostly positive sense. For example the usage of *lü* in the *locus classicus* of *The Analects*: "If a man take no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand" (人无远虑，必有近忧). See *The*

the chapter *Knowledge Wandering in the North (Zhi bei you* 知北游), Zhuangzi conveyed his idea via the Yellow Emperor that "To exercise no thought and no anxious consideration is the first step towards knowing the Dao; to dwell nowhere and do nothing is the first step towards resting in the Dao; to start from nowhere and pursue no path is the first step towards making the Dao your own".[37] Hence it is sufficient to say that if Zhu Xi meant to express the transcendence in a Daoist style, he then presented an antinomy in this poem: Being transcendental means being infinite and surpassing all things, while thinking can only be about things, not the *dao*. Real transcendence in Zhuangzi's sense is limited and biased by the thoughts, which, ambivalently, is what Zhu Xi cannot cease to do.

Likewise, if Zhu Xi meant to pursue the natural transcendence in a Buddhist way, the two verses of the line are still mutually incompatible. Because the cultivation method that Zhu Xi received from the Chan master Dao Qian 道谦 (?-1155) at that time was "sudden enlightenment"(*dunwu* 顿悟). This is more of a spontaneous resonance in mind and opposite to thinking, as Zhu Xi later described when recalling his first encounter with his Chan master: "One day I met with a monk at Bingweng's place and talked to him. The monk just echoed what I said, without judging right and wrong. But I told Liu that I have understood the bright and mysterious Chan".[38] Also, when Zhu Xi was living together with Liu Zihui 刘子翬 (1101-1147) after his father's death, there was a debate between Dao Qian's master Zong Gao 宗杲 (1107-1163) and Liu Zihui, where Zong Gao summarized the method of sudden realization as "once understand all things are understood, once awakened all things are awakened from, once testified all things are testified. It is like chopping knotted thread. Once chopped, it is untied all of a sudden. Witnessing the boundless Dharma is the same".[39] This means that one needs to get to a point where he can instantly be awakened and detached from all things before he can get the idea that Buddha transmits and the Buddhist sense of transcendence. In this case how would he be able to get there without having his mind cleared of all things in the world?

Analects, vol.15 in Zhu Xi, ed., *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四书章句集注 (The Collected Annotations on the Four Books) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), P. 164. And the usage of *lü* as worries or concerns appears much later than that period. So I think it is more appropriate to translate the *si lü* here as "think or indulge any anxious doubts".

[36] Guo Qingfan 1961, P. 539.

[37] Guo Qingfan 1961, P. 731.

[38] Zhu Xi 1986, P. 2620.

[39] *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普觉禅师语录 (Discourse of Chan Master Dahui Pujue), vol.27. See Takakusu Junjirō 高楠顺次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 et al. eds., *Taishō shinshū daizō kyō* 大正新脩大藏经, 100 vols (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932 [–1935]), T47, no. 1998A, P. 925, c19-21.

Apart from that, the last line of the first rain poem writes “Inspecting things while my thoughts are not pinned on them; in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered”. The two verses from which it is composed are also contradictory to each other. Zhu Xi declared that he had reached a spiritual level where he inspected things without having his thoughts pinned on them on the one hand, whereas on the other hand he announced his indulgence by saying “in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered”. He was able to get disengaged from outer things and not rest his thoughts on them. This is similar to the discourse of Zhuangzi that says, “Go along with things and let your mind move freely” and “let your mind travel through the illimitable”. Thus he would be free and unfettered despite the arising of whatever things and circumstances. Then why is it only about current circumstances and only temporarily? In addition, the most important and very likely the earliest occurrence of the notion of being free and unfettered (*xiao yao* 逍遥) was in *Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease (Xiaoyao you* 逍遥游) in Zhuangzi.[40] What Zhuangzi meant by *xiao yao* was a status where the human mind is liberated from all instrumental rationality, passions, desires and finite achievements, by transcending the unending inquiry of the external world, which only leads to self-misunderstanding. In this sense, the real realm of being free and unfettered is without any realistic attachment to any specific matter; otherwise it makes people shallow in their sensitivity to heaven’s work.[41] So apart from the conflicts between the two verses, the expression “in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered” is self-contradictory as well. This could be another random use of expression as a free-floating resource, indicating that the author was not clearly aware of what he wanted to reach, not to mention the approaches of getting there. In this case, consistency would not be possible.

Also in the second poem, it is evident that Zhu Xi’s lamenting of the year coming to an end, implying that everything inevitably has an end or death, fundamentally conflicts with his proclamation of not being enslaved by things in the following verse, which would mean seeing the beginning and end of things as well as life and death of people as the natural rhythm of cosmic creativity. People should follow this natural rhythm so as to attain the way of freedom

[40] See Guo Qingfan 1961, P. 1-42.

[41] “Deep in their passions and desires, they are shallow in the sensitivity to Heaven’s working” (其耆欲深者，其天机浅). *The Great and Most Honored Master (Da zong shi* 大宗师), Zhuangzi. See Guo Qingfan 1961, P. 228. Translation see Watson, Burton, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1968), P. 77-78.

instead of imposing on specific forms of existence. This further demonstrates Zhu Xi's incapability of getting detached from the external world so to reach his ideal inner tranquility.

These poems are also sometimes observed to contain Confucian elements. The ideas expressed in the verses "In such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered" and "In this tranquil moment, I temporarily linger" bear some resemblance with sayings of Zeng Dian 曾点 (fl. 525-504 BC), showing one of the most famous examples of the Confucian way of pleasure in *The Analects*. When Kongzi asked about the wishes of his disciples, among all the ambitious wishes of social achievements, Zeng Dian simply answered "In this, the last month of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six young men who have donned the cap, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing".[42] This shows a Confucian way of getting along with nature and life, a modest and practical perception of their career of reconstructing an ethical social order. This is very likely to be the origin of what Zhu Xi later developed in his *lixue* thought as the ultimate spiritual realm of "eagles flying and fishes jumping" (*yuan fei yu yue* 鸢飞鱼跃), meaning enjoying the pleasure of fulfilling the great principle of nature.

5. Conclusion： A shift of political thought from Daoism and Chan Buddhism to the rule of principle

Through close readings of Zhu Xi's poems in his young age, we realize that he had been thoroughly thinking about ways to deal with anxieties of life originated from the conflicts between inner mind and the outer world, as well as worldly annoyances coming from societal problems of disorder and inappropriate social management. In writing his poems, he sought for resources from Daoism and Chan Buddhism, but ended up in vein. He cannot realize the real sense of transcendence that solves his problems. Internal inconsistencies from perspective philosophical views give him more conflicts rather than inner peace and ideal status of equilibrium within society. It is fair to sum up the tensions between inner and outer within Zhu Xi's poetry of this period in his own words that occasionally appear as verses in the poems: "I pity myself for being unable to be free from the shackles of the mundaneness" (自怜尘羁不得

[42] *The Analects*, vol. *Xian jin* 先进. See Zhu Xi 1983, P. 130.

去)[43] "I am deeply ashamed for not knowing the way, and holding onto the center is not how I can attain peace" (深惭未闻道，折衷非所宁).[44] It is based on his most instinctive and entangling poetic exploration as such, Zhu Xi had to abandon his vague ideas of transcendence as a whole, and dig deeper into the principle of things. It is only in this way, a concrete understanding of the universal principle of all things in the world might be attained, so that worldly annoyances could be dealt with according to their perspective principles and an orderly society could be build up by the rule of principle, one of the major political views in Zhu Xi's later life.

[43] 'Echoing Li Boyu Poetizing Plum Blossom with Dongpo's Rhymes' ('He Li Boyu yong Dongpo yun fu meihua' 和李伯玉用东坡韵赋梅花). See Guo Qi 2000, P. 142.

[44] 'To Fellow Partners' ('Shi zhu tongzhi' 示诸同志). See Guo Qi 2000, P. 124.