Cultivating Confucian Virtues Through Buddhist Meditation

The «Meditation Essentials» in Yuán Huáng's program of self-cultivation

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“Cultivating Confucian Virtues Through Buddhist Meditation: The *Meditation Essentials* in Yuán Huáng’s program of self-cultivation”

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Abstract

This MA thesis is the first ever comprehensive study of *Jìngzuò yàojúe* 靜坐要訣 (”The Meditation Essentials”), a Chinese meditation treatise authored by Confucian scholar-official Yuán Huáng (h. Liǎofán, 1533–1606) but largely based on a work lectured one millennium earlier by Buddhist Tiāntāi monk Zhìyǐ (538–597). Its main contribution is the discovery of a link between sitting meditation and the practice of keeping morality ledgers.

The primary concern has been, through an analysis and contextualization of the text, to catch a glimpse of how Yuán Huáng conceptualizes and *re*-conceptualizes meditation, and what the answer to this question might impart in terms of new knowledge about the late Míng period (c. 1530–1644). One aspect in particular of this reconceptualization emerged as particularly significant, and thus became the argumentative focus. This is how meditation relates functionally to the author’s other self-cultivation practices, i.e. what role it plays in what I call his program of self-cultivation. Yuán Huáng is today known mainly for his practice of merit accumulation through the keeping of daily ”Ledgers of Merit and Demerit”. I argue that meditation as conceived by Yúan Huáng must be understood in relation to this practice, and that this relation consists in seeing meditation as an important *prerequisite* for the karmic efficacy of merit accumulation; meditation is, above all, a way to rid the mind of self-centred desire and cultivate humaneness (*rén*) in its place, thus instilling in the practitioner the selfless ”no-mind” required for good deeds to result in good karma. Accordingly, the original soteriological goal of Buddhist meditation is partly lost; it is secularized and confucianized, in the sense that it becomes part of a self-cultivation program that aims for moral fulfilment and societal harmony in the here and now.

This is demonstrated through a three-step process, with each step involving a progressively broadened perspective: First, I contrast the *Meditation Essentials* with the work on which it is based, pointing out the significant differences, as well as the likely underlying reasons for them. Second, I compare it to the author’s works on merit accumulation, demonstrating the overriding concern with selfless virtues in both through a discussion of the three fundamental concepts ”no-desire”, ”humaneness” and ”no-mind”. Finally, I use the resulting picture of Yuán Huáng’s conception of meditation to uncover a similar approach to meditation latent in preceding and contemporaneous Neo-Confucian meditators, centring on Liú Zōngzhōu in particular. Thus ending the thesis on a note of wider implications, I contend not only that the relation between meditation and morality ledgers is not exclusive to Yuán Liǎofán, but furthermore that the perceived efficacy of sitting meditation for the purpose of weeding out self-centred desire and intentions was one significant reason for its introduction into Neo-Confucianism.

Keywords: Yuán Huáng, meditation, Ledgers of Merit and Demerit, Neo-Confucianism, egocentrism, no-mind, soteriology, secularism, individualism, syncretism.

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For the contributions by these individuals I am truly grateful, yet the responsibility for any inaccuracies remains entirely my own.

– Gunnar Sjøstedt, November 23rd 2015.

Abbreviations

ME	*Meditation Essentials* (*Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣)
SG	*Explaining the Sequential Gateway to the Perfection of Dhyāna* (釋禪波羅蜜次第法門)
T	*Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (The Standard Japanese version of the Chinese Tripiṭaka)
X	*Shinsan dai nihon zoku zōkyō* 卍新纂續藏經 (Supplement to the Chinese Tripiṭaka)

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INTRODUCTION

The era from the beginning of the Sòng 宋 (960) to the end of the Míng 明 dynasty (1644) roughly corresponds with the heyday in China of the philosophical movement termed (in the West) Neo-Confucianism. From Zhōu Dūnyí (b. 1017) to Liú Zōngzhōu (d. 1645), what characterises most Neo-Confucians more than anything else is at the same time a keen interest in metaphysical speculation and a near obsession with moral self-cultivation. One symptom of this orientation is the experimentation with sitting meditation that it brought about—which, though having been part of both the Buddhist and Daoist traditions, in Confucianism was a novelty.

The culmination of that era has been claimed to anticipate certain elements of modernity—and even as witnessing the ushering in of the modern period in China.[1] Intellectually, the "Late Míng" (c. 1530 to 1644)[2] stands among the most tolerant and vibrant periods, not only of that era, but also in the whole course of Chinese history. By way of illustration, it witnessed the publishing of the erotic novel *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, the flourishing of such preposterous intellectuals as Lǐ Zhì, and the eventual settling down of Matteo Ricci with his Jesuit mission in Beijing. It was, furthermore, the period when the syncretist concept and tendency of "uniting the three teachings" (三教合一) reached its maturation. Some would argue that "the most remarkable development in the world of thought in the late Míng was the revival of Buddhism",[3] and that Buddhism and Confucianism played the main roles on this ecumenical scene. The two traditions came into unprecedented intimate contact when an economically and numerically invigorated gentry

[1] de Bary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and Enlightenment", 204; Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, 438.

[2] There is no consensus on the exact dating of the Late Míng, but in the few cases where it is explicitly dated, usually the starting point falls either between 1520 and 1530, or in 1573 with the ascendance of the Wànlì 萬曆 emperor (r. 1573–1620). Jacques Gernet, in his classic *Le monde chinois,* draws the line at 1520, by criteria of "a series of economic, social and intellectual changes" (p. 388). Xú Shèngxīn 徐聖心 is so charitable as to provide a discussion (pp. 11–12) of the different options. He dismisses 1573 as paying regard merely to political changes, has a similar objection to 1521, and lands finally on 1529, the year of Wáng Yángmíng's passing. The reason offered, (presumably) other than economic and social changes, is the great intellectual influence exerted by the Wáng school in the "150 years after his passing". (Incidentally, the same author also extends the end point well beyond the fall of the Míng in 1644, maintaining that such a date obscures the fact that many intellectual tendencies continued long into the early Qīng 清. I agree, but there are also obvious reasons *for* selecting 1644. So having made this concession, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion I opt for 1644.) In a few cases I will use the term "very late Míng" to denote the last three decades of the late Míng. By lucky coincidence, Yuán Huáng's year of birth (1533) corresponds neatly to the onset of the late Míng, and his year of death (1606) almost to the onset of the very late Míng.

[3] Araki 荒木, "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming", 39.

sought ways to affirm their newly won power outside of the Confucian state realm. Culturally, the *way* that was chosen more than anything else, at least on the face of it, was lay Buddhism. Suddenly, limp Buddhist institutions saw money flowing in from new patronage, and gentry flowing into their monastery compounds, to savour the view, read sutras and drink tea.[4]

Part of the basis for that ecumenicism was the development in the mid- and late Míng of what we might call a "Chinese individualism", emerging from the philosophy of the most important Míng Confucian philosopher, Wáng Yángmíng (1472–1529). The late Míng was a period of great economic expansion and social instability, that saw the individual pitted against the established societal and moral order, and society against the established forms of government. This stimulated much intellectual speculation on the role of the individual, and lead to several attempts to reassess his moral value. Generally speaking, this would often entail either opposing or reaffirming the rigid hierarchical social status and restrictions on the individual, as represented by the Tàizhōu and Dōnglín movements respectively.

Wholly different from that emerging in the West, and without any legal motivations or consequences, most varieties of this individualism still accorded great powers to each individual man, particularly his, if not right, then at least unquestioned *ability* to make his own moral—and intellectual—judgments, the discovery and application of which was indispensable for both personal fulfilment and societal perfection.[5]

These three historical conditions—the obsession with moral self-cultivation, the cultural ascendancy of Buddhism, and a "Chinese individualism"—combined to create an atmosphere in which if a Confucian scholar were to write a treatise on Buddhist meditation, it would presumably be regarded as a highly natural, even eagerly anticipated, thing.

As a matter of fact, that happened. At the turn of the 17th Century—when *The Plum in the Golden Vase* had recently reached its first publication, Matteo Ricci's mission had just been firmly established in Beijing, and Lǐ Zhì's spectacular suicide still lingered in the memories of the literati—Yuán Huáng 袁黄, another Confucian scholar and lay Buddhist wrote and had published his treatise on meditation, called *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣—the "Meditation Essentials".

This MA thesis is a study of the *Meditation Essentials*. To my knowledge, there exists as yet no scholarly work devoted to this treatise. The only mention beyond a mere listing that I know of appears in an article on Neo-Confucian meditation in Song-Ming times;[6] in a

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[4] Brook, *Praying for Power.*
[5] The term "Chinese Individualism" is from de Bary, "Individualism and humanitarianism in late Ming thought". See also Brook, who uses the term "moral autonomy", in *Troubled Empire*, 178–84.
[6] Mabuchi 馬淵, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ" 宋明時期儒學對靜坐的看法, 95–9. (Also forthcoming as "Quiet Sitting in Neo-Confucianism".)

history on Neo-Confucian meditation;[7] and in a recent article on the meditative practices of Hānshān Déqīng 憨山德清.[8] The former, by Mabuchi Masaya, is the only one that can be said to offer an extensive treatment. It is nonetheless a small part of a larger study, and the author calls for more detailed studies than his article allowed for. Although I discovered Mabuchi's article only towards the end of my work with this thesis, the result should be regarded as a response to that call. It may also be regarded as a continuation of Cynthia Brokaw's study on another aspect of Yuán Huáng's authorship, his "Ledger of Merit and Demerit", without which the most fundamental contention and contribution of this thesis necessarily would have taken a longer time to discover—and not necessarily been discovered at all.[9]

The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit (*gōng-guò gé* 功過格) are a genre of moral notebooks that assign numerical values to various good and bad deeds, and thus let one keep track of one's total amassment of moral merit. Yuán Huáng reinterpreted this system through his theory of *lì mìng,* "Establishing Fate", which affirmed every man's boundless potential to dramatically alter ("establish") his own fate, in this life, simply by virtuous conduct. There was, however, one important complicator to this simple system. This was the concept of *wú xīn,* "having no mind", or "no-mind". Presumably introduced to alleviate the ethical problems arising from doing good merely for one's own sake, Yuán Huáng's system placed great demands on the state of mind of the practitioner. In short, good deeds if performed with a conscious, calculated—self-centred—intention of their karmic effects, would not be efficacious. In other words, it would have little or no effect on one's total merit, and thus be futile for the purpose of transforming one's future fortune. This system of merit accumulation and its selfless selfishness is of course fraught with paradoxes, even more so than its earlier selfish altruism, but that will not concern us here. What I am concerned with is how this crucial yet seemingly impossible goal of a "no-mind" free of self-centred motivations was to be attained in practice.

The main purpose of this thesis is to show that meditation, as conceived by Yuán Huáng, must be understood in relation to the practice of merit accumulation through daily keeping of Ledgers of Merit and Demerit. Its main function, I contend, was precisely to instil the "no-mind" required for the Ledgers' karmic efficacy. Through sustained meditation the Ledger practitioner may gradually rid himself of self-centred intentions, thereby enabling him (again paradoxically) to climb the social hierarchy much more effectively.

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[7] Nakajima 中嶋, *Jìngzùo: Shíjiàn yǔ lìshǐ* 靜坐: 實踐與歷史, 19–20.
[8] Eifring, "Meditative Pluralism in Hānshān Déqīng", 117, 126.
[9] Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit.*

The question that led to this discovery was how Yuán Huáng conceptualizes and *re*-conceptualizes meditation—what happens when Buddhist texts and practices stemming largely from the 6th century are recast in the hands of a self-proclaimed Confucian of the 17th century, and why? In other words, in addition to assessing the quality of the relation between meditation and merit accumulation (the 'what'), I aspire moreover to uncover the underlying *processes* and the causes behind them (the 'why'). I argue that the most important such processes—or rather conceptual tools for understanding them—are syncretism, individualization and secularization, three interrelated developments of late Míng China. Late Míng Chinese individualism and the syncretism[10] of the Three Teachings I have already touched upon, and they will be revisited throughout the thesis.

Even more pertinent to my research question and less explored in the secondary literature, however, is the question of secularization. Accordingly, it is also accorded a more focal place than syncretism and individualism in this thesis, notwithstanding that it cannot be

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[10] Following Berling, syncretism is here defined as "the borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation." The theme of syncretism recurs in much of the literature out there touching on this period. The culmination of the theoretical contention on the matter is as far as I know Timothy Brook's 1993 article "Rethinking Syncretism: The unity of the Three Teachings and their joint worship in late-Imperial China." In it Brook criticizes what to him is a conflation of terms, and the misguided assessments of late Míng intellectual trends that this leads to. For Brook syncretism is to be distinguished clearly from ecumenicism, compartmentalism, inclusivism and eclecticism. I agree wholeheartedly with Brook's emphasis on the relevance of these other analytical tools for religious mixing and coexistence. Following Stewart and Shaw, I do not, however, agree with the contention that a broad definition of syncretism renders it analytically useless—we may still speak about degrees and variants of syncretism—nor that its negative connotations (of "impurity", "ingenuineness", etc.) make it somehow tainted. Even the claim that it does possess such negative connotations at all seems to me to be a projection by established scholars particularly within the field of anthropology, and is of little relevance for present generations, for whom the omnipresence and inevitability of religious and cultural borrowing is an undisputable truth—and the conceived "purity" of *any* tradition an illusion. That syncretism takes place everywhere and at all times, does not mean that the term is of no use, however. We may still speak of degrees and varieties of syncretism—and how else would we describe succinctly this trend during the late Míng?

When we already possess the term 'syncretism' in our analytical toolbox to describe such influence and reconciliation between belief systems in general, I see no need to discard it. Accordingly, as opposed to Brook I do not distinguish it from the other forms of religious interaction, but rather use it as an overarching term that encompasses those more restricted concepts ecumenicism, inclusivism, eclecticism and compartmentalism, for which I employ Brook's definitions. Brook's interpretation of syncretism I would instead call 'synthesis'. His definition of ecumenicism I should spell out, since ecumenicism in my opinion is the most common form of syncretism in the Míng, and I employ the term repeatedly: "Ecumenicism understands that truth is universal: Separate religious world views are sustained as separate traditions not by fundamentally different perceptions of truth, but by their external elements, such as ritual practices or modes of discourse. Beneath these distinctions lie the same truth and the same pursuit of truth."

Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-En,* 9; Brook, "Rethinking Syncretism", 13–5 (for critique and definitions); Stewart and Shaw, *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism*, 1–2. On the specific issue of syncretism in the late Míng, see also Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*; Xú 徐, *Míng mò Qīng chū sānjiào huìtōng guǎnkuī* 明末清初三教會通管窺; and for articles, Araki 荒木, "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming"; Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ yǐjí sānjiào héyī sīxiǎng de xīngqǐ"; and Fāng 方, "Wáng Jī de xīntǐ lùn jí qí Fó Lǎo sīxiǎng yuānyuán".

strictly separated from them. In a similar fashion to how Huáng reconceptualized the Ledgers of Merit and Demerit, I argue that the original soteriological purpose of Buddhist meditation is partly lost through his refashioning. I use “secular” not as the opposite of “sacral” or “religious”—which in any case is a particularly problematic term when applied to China[11]—but of “soteriological”, more relevant to this study and with a clearer and more restricted denotation (which is that which pertains to salvation and the afterlife).

This secularization may also be described as a “confucianization”. One of the most common criticisms directed at Buddhism by “pure Confucians” (*chún rú* 純儒) was that its motivations were, in the end, selfish—because its ultimate goal remained, they claimed, the liberation of the individual from this world and all its obligations. (Of course, this claim is quite absurd to the Buddhist, for whom there is no self.) Ironic then that in the hands of Yuán Huáng, and partly due to a reconciliation with Confucianism, meditation—the symbol *par excellence* of Buddhist selfishness as perceived by Confucians—is turned self-centred in an entirely new way: No longer is the practitioner’s soteriological salvation the main concern, but rather, as I will show, his moral and material fulfilment in the here and now. This confucianization is quite different from how Buddhist elements were adopted into early Neo-Confucianism, elements one scholar calls “carefully recontextualized traces of Chan skilfully woven into the relentlessly secular fabric of Confucianism”.[12] In our case it is not traces but blatantly Buddhist practices and theories that are carelessly twined around a Confucian string. Or so it was later common to denigrate late Míng syncretism. What I am interested in are these Confucian vestiges, which I hope to show are more than just trifling echoes or mere lip service. They are partly responsible for a subtle yet radical reconceptualization of meditation.

What I am accordingly *not* concerned with in this thesis is how this syncretism conversely leads to a “buddhicization” of Confucianism as well. This is not an insignificant question, but less pertinent to my main argument concerning the reconceptualization of meditation. Furthermore, an affirmative answer to that question is as I see it far more obvious than to the question of confucianization, inasmuch as the *Meditation Essentials* is a text on Buddhist practice. It goes without saying that Buddhism had a profound impact on the worldview of at least Yuán Huáng as an individual, and, in the case of ledger practice, also on other Confucians. Much less obvious is the impact his Confucian background engenders in his conception of Buddhist meditation—and that is what I hope to uncover.

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[11] And indeed everywhere in the non-western world. The term, which is based largely on modern Christianity, implies several categories that tend to misrepresent non-modern or non-western societies when forced onto them. In China, the concept of ”religion” (*zōngjiào* 宗教) never existed before the 19th century introduction of modernity. The adjective ”religious” is slightly less problematic to define in an etic way, but I will still strive to avoid it.
[12] Allen, *Vanishing Into Things*, 165.

Yet another way of looking at the secularization taking place in the *Meditation Essentials,* is as a “laicization”, a term I will use in the sense of change owing to and reflecting concerns typical of laity. Traditionally, the amassment of good karma is a concern of laypeople more than monastics, for the rigorous of whom not only bad karma but karma *in itself* is what keeps us attached to and suffering in this world. By virtue of being fitted into a context of merit accumulation, I will argue that the *Meditation Essentials* is thus laicized.

Inasmuch as most resourceful Buddhist laymen were Confucians by social status and intellectual commitment, confucianization and laicization are two sides of the same coin—the coin I call secularization.

My exploration of these themes—the research question and its theoretical backdrop—is divided into four individual chapters.

Chapter one is devoted primarily to the author Yuán Huáng, and secondarily to the late Míng intellectual landscape. As I see it, getting to know the man behind the book is vital for understanding why it was written and how it was used. The late Míng period witnessed a boom in writing, printing and publishing activity, and a considerable portion of the resulting works are still available to us today, so that we are actually not at a lack of sources when it comes to the biography of Yuán Huáng. However, an exhaustive treatment of the biography of this individual is beyond the limits of a work of this kind, and has moreover to a considerable extent been done already by Sakai (1960), Fang (1976), Okuzaki (1978), and Brokaw (1991), Okuzaki’s being the most extensive.[13] Accordingly, I will focus on the aspects most relevant for this thesis: I start, in the subsection on his life, by describing his Confucian background and experience with the bureaucracy, while at the same time recounting his way into Buddhism, two processes that are in fact related. I continue with his bibliography, relating it to the intellectual landscape of the late Míng, particularly the Neo-Confucian Tàizhōu school and the related broader movement to “unite the Three Teachings”, two developments following in the wake of Neo-Confucian philosopher Wáng Yángmíng (1472–1529). Finally, I relate this to his interest in meditation, though I will have more to say about that connection in chapter three. Except where I bring in meditation and the *Meditation Essentials*, this chapter on the individual Yuán Huáng offers nothing new in terms of research. (It does, however, reproduce into English some interesting findings in a recent Chinese article concerning Huáng’s service in the Korean-Japanese war of 1592–7, as far as I know until

[13] Sakai 酒井, *Chūgoku zensho no kenkyū* 中國善書の研究 (the part concerning Yuán Huáng is translated in full into Chinese in by Yǐn 尹 as “Yuán Liǎofán de shēngpíng jí zhùzuò 袁了凡的生平及著作); Okuzaki 奥崎. *Chūgoku kyōshin jinushi no kenkyū* 中國鄉紳地主の研究, 129–206; Fang, ”Yüan Huang”, 1632–5; Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 64–109.

now not available in English).[14] Being a background chapter, it instead draws broadly on autobiographical as well as primary and secondary sources, and tries to fit the essentials into the framework of this thesis.

In chapter two I turn to one of Huáng's specific works, and the subject matter of this thesis, the *Meditation Essentials.* Since this thesis as far as I know is the first study of the treatise, the chapter aims not only to reinforce the central argument of the thesis, but also to provide a fairly comprehensive presentation of the work.

As it happens, the *Meditation Essentials* draws heavily and often verbatim on a much earlier and larger work, and thus the chapter begins not with the *Meditation Essentials* itself, but with the well-known 6th century Buddhist monk Zhìyǐ and his, not so well-known, work the *Sequential Gateway* (*Cìdì fǎmén* 次第法門). This work stays with us throughout the chapter, even when proceeding to zoom in on details in the *Meditation Essentials.* The reason for this is that when it comes to the question of Yuán Huáng's conceptualisation of meditation, other than the content itself nothing is able to impart more answers than a comparison of the two. In fact, I would argue that it is actually of more significance than the actual practices per se, insofar as Yuán Huáng strictly speaking did not himself create the descriptions of them. Thus I ask: From the *Sequential Gateway*, what did he include, and what did he exclude? Where does he provide his own comments or editing, where does he rewrite Zhìyǐ's passages, and how? What framework does he strip away, and what does he provide in its place? In short, how is it similar, and, more significantly, how is it different—and why? By posing these questions, what I aim to catch a glimpse of, and show to the reader, is the *process* by which this originally Buddhist 6th century disquisition becomes a Confucian 17th century manual—the *negotiation* between Buddhism and Confucianism, monkhood and laity, Suí aristocracy and Míng gentry.

The second purpose of chapter two is to provide an argumentative basis for chapter three, the argumentative core of the thesis, where I look at another aspect of Huáng's conceptualization of meditation, namely the relationship of meditation to morality ledgers, the self-cultivation practice for which Yuán Huáng is mainly known. For one of the conclusions drawn from the questions in chapter two is that in the *Meditation Essentials* soteriology is downplayed whereas cultivation of compassion, partly reconceptualized as the Confucian virtue of "humaneness", is brought to the fore—or rather to the end, where in *sequential* meditation the most essential practices are located. I argue that in order to understand this transformation, it is necessary to take a broader look at Yuán Huáng's general take on self-cultivation—and particularly his works related to the practice of keeping a

[14] Zhāng 張, "Shíliù shìjìmò zhōng-hán shǐjié guānyú Yángmíng xúe de lùnbiàn jí qí yìyì" 十六世紀末中韓使節關於陽明學的論辯即其意義.

Ledger of Merit and Demerit. By comparing these works with the *Meditation Essentials,* I show that there is much to indicate that meditation possesses a function in Yuán Huáng's broader program of self-cultivation—which is to instil a perfectly selfless mind—a "no-mind"—that in turn will provide karmic efficacy to ledger practice. Huáng was a firm believer in every man's limitless power to alter his own fate. This was to be achieved through the accumulation of merit and the minute recording thereof. However, good deeds if performed with a conscious calculated intention of their karmic effects, would not be efficacious. This is where Buddhist meditation comes into play. Through sustained meditation the practitioner may gradually rid himself of self-centred desire and intentions, thereby enabling him, paradoxically, to climb the social hierarchy much more effectively.

I furthermore propose that a way of understanding this relationship is through the "root-and-branch" (*běn-mò* 本末) analogy made famous by the *Great Learning*, a classic on self-cultivation. This scheme not only exerted immense influence by virtue of the status of the *Great Learning* as one of the Four Classics, but as I will show was also explicitly drawn upon by one contemporary of Yuán Huáng with a conspicuously similar bibliography on self-cultivation.

The first part of the chapter is devoted to comparing the *Meditation Essentials* with his (more famous) works on merit accumulation, focusing particularly on the central concern for virtues and intentions in both. Whereas a selfless and compassionate mind is portrayed as the most important *effect* of meditation, it is an indispensable *prerequisite* of ledger practice. The second part is an exploration of the terms used to express this state of mind in the *Meditation Essentials* ("no desire", "humaneness", "pure mind") on the one hand and the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* ("no-mind") on the other. By showing the intimate and non-incidental connections between these concepts, I aim to reinforce the argument that they are expressions of the same fundamental concern and thus lend credence to my theory of there being a "root-and-branch" relationship between meditation and morality ledgers.

The exploration of these fundamental concepts concerning state of mind, as well as their relation to meditation, is continued in chapter four. Here I broaden the view to look at their occurrence in meditation texts written by important earlier and contemporaneous Neo-Confucian thinkers. Through the examples, I show again the quality of the connection between the three concepts, and furthermore that they were all part of the concerns of these Neo-Confucian masters in their dealings with meditation. Doing so, I demonstrate that Yuán Huáng's particular conceptualisation of meditation—as a way of weeding out desire and cultivating "humaneness" in its place—is not so idiosyncratic after all. Rather, it has clear both antecedents and succedents in the Neo-Confucian discourse on meditation. The presence of such concepts in that discourse, as well as their relation to the quasi-soteriological ultimate

goals of these meditators—expressed through such terms as ”discerning the minute distinctions of our root source”, “matching heaven”, ”recognizing from experience the original form of our root nature” and ”returning to one’s nature”—is something utterly neglected in the existing secondary literature on Neo-Confucian meditation. Thus, one important broader implication of the *Meditation Essentials* as I see it, is that by virtue of foregrounding this function of meditation as weeding out desire and cultivating humaneness, it draws our attention to the fact that even in cases where this function is placed further in the background, it is still present—as demonstrated by the examples in this chapter. Since the examples are from somewhat different time periods, I strive to combine the discussion of them with a superficial historical treatment of the Neo-Confucian dealings with meditation as a whole. By providing this historical context, it is hoped that the reader will be able to better appreciate not only the significance of the mentioned three concepts and their relation to the goal of Confucian meditation, but also the place of the *Meditation Essentials* within that context.

Finally, in Appendix A I have translated the original preface and the chapters most germane to my main argument: chapters one (”Distinguishing the Will”), five (”Eliminating Desire”) and six (”Expanding Love”). In Appendix B the reader will find a copy of the complete original text, with page numbers to which the references in this thesis correspond.[15]

Before getting on with the Chapter 1 and Yuán Huáng’s biography, some words should be said about the terms ‘meditation’ and “sitting in meditation”. As applied in this thesis the first is mostly an etic term used as an analytical tool, whereas the second is an emic term, used to translate the Chinese term *jìngzuò* 靜坐. I say “mostly”, because in some of my translations *jìngzuò* is for stylistic reasons instead rendered as “meditation”—as for example in the very title of our text, “Meditation Essentials”. In such instances, the reader can be sure that “meditation” refers to *jìngzuò*, and not some other meditative practice. For example, unlike many other writers on related topics, I consistently steer away from having “meditation” refer to *chán* 禪, and ”sitting meditation” to *chán zuò* 禪坐 (*chán* being a term specific to Buddhist meditation). Instead, *chán* is predictably rendered as *dhyāna,* the original Sanskrit term it translates, except where its referent is clearly the Chinese Chán tradition, in which cases the Chinese word is used, with a capital C.

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[15] The edition copied is that included in the 1605 collection *Liǎofán zázhù* 了凡雜著, as reprinted in *Yuán Liǎofán wénjí* 袁了凡文集. Page referrals are to the page number in *Yuán Liǎofán wénjí,* which may be located at the bottom right of each copied page pair (“a” referring to the page on the right, “b” to the page on the left). For philological information on the *Liǎofán zázhù* as well as and the different editions of the *Meditation Essentials*, see present thesis, ch. 2, sect. 5.

As for ’meditation’ as en etic term, it is necessary to provide a working definition. In other words, what is meditation? One does not have to delve deep into this question before its complexity becomes apparent, and no final answer may be given to it, but there have been some efforts to provide it with an operable definition in recent decades. Throughout this thesis I will employ and imply one rather broad definition developed by Halvor Eifring:

> Meditation may be defined as attention-based techniques for inner transformation.[16]

An earlier version of this definition has been shown to be operable both in an East Asian and global context.[17] It also works well with my argument, inasmuch as one of the things I argue is that Yuán Huáng conceived of meditation precisely as a means to “transform” himself—*eliminate* desire and *expand* humaneness.

I should disclose that by opting for this definition, by implication I also reject a different trend of perceiving meditation developed in later decades, especially in Buddhist studies. “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience” is the title of an article that has been particularly seminal for this trend. In it Robert Sharf polemicizes against the tendency to treat Buddhist meditation phenomenologically—as an inherently personal *experience*, with distinct “states” taking place in the mind of the meditator. He argues instead that Buddhist meditation is fundamentally a ritual phenomenon—a social “enactment” of Buddhist doctrine.[18] In order to bring out the difference between these two ways to treat meditation, we might call the perceived experience and its states of the former approach “transformative”. I do sympathize with Sharf’s project to counter the psychologization of Buddhism. I moreover accept his critique of the commonly concomitant view that Buddhist experiences of enlightenment and the stages (*mārga*) on the path towards it are phenomenologically constant, and that written accounts of them are inherently descriptive rather than prescriptive. I even admit that the lack of consideration for ritual might be a weakness in the definition I employ here as applied to meditative techniques in a pre-modern context. However, I believe Sharf goes too far in his “de-psychologization” of Buddhist meditation. Wanting to break down our Cartesian epistemic commitments, it seems that by distinguishing so distinctly ritual from experience he commits the self-same fallacy himself, separating mind clearly from body, and inner psychological phenomena from outer phenomena.[19]

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[16] Eifring and Holen, “The Uses of Attention: Elements of Meditative Practice”, 1.
[17] Eifring, ”Characteristics of East Asian Meditation”, 133–6. That version was: “Meditation is a self-administered technique for inner transformation” (ibid., 130).
[18] Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience", 269.
[19] Appreciations to Guttorm Gundersen for our discussions on this topic.

That being said, delving fully into this discussion would lead us too far astray. Whatever the case for Buddhist meditation as narrowly understood, I feel confident that in our case at hand—Yuán Huáng and his *Meditation Essentials*, of which one characteristic is to consciously borrow a practice and place it in a partly new doctrinal as well as personal framework—the emphasis on "inner transformation" in our definition is not misplaced. Due to the antagonisms towards Buddhism, the Confucians were habitually careful not to, at least overtly, incorporate ritualistic aspects of meditation into their "sitting in meditation"—slightly parallel, I would say, to "secular" applications of meditation in the modern word. Although he does not share this antagonism, Yuán Huáng is to some extent influenced by this rhetoric and hermeneutic, stressing as he does how sitting in meditation should not be restricted to time, place or posture.

Moving on to the emic term "sitting in meditation", this is a very unorthodox rendering of *jìngzuò,* the more literal "quiet-sitting" having become the conventional English translation.[20] "Sitting in meditation" was used by Wing-tsit Chan in his pioneering translations of Neo-Confucian works, but I have never seen it in other works.[21] As for "quiet-sitting", as far as I have been able to discern, it was coined by William de Bary. In a 1975 article, de Bary—laudably I should say—makes explicit his reasons for using this translation—thus enabling me more easily to point out why I think it is misguided. De Bary opposes Wing-tsit Chan's "sitting in meditation", arguing that it associates *jìngzuò* to closely with *Buddhist* "sitting in meditation" (*chánzuò* 禪坐 or *zuò chán* 坐禪), what I render as "sitting in *dhyāna*".[22] However, there *is* much reason to associate the two—as the *Meditation Essentials* is one example of, *jìngzuò* there being used to describe a wholly Buddhist meditative practice as far as technique is concerned. Moreover, there is no reason to render *zuò chán* as "sitting in meditation". *Chán* is a far more denominationally specific word, carrying heavy Buddhist connotations—thus poorly represented by a word such as "meditation". Of all the terms for meditative practices in Chinese, it is in fact *jìngzuò* that is the least denominationally specific. That the term was restricted only to Neo-Confucian meditation is a misconception. For sure, it was the term the Neo-Confucians opted for, and it has a certain Neo-Confucian bias, but it was occasionally used in Buddhism and Daoism as well. Furthermore, whenever meditation was discussed in general terms, often in a context comparing the Three Traditions, it seems that *jìngzuò* was the preferred term.[23] In this respect, it is in many ways similar to the English term 'meditation' of today. Indeed,

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[20] If we add its variant "quiet sitting", among the sources used in this thesis that glosses *jìngzuò,* I have come across none who does not employ this gloss, except for Chan.
[21] Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy.*
[22] de Bary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and Enlightenment", 170–2.
[23] See for example Chén Chún 陳淳, student of Zhū Xī, quoted in Nakajima, 108.

"*jìngzuò*" is today a common way to translate 'meditation' back again to Chinese, as well as one of the two preferred ways of referring to meditative practices in an all-embracing.[24] Lastly, *jìng* by itself is certainly best represented by English "quiet" or "quiescence". Indeed, I employ the latter one myself in this thesis. Still, it should be remembered that *jìng* is a metaphysically far more potent word than English "quiet", and this was carried over into *jìngzuò* from the very outset of its historical application.[25]

In order to capture these qualities of *jìngzuò* —especially its all-embracing, non-denominational quality—I thus opt instead for "sitting in meditation". Wing-tsit Chan got it quite right, and there was no reason to scrap his translation.

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[24] The other being *míngxiǎng* 冥想. *Jìngzuò* makes one specification that the English term meditation does not, namely spelling out that *sitting* is a requirement. (Indian Hatha yoga, for example, is not *jìngzuò.*)

[25] In "The Ten Faults" (十過), the tenth chapter of the legalist *Hán Fēi Zǐ* 韓非子 (c. 202–c. 136 BCE), which is the first known instance of the term, a court musician is by way of "*jìng zuò*" able to hear and memorize a song from the realm of demons.

For a book length genealogy of *jìngzuò* (centred around numerous and lengthy quotations) see Nakajima, *Jìngzùo*; for a shorter one plus some reflections about its present usage, see Eifring, "Sitting Quietly in China". Nakajima also has a section on the genealogy of *jìng* itself, 66–80.

CHAPTER 1:
YUÁN HUÁNG AND LATE MÍNG CHINA

1.1. Life: Establishing the fate

Just as his work the *Meditation Essentials* was a product of its time, Yuán Huáng was a man of his age. Indeed, many characteristics of the late Míng era are reflected rather well in his biography.[26] Yet of course it also includes more idiosyncratic aspects—the most important of which is inherently related and will point to his works on self-cultivation.

Born to a gentry family of Jiāshàn county 嘉善縣 in the province of Zhèjiāng 浙江 in 1533, Yuán Huáng hailed—as did the majority of officials during the Ming dynasty[27]—from the economically and culturally dominant Jiāngnán 江南 area (”south of the Great River” i.e. the Yangzi). Ever since his Great-great-grandfather Yuán Qìshān 袁杞山 was implicated in—but survived—the draconian purges following the 1402 coup d'état by the third Míng emperor Yǒnglè 永樂, the Yuán family had made medicine their family profession. Often portrayed as a humble craft,[28] during the Míng medicine was in fact the most honoured of all professions, when we leave out the bureaucracy and agriculture.[29] It had become a major alternative for aspiring gentry during the Yuán 元 dynasty, when imperial examinations were rarely held; and remained one during the Míng, when both the economy and the general population—and consequently the number of gentry—expanded abruptly, without a corresponding upscaling of the examination system and the bureaucracy.[30]

Whether it was this felt esteem or the family's scepticism towards office that was the main motivation behind his mother's decision to keep him from pursuing a career as an official despite the fact that the family's ban from the examinations had finally been lifted,

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[26] For secondary material on Huáng's biography, see works in note 13, as well as the TV drama *Liǎofán de gùshi* 了凡的故事 (aired 2009), which, though it of course has its historical inaccuracies, is surprisingly well-made.

For historical sources on his biography, see his entries in the gazetteers *Jiāshàn xiàn zhì* 嘉善縣志 (from 1677 CE), f. 8, p. 21a–22a; *Jiāngnán tōngzhì* 江南通志 (1675 CE), f. 140, p. 51b; *Jiāxìng fǔ zhì* 嘉興府志 (1721), f. 14, p. 9; in the unofficial history of the Míng dynasty by Chá Jìzuǒ 查繼佐, *Zuì wéi lù* 罪惟錄 (1672), f. 48, p. 67; and in the collection of laymen biographies *Jūshì zhuàn* 居士傳 (1775), p0266b15–p0268c21. For autobiographical material, see Yuán, “Lì mìng zhī xué” 立命之學, in *Liǎofán sì xùn* 了凡四訓, 876a–883b.

[27] Brook, *Troubled Empire*, 32–38.

[28] E.g. in the TV drama on Yuán Huáng's life mentioned in note 26.

[29] Brook, *Troubled Empire*, 152.

[30] Ibid. According to Joanna Handlin, towards the end of the Wànlì reign (1572–1620), which was the period when Yuán Huáng served, the bureaucracy actually *shrank,* due to the emperor's refusal to assign new officials to vacant posts. See Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought,* 106.

we cannot be sure. By Huáng's own account, his mother's decision was motivated by the weight of the medical calling of saving, curing and caring for other people, and compelled by the will to this end of Huáng's father, who had died when Huáng was a child.[31] We might further speculate that she was also worried about economic and social stability, her son now being the only male in the household—and such stability was better sought in medicine than office, as indicated above. Furthermore, her personal belief was predominantly Buddhist,[32] which might have made her reluctant to send her son into the bureaucratic battlefield. Quite likely, it was a mixture of all these considerations.

What we do know, in quite some detail due to Huáng's own minute recounting of them,[33] are the circumstances leading up to the reversing of this decision—and thus the continuation of our story. Unclear in which year, but early in his life and probably during his adolescence, Huáng ran into a Daoist fortune teller surnamed Kǒng 孔 outside a Buddhist monastery,[34] who impressed him enough with his predictions that Huáng agreed to be his student and later receive a complete divination of his life's future fortunes and misfortunes. Thus it was proved that Huáng's fortune included passing both the county and provincial level examinations. If the decision to consequently resume classic schooling was made by his mother, this lends credence to my speculation about her consideration for stability (since she now could rest assured, granted she believed Kǒng, that Huáng would respectably pass the first two levels). At this point, however, he himself might have had a say in the matter; the only information he provides us with in this regard is that he "developed an aspiration to study [for office]".[35] This he did, and before long the first predictions made by prognosticator Kǒng were verified. Considering how the prophecy included such misfortunes as having no son and dying by the age of 52, we can only imagine the growing uneasiness Huáng must have felt when the increasingly specific predictions were confirmed one after the other. His subsequent fatalism and apathy we need not imagine, as he relates such feelings extensively himself. Particularly noteworthy with regard to the present study is his comment that he did not bother to read at all during his one year scholarship at the National Academy in Běijīng (Guózǐjiàn 國子監), but merely whiled away his days sitting in meditation.[36] His dejection

[31] Yuán 袁, *Liǎofán sì xùn*, 876a3.
[32] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 72.
[33] In "Lì mìng zhī xué", first chapter of *Liǎofán sì xùn*.
[34] Anyone familiar with the three traditions will recognize the curiousness of this incident. Incidentally, the *Daoist* fortuneteller shared surname with Confucius. Less incidentally, he happened to kick his heels outside a Buddhist monastery. This was probably in the 1550s, just when late Míng syncretism was in its incipient stage. For his encounter with Kǒng, see Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* starting at 876a4.
[35] Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* 876a.
[36] Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* 877a.

when it came to reading we can easily gather (reading could, in his view, not affect his examination results), but why meditate instead? Had he resigned to his fate in this life, pursuing instead liberation from *saṃsāra*? Does this slightly dismissive mention of meditation imply that it was *not* an important part of his religious practice after his rejection of fatalism?

In 1569, on his way to the National Academy in Nánjīng (Yōng 雍), Huáng stopped over at Qīxiá Monastery 棲霞寺 just outside the city to pay a visit to Chán Master Yúngǔ Fǎhuì 雲谷法會禪師. This was just five years after one of the four great monks of the Míng dynasty, Hānshān Déqīng 憨山德清, had stayed there. Hānshān, at the time only 18 years old and still not ordained, was there partly to study meditation with the Master; Yuán Huáng, though he did sit in meditation opposite of the Master three days on end before any one of them uttered a word, learned something quite different, yet of comparable transformative import. It was the theory of ”establishing [one's] fate” (*lì mìng* 立命), and the concomitant practice of keeping a ”Ledger of Merit and Demerit” (*gōng-guò gé* 功過格).[37] Before continuing with Huáng's biography, it is necessary to linger for a moment on these two concepts. Both are on the face of it fairly straightforward: *Lì mìng* is the ethical aspect of karmic law framed within the perspective of a person's lifetime: Sow good deeds, and you will reap good rewards, thereby possibly altering your own fate (predominantly in the present life). A ”ledger of merit and demerit” was a chart by means of which the practitioner recorded and summed up his daily good and bad deeds—merits and demerits. This aided him—or her—in keeping track of his/her amassment of merit, and thus also, when coupled with the *lì mìng* theory, what fortune to expect for the future. It was originally a Daoist practice, based on the 12th century book *Ledger of Merit and Demerit of the Tàiwēi Immortal* (太微仙君功過格), but was in the syncretist environment of the Late Míng adapted and modified by Buddhist revivers, and then popularized by such figures as Yuán Huáng also among the Confucian literati.[38]

For Yuán Huáng the *lì mìng* theory and *gōng-guò gé* practice were intimately connected: the prospect of altering one's own fate was ultimately his rationale for keeping

[37] For an extensive book length study of morality ledgers see Brokaw, *Ledgers*. There is also the classic 1960 study by Sakai, *Chūgoku zensho no kenkyū*; as well as a recent study in German, including a translation, by Lehnert, *Partitur des Lebens: die Liaofan si xun von Yuan Huang (1533–1606)*, but my lacking language proficiency prevents me from appraising either.

[38] There were also inspirations for this first Ledger of Merit and Demerit in the famous 4th century Daoist work *Bào pú zǐ* 抱樸子 (“The Master Who Embraces Simplicity”) by Gě Hóng 葛洪 (283–343), as well as several similar works on the practice of merit accumulation that appeared in the ten intervening centuries. Many of these incorporated concepts and deities from both the Daoist and Buddhist corpus. On the early tradition of merit accumulation and its later Ledger variety, see Brokaw, *Ledgers,* ch. 1. (Interestingly, for my central claim of there being a functional relation between merit accumulation and meditation in Yuán Huáng, the *Bào pú zǐ* contains also meditation practices.)

such ledgers. Yet they are not inherently connected; at least not in Yúngǔ and Yuán Huáng's interpretation of *lì mìng*. For this concept is a bit more complicated than what appears. *Lì mìng* originates —as so many popular Confucian concepts during the Míng dynasty—from Mencius. As Brokaw demonstrates, Yúngǔ and Huáng deviates from Mencius' understanding, which is not so much that man may transform his fate in terms of external benefits, but rather that he may choose to cultivate himself and act morally *within* the fate heaven has decreed for him (*mìng* literally means "decree"). This is to fulfil his nature (*xìng* 性), which in turn will bring happiness to himself and others. Brokaw calls Huáng's idiosyncratic version "material fate", and Mencius' version "moral fate".[39] I might add that these two conflicting understandings of *lì mìng*, granted that they in fact are so different, seem in fact to be slightly different syntactically: whereas *lì* becomes transitive in Huang's understanding, with *mìng* as its object ("establishing the fate", i.e. actively altering it), for Mencius *mìng* seems rather to be a place adverbial, *where* the establishing takes place, "establishing oneself *in* one's fate" (*lì* [*yú*] *mìng* 立[於]命). I should also mention, however, which Brokaw does not, that even though most sayings on this matter in Mencius goes against the morality, desirability and possibility of altering one's material fate, there are also sections that are easily interpreted as amounting to the contrary—making the novel interpretation by Huáng and Yúngǔ less aberrant than Brokaw deems it, and plausibly even not entirely novel.[40] Whether the belief that it is *possible* for man through virtuous conduct to alter his own "material" fate was in Confucianism heterodox or not, should perhaps rather be left an open question. Whether such motivations were *moral,* on the other hand, is much more clear-cut, this being the main opposition towards Huáng's ledger practice.

Another, more blatantly wrong, misconception in recent literature that we might bring up at this point, is that Huáng's conception of karma was of the completely mechanical type, as opposed to the mystic, "organic" understanding represented by Oǔyì Zhìxù 藕益智旭 (1599–1655), the last of the Four Great Monks of the late Míng.[41] As a matter of fact, Huáng is first of all far from strange to the importance of repentance as a means of influencing karma.[42] Moreover, as we shall see shortly, anterior to the actual execution of good deeds, Huáng is careful to *ritually vow* to perform them. This shows that he trusts the common Buddhist doctrine that actions are more potent karmically if vowed at an earlier point in time.

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[39] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 79–84.

[40] In the first two chapters of *Mencius*, in his efforts to motivate the rulers Mencius repeatedly appeal to how humane governance (仁政) will naturally lead to benefits also for the ruler and his state themselves, bringing with it strength, reputation and leverage over the other states.

[41] McGuire, *Living Karma,* 11–12; 10.

[42] Not only does repentance play an important integral role in his Ledger system, but he also authored a whole work devoted to repentance, *The Repentance Method of Mr Yuán* (*Yuán-shēng chànfǎ* 袁生懺法).

Finally, when discussing *lì mìng* and morality ledgers he repeatedly refers to the presence of gods in the meeting out and readjustment of fate (which, though far from un-Buddhist, might be one of the few remnants of the predominantly Daoist origin of ledger practice).

That the gods control the application of the law of karma does not mean, however, that the workings of that law are not predictable. Huáng is adamant that if you start transforming your conduct through ledger practice, you can be certain to be rewarded a future fortune perfectly corresponding to the merit put in (at least if you vowed to do them). And this will happen to you *now*, in your present life—in contrast to the earliest ledgers where the focus was more on pleasing the gods and the prospect of becoming an immortal.[43] Still, I challenge Brokaw's view that there is a contrast between the early Daoist ledgers and Huáng's reinterpretation of them when it comes to the concern for longevity.[44] This traditionally Daoist concern is rather also something that is retained and lives on in his application—indeed, his life span was one of the main aspects of his allotment that he succeeded in altering, as we shall see. The conclusion by Brokaw, that the ledgers were on the whole secularized in the hands of Yuán Huáng, is nevertheless valid.[45] Although his encounter with them led to his changing his sobriquet to "Ending the This-Worldly" (Liǎofán 了凡), it is clear that the this-worldly is precisely his main concern, the core of his motivation for using them in the first place—at least judging by how he sells it to his reader, which among other things features extensively stories about successful people, who owed the success of themselves and their descendants to infallible, humane conduct.[46]

Yes, *descendants* were also included—an important qualification to my previous statement that *lì mìng* pertains only to one's own individual fate. Even with an individualist as Yuán Huáng, the Confucian concern for family—past, present and future—is so ingrained in the way of thinking about everything—even the individual—that the *mìng* of a person is conceived as inseparable from the broader *mìng* of one's kin. This was the case in all earlier theories and practices of merit accumulation practice as well—the belief in the inheritability of merits and demerits serving in the one end as an explanation of the apparent discrepancy

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[43] Still, I challenge Brokaw's view that there is a contrast between Huáng and the early Daoist ledgers when it comes to the concern for longevity. One of the things he explicitly states (in "Lì mìng zhī xué") that he was able to alter is precisely his life span. He was destined to die at age 52, but lived on to age 73.
[44] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 105.
[45] Ibid.
[46] In the version of "Merit for Accumulating Goodness" (Jī shàn zhī fāng 積善之方) found online the first half is dedicated to ten such anecdotes, whereas "The Efficacy of Humility" ("Qiāndé zhī xiào" 謙德之效), as indicated by the title, consists mostly of similar stories. For reasons I have not had the occasion to probe, in the *Liǎofán sì xùn* version of "Jī shàn zhī fāng" that I have in front of me these stories are not included. The curious reader is therefore referred to the version at the homepage of monk Chin Kung 淨空: http://www.amtb.org.tw/pdf/19-16g_word.pdf.

between conduct and fortune (his parents must have been bad, that is why he despite virtuous conduct is still poor) and in the other end as a deterrent to bad conduct (not only you will suffer, but your children too).[47] It would seem that it is in line also with the Neo-Confucian ontology of the day, according to which all humans (and everything else) have a common source (*yuán* 源), or principle (*lǐ* 理). As we shall see in chapter three, Chéng Hào's 程顥 preferred analogy for "humaneness" (仁 *rén*), the Confucian cardinal virtue, was that of sensory feelings of the human body: Not feeling commiseration for other people was like being numb in parts of one's own body. Somehow however, in Confucianism kin was in the end always closer, a more vital body part so to speak. Huáng does not relate how exactly he thinks about this—how one's own *mìng* is part of and influences the *mìng* of one's descendants—but there is no question that they do. He merely refers to commensurate formulations in the Confucian classics, especially this one from the *Book of Changes,* which he cites twice: "The family that accumulates good is bound to have abundant fortune. The family that accumulates evil is bound to meet with abundant misfortune".[48]

Bringing this finally back to Yuán Huáng's biography, it was not the stupendous odds against the continued accuracy of Kǒng's prophecy that led to his rejection of it, but rather the realization that one's fate is one's own to alter. In fact—and this is seldom stressed in the secondary literature—Yuán Huáng never rejected his fortune telling in the sense that he thought it was inaccurate or plain quackery: It had proved true, time and time again—but, as he now realized and later had confirmed, only while he did not actively try to change it. Fortune telling was possible—Yuán Huáng in fact dallied with it himself—and Kǒng had clearly reached supreme mastery, but it nonetheless represented a limited understanding of the world. With the help of Chán Master Yúngǔ, Huáng had managed to reach a deeper understanding—much like a Buddhist meditator's transcendence of ordinary knowledge and attainment of perfect gnosis through *dhyāna*. This was Yuán Huáng's enlightenment. And that he wanted to be known far and wide: From that day onwards he would be known not as "Ocean of Learning", his previous sobriquet, but as Liǎofán 了凡—"[He who has] Ended [or overcome] Mundanity".

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[47] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 34–5.

[48] *Yì jīng,* ch. 2, para. 10. Modified based on translation by Legge. The first part is cited by Huáng as an introduction to "Jī shàn zhī fang" ("Method of Accumulating Goodness", ch. 2 of *Liǎofán sì xùn*), and is also cited once in "Lì mìng zhī xué" (ch. 1). I might also add that although Yuán Huáng is largely unconcerned with the afterlife, it is my impression that one aspect with regard to kinship merit accumulation is that virtuous conduct will lead to filial sons and grandsons (etc.), who in turn will fulfil their sacrificial obligations towards their virtuous ancestor. This will in turn be beneficial for the ancestor. (If his outlook on the matter is Buddhist, then the perceived reason is that it will influence positively on his karma in future rebirths.)

As we have seen, most Buddhist schools teach that good deeds are karmically more potent if you at some point prior to their effectuation vowed to do them. And so one of the first things Yuán Huáng did as Liǎofán was to pledge the performance of three thousand good deeds—in order to "repay the virtuosity of [his] ancestors" and with the *lì mìng* goal of succeeding in the imperial examinations.[49] The next year, 1570, he gained first place in the provincial examination, not third as Kǒng had predicted, thus earning him the *jǔrén* 舉人 degree—and proving to him the efficacy of his new-born philanthropy.[50] Nine years later he performed the last of the three thousand good deeds. The following year, 1580, he then made another vow of three thousand deeds, this time with the supplication to finally have a son born to him. His faith in the boundless possibilities resting in the transformation of one's fate must have been great at this point, as he was already 47 years old, his wife presumably only a couple of years younger. His confidence could have been no less unwavering one year later, when his wife bore him not only a child but a son, thereby securing the Yuán blood line for at least another generation.[51]

Confidence is no less evident in Yuán Liǎofán's last vow, undertaken in 1583: Ten thousand good deeds, with the wish to pass the highest imperial examination and thus earn the vital degree of *jìnshì* 進士. This he did in 1586, and was subsequently appointed magistrate of Bǎodǐ county (寶坻縣) in North Zhílì province (北直隸府) in 1588. The consummation of his last vow during these years in office must have manifested well in his merits of service,[52] for after having served for five years he was appointed to a minor position in the Ministry of War[53]—in 1593, his sixtieth year. This was the year the Ming court finally decided to go all in on Korea's side in the Korean-Japanese War of 1592–1597, and Liǎofán was soon dispatched to the front to serve as advisor (*zànhuà* 贊畫) to the highest civil officer

[49] Yuán, "Lì mìng zhī xué", 880a.

[50] Again we have a possible parallel in meditation, viz. how meditative visions were interpreted and used as indicators (*xiàng* 相) of progress on the path.

[51] There is a parallel here in one of the earliest recounts of a system of merit accumulation: *Yào xiū kēyì jièlǜ chāo* 要修科儀戒律超, an early Táng text, tells of a man who had committed 530 evil deeds and thus could expect his children to be stillborn, while another who had done 720 would, as Brokaw phrases it, "be cursed with an even graver misfortune—many daughters, but no sons." Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 33.

[52] The breaking down of the *lǐ jiǎ* 里甲 system of rural organization in the previous decades had left unprecedented large room for dynamic local officials (Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 35). Liǎofán seems to have been an example of such, as he is remembered to this day as one of the most conscientious magistrates in the history of Bǎodǐ county. After he died, both a sacrificial altar and a memorial stele were erected to his memory. Securing his stature in particular, was his feat of managing to lower the tax and corvée burden of the county, through a memorial to the throne (which also secured him the remaining merits of his last wow). See Yáo 姚, "Bǎodǐ shànzhèng".

[53] His position was that of *zhǔshì* 主事 ("manager") in the *zhífāng sī* 職方司, a bureau under the Ministry of War (*bīng bù* 兵部) dealing with geography and tribute.

in the war, Sòng Yīngchāng 宋應昌. Liǎofán is portrayed as having opposed on moral grounds several of the decisions by the highest military officer Lǐ Rúsōng 李如松, thereby provoking Lǐ to impeach Liǎofán on false grounds, leading to Liǎofán being stripped of his office later that year.[54] In this he was one example among many, as the chaotic, fractious state of Late Míng court politics reached a climax during the last decades of the 16th century.[55] During the reign of the Tiānqǐ 天啟 emperor (1620–27) the war was reassessed, prompting a rehabilitation of Liǎofán and an acknowledgement of his contributions.[56]

Dismissal was perhaps not an unwelcome event, as it allowed him to return south to his home village Jiāshàn to spend his remaining years there and concentrate on his writing.[57] Several of his works were written in this period, including the most important autobiographical source that later became the first chapter of the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán*—and probably parts of the *Meditation Essentials.* Liǎofán died here in 1606, 73 years old—at least according to the conventional dating, which there is some reason not to trust unreservedly.[58]

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[54] Péng 彭, "Yuán Liǎofán zhuàn" 袁了凡傳*,* p0267a22.

[55] Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 31.

[56] Zhāng, "Shíliù shìjìmò zhōng-hán shǐjié guānyú Yángmíng xúe de lùnbiàn" 十六世紀末中韓使節關於陽明學的論辯, 67. Liǎofán was bestowed the title of 寶司少卿.

[57] *Jiāshàn xiàn zhì* 嘉善縣志, revised 1677 edition, fasc. 8, p. 22a.

[58] As far as I can tell, the year stems from the biographic encyclopaedia of prominent Buddhist laymen, *Jūshì zhuàn* ("Biographies of Laymen"), finished in 1775, and it seems impossible to know what that dating is based on. Of his extant biographies written prior to this, none mentions year of death (*Jiāshàn xiàn zhì* 嘉善縣志; *Jiāxìng fǔ zhì* 嘉興府志; *Jiāngnán tōngzhì* 江南通志; *Zuì wéi lù* 罪惟錄). As a matter of fact, the *Meditation Essentials* includes evidence for the falsity of this dating. In the preface, after mentioning his association with the monks Yúngǔ and Miàofēng, Liǎofán states: "The Great *Dharma* has been abandoned for a long time, and I wish to contribute to its revival. The two masters, too, have both passed away. […]" The Miàofēng he refers to, must, according to my research, be Miàofēng Fúdēng, 妙峰福燈 (1540–1612) of Mount Wǔtái 五台山. The fact that Miàofēng died in 1612 indicates that the *terminus post quem* of the *Meditation Essentials* is 1612—i.e. *after* his year of death, which is surely impossible. This means that either Liǎofán is wrong about Miàofēng being dead at the time of writing the preface, or the preface was written after 1612, which means in turn that Liǎofán's year of death too must be after 1612. The reasons for choosing for the latter option are quite compelling: First, the *Biographies of Laymen,* from which the conventional dating derives, was compiled as late as 1775. Second, the entry on Liǎofán in this work includes another misconception, namely that he was from Wújiāng 吳江, which has later been disconfirmed. However, the evidence for the latter option—that Liǎofán mistakenly believed that Miàofēng was dead—is even more compelling. For the first publication of the *Meditation Essentials* that we know of was in 1605. This redaction includes said preface with said comment, making 1605, not 1612, the *terminus post quem* for the *Meditation Essentials.* And so the evidence for the falsity of the conventional dating of Liǎofán's passing was not compelling evidence after all; 1606 is still a possibility, and should remain the conventional dating.

1.2. Works and legacy: Ocean of Learning; School of Mind

Today, Yuán Liǎofán is remembered primarily as the single most important individual for the dissemination of the Ledgers of Merit and Demerit; and among the originators of the related genre of *Shàn shū* 善書 ("[exhorting] good books"), through his four texts that circulated both independently and as part of other works, and that we today know by the title *Liǎofán sì xùn* 了凡四訓, the "Four Admonitions of Liǎofán". He is remembered as Liǎofán, the Buddhist layman who "overcame" his "ordinary" understanding of fate and fortune, and contributed to the inception of a movement that would later make a great impact on Chinese civil society.

Yet, though he had formally dropped this sobriquet, Liǎofán was still *Xuéhǎi* 學海, an "ocean of knowledge". He is described as a prodigy and as being of great learning (*bóxué* 博學) in several of the biographical sources, and wrote extensively on highly diverse topics. In the historical county and prefectural gazetteers where his biography was included, his fields of expertise are said to cover *Xiàng-wěi* divination (象緯), calendar science (*lì fǎ* 曆法), philological evaluation of historical texts (參訂古今圖史), geography (*yúdì* 輿地) and medicine and prophecy (*yī bǔ* 醫卜). Looking at the works included in *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* (*Liǎofán zázhù* 了凡雜著) we might add to this list edification, poetry, unofficial biography, water conservancy, agronomy, administration, "praying for progeny"—and, repentance and meditation.[59] According to Brokaw he also wrote commentaries on the Confucian Four Books (*Analects, Mencius, Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*).[60] In his entry in the *Dictionary of Ming Biography,* his works and interests are summarized into three categories: "Government-administrative writings, moral-religious writings, and reference books mostly aimed at students preparing for the examinations."[61] To this should perhaps be appended a category "personal writings", so that his poetry, biographies and letters are not excluded.

Alternatively, another possible categorization of his works, stressing their function and interrelatedness, could be drawn along the classical interior/exterior (*nèi-wài* 內外) distinction, yielding: (1) self-cultivation, (2) statecraft and preparations for service, (and 3,

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[59] Represented by the following titles (in the corresponding order): *Xùn ér súshūo* 訓兒俗說 ("Popular sayings for educating sons"); *Qǐ sì zhēnquán* 祈嗣真詮 ("The true principles of praying for progeny"); *Jìngxíng biépǐn* 净行別品 ("Alternative chapters on pure practice"); *Hé tú luò shū jiě* 河圖洛書解 ("An explication of the *Hé tú luò shū*"); *Quàn nóng shū* 勸農書 ("Letters for the encouragement of farming"); *Huáng dū shuǐ lì* 皇都水利 ("Water conservancy in the capital"); *Shī wài bié zhuàn* 詩外別傳 ("Unofficial poems and biographies"); *Bǎodǐ zhèngshū* 寶坻政書 ("Texts on the government of Bǎodǐ"); *Yuán-shēng chànfǎ* 袁生懺法 ("The repentance method of Mr Yuán") and *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣 ("Meditation essentials").

[60] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 70n29.

[61] Fang, "Yüan Huang", 1634.

personal writings). Another way of conceptualizing this distinction is through the root-and-branch metaphor of the *Great Learning*, one of two self-cultivation chapters extracted from the *Book of Rites* (c. 100 CE[62]) and included among the Four Books (*sì shū* 四書) of the new Neo-Confucian state orthodoxy. The main point the *Great Learning* makes is that good governance and moral behaviour is predicated upon the statesman's perfected virtues and state of mind, calling the latter *běn* 本 ("root") and the former *mò* 末 (”treetop" or ”tip of branch"). Self-cultivation follows a series of sequences, from cultivation of the mind (root) to moral action and good governance (branch), every step being a prerequisite for the next.

In the self-cultivation category I would then place the *Meditation Essentials* along with the works later published as the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán,* as well as *Qǐ sì zhēnquán* 祈嗣真詮 (”The true principles of praying for progeny"); *Jìngxíng biépǐn* 净行别品 and *Yuán-shēng chànfǎ* 袁生懺法 (”The repentance method of Mr Yuán"). The ”root-and-branch" distinction can be conveniently applied here as well. As I will argue in later chapters, there is a functional relationship between meditation and merit accumulation (represented by the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán*) wherein the former is a prerequisite of the former. This relationship is succinctly encapsulated, I believe, by conceiving the former as root and the latter as branch. There is even some evidence that meditation and merit accumulation was conceived of in exactly this way in Liǎofán's own time, as I will show when comparing Liǎofán to Liú Zōngzhōu in chapter four.

Thus, there are two levels to this root-and-branch distinction as applied to Yuán Liǎofán's authorship: first a general level, indicating the relationship between self-cultivation and statecraft; and then a more specific one, indicating the relationship between his works *within* the category of self-cultivation.

These functional distinctions have the added benefit of throwing light on the function of meditation within Liǎofán's program of self-cultivation and the *Meditation Essentials* within his authorship, a theme that will be pursued in chapter four.

The root-and-branch distinction corresponds almost to the conceptual pair "ideal-centred" and "fact-centred" that Joanna Handlin uses to distinguish diverging approaches to self-cultivation in the late Míng. The "ideal-centred" approach, as defined by Handlin, emphasised abstract ideals based upon scholarly learning from the Classics, whereas the "fact-centred" approach is characterized by an emphasis on personal experience, concrete events, and the scrutiny and perfection of faults.[63] Let us now see if this framework is applicable to Yuán Liǎofán, specifically his meditation and merit accumulation.

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[62] Brooks and Brooks, "An Overview of Selected Classical Chinese Texts." All the datings in this thesis of historical texts are based on the revisionist datings by Brooks and the Warring States Project.
[63] Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought,* 186.

The *Meditation Essentials* is a bit difficult to place, inasmuch as Handlin's categories are based on the Confucian self-cultivation discourse (as narrowly understood). However, even though it expounds a *practice,* personal experience is almost entirely absent from that text, while appeals to authority, textual as well as previous sages (the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*) and present masters (meditation teachers for guidance), are conspicuously present. So are abstract virtues and ideals. There is no place, explicitly at least, for the unique experience of the individual. And so, on further scrutiny the *Meditation Essentials* fits into the ideal-centred genre in this framework.

As for the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán*, although they cite extensively from particularly the *Book of Changes* and *Mencius,* these works still fit relatively neatly into the "fact-centred" genre. Indeed, Liǎofán is one of Handlin's examples of intellectuals adhering to this approach.

The main problem with Handlin's distinction is that it obscures the possible functional and integrated relationship between these two approaches to self-cultivation. Admittedly, she does state that the two are not mutually incompatible, but her actual discussion of them nonetheless treats them as being in opposition. As a matter of fact, she invokes both Yuán Huáng and Liú Zōngzhōu as belonging to the "reorientation" of the fact-centred side, despite the fact, which will become clear through the course of this thesis, that they both spanned the whole root-and-branch continuum, including the "ideal-centred" practice of cultivating moral virtues through sitting in meditation.

The exceptionally perceptive reader will have noticed that even though divination must surely have been part of the original "moral-religious writings" category, I have not included it in my revised category of "self-cultivation". This must imply that I categorize it as "statecraft", which might strike the reader as odd. However, Korean sources from the 1592–97 war offer us a window through which we can detect its perceived utility in a governmental context: During his assignment in Korea Liǎofán somewhat bewildered the Korean king by fervently practicing a branch of Chinese geomancy called *wàng qì* 望氣, which Fang glosses as "prognostication involving study of the atmosphere".[64] This he did to determine the prognosis for battle—parallel, I might add, to one important usage of turtle shell divination (the origin of the Chinese script) in antiquity.[65]

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[64] Fang, "Yüan Huang", 1633.

[65] For an example of turtle shell divination used in a war context, see Ebrey ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook,* 4.

Zhāng Kūnjiāng has further explored Korean sources to show Liǎofán's contribution to Korean philosophical discourse at the time, through his advocacy of the Wáng Yángmíng 王陽明 School of Mind (*xīn xué* 心學) of Neo-Confucianism.[66]

This last finding is especially significant for the purposes of this paper, because it reveals Liǎofán's predilections regarding the Neo-Confucian schools, which are scarcely offered us by Liǎofán himself in his writing. The few mentions he does offer, Zhāng also locates, thus elaborating the descriptions from the Korean sources with a couple of details: First, Liǎofán lamented the contemporary situation of state orthodoxy, in which Zhū Xī 朱熹 (1130–1200) was accorded uncontested supremacy while Lù Jiǔyuān 陸九淵 (1139–1192), Wáng Yángmíng's doctrinal forerunner, was simply discarded. (This situation did indeed not reflect the intellectual trend in China at the time.) Second, his understanding of key concepts from the *Great Learning* corresponded with that of Yángmíng, who opposed Zhū Xī's interpretation. And third, he studied for a while under Wáng Jī 王畿, one of the most influential disciples of Wáng Yángmíng.[67]

This third detail is further attested to by the obituary Wáng Jī wrote of Liǎofán's father, Yuán Rén 袁仁 (1479-1546), with whom he was close friends. In this obituary we also learn that Wáng Gěn 王艮 (1483–1541), another student of Yángmíng, recommended that Yuán Rén go study with Yángmíng—though Rén never did, for whatever reason.[68]

It is not surprising that a Confucian scholar with Buddhist sympathies would adhere to the Neo-Confucian School of Mind rather than the School of Principle (*lǐ xué* 理學)—or said the other way around: that an adherent of the School of Mind might have Buddhist inclinations. Both schools were undoubtedly influenced by Buddhism (and exerted influence back again), but the common ground was more obvious in the School of Mind.[69] A superficial indication of this is the fact that ”school of mind” was also a designation of a denomination within Buddhism, namely the Chán school, which had been the leading Buddhist tradition ever since the late Táng 唐.

However, when it comes to meditation, the question of which Neo-Confucian school had most common ground with Buddhism is much less clear-cut. According to Rodney Taylor, meditative practices were predominantly associated with the Chéng-Zhū school, and

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[66] Zhāng 張, "Shíliù shìjìmò zhōng-hán shǐjié guānyú Yángmíng xúe de lùnbiàn" 十六世紀末中韓使節關於陽明學的論辯即其意義.

[67] This is corroborated by the Míng history *Zuì wéi lù* by Chá Jìzuǒ (f. 48, p. 67), where Liǎofán is said to have "harshly condemned [the] Chéng-Zhū [school]" ("極詆程朱").

[68] Zhāng 張, "Shíliù shìjìmò zhōng-hán shǐjié guānyú Yángmíng xúe de lùnbiàn jí qí yìyì" 十六世紀末中韓使節關於陽明學的論辯即其意義, 68–9.

[69] Araki, "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming", 39–40.

in fact deemed irrelevant by Wáng Yángmíng's School of Mind.[70] How then did Yuán Liǎofán, advocate of this school, come to practice meditation?

As we shall later see, demonstrated by examples such as Chén Báishā, Wáng Jī, Luó Hóngxiān and Liú Zōngzhōu, and as also pointed out by Mabuchi,[71] Taylor's assertion is not entirely correct. But let us first look for a partial answer in Liǎofán's life and Yuán's family history. Brokaw, basing herself on Okuzaki, observes that their forced position outside of the examination system allowed the Yuán family to stay relatively free in their intellectual propensities and clear of distinct doctrinal affiliations in the realm of Neo-Confucianism, yet remain active in contemporary debates.[72] In time, this intellectual independence and moral purity, untainted by the corrupting influence of first pursuit then holding of office, became inexorably linked with the family identity. Herein lies perhaps also the reason why Liǎofán's father, although on a social footing with disciples of Wáng Yángmíng, decided not to go study with him personally. To me it seems that this intellectual freedom ultimately can be traced at least partly to the socio-economic conditions during the late Míng, and that the Yuán family serves as a good example of how economic conditions might influence intellectual trends.

Although Liǎofán brought the Yuán family back onto the examination treadmill (his son too became a *jìnshì*), and trust in the examination system and bureaucracy are evident in his moral philosophy, this heritage of intellectual independence would no doubt have made its influence on him.

His works in the *shàn shū* genre furthermore evince an extraordinary personal faith in the power of the individual. As we saw in the previous section, man has the power to alter not only his moral fate, in the sense of reaching moral perfection, but also his *material* fate, climbing the social ladder. This *moral* individualism presumably secured a certain belief in *intellectual* individualism.

We see then that both his individual and familiar situation secured a certain openness towards "heterodox" doctrines and practices. This openness would certainly have been strengthened by the intellectual climate of the time. Indeed, without an appeal to that climate, the particular forms of intellectualism his openness took cannot be begun to be understood—and that brings us back to the Neo-Confucian debate of the time. Wáng Yángmíng had democratized the notion of sagehood, affirming everyone's ability to reach moral perfection through the uncovering of his or her perfect inner innate knowledge or conscience (*liángzhī* 良知). Accordingly, he also relativized the moral significance of the classics and the

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[70] Taylor, "Meditation in Ming Neo-Orthodoxy", 149.
[71] Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ", 64n.
[72] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 64–71.

historical (and mythic) sages, subordinating them to the moral judgement of each man's own conscience. The Tàizhōu 泰州 school (named after the birthplace of its founder Wáng Gěn), the most radical of the School of Mind branches growing out of Yángmíng's theories, brought this stream of his thought into what it perceived to be its logical conclusion: It is up to every man to seek out moral truth, and this quest should not be inhibited by random delineations of doctrines or judgments of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy. Some professed Confucians even believed that Buddhist and Daoist conceptions of the mind came closer to the truth and could be more helpful in the quest to uncover one's ”original nature” (*běnxìng* 本性) than the Confucian classics.[73] Buddhism and Daoism could thus in some respects be more ”confucian” than Confucianism itself, if Confucianism meant sticking prescriptively to the established scriptures and doctrines as decided by later interpreters. A section in the *Meditation Essentials* reveals Yuán Liǎofán's allegiance to this trend:

> Some might ask: “How is this [the compassion of the *bodhisattva*] different from Mòzǐ's theory of 'Impartial Love' (*jiān ài* 兼愛)?” My answer is: [Yangist] 'Self-preservation'[74] and [Mohist] Impartial Love are both commendable. Impartial Love is 'humaneness' (*rén* 仁); Self-Preservation is 'righteousness' (*yì* 義)—how indeed are these not virtues! Mencius' reason for being hostile towards Yángzǐ and Mòzǐ was simply their clutching to one [extreme]: Either clutching to Self-Preservation and neglecting Impartial Love, thereby harming *rén*; or clutching to Impartial Love and neglecting Self-Preservation, thereby harming *yì.* It is merely for this reason that Mencius remained hostile towards these doctrines.
>
> The scholars of antiquity practiced Self-Preservation; so how can Confucians not be Self-Preserving? 'Humaneness' is loving other people; so how can Confucians not practice Impartial Love? Confucianism regards striving for *rén* as the ethos of its doctrinal transmission. At the same time it has never abandoned *yì.* The parallel application and mutual compatibility of *rén* and *yì* is what is regarded as the Middle Way. If one did not practice self-preservation or Impartial Love, then how indeed could one do what is right? Clutching to the theories of Yáng and Mò, *and clutching to Confucianism*, are equally perverse! (ME 34b7–35a5)

[73] Mabuchi, “Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ”, 64. See for example the case of Xuē Huì 薛慧 (1489–1541), as quoted in Mabuchi, p. 78. According to Araki, during the period in which Wáng Yángmíng (1472–1529) was active, it was impossible for a Confucian to hold such blatantly ecumenical views (“Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming”, p. 43). If we do not regard Xuē Huì as an exception, it seems then that the 1520s and 1530s must have been decades of pronounced change in this regard. This is another reason, I think, for taking 1530 as the starting point of the late Míng. Bear in mind also that our Yuán Liǎofán was born in 1533—straight into late Míng syncretism in its incipient stage.

[74] *wèi wǒ* 為我. A gloss that is more faithful to the meaning of this concept, but less faithful the terseness of the paragraph as a whole, is “Doing for Oneself”. Opting for “self-preservation” I must specify that this Yangist concept has little to do with Wáng Gěn's *bǎo shēn* 保身, which is also glossable as ”self-preservation”. On the Yangist school and *wèi wǒ,* see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao,* 53–64.

Here I believe that “Confucianism", in the italicized phrase “clutching to Confucianism” (*zhí rú* 執儒), must be understood in the mentioned ”taizhouan” way of random, restricting partisanship.

Such judgements go back too to an age-old syncretist intellectual tradition, epitomized in “All Under Heaven” (*Tiān xià* 天下), final chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子 and the first instance of an intellectual history in China (probably dating from the early Hàn 漢 dynasty).[75] There too ”clutching to one [extreme]” (*zhí yī* 執一)—in that case of fragmented traces of the ancient sages that can be found in contemporary doctrines—is what is regarded as particularly intellectually perverse. The sages of old, according to the author of *Tiān xià*, did not let themselves be restricted from the Way by such constructions as doctrinal affiliation; the sages of new, in the view of the Tàizhōu school, transcended all notions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Hence, if meditation, even Buddhist meditation, aided Yuán Liǎofán in his quest for moral excellency, then it should not be regarded as incompatible with the Confucian quest for sagehood. Many Tàizhōu affiliates used Buddhist doctrine in this way. Possibly, many of these also practiced Buddhist meditation, considering its essential role in Buddhist practice (a hypothesis which to my knowledge is yet to be explored). Buddhist meditation might even have been simpler to accept than an integrated Confucianized practice. Indeed, the meditative practice found in Wáng Jī, not strictly of the Tàizhōu school but habitually linked to it, has clearer Buddhist characteristics than those found among Dōnglín affiliates, such as Gāo Pānlóng 高攀龍 and Liú Zōngzhōu 劉宗周 (whom we will meet in chapter four). At the same time, paradoxically, it seems to have played a much less central and integrated role (raising the question of which of the two strategies was in the end more syncretistic.) This last fact—the discrepancy in degree of “confucianization”—is presumably also the reason behind Taylor’s assertion that ”quiet-sitting” was mainly associated with the Chéng-Zhū School of Principle.

This tolerance for Buddhist practices is of course not only attributable to the theorizing of philosophers in the Tàizhōu School of Mind. The cultural ascendancy of Buddhism, detailed by Timothy Brook in *Praying for Power,* played a crucial role as well. Figuratively speaking, from the tea pavilions of a Buddhist monastery, where trendy Confucian scholars came to drink tea and even read sutras, the distance to the *dhyāna* hall was not far. Not owing merely to the intellectual developments within the school of mind, this had also to do with economic and social developments that lead the invigorated gentry to seek ways to affirm their newly won economic power outside of the Confucian state realm.

[75] ICS Zhuangzi 33/97/13–33/102/2. Brooks and Brooks, in “An Overview of Selected Classical Chinese Texts,” call the *Tiān xià* a librarian’s colophon rather than an actual chapter.

Or rather: these developments are all interrelated—the economic conditions also influencing the trajectory of the development of Neo-Confucianism. Still, it is possible to distinguish between the two when it comes to the shift in the gravitation in Liǎofán's eclecticism from Daoist—where it had been with his ancestors (not uncommon for people dealing with medicine)—to Buddhist.[76] This is clearly better explained by the economic and cultural ascendancy of Buddhism than the intellectual trends of the Tàizhōu school, which affirmed the role of Daoism as much as it did Buddhism.

Yuán Liǎofán was indeed identified with the Yángmíng School and Tàizhōu branch by later critics, and routinely linked with Lǐ Zhì 李贄 (the erratic figure mentioned in the introduction), "as an example of the type of irresponsible and 'depraved' literatus responsible for the fall of the Ming."[77] This was despite the fact that the two never associated and had little in common intellectually other than their affirmation of Buddhism. For example, Lǐ Zhì left no works on meditation. He furthermore "lamented the dominance of market values in the formation of human relationships", [78] which bears resemblance to the criticism most commonly directed against Liǎofán's use of merit ledgers: that this subjected ethics to market logic and reduced moral goodness to profit-seeking.[79] Their common fault then must have rested in their readiness to look for moral authority beyond the Confucian classics and beyond the contemporary state of Confucianism.

And yet, whenever concrete critique was directed towards Liǎofán, it was always his *shàn shū* and the keeping of ledgers that was criticized—or endorsed. As I will show in the next chapter, to my knowledge, prior to 1929 no one ever appraised his meditation practice. Liú Zōngzhōu (1578–1645), perhaps the most important Neo-Confucian philosopher of the very late Míng, and part of the Dōnglín reaction to the Tàizhōu school, offered the most detailed criticism of Liǎofán, and even designed his own self-cultivation program in response.[80] In this program, meditation plays a surprisingly essential part, meaning that this could not be a part of his opposition to Liǎofán, at least not meditation per se. Does this mean

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[76] One exception to this shift is his *Qǐ sì zhēnquán* 祈嗣真詮 ("The true explication of praying for progeny"), perhaps the most syncretic of Liǎofán's works, where there arguably is an overweight of typically Daoist practices. The shorter abridgement *Shè shēng sān yào* 攝生三要 ("Three essentials for the nourishment of life" describes how to nourish the body's *qì* 氣 ("ether"), *jīng* 精 ("quintessence") and *shén* 神 ("spirit"), unmistakably Daiost practices.
[77] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 112. In the biographical section of the unofficial Míng history *Zuì wéi lù,* the two are grouped together under one entry ("李贄袁黄"), as the only ones as far as I can see. Yet the actual biographies are separated, and no relation between them is explicated. See Chá Jìzuǒ, *Zuì wéi lù,* f. 48, p. 67.
[78] Ibid., 126.
[79] Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 200, 202.
[80] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 130–8.

that Liǎofán and/or his audience regarded the two as separate? Or might it be that his critics missed a crucial part of his program of self-cultivation?

CHAPTER 2: THE *MEDITATION ESSENTIALS* AND *THE SEQUENTIAL GATEWAY*

Having introduced the author's biographical, bibliographical and intellectual context, let us now turn to the subject matter of the thesis, his *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣 ("The Meditation Essentials"). It is a common misconception either that Liǎofán authored the treatise himself or, more commonly, compiled and edited it from a base of different Buddhist meditation texts. And in the latter case, the text he does in fact base himself on is curiously never among the texts mentioned.[81] Liǎofán himself provides no clues as to what parts of the texts are quotations, where they are extracted from, or to what degree they are condensed or rewritten. Some segments are quite obviously his own writing. Without the preface a reader without mastery of Buddhist meditation texts might be mislead to think that his pen is present throughout the text. The preface is where he reveals his own role:

> For the sake of expounding the purport of the teachings [masters Yúngǔ Fǎhuì and Miàofēng Fúdēng] left behind, as well as exploring the legacy of the Tiāntāi [school], I have *compiled* (輯) this treatise. I now share it with the aspiring. (ME 33b6–7, my emphasis)

For a long time I too believed that much of the content in the *Meditation Essentials* was gathered from different meditation texts, and tried to ascertain which paragraphs in the *Meditation Essentials* this was, as well as which texts they were extracted from. After having done this for a while, however, I had only found fragments from *one* meditation text. On the other hand, these fragments started to cover a considerable portion, found in every chapter. Thus came the realization that the *Meditation Essentials* is *not* an edited compilation of different meditation texts, but (with one exception) rather a reworked abridgment of one single meditation text, Zhìyǐ's *Sequential Gateway*.[82] I find no better word than 'abridgement' to describe this process and the resulting text, but there are many qualifications to such a description; and for the complicated role of Liǎofán in this process there simply exists no word (though I am of course forced to refer to it repeatedly, opting then for "author"). The quality of this role will emerge gradually in the following presentation.

I begin it by treating Liǎofán's possible reasons and motivations for choosing the basis text he did, and continue with a discussion of the genre of the *Meditation Essentials*

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[81] Yán Wèibīng 嚴蔚冰, editor of the most recent publication of the *Meditation Essentials,* claims intimate understanding of it yet says that it is based mainly on the *Liù miào fǎmén* and *Xiǎo zhǐ-guān* (both of which I will come back to below). Yán, ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣, 102.

[82] As far as I know, or later came to learn, this discovery was first made by Mabuchi, in "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ" (from 2013), 96. He does not, however, mention the exception, which I will return to below.

through comparisons with other similar preceding as well as contemporary works. Then I turn to the core of this chapter, which is to analyze the content and structure of the *Meditation Essentials*, as well as the methodology Liǎofán employs to abridge and recast Zhìyǐ's text. Gradually, the ways in which Liǎofán's *Meditation Essentials* differs from Zhìyǐ's *Sequential Gateway* will begin to emerge. Generalizing these will in turn facilitate a discussion of the reasons behind them, and that is where this chapter points to and provides a basis for chapter three and four. Although Liǎofán introduces no new practices, I contend that the meditation of the *Meditation Essentials* is fundementally different from that of the *Sequential Gateway,* by virtue of the new Confucian framework Liǎofán erects for it, after having dismantled the original. I conclude the chapter with a philological treatment of the text's provenance and transmission, bringing it all the way up to our day, when the *Meditation Essentials* can still be read.

Before all this, however, it is necessary to get to know this meditation treatise to which the *Meditation Essentials* is so greatly indebted.

2.1. Zhìyǐ and *Explaining the Sequential Gateway to the Perfection of Dhyāna*

Explaining the Sequential Gateway to the Perfection of Dhyāna[83] is a treatise on meditation based on a series of lectures held by Zhìyǐ 智顗 (538–597) sometime during his eight years

[83] *Shì chán bōluómì cìdì fǎmén* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門 (T46n1916). In Chinese the work is often referred to by one of its shortened titles *Cìdì chán mén* 次第禪門 ("Sequential gateway of *dhyāna*") or *Chán bōluómì* 禪波羅蜜 ("The perfection of *dhyāna*"). In this thesis it is henceforth referred to as "Sequential Gateway". Direct references come in-line with the acronym SG followed by page and line number based on the concordance code in CBETA.

Since the work has never been translated into English, there is no fixed rendering of the title. The three scholars that I know of who have worked on the treatise in English all render it slightly differently than I do—and different from each other: Greene uses "Explanation of the Sequential Method of Cultivation of the Perfection of *Dhyāna*"; Wang prefers "An Exposition of the Methods to Achieve the Stages of Meditative Perfection"; whereas Donner and Stevenson glosses it as "Elucidation of the Graduated Approach to the Perfection of Dhyāna". (Stevenson has later, in an informal setting, described it as "Sequential Approaches for the Perfection of *Dhyāna*". I have two main objections to these renderings, one concerning the word *shì* 釋*,* and the other the word *fǎmén* 法門: First, I insist that *shì* 釋 ("explain/explanation") is verbal in this title. As for *Fǎ* 法, it is a complicated word, but its two main denotations in Chinese are "law" and "model, method"; in Buddhism it is in addition used to translate Sanskrit *dharma*. *Mén* 門 means "gate" (the graph is a pictogram), with the additional metaphorical meaning "means, method". In my opinion English "gateway" best covers both the literal and the metaphorical meanings of *mén.* For the compound *fǎmén,* "*dharma* gateway" as Apple uses for *Liù miào fǎmén* 六妙法門 ("Six Subtle Dharma Gateways"), is possible, but is perhaps a bit too awkward with its four syllables and mixing of languages. It furthermore slightly obscures the fact that *fǎ,* too, has the meaning of "method". I thus land on "gateway", which in any case is better than simply "method". Lastly, in the introduction I have already mentioned one decisive reason for avoiding "meditation" as a gloss for *chán* 禪.

See Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation,* 6–7; Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism", 203; Wang 王,

stay at the Chén 陳 capital of Jīnlíng (金陵, today's Nánjīng) from 567 to 575 AD. Zhìyǐ is regarded as the fourth patriarch and founder of the Tiāntāi school (天台宗, Jap. Tendai). He is without question one of the most important figures of East Asian Buddhism as a whole, his works—especially those on meditation—having been read and exerting influence not only within Tiāntāi but throughout the East Asian Buddhist world for the last 1400 years. Though wary of guru status, Zhìyǐ was a major figure in his own day as well, owing significantly to the lectures on meditation that were to become the *Sequential Gateway*.[84] As with most of the works attributed to him, Zhìyǐ did not write the treatise himself; rather it was based on notes taken down by one of the attendants, in this case by the monk Fǎshèn 法慎, incidentally making it the sole such work that was not recorded by fifth patriarch Guàndǐng (灌頂, 561–632)—though Guàndǐng was responsible for the editing, which according to Tiāntāi scholar Ando Toshio was quite considerable.[85] As maintained by Guàndǐng in his biography of Zhìyǐ, the lectures series lasted one year.[86] In a colophon attributed to same Guàndǐng, that year was 571.[87] The extant redaction is supposed to consist of ten chapters, but the last three are missing. The reason for this is disputed, as is the question of how extensive it was before Guàndǐng's editing.[88]

The *Sequential Gateway* may be regarded as the culmination of Zhìyǐ's early years of studies and practice, especially his seven years under Huìsī (慧思, 515–577, second Tiāntāi patriarch), from whom he inherited the priority of the "perfection of *dhyāna*" over "the perfection of wisdom" (as well as the four remaining perfections). They studied together the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*[89] as well as its even more influential commentary *Dàzhì dù lùn* 大智度論[90], the two works on which the Sequential Gateways is predominantly based.[91] (Huìsī's bibliography moreover contains a one-fascicle work intriguingly titled *Sequential Dhyāna Essentials* (*Cìdì chán yào* 次第禪要), unfortunately no longer extant.) A massive 10 fascicle work, the *Sequential Gateway* incorporates and systematizes the array of Buddhist meditative practices that had been brought into and further developed in China from the second to sixth centuries CE, the period commonly referred to as "Early Chinese Buddhism".

"Zhiyi's Interpretation of the Concept '*Dhyāna*' in His Shi Chan Boluomi Tsidi Famen", 13, 15; Stevenson, "Buddhism in China–Connecting with the Source", part 9; Apple, *Value Of Simple Practice*, 1.

[84] Ando 安藤, *Tiāntāi xué* 天台學 [Tiāntāi studies], 512, 521–3.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Wang, "Zhiyi's Interpretation of the Concept '*Dhyāna*'," 27.

[87] Ibid., 26.

[88] Ibid., 25–27. One common claim is that it consisted originally of 30 fascicles; Ando regards this as unlikely. *Tiāntāi xué,* 510.

[89] Ch. *Dàpǐn bōrè jīng* 大品般若經 ("Scripture on great wisdom"), T07n0220.

[90] Skt. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* ("Commentary on the great perfection of wisdom"), T25n1509. Possibly apocryphal, which is why I use its Chinese title. For its apocryphal status, see Digital Dictionary of Buddhism ("大智度論").

[91] Ando, *Tiāntāi xué,* 509, 511–2.

It situates all these practices within a comprehensive, theoretical—and Mahāyānist—framework, as such being the first of its kind. Many of these practices made their first appearance in shorter manuals—some being translations, other apocrypha, most a blend of the two—without providing such a framework. Conceivably, these fragmented texts on meditation practice were in Zhìyǐ's eyes a symptom of the larger contemporary state of Chinese Buddhism, which in his opinion was fraught with narrow-minded specialization in either theory or practice, in turn a situation that he and Tiāntāi Buddhism sought to remedy.[92]

The *Sequential Gateways* represents one of the three main overarching schemes for meditation that Zhìyǐ developed, namely the ”gradual *śamatha-vipaśyanā*” or ”gradual calming and contemplation” (*jiàncì zhǐ-guān* 漸次止觀). ”Gradual”, which we see as ”sequential” in the title, here means starting from simple, shallower meditation practices—or even preparatory practices, as in the *Sequential Gateway*—and incrementally, progressively and meticulously approaching the complex and deeper, eventually arriving at enlightenment itself. The other two schemes are ”unfixed calming and contemplation” (*bú dìng zhǐ-gūan* 不定止觀), of which the shorter *Six Wondrous Gateways*[93] is the representative work, and ”complete and sudden calming and contemplation” (*yuán dùn zhǐ-guān* 圓頓止觀), which is elaborated in the equally massive *Great Calming and Contemplation*[94]. Since Zhìyǐ developed the ”gradual” approach before the other two, and this ostensibly happened before his final awakening, the *Sequential Gateway* has been a relatively neglected work. There is consensus among present scholars that it deserves much more attention that it has been accorded in modern scholarship.[95] However, their reason for such a statement is commonly due to its *indirect* significance: Either as a work through which we may catch a glimpse of even earlier Buddhist meditative practices and conceptualizations in China (Greene), or as a work indispensable to a full understanding of Zhìyǐ's other, more important, works, most notably the *Small Calming and Contemplation*[96] and the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, which repeatedly refers to it (Stevenson). What the 16th century *Meditation Essentials* by Yuán Liǎofán shows us is that the *Sequential Gateway*, even one millennium later, was used and studied also *in and of itself*, and thus warrants our attention in its own right.

Owing to its immense scale and technical complexities, and the comparatively small scope of this thesis, I myself however am forced to turn my focus now to the *Meditation Essentials* (though I will keep comparing the two).

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[92] Ibid., 34.
[93] *Liù miào fǎmén* 六妙法門 (T46n1917).
[94] *Móhē zhǐ-guān* 摩訶止觀 (T46n1911).
[95] Ando, *Tiāntāi xué,* 499, 510; Greene, "Meditation, repentance, and visionary experience”, 203; Stevenson, “Buddhism in China”; Wang, “Zhiyi's Interpretation of the Concept ‘*Dhyāna*’”, 16–20.
[96] *Xiǎo zhǐ-guān* 小止觀 (*Xiūxí zhǐ-guān zuòchán fǎ yào* 修習止觀坐禪法要, T46n1915).

2.2. The *Meditation Essentials* by Yuán Liǎofán

Almost exactly one millenium after Zhìyǐ's lecturing of the *Sequential Gateway,* the Confucian scholar and lay Buddhist Yuán Liǎofán authored a meditation treatise on its basis, calling it eventually *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣*,* ”Essential Knacks of Sitting in Meditation”, or as I render it, the ”Meditation Essentials”. One fascicle and about 14 000 characters long, it is roughly 1/9 the scale of the ten fascicle and 120 000 character long *Sequential Gateway,* and comparable in size to the *Small Calming and Contemplation*, a text Zhìyǐ authored himself later as a more accessible version and which has been one of the most widely read texts on meditation in East Asia.[97] I think it would be surprising to most Buddhologists to learn that it is not this text layman Liǎofán uses, but rather the momentous and comparatively obscure (at least from a current perspective) *Sequential Gateway.* Liǎofán's motivations we can only guess at. Perhaps he was first recommended the *Small Calming and Contemplation* by his meditation teacher, but left unsatisfied by it and thereupon requested to see something more elaborate? Or perhaps he studied this text regularly and over several years in concert with his teacher? In the preface he writes: ”My teacher, Great Master Yúngǔ, meditated for over twenty years, and possessed subtle understanding of the Tiāntāi legacy, *which he discussed in detail with me*.” (ME 33b4–5, my emphasis) What we may say for certain is that the *Sequential Gateway*, as compared to the *Small Calming and Contemplation,* left him with many more options regarding which practices to include and which to exclude, as we shall see later. After all, the *Small Calming and Contemplation* was already heavily condensed. Moreover, it is clear that the unequivocally and explicitly gradual approach to meditation in the *Sequential Gateway* caught his interest. As he states in the preface: ”Generally speaking, as for the methods of meditation, there are steps through which one embarks on cultivation (...)”. (ME 33b2) As I will return to later in this chapter and also in chapter three, the only overarching scheme that Liǎofán retains from Zhìyǐ is precisely the gradualness (although he makes one very significant reordering, as we shall see).

Almost as surprising as Liǎofán's selection of this text at the expense of other Tiāntāi works, is the fact that he avails himself of Tiāntāi material at all. It is generally agreed upon that Chán 禪 and Pure Land (*jìngtǔ* 淨土) were the two dominant traditions during the late Míng, Tiāntāi suffering a general decline ever since its revival in the Sòng dynasty.[98] Typical Chán practices, such as *gōng'àn* (公案, Jap. *kōan*) or silent illumination (*mòzhào* 默照), are blatantly absent from the *Meditation Essentials*, and so is Buddha recitation (*niàn Fó* 念佛) of Pure Land Buddhism. The only reference to such practices is in a section called ”restraining the mind by tying [it] to objects” in the second chapter “On Preparatory Practices”: ”In the end, Buddha recitation, keeping *mantras,* investigating *huàtóu*[99] and the

[97] Ando, *Tiāntāi xué,* 36.
[98] Ando, *Tiāntāi xué*, 2.
[99] 話頭, the central phrase of a *gōng'àn,* by synecdoche also used to refer to the *gōng'àn* itself.

like are all [instances of] deluded thoughts. Nevertheless, one avails oneself of this one delusion to suspend the flock of delusions." (ME 38a4–6) They thus feature only as a preparatory expedience of stilling the mind.

Again one wonders what the motivations of Liǎofán were. I say the motivations of Liǎofán and not of his teacher, because Yúngǔ was known for his joint mastery of all the traditions, as well as for his proficiency in "expedient means" (*fāngbiàn* 方便, *upāya*), i.e. in each particularity recognizing the most appropriate way to lead someone towards enlightenment. Moreover, if Yúngǔ did incline in any way, it seems to have been in the direction of Chán and Pure Land practices.[100] In the works on meditation by Hānshān Déqīng, whose primary instructor was also Yúngǔ, we see none of the practices we see in Liǎofán, and vice versa.[101] These circumstances make it difficult not to conclude that the choice of the *Sequential Gateway* reflects the inclinations of Liǎofán rather than his teacher Yúngǔ—notwithstanding that it was most likely Yúngǔ who introduced and instructed him in the text. I think one reason for the choice of a Tiāntāi text might be that, although an avowed adherent of the anti-bookish-learning Wáng Yángmíng School of Mind, Liǎofán's biography and bibliography both clearly show that he was a man of books and scholarship. This might have made him sceptical towards the ambivalent attitude to textual learning within the Chán school, and at the very least would not have deterred him from approaching the massiveness of Zhìyǐ's teachings. The devotional meditation within the Pure Land tradition, on the other hand, might have appeared too easy; it is likely that the uncompromising faith in the power of each individual that we see in his *lì mìng* theory—Liǎofán's variety of individualism—rendered him less susceptible to the Pure Land doctrines of the degenerate age (*mò fǎ* 末法) and the impossibility of attaining *nirvāṇa* through own effort.

One last thing we might look at in order to get a clue of the reasons behind Liǎofán's choice of text, is the differences in the persons of Hānshān Déqīng and Yuán Liǎofán that might in turn explain the differences in their meditative practice. The most obvious and significant contrast between these two is that Hānshān was a monk whereas Liǎofán was a layman. Generally speaking, today monks do not advice lay-people to practice *gōng'àn* meditation, as it usually necessitates the delimitations in space and time that only a monastic life can provide. Although one should be wary of projecting present practice four centuries back in time, I wonder if this was the case for late Míng also.[102]

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[100] Hānshān 憨山, "Yúngǔ dàshī zhuàn" 雲谷大師傳 ("Biography of Great Master Yúngǔ"), p0673b14–b16 and p0674a10–a12. Yúngǔ was also well versed in Huáyán (p0674b05) and Yogâcāra theory (p0673b16). See also Brokaw, *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit,* 78.

[101] Eifring, "Meditative Pluralism in Hānshān Déqīng", 117, 126.

[102] All the meditative traditions in China agree that wrong meditation is not only futile, but can be harmful. Liǎofán shows his adherence to this view in the preface: "If we skew out of course, and have no wise teacher to guide us and to show us the cruces, then some of us will regard what little we have obtained as complete, others will on the contrary contract illnesses." (ME 33a–b) And then in chapter 1: "As soon as there is a slight error in the will, one will descend into evil ways." (ME 33b)

If this is the case, it shows that the fact that these two men each practiced their own unique form of meditation does not imply that Yúngǔ did not play a role in *guiding* them towards it. He seems at least to be part of the reason why Liǎofán did not practice *gōng'àn* meditation, and we know for a fact from Hānshān himself that his reputed Buddha recitation *gōng'àn* ("Who is reciting?") stems from Yúngǔ.[103] It should be interesting (in a different study) to compare Liǎofán with the numerous other well-known laymen of the period, and see if a pattern emerges.[104] Other than Buddha recitation and the too generic label "chán", what kinds of meditation did they actually practice? Could it be that the *Sequential Gateway* is in fact not an anomaly at all? Was perhaps Zhìyǐ's gradual scheme for meditation, as represented in the *Sequential Gateways* and the *Small Calming and Contemplation*, rather regarded as particularly suitable for lay practitioners? There is no indication of the plausibility of such hypotheses in Sheng-yen's late Míng study, but I wonder how deep he has been able to dig in such a wide-ranging study.[105]

The last aspect I would like to look at with regard to Liǎofán's motivations—and the most significant for this study—is his consideration for selfish intentions and desires. Since I will return to and argue for this point later, I will here simply note that I think one reason for Liǎofán selecting the *Sequential Gateway*—and at least for deeming its content the very quintessence of potent meditation—is its inclusion of practices devised to counteract desire and reinforce compassion.

2.3. Genre and title

Some words should be said about the genre of the *Meditation Essentials.* One fascicle in length, heavily practice oriented and claiming to convey an essence of some kind, the *Meditation Essentials* is what I would deem a manual, more specifically a meditation manual. As such it harks back to the genre of short meditation manuals called "*Dhyāna* scriptures" (*chán jīng* 禪經) of Early Chinese Buddhism. This is a fascinating historical coincidence

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As for *gōng'àn* being a monk's practice, in Sòng times it may have been the other way around, according to Sharf: "As for Rinzai [Línjì 臨濟], the notion that kōans, which developed as a literary genre, could serve as objects of seated contemplation dates no earlier than the Song, and even then it may originally have been intended as a simplified exercise for laypersons rather than a practice befitting elite monks who aspired to become abbots." See Sharf, "Mindfulness and Mindlessness in Early Chán," 933–4.

[103] Hānshān, "Yúngǔ dàshī zhuàn".

[104] Sheng-yen 聖嚴 does something of the kind in his "Study of late Ming Buddhism" (*Míngmò fójiào yánjiù* 明末佛教研究, 285–6), but under the larger rubric of "practice", not solely meditation per se. Dividing the laymen into the categories of (1) "Pure Land", (2) "Chán", (3) "First Chán, then Pure Land", (4) "Buddha recitation *samādhi*" and (5) "Joint Chán and Pure Land", he finds that by far the most sort under the Pure Land category (28 laymen), with Chán coming in as a clear number two (12), followed by the three others (8; 6; 5). Unfortunately, he says nothing of what particular kind of chán meditation the Chán practitioners practiced.

[105] Ibid.

considering that such manuals were part of the basis for Zhìyǐ's 6th century *Sequential Gateway*—on which in turn the *Meditation Essentials* is based. In fact its title is very similar to some of these works, the character *yào* 要 (”essential”) recurring in many of them. We have for example the *Scripture on the Esoteric Essential Methods of Dhyāna* (*Chán mì yàofǎ jīng* 禪祕要法經, shortened ”Chan Essentials” by Greene)[106], an important apocryph by Kumārajīva that exerted much influence in its time, including on Zhìyǐ.[107] The title is also strikingly similar to two single fascicle meditation works attributed to Zhìyǐ himself, *Chán mén yàolüè* 禪門要略 (”Essentials of the *dhyāna* gate” or simply ”Dhyāna essentials”) and *Chán mén kǒujué* 禪門口訣 (”Mnemonic formulas of the *dhyāna* gate” or ”*Dhyāna* formulas”).[108] The latter is quoted briefly twice in the *Meditation Essentials* as "*Tiāntāi chán mén kǒujué*", but none of them serves as the basis for the *Meditation Essentials*—except, it would seem, as possible titular inspirations. Although not plain to see, even the much more well-known *Small Calming and Contemplation—*which, as described above, in common with the *Meditation Essentials* is basically a shortened version of the *Sequential Gateway*—is titularly similar; its (seldom used) full title is *Xiūxí zhǐ-guān zuòchán fǎ yào* 修習止觀坐禪法要 (”The essential methods for practicing calming/contemplation and sitting in *dhyāna*”).

An early, or working, title of the *Meditation Essentials* was in fact *Zuòchán yàojué* 坐禪要訣 (”Essentials of sitting in *dhyāna*” or ”*Dhyāna* essentials”),[109] which almost mirrors several of both the early "*dhyāna* scriptures" and Zhìyǐ's manuals, especially the last four characters of the full title of the *Small Calming and Contemplation*. On the basis of this working title alone it would have been impossible to distinguish it from the, in some cases 1300 years older, *Dhyāna* Scriptures.

There was also at least one similarly titled work in Liǎofán's own time. In one of the only two bibliographies mentioning the *Meditation Essentials* that I was able to locate, the entry right next to it is one *Cān chán yàofǎ* 參禪要法, "The Essential Method for Investigating *Dhyāna*".[110] In common with the *Meditation Essentials*, it is listed as consisting of one fascicle.

The only aspect of the title, then, that makes the *Meditation Essentials* stand out from other ancient as well as contemporary Buddhist works on meditation, is the *jìngzuò* part, ”quiet-sitting” or ”sitting in meditation”. This term for meditation was not commonly used in Buddhism, nor any other traditions, before the 11th century. It became the preferred term for meditation in Neo-Confucianism straight from its inception in the 12th century. We find it

[106] T15n0613.
[107] Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 79–80.
[108] T46n1919 and X55n0908 respectively.
[109] As quoted in the 1594 work *Jìngtǔ zīliáng quánjí* 淨土資糧全集 (X61n1162), fasc. 6, p0610a15.
[110] The listed author is not entirely obscure. Wáng Kěntáng 王肯堂 (?–1638) was a scholar-official, physician and Buddhist layman—much like Liǎofán himself. For this exact text, however, I have found no clues.

used by most of the renowned Neo-Confucians, both those preceding and those more or less contemporaneous with Liǎofán; in some cases even in the title of independent chapters or works. For example, Gāo Pānlóng (1562–1626) and Liú Zōngzhōu (1578–1645), two mastodons of late Míng Confucianism, both had short works entitled *Sayings on Meditation* (*Jìngzuò shuō* 靜坐說) in their respective authorships (first published 1615[111] and 1633[112] respectively). Although it is wrong as is commonly claimed or assumed that the term *jìngzuò* was exclusively Confucian, from Liǎofán's use of this particular term it is clear that his intended readership is not primarily Buddhist. I would not claim that his readership is therefore strictly Confucian (which is tempting), because *jìngzuò* seems to be the most denominationally neutral word available to him. Instead, we should say that the application of this word indicates that his intended readership was the general gentry.[113] Still, belonging to the gentry had ever since Hàn 漢 times been closely tied to identification with Confucianism. When we later take a closer look at the usage of terms and the framing of the content, we will see that Liǎofán addresses primarily Confucian readers.

As the early working title *Dhyāna Essentials* indicates, however, the actual practices described in the book are unmistakably Buddhist, as already briefly discussed above. It is not only the title and genre that harks back to the Buddhist meditation manuals of the 4th and 5th centuries but also much of its content. Inasmuch as Zhìyǐ incorporated many of these in his great systematization that became the *Sequential Gateway,* the practices retained in in the *Meditation Essentials* are predominantly the same practices as you find in those early manuals. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the systematization and theorizing that Zhìyǐ superposes on these practices—and the multifarious connections he draws between them—were not developed yet in these manuals. When Yuán Liǎofán, one millennium after Zhìyǐ and 1300 years after the manuals, strips most of that theoretical framework away again, we end up with the paradoxical result that this 16th century treatise on meditation is in many respects similar to the meditation manuals of Early Chinese Buddhism. Not only that, but it consequently also bears comparison to Hīnayāna meditation practices, seeing as except for *bodhi-citta* (the aspiration to become a *bodhisattva*) there was in the early period of Chinese Buddhism little that separated the meditation practices of the two wagons.[114]

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[111] Taylor, "Meditation in Ming Neo-Orthodoxy," 175n39.

[112] Fān 潘, "Liú Zōngzhōu duìyú 'zhǔ jìng' yǔ 'jìngzuò' de fǎnxǐng" 劉宗周對於 "主靜" 與 "靜坐" 的反省, 63.

[113] Probably including the lower gentry and possibly even commoners. In one of the most popular works of popular meditation literature in modern China, Jǐang Wéiqiáo 蔣維喬 (1873–1958) notes that the word *jìngzuò* (as understood by him in 1955) is very transparent, "in keeping with the vulgar and easy to understand". Jiǎng, *Yīnshìzi wèishēng shíyàn tán* 因是子衛生實驗談, 101. "Vulgar" in the sense of popular.

[114] Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 46.

2.4. Structure, methodology and content

Let us now look more closely at how these practices are presented in the *Meditation Essentials*: the structuring of the work and the editing methodology that Liǎofán uses—all along comparing the presentation with its basis text *Sequential Gateway*.

The *Meditation Essentials* is ordered into seven parts: a preface and six chapters (*piān* 篇), of which the first two deal with preparatory considerations, and the last four with meditation proper, each focusing on one particular type of meditative practice. Each chapter typically opens with a short introductory note by Liǎofán himself, after which follows descriptions of the concrete practice, which are typically long citations from the *Sequential Gateway,* often omitting or condensing especially verbose or abstruse parts in the original, exchanging some vocabulary, rewriting some passages, and occasionally inserting in between them a few sentences by Liǎofán himself. Some of the chapters are then wrapped up with another short comment by Liǎofán. As we have seen, in the preface Liǎofán calls his role that of "editing" (*jí* 輯). It is a striking feature of the *Meditation Essentials*, however (at least to modern Western eyes), that nowhere throughout the entire text is the *Sequential Gateway* or its author ever mentioned, even in the preface where such information would perhaps be natural to provide. Neither are any of the citations from it marked in any way. (I first discovered them by inserting snippets from the *Meditation Essentials* into the ”range” search-engine of CBETA Lexicon Tool.[115])

As for the vocabulary, some changes are of a linguistic nature, such as systematically exchanging *xíngzhě* 行者 with *xuézhě* 學者, both meaning ”practitioner”. More interesting for this study are the changes that arise due to the differences between the Buddhist and Confucian lexica, since they again reveal the Confucian identity of the author and his readership. The most prominent example in this regard is the reluctance to use the word *ài* 愛 negatively. In Confucianism, *ài* is an unconditionally positive feeling, in line with its original common meaning in Chinese, and usually translated into English as ”love”. (I will come back to Confucian *ài* in chapter 4.) In Buddhism, however, *ài* is used as a translation of Sanskrit *tṛṣṇā,* ”craving”, or as in the *Sequential Gateway,* of *rāga*, ”desire”, one of the ”three poisons” (*tri-dosa*) along with ”nescience” and ”anger”. I have come across sections in the *Meditation Essentials* where phrases with such an *ài* are edited out; or, stated differently: where Liǎofán's grounds for editing out a passage seems to be the presence of *ài.*[116] I should

[115] Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (中華電子佛典協會), Lexicon Tool: Range. http://140.112.26.229/cbetalexicon/range.py.

[116] ME 36b/5 ("既顛倒想斷。則無無明。亦無三毒。罪從何生"), comp. SG p0486b08–09 ("既顛倒斷。則無無明及以愛恚。無此三毒。罪從何生"). This sentence in fact gets somewhat awkward in Liǎofán's rendition, "[...] then there will be no nescience, nor the three poisons" suggesting that nescience is not part of the three poisons, when in fact it is. The full paragraph, where 愛 recurs in Zhìyǐ but not in Liǎofán's rendition is SG p0486a22–b09 and ME 36a/6–36b/5. (On the three poisons, see also entry 17 in the appendix glossary.)

emphasise that these are not necessarily conscious acts by the editor; he might have simply found such passages inelegant, not necessarily for any specific conscious reason. Indeed, the fact that these changes are not systematic—there are also several instances of his retaining such usage of *ài*, even actively using it himself—seems to point in that direction.

More striking than his reluctance to include *ài* in such contexts, however, is his blatant active use of the word in a *positive,* Confucian sense. This happens first and foremost in the final (and in the gradual, progressive scheme thus very important) chapter ”On Expanding Love”. The ”love” in the chapter title is precisely the character *ài,* and is here used to represent the Buddhist *cí* 慈 (*maitrī*) and *bēi* 悲 (*karuṇā*), both of which Liǎofán also uses in the chapter. Now, for more eclectic practitioners of Buddhism among commoners and gentry, this conflation of terms might not have appeared particularly dissonant, but among more rigid practitioners and definitely among monks, the mere appearance of this title would presumably be sufficient grounds for repudiating the work all-together. If they needed an abridged version of the *Sequential Gateway* they could simply go to the *Small Calming and Contemplation.* Surely, Yuán Liǎofán would be aware of this. Those less likely to pick up that work were the Confucian gentry—except, perhaps, those already overtly engaging with Buddhism.

Having made these general remarks on the structure and methodology, let us now continue by looking specifically at each chapter, introducing now also the actual content of the chapters, and all the while comparing them with the corresponding chapters in *Sequential Gateway.* The first chapter “Distinguishing the Will” (“Biàn zhì piān” 辨志篇) is based on the first chapter of the *Sequential Gateway* titled “General Purpose of Practicing the Perfection of Dhyāna” (“Xiū chán bōluómì dà yì” 修禪波羅蜜大意), where Zhìyǐ presents the reasons for practicing this most (as according to Zhìyǐ) essential of the perfections. Zhìyǐ introduces *his* chapter by listing what should *not* be reasons for practicing meditation and which in fact makes it inefficacious. Liǎofán opens in the same manner, only abridging the originally ten into four, and calling them “wills” or “intentions” (*zhì* 志), between which one must ”distinguish” (*biàn* 辨). Where Zhìyǐ goes on to describe the correct approach to meditation, the two diverges, Zhìyǐ focusing his discussion on the ”four great vows” (*sì hóng shìyuàn* 四弘誓願), Liǎofán instead turning his gaze to the Confucian reader by appealing to the Confucian concept of *rén* 仁 (as applied in this period often glossed as ”humaneness” or ”benevolence”), which in his opinion ”encapsulates” and should guide all meditation practice, i.e. the only proper, well-advised “will”. In ecumenical fashion he then goes on to liken this virtue with the will of the *bodhisattva*, as well as the ancient Mohist concept of “impartial love” (*jiān’ài* 兼愛). The two corresponding chapters converge again in their

endings, with Liǎofán elegantly bringing Zhìyǐ's discourse back again with a reply to a question of why meditation practice is not in the end selfish (a passage originating from the *Dà zhì dù lùn*).[117]

The second chapter, "Chapter on Preparing Practice" ("Yù xíng piān" 預行篇), continues this pattern of walking in and out of Zhìyǐ's discourse. In this case it is the sixth chapter "Preparatory Expedient Means" of the *Sequential Gateway* that serves as the basis. Despite being the sixth out of ten, this chapter in fact covers fascicles number two through four, making it one of two main parts of Zhìyǐ's work. It is divided into "external" (*wài* 外) and "internal" (*nèi* 內) expedient means (*fāngbiàn* 方便). The former consists of the "25 Preparatory Expedient Means"—a well-known Zhìyǐ creation[118]—that are not directly linked with meditation practice but will nevertheless aid it. The latter are of themselves meditative practices, but in this context used as means to ascertain karmic "roots", before meditation proper begins. Liǎofán is only interested in the "external" part, picking out as a basis for his chapter no more than two of the 25 expedient means, discarding that whole scheme along with the internal/external distinction. The first of the two is what Zhìyǐ calls "Maintaining the Precepts and Purity" (*chíjiè qīngjìng* 持戒清淨). Despite constituting only one out of twenty-five, this section is in the *Sequential Gateway* rather extensive, and so Liǎofán shaves it even further, first focusing in on one of its three aspects, "repentances" (*chànhuǐ* 懺悔), and then singling out one of the three types of repentances, namely what Zhìyǐ calls the "Repentance of Contemplating Non-Arising" (*guān wúshēng chànhuǐ* 觀無生懺悔). (SG 486a16) Liǎofán cites this section almost verbatim, but calls it instead "Profoundly Reaching the Source of Sin" (*shēn dá zuìyuán* 深達罪源), and interestingly refrains from using the word "repentance" throughout the chapter (and the whole treatise for that matter).[119] This repentance is a kind of analytical meditation on the ultimately "empty" (*kōng* 空) nature of sin.

The latter part of Liǎofán's chapter deals with "regulating the mind" (*tiáo xīn* 調心), which is also one of Zhìyǐ's 25 preparatory expediencies but is completely rewritten by Liǎofán—as such representing an anomaly in the *Meditation Essentials,* the norm being one of either subtle editing or short new sections of novel commentaries. It does not look like Liǎofán draws this section directly from some other work than the *Sequential Gateway* either (which we shall find an example of in chapter 5), although it is hard to be absolutely sure; what we can be certain of is that it is not a reproduction of anything found in the Chinese Buddhist canon.[120] As a matter of fact, this section on regulating the breath *is* found in the

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[117] See Appendix I for a complete translation of Liǎofán's chapter, as well as for chapter five and six.
[118] But based on the *Dàzhì dù lùn.* They are replicated in both the *Small* ... and *Great Calming and Contemplation.* See Ando, *Tiāntāi xué*, 511.
[119] Possibly due to a wish to keep the rubric of repentance distinct from meditation. Liǎofán has a separate work on repentance called *The Repentance Method of Mr Yuán* (*Yuán-shēng chànfǎ* 袁生懺法), which should merit a study of its own.
[120] According to my searches in CBETA Lexicon Tool.

Canon, but not because Liǎofán quoted some other work. Surprisingly, it is because Liǎofán is the one being quoted by a work found in the Supplement Canon (*Xù zàngjīng* 續藏經)—the section in its entirety is included in the Pure Land compilation *Complete Collection of Pure Land Provisions [of Merit]* (*Jìngtǔ zīliáng quánjí* 淨土資糧全集)[121]. This work was compiled by a contemporary of Liǎofán, Zhuāng Guǎnghuán 莊廣還, also a layman from Zhèjiāng, and proofread and prefaced in 1594 by Yúnqī Zhūhóng 雲棲袾宏 (1535–1615), another of the Four Great Monks of the late Míng, based in Hángzhōu.[122]

For these two reasons—i.e. its originality and its inclusion in another work—I would like to take a somewhat closer look at this section on "regulating the mind":

Liǎofán introduces and frames his discussion of the regulation of the mind by observing that for most people the chores of ordinary life can be a hinder to finding time for meditation, and that "the practitioner [therefore] must regulate his mind at any time". (ME 37b6–8) (Again we have a clue to the difference in readership, this being apparently tailored to laymen, not monks.) He then goes on to explain the three different methods for such a situation-independent regulation, calling the first "Restraining the Mind by Tying [it to]

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[121] X61n1162, fasc. 6, p0610a15– b19.

[122] Some information on these two gentlemen: Zhuāng Guǎnghuán was, according to *Biographies of Laymen,* from the town Tóngxiāng 桐鄉, which is separated from Liǎofán's hometown Jiāshàn only by the prefectural city of Jiāxìng. Dates of birth and death are unknown, but we know that he was quite old (way beyond 40) before being drawn to Buddhism and meeting (an already reputed) Zhūhóng in Hángzhōu 杭州. He then took the *bodhisattva* vows at an age of 80 in Zhūhóng's presence, i.e. before Zhūhóng died in 1615. This means that Guǎnghuán was older than Liǎofán (who died at an age of 73 in 1606), but probably not much. In all likelihood the two knew each other. *Biographies of Laymen* tells us that Guǎnghuán too was a Confucian (*rú* 儒) and studied medicine, and that he experimented with the Daoist arts of *yǎng shēng* 養生 ("life nourishment") before awakening to the impermanence of things late in life (while looking at a withering flower). Péng, "Zhuāng Fùzhēn" 莊復真, *Jūshì zhuàn*, p0259b02.

Yúnqī Zhūhóng 雲棲袾宏, being one of the "four great monks of the late Míng" (明末四大高僧) is a much more known figure. Incidentally (or perhaps not), aside from Liǎofán, Zhūhóng is the most famous popularizer of the Ledgers of Merit and Demerit. In 1604 he published *Records of Self-Knowledge* (*Zìzhī lù* 自知錄), a revision and expansion of the 1171 *Ledger of Merit and Demerit by the Tàiwēi Immortal,* the work on which most Ledgers of Merit and Demerit were based, including those given to Liǎofán by Yúngǔ. As did Liǎofán (1569), Zhūhóng encountered the Ledgers early in his life. He was immediately delighted and extensively recommended the practice, though any publication on it had to wait until 1604 when he was 69 years old. As for Liǎofán, he waited until age 68 to produce *Lì mìng piān* 立命篇—in 1601, according to Chun-fang Yü (p. 120). The parallels between Zhūhóng and Liǎofán and their dealings with the morality ledgers, as well as their link in the *Complete Collection of Pure Land Provisions,* I find intriguing, and wonder whether there was any contact between them, a conjecture for which I have come across no explicit evidence. At the very least, they are both part of a common network somehow; one node of connection is the mentioned layman Zhuāng Guǎnghuán (certainly knew Zhūhóng; lived close to Liǎofán). Another possible node is monk Yúngǔ. Was perhaps he the one introducing Zhūhóng too to ledger practice? On the whole, Yúngǔ Fǎhuì's role in the dissemination of morality ledgers appears to me to be a commonly neglected and critically understudied topic. (And even the object of some basic misunderstandings: In one monographic study with morality ledgers and related practices as an important integrated topic, he is preposterously called a "Daoist recluse". Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought,* 195.)

Objects", the second "Disciplining the Mind by Way of Ordinary Affairs" and the third "Nurturing the Mind at Any Place".[123] (ME 37b8–9) "Restraining the Mind by Tying [it to] Objects" is classic *śamatha* ("calming", *zhǐ* 止) practice. What is perhaps slightly novel, and seemingly somewhat dismissive, is that "Buddha-recitation" and *kōan* are both mentioned as such expedient calming, regulating practice—as the only place where they figure throughout the entire work. (ME 38a4–6) The second "Disciplining the Mind by Way of Ordinary Affairs" opens with the comment "the mind of ordinary people is tangled up with selfish intentions, its desire dense and thick" (ME 38b1–2), before describing how one may counteract this desire by way of self-discipline. In "Nurturing the Mind at Any Place" the two related practices of regulating the breath and regulating the body receive brief mention, thus ending the chapter.

For Zhìyǐ, any discussion of regulating the mind is inseparable from these two preceding expediencies of "regulating one's body" (*tiáo shēn* 調身) and "regulating the breath" (*tiáo xí* 調息). This is due to their mutual influence, especially in the direction from the body, via the breath to the mind, meaning that an unregulated body (improper posture) will lead to an unregulated (uneven) breath, which in turn will lead to an unregulated mind (scattered, torpid or restless). Conversely this means that a regulated proper posture will be conducive to an attenuated breath, which in turn is required for reaching a concentrated mind. A concentrated mind in turn is a preparatory requirement for entering into *dhyāna* in meditation proper. This final dichotomy encapsulates much meditation practice, and is what is represented in Zhìyǐ's later works as *zhǐ-guān* 止觀, "calming and contemplation" (*vipaśyanā-śamatha*).

Incidentally, of the practices more or less openly borrowed from Buddhism into Neo-Confucian meditation, regulation of the *breath* was as far as I can judge one of the most common. Zhū Xī wrote a very short text on the Buddhist practice of focusing on the breath and the tip of one's nose.[124] Liǎofán's teacher Wáng Jī put down on paper the fourfold gradation of breath that Zhìyǐ expounds in the *Sequential Gateway* and which is later included unabridged in his *Small Calming and Contemplation*. In a fashion strikingly similar to Liǎofán's method, Wáng Jī quotes them almost verbatim (without ever referring to Zhìyǐ).[125] Probably he is basing himself on the popular *Small Calming and Contemplation*, yet one wonders whether Wáng Jī, and not only Yúngǔ, played a part in introducing Liǎofán to both these works.

[123] Respectively: *Xì yuán shōu xīn* 繫緣收心, *jiè shì liàn xīn* 借事鍊心 and *suí chù yǎng xīn* 隨處養心.

[124] Zhū Xī, "Tiáo xí zhēn" 調息箴, in *Zhū Xī wénjí* 朱熹文集, fasc. 85, p. 6a.

[125] Called "Tiáo xí fǎ" 調息法 ("Method for regulating the breath"), quoted in Nakajima, *Jìngzuò*, 119–20.

One wonders also if a familiarity with this practice on the part of the Neo-Confucians, i.e. its lack of novelty, was one reason why Liǎofán chose to virtually exclude it, and focus more exclusively on regulation of the mind. Regulation of the breath *is* mentioned in the last part ”Nurturing the Mind at Any Place”, but in one mere sentence: ”The one sitting in *dhyāna* (or ”when sitting in *dhyāna*”, an inherent ambiguity of Classical Chinese) must regulate the breath and collect the primordial ether (氣)”. (ME 38b7–8) And what Liǎofán calls “regulating the breath” in the title of his fourth chapter is a different breathing practice.

The rest of the chapters, i.e. three to six, are all based on the seventh and main chapter of the *Sequential Gateway* titled “Explaining Practice and Realization of the Perfection of *Dhyāna*” (“Shì chán bōluómì xiū-zhèng” 釋禪波羅蜜修證). This chapter, which is also the last chapter in the extant version and covers fascicles 5 to 10, is where Zhìyǐ finally arrives at meditation proper, ”explaining” its ”practice” and concomitant ”realization”.[126] Liǎofán singles out roughly ten more or less discrete practices, and groups them together in categories that become four separate chapters. The relative order of these practices is nevertheless retained from the *Sequential Gateway*, except for one important reordering that I will come back to.

Chapter three in the *Meditation Essentials,* its longest, is called “On Practice and Realization” (“Xiū-zhèng piān” 修證篇). It covers the two related practices of the ”Four *Dhyānas*” (*sì chán* 四禪) and the ”Four Formless Attainments” (*sì wúsè dìng* 四無色定), which together constitute the most classical example of *gradual* meditation practice in both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism (sometimes also called the Eight *Dhyānas*).

Three important amendments in this chapter merit our attention. First is Liǎofán’s own (unmarked as always) introduction to the chapter, which begins as follows:

> “No meditation is restricted to full lotus or half lotus position; simply sit down as is convenient.” (ME 39a6)

[126] The last three missing chapters in the *Sequential Gateway* are called (8) ”Demonstrating the Retribution of the Perfection of Dhyāna” (顯示禪波羅蜜果報), (9) “Developing Pedagogy from the Perfection of Dhyāna” (從禪波羅蜜起教) and (10) “Concluding the Ultimate Purpose of the Perfection of Dhyāna” (結會禪波羅蜜歸趣) (these glosses of mine are naturally based only on the titles, without knowledge of the specific contents of the chapters). Supposedly, they are missing not because the notes were lost, but beause Zhìyǐ never got to actually lecturing on them. On the reason for this, there are competing explanations, one being that what they were supposed to explicate represented a mastery that not even Zhìyǐ, by his own judgement, had attained, another that he simply did not have time before he left Jīnlíng. As for why he left Jīnlíng for Mount Tiāntāi in the south, there are also competing explanations, including: the prosecution of Buddhism in the Northern Zhōu state (557–581); the dire situation of Buddhism in south China as perceived by Zhìyǐ; his discomfort with celebrity; and his growing discontent with his audience at Jīnlíng. These are not mutually exclusive. Ando emphasises the first two explanations, and adds to them the possibility that Zhìyǐ also feared personal prosecution, after a Northern Zhōu general who had earlier assisted him financially was caught and decapitated. See Ando, *Tiāntāi xué,* 34–5.

This is actually diametrically opposite of what the *Sequential Gateway* prescribes, proper seated posture being the subject of "Regulating the Body", which as we saw is inseparable from regulating the mind. In fact, *Sequential Gateway* is the first, or one of the first, texts of Chinese Buddhism to give detailed descriptions of posture.[127] This was then replicated in both the *Small* ... and the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, thus exerting an immense influence on later Buddhist meditation in China. Neo-Confucian meditation, however, was commonly less attentive to and more flexible with regard to posture.[128] It would thus seem that Liǎofán has been influenced on this matter by the Neo-Confucian dealings with meditation. Indeed, a text on Buddhist meditation practice explicitly stating that posture is not important as long as one sits comfortably, seems to be something truly exceptional.

Second is a small comment Liǎofán inserts in between the descriptions of the first and second *dhyāna,* concerning the meditative experience of the perhaps most important mid-Míng Neo-Confucian Chén Báishā 陳白沙 (1428–1500): "The revered Mr Chén meditated for twenty-odd years at Jiāngmén 江門. Alas, he had no wise teacher to guide him, and so when while meditating (靜中) he saw a clue manifesting itself, he became deeply attached to it. Shortly afterwards even this clue was lost to him, and he did everything he could to retrace it. However, it was never to be seen again." (ME 42b3–6) From where it is placed, it is evident that Liǎofán believes that the meditative accomplishments of Báishā never exceeded first *dhyāna.*

Third is the wrapping up of the chapter. Here Liǎofán anticipates the "Nine Sequential Concentrations" (*jiǔ cìdì dìng* 九次第定, *navânupūrva-samāpattayaḥ*) that appear later in the *Sequential Gateway* and adds to the Four *Dhyānas* and the Four Attainments a ninth and final state, the "Attainment of Extinguishing Sensation and Perception" (*miè shòu xiǎng dìng* 滅受想定, *nirodha-samāpatti*). Where Zhìyǐ ends his discussion of the eighth attainment (SG 523c07), Liǎofán continues:

> From this point on one neither grasps nor clings, thus shattering nescience, entering the [ninth] "Attainment of Extinguishing Sensation and Perception", and attaining *arhat*-hood.
>
> [Referring to all the preceding descriptions in the present chapter:] These are what are called the 'Nine Sequential Attainments'. To summarize, the first *dhyāna* parts from the realm

[127] According to Ando, *Sequential Gateway* is the first. According to Greene, this honour should rather be accorded Kumārajīva's fourth century *Scripture on the Esoteric Essential Methods of Dhyāna,* on which all later descriptions was based. See Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience", 80n13.

[128] de Bary, as summarized by Shǐ 史 in "Dōng-Yà rúxué jìngzuò yánjiù de gàikuàng" 東亞儒家靜坐研究的概況, 32. However, I think it is important to note that in the late Míng there are exceptions to this trend, almost to the point where the exception becomes the trend. Gāo Pānlóng in particular and also Liú Zōngzhōu (in his repentance-like method) have prescriptions for posture—and also for temporal and physical setting. This means that Liǎofán's disregard for posture is doubly ironic, inasmuch as posture was emphasised not only in Buddhism, but in this period also in Neo-Confucianism.

> of desire and enters the realm of form; the second, third and fourth *dhyāna* are all [in] the realm of form. The Four Attainments part from the realm of form and enter the formless realm. The 'Attainment Of Extinguishing Sensation And Perception' in turn parts from the formless realm, and [by it the practitioner] realizes *arhat*-hood, is [re-]born in the West and enters the Pure Land. This is the gateway of the shortest route. [End of chapter] (ME 50a–b)

The summation of the analogy between the stages of *dhyāna* and the cosmology of the three realms, though not drawn verbatim from the *Sequential Gateway* are very much in line with Zhìyǐ's conception (indeed, it is one of very few places where Liǎofán retains a Zhìyǐ scheme). The very last part, however, where *arhat*-hood is likened with rebirth in the Pure Land, is not; and is perhaps something quite peculiar, the Pure Land usually being described in opposition to *arhat*-hood, as the last step before becoming a *bodhisattva*.

The next practices in both Zhìyǐ's and Liǎofán's schemes are the three practices that for Zhìyǐ go by the label "Pure *Dhyāna*" and are classified as "Both Mundane and Supramundane *Dhyāna*". Liǎofán instead calls his chapter (four) "On Regulating the Breath" ("Tiáo xí piān" 調息篇). It is the chapter Liǎofán is the least present in, and so I will not elaborate any further than saying that the three practices are the *ānâpāna* based practices of "Six Wondrous Gates" (*liù miào fămén* 六妙門, a few years later elaborated in the *Six Wondrous Gateways* mentioned above), "Sixteen Superior [Forms of Meditation]" (*shíliù tèshèng* 十六特勝) and "Contemplation of the [six] Supranormal Powers and [three] Illuminating Insights" (*tōngmíng guān* 通明觀).

In chapter five, "On Eliminating Desire" ("Qiăn yù piān" 遣欲篇), Liǎofán selects three practices of the kind "Contemplations on Impurity" (*bú jìng xiǎng* 不淨想). He starts with the "Nine Contemplations" (*jiǔ xiǎng* 九想), which is a visualization of a human corpse in nine stages of decay. Then he skips Zhìyǐ's "Eight Mindfulnesses", and moves straight to the "Ten Contemplations" (*shí xiǎng* 十想), a more composite collection of contemplations on important Buddhist doctrines, the three first, for example, being impermanence (*wú cháng* 無常), suffering (*kǔ* 苦) and *anātman* (*wú wǒ* 無我). For both these contemplations, Liǎofán's methodology is to summarize Zhìyǐ's original detailed descriptions of the stages of visualization into one single sentence for each, making them appear more like lists.

The third practice of chapter five, "White Bone Contemplation" (*bái gǔ guān* 白骨觀), is unique in that it constitutes the only lengthy citation in the entire *Meditation Essentials* that stems *not* from the *Sequential Gateway.* Zhìyǐ too has visualizations of bones and skeletons following the Ten Contemplations, as part of the "Eight renunciations", but although very similar, Liǎofán's "White Bone Contemplation" is clearly taken from the late fourth century *Scripture on the Esoteric Essential Methods of Dhyāna*, the apocryphal three fascicle work attributed to Kumārajīva that I already mentioned in the section on genre and title.[129] Much

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[129] *Chán mì yào fǎ jīng* 禪祕要法經 (T15n0613), p0243b27–p0245a10. Again, CBETA Lexicon Tool was used for this discovery.

more fleshed out than the two previous practices, the description of this contemplation is largely verbatim (unmarked) citations from Kumārajīva's work, the omissions consisting mainly of especially repetitive phrasings. It is likely that Zhìyǐ's exposition of skeleton contemplations is based on this work, which makes Liǎofán's decision, who also had an interest for philology, of going straight to the source understandable—even more so when we consider that this work by Kumārajīva had a very practical rather than theoretical orientation, and was a popular meditation manual for centuries even after Zhìyǐ.[130] I only wonder whether Liǎofán tracked it down himself or if the monk Yúngǔ presented it to him.

The last chapter, "On Expanding Love" ("Guǎng ài piān" 廣愛篇) focuses exclusively on the practice called ”Four Boundless Mentalities" (*sì wúliàng xīn* 四無量心, *apramāna-citta*). As already mentioned, in the *Sequential Gateway* this practice is situated in between the Four *Dhyānas* and the Four Formless Attainments. Zhìyǐ thus categorizes it as part of the "Concentrations of the Realm of Form", which in turn is part of the "Contaminated Methods". In the *Meditation Essentials* it comes last, ending the entire meditative crescendo.

Liǎofán opens the chapter with a quotation from Confucius in the *Analects* (*Lúnyǔ* 論語): ”The Master said: '[My aspirations are:] To bring peace to my elders, to place trust in my friends, and to take good care of my juniors.'" (ME 64a5) He continues by elaborating on the differences between these essential relationships and gradations within them, before using them as a point of departure for the actual practice, gradually moving into Zhìyǐ's discourse. The general point is to use the gradations of affinity and responsibilities that belong to man's nature as a starting point for ”expanding" one's love and overcoming such boundaries. Zhìyǐ makes a similar point, but speaks only of ”beloved relatives", not of ”elders", ”friends" and ”juniors". (SG 517b17) Perhaps this framework that Liǎofán erects for the Four Boundless Mentalities is also a clue to understanding his discussion of the relationships between *bodhisattva*-hood, Mohist ”Impartial Love", Yangist ”Doing for Oneself" (or Self-Preservation") and Confucian humaneness and righteousness, which are all objects of his praise. Commencing in the visualization from one's natural empathy for one's ”elders, friends and juniors" in order to ”expand" it to everyone in the world seems to me to be a way of acknowledging *both* the Confucian insistence on the naturalness of familial and hierarchical relationships *and* the Mohist (and Buddhist) call for overcoming such hierarchies and being completely impartial. The one does not exclude the other—there is no point in ”clutching to one" (ME 34b9).

Having introduced the practices Yuán Liǎofán chooses to include in his abridgement, the next interesting question becomes which main practices from the *Sequential Gateway* he did *not* include—and why. As I have not had the occasion to examine the omitted practices in detail, in addition to simply listing them I will only share some of my preliminary observations,

[130] Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience", 79–80.

leaving to others to explore the complete significance of their being omitted. The practices omitted are, in order of appearance in the *Sequential Gateway*: “Eight Mindfulnesses”, (most of the) “Eight Renunciations”, ”Eight superior points”, ”Ten universal points [of concentration]”, ”Nine Sequential Concentrations”, ”Forceful Lion *Samādhi*” and ”Transcendental *Samādhi*”.[131] The most conspicuous connection between these practices is that they all occur towards the end of the *Sequential Gateway*, the “Eight Mindfulnesses” being the only practice that Liǎofán simply skips. They are thus part of the final soteriological culmination in Zhìyǐ’s grand scheme of gradual meditation, all of them belonging to the “Uncontaminated Methods” (*yǒu lòu fǎ* 有漏法) and the last category of “Supramundane *Dhyāna*” (*chū shìjiān chán* 出世間禪).[132] They are the very last steps before attaining *bodhisattva*-hood. Liǎofán ends instead with a meditation which according to Zhìyǐ in the grand scheme of things is still in the “realm of form” (*sè jiè* 色界) and ”contaminated” (*yǒulòu* 有漏). (SG 480a14–481b03) This again points to Liǎofán’s relative disinterest in theory and soteriology, as well as his own unique conception of gradual meditation, which culminates instead in the weeding out of desire and cultivation of compassion/humaneness, the significance of which I will return to in the next chapter.

It is not only many important *practices* from the *Sequential Gateway* that are left out by Liǎofán’s editing, but also most of the theoretical framework. As far as I can discern, what is partly retained is only the overarching scheme of gradual meditation, as well as the related emphasis on the indispensable importance of *bodhi-citta* (or *rén,* “humaneness”, in Liǎofán’s terminology). Both these schemes are in fact partly recast by Liǎofán. We have already seen his reordering of the sequences, and in the next chapter we will see what implications the introduction of the Confucian virtue humaneness entails.

The overarching schemes that are omitted includes:

- The distinction between “mundane *dhyāna*”, “both mundane and supramundane *dhyāna*” and ”supramundane *dhyāna*”.[133]
- The distinction between ”contaminated *dhyāna*” and ”uncontaminated *dhyāna*”.
- The fundamental ”principle/phenomena” (*lǐ/shì* 理/事) dichotomy.

[131] Respectively: *Bā nìan* 八念, *Bā bèishě* 八背捨, *Shí yíqiè chù* 十一切處, *Jiǔ cìdì dìng* 九次第定, *Shīzǐ fènxùn sānmèi* 獅子奮迅三昧 and *Chāoyuè sānmèi* 超越三昧. Based on Ando’s list of all the practices in SG. Ando, *Tiāntāi xué*, 510.

[132] See the table of contents in Guàndǐng’s preface to SG (p0475b02) (in Chinese), and Wang’s (“Zhiyi's Interpretation of the Concept ‘*Dhyāna*’,” 249–61) even more elaborate table of contents (in English), as well as Zhìyǐ’s own explanation of these sequences and categories in SG chapter 4, ”Distinguishing the Relative Sequences in the Perfection of *Dhyāna*” (“Biàn chán bōluómì quáncì” 辨禪波羅蜜詮次) (Beginning at SG p0475b02).

[133] Respectively: *Shìjiān chán* 世間禪, *yì shìjiān chán yì chū-shìjiān chán* 亦世間禪亦出世間禪 and *chū-shìjiān chán* 出世間禪.

- The intimate connection between *dhyāna* (*chán* 禪) and repentance (*chàn huǐ* 懺悔), and what Greene calls "visions of karma", i.e. meditative experience used as a tool to assess, or "divine", one's karma.[134]
- Related to the former, the distinction between practitioners of sharp (*lì* 利) and blunt (*dùn* 鈍) faculties (*gēn* 根), i.e. spiritual talent, which must be assessed through various practices, and according to which the practitioner adjusts his or her specific practice. That Liǎofán discards this distinction is somewhat surprising, considering that Wáng Yángmíng in his later years borrowed it into his own teachings on innate knowledge (*liángzhī* 良知). It was also picked up by Wáng Jī, who in turn had Liǎofán as a student for several years.[135] It must then be Liǎofán's staunch belief in *lì mìng* that makes him reject this distinction. *Anyone,* regardless of social status and of talent, has the same ability to take control of his own moral life, and thus also his material fate.
- The relationship between "calming" and "contemplation" (*dìng* 定 and *guān* 觀 or *zhǐ* 止 and *guān*), which in the *Sequential Gateway* is not yet fully matured as an exhaustive hermeneutic term to replace *dhyāna,*[136] yet which nonetheless recurs in it.

In addition, although mentioned sporadically, the two following distinctions as threads running throughout the entire work, are also missing:

- the three realms (*jiè* 界): "realm of desire", "realm of form" and "realm of non-form" (occurs only at the end of chapter four).
- the three vehicles (*shèng* 乘): "voice-hearer", "individually enlightened" and *bodhisattva* (occurs only once in chapter one).[137]

Furthermore, as the full title *Explaining the Sequential Gateway to the Perfection of Dhyāna* hints at, Zhìyǐ has a habit of explaining (*shì* 釋) all practices from different perspectives and in terms of different themes, occasionally even negating himself as a means of avoiding dualism (*èr* 二). The result is a vast recursive hierarchy of subsections and lists. He even has a typology of different kinds of explications, such as "explaining" (*shì* 釋), "distinguishing" (*biàn* 辨), "demonstrate" (*biǎo* 表), "illuminating" (*míng* 明) and "directly illuminating" (*zhèngmíng* 正明). It seems to me that this methodology must have been highly demanding of the reader, making it almost impossible to keep track of where he is in the hierarchy at any one point, unless he is taking notes and studying it full-time—as a monk might do. Liǎofán is no opponent of lists, but he usually abstains from embedding them into each other, and he describes each practice in a much more linear manner. Locating the

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[134] Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 203–18.
[135] Zhāng, "Shíliù shìjìmò zhōng-hán shǐjié guānyú Yángmíng xúe de lùnbiàn," 68.
[136] On this term and its replacing, in the *Great Calming and Contemplation, dhyāna* as the central hermeneutic for meditation, see Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation,* 7–8.
[137] *śrāvaka* (*shēngwén* 聲聞), *pratyekabuddha* (*yuánjué* 緣覺), *bodhisattva* (*púsà* 菩薩).

descriptions of actual practices is a much more straightforward undertaking in Liǎofán's abridgement.

What this all entails is first of all that Zhìyǐ's attention to theory, and the placement of each practice within it, makes the *Sequential Gateway* virtually impossible to read for anyone without a firm grasp of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka; and secondly, that the sheer scale of it, as well as its meticulous methodology, makes it inaccessible to anyone but specialists—or else exceptionally resourceful dilettanti, such as Yuán Liǎofán himself. That being so, by virtue of lacking those characteristics the *Meditation Essentials* was a work accessible to virtually anyone, provided that they possessed a rudimentary understanding of Buddhism and functional literacy—in fact even illiterates, if they had an instructor. Ironically, if anyone is excluded by this work, it is Buddhist specialists. This is further corroborated by the application of Confucian terms and frameworks (e.g. "Chapter on Expanding *Love*"), as elaborated above.

2.5. Provenance, transmission and afterlife

Now, a gentry orientation would by no means make the *Meditation Essentials* in any way niche or irrelevant to mainstream Buddhism in the late Míng, of which a characteristic is its heavy lay orientation—lay associations gaining power at the expense of monasteries.[138] It might, however, help explain why the *Meditation Essentials* faded into relative obscurity for a long time after its first (extant) publication in 1605. For the general gentry, which composed the main readership, blatant interaction with Buddhism and Buddhist texts became much more problematic around and after the dynastic transition, because this interaction was seen retrospectively as a contributing factor to the corruption and eventual downfall of the Míng.[139]

That being said, the texts constituting the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* also contain a great deal of Buddhist material; and that work, though controversial in Confucian circles, has been hugely popular up to this day. I think one reason for the difference in reception of these two works might lie in the subject matter. We should remember that meditation throughout history has commonly been restricted to a kind of spiritual elite. This is true also for Buddhist meditation, although it is often neglected due to the kind of bias in favour of meditation that easily arises in Buddhist studies when (prescriptive) texts is used as the main evidential basis. Clearly, the potential readership for a work of the kind of the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán,* which centres on issues pertaining to everyday morality, is considerably greater. What's more, for this more numerous stratum of the Chinese populace, religious tolerance, syncretism and

[138] Yü 于, The Renewal of Buddhism in China, 6.
[139] That this was the predominant view is an established historical fact. See for example Brook, *Troubled Empire,* 183.

eclecticism had *always* been the rule rather than the exception. What is special about late Míng syncretism is not the presence of syncretism per se, but its *spread* to the upper strata (which, incidentally, thus seems to be an instance of intellectual bottom-up influence). This development made possible such syncretistic works as the *Meditation Essentials,* but the same fact also made the *Meditation Essentials* vulnerable if the development reversed, which it did in the mid-17th century. On top of that, it was not only the syncretistic development that turned in that period; the intense concern with sagehood of the Sòng and Míng Neo-Confucians, too, ebbed away. Meditation was an integral part of this concern. Accordingly, the *Meditation Essentials* was doubly vulnerable. The *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* and the genre of morality books, on the other hand, enjoyed a much wider audience less dependent on the intellectual fluctuations of the elite, for whom syncretism was the rule, and for whom "becoming a sage" had never been a concern. A basis for understanding that Yuán Liǎofán is the author of both works, I think, is that he was intellectually situated in a medial position—in two respects: First, socially he belonged to the expanded late Míng lower gentry, with connections both downwards and upwards in the hierarchy. Second, historically, he was a man of the late Míng, a transitional period between the Sòng-Míng obsession with sagehood, and the Míng-Qīng focus on practicality. In fact, the focus on *both* sagehood, virtues and quiescence on the one hand *and* practicality, deeds and action on the other is a trait I see in this period in more Confucians than Yuán Liǎofán. Gāo Pānlóng (1562-1626), famous for his creative and detailed meditation methods, was not incredulous to the benefits of keeping morality ledgers, and the most important late Míng Neo-Confucian philosopher Liú Zōngzhōu (1578-1645) had morality ledgers *and* meditation as essential parts of his self-cultivation scheme. In my opinion, this joint focus on both the "root" and "branch" of self-cultivation in several late Míng figures is lost from sight in a seminal work on the late Míng intellectual landscape, *Action in Late Ming Thought* by Joanna Handlin. Notably, Yuán Liǎofán and Liú Zōngzhōu are both invoked in that work as evidence of the "reorientation" towards practicality, by virtue of their respective works on morality ledgers—omitting mention of the important qualification that both of them were in fact avid meditators.[140] I do not question the central tenet of a "reorientation", neither that Liǎofán was part of it, but I think the interesting transitional quality of this period and particularly the continued presence of more "introvert" self-cultivational methods, is somewhat obscured. Handlin admits the continued existence of such introvert conceptualizations of self-cultivation, and discusses the controversy between it and the new focus on practicality, but fails to notice that there was not only controversy between them (and their respective advocates), but also negotiations, and many who did not necessarily see any opposition between the two—Liǎofán being one of

[140] See Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought*, ch. 8. On Liǎofán: pp. 194–5, 200; on Zōngzhōu: pp. 200–3.

them. I would argue that many viewed them rather in a functional relationship. That this was the case for Liǎofán I will attempt to show in the next chapter.

Before that, however, we should continue our look at the actual textual transmission of the *Meditation Essentials.* For although there is no indication of it being an appreciated work during the Qīng 清 dynasty (1644–1911)—except for its unbroken transmission—this changed again with the Republican period (1912–1945) and the unmitigated onset of modernity.

From what we may know from extant sources, the *Meditation Essentials* began its life—at least of publicity—as the *Dhyāna Essentials* in 1595, when it was cited in the *Complete Collection of Pure Land Provisions.*[141] The first (extant) complete edition appears ten years later, when it is included as a two fascicle work under its updated title in the 17-fascicle *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán*[142], the year being 1605, one year before his probable date of death. In the following decades and centuries many people read and critiqued his *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán*, but there is no evidence for a similar appreciation—or depreciation—for the *Meditation Essentials.* Before 1929, there are no signs of life at all except for its existence in two bibliographies, both of which are featured in the late 18th century Qīng "Complete Library of the Four Branches"[143]. First is the catalogue of the private library of Huáng Yújì 黃虞稷 (1627–1691) called *Bibliography of the 'Thousand Item Studio'* (*Qiānxiàngtáng shūmù* 千項堂書目). The bulk of these items were collected during the Míng-Qīng transition and the library's bibliography published sometime during the early Qīng. We find the *Meditation Essentials* in the philosopher (*zǐ* 子) category, interestingly under the subcategory of "Buddhism" (*shì jiā* 釋家). It is listed by itself, not as part of any collection, and as consisting of only one fascicle.[144] Second is the bibliography part of the 1736 CE second edition of the *Zhèjiāng Comprehensive Gazetteer.*[145] There the *Meditation Essentials* is listed not as a separate work, but as part of a "*Collected Works of Mr Yuán*" (*Yuán shì cóngshū* 袁氏叢書). This entry too is sorted under *zǐ*. Unsurprisingly, since it is a collection of works, the subcategory is not Buddhism, but instead "miscellaneous" (*zá jiā* 雜家). In terms of titles included, this collection equals the extant *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* (*Liǎofán zázhù*) mentioned earlier.

What we may gather from this bibliographical information is that the *Meditation Essentials* circulated both separately (at least for a while) and as part of the collection variously titled *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* and *Collected Works of Mr Yuán.* Furthermore, these two editions vary in length, and there is thus a possibility that they are

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141 *Jìngtǔ zīliáng quánjí* (X61n1162). The *Meditation Essentials* excerpt is in fasc. 6, p0610a15–b19.
142 *Liǎofán Zázhù* 了凡雜著, in *Yuán Liǎofán wénjí* 袁了凡文集, vol. 1–6. The *Meditation Essentials* in vol. 1, p. 33a–67b.
143 Jī 紀 and Lù 陸, eds., Sìkù Quánshū 四庫全書.
144 Huáng Yújì 黃虞稷, *Qiānxiàngtáng shūmù* 千項堂書目, fasc. 16, p. 12a.
145 Xī 嵇, *Zhèjiāng tōngzhì* 浙江通志, fasc. 246, p. 31b.

slightly different also in content. Add to these the 1595 *Dhyāna Essentials,* and we end up with three different versions of the *Meditation Essentials* circulating in the late Míng that we know of. (Henceforth I will call these three "redactions", in order to separate them from later derived versions.) If I were to speculate, I would say that it is likely that the only difference between the three lies in the preface of the *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* version (1605), which is likely younger than the pre-1595 edition, considering that it claims that Miàofēng Fúdēng no longer lives. (Admittedly this is wrong in 1605 too, but in 1595 Miàofēng would have been only 55 years old, and there is thus less reason for Liǎofán to reckon him dead.) Possibly, a hypothetical absence of this preface in the redaction listed separately in the *Bibliography of the Thousand Item Hall* accounts for it being one fascicle shorter. In that case, lacking the preface yet possessing the updated title, the first publication of that version may be situated temporally in between the other two redactions, i.e. between 1595 and 1605.

Almost two hundred years after its inclusion in the *Zhèjiāng Comprehensive Gazetteer* bibliography, the *Meditation Essentials* resurfaces again in 1929, when it is published by a monk calling himself Xìnghuái 性懷.[146] Besides the 1605 redaction, it seems that this is the only redaction that survives—through republications—to this day, all other editions being based on either of the two (hence earning my label "redaction").

Xìnghuái is kind enough to supply his editor's preface, which is rich in interesting information concerning the motivations of this monk, yet unfortunately short on any bibliographical information. Xìnghuái merely notes that the version he is basing himself on is printed from movable types. The remaining bibliographical information is all in the negative: He tells us that the edition he had in front of him was deprived of such information, and that it was impossible to dig up any.[147] Yet this tells us that his basis edition must have been another than the *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* redaction, seeing as that collection is prefaced with date of publication.[148] Considering its lack of contextual information, it is likely that the edition he used was a separate book—possibly the two-fascicle redaction included in the *Bibliography of the Thousand Item Hall* mentioned earlier, or a reprint thereof. The content of the two redactions, however, is identical, except for some erroneous characters in the Xìnghuái redaction.[149] (Because of this, and due to the uncertain origin of the Xìnghuái redaction, when translating I have based myself on the 1605 redaction.)

[146] The 1985 and 2013 editions, which will be mentioned in a minute, are both based on this one.
[147] Xìnghuái 性懷, "Jiàokān Yuán Liǎofán xiānshēng *Jìngzuò yàojué* yuánqǐ" 校刊袁了凡先生靜坐要訣緣起序 ("Origins of the new printing of the *Meditation Essentials* by Yuán Liǎofán"), in Yán 嚴 ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣, 33–5.
[148] Yuán 袁, *Liǎofán zázhù* 了凡雜著, 3a.
[149] For example, *tiáo xí* 調習 in the 1605 redaction (ME 37b8) is rendered at one point as *tiáo xí* 調息 in the Xìnghuái redaction (Yán 严 ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣, 31). From the context (調習此心) it is clear that 習 is the correct character.

The *Meditation Essentials* is mentioned by the perhaps most successful author on meditation in China the 20th century, Jiǎng Wéiqiáo, in his third and final main publication on meditation in 1955.[150] In the most recent publication (2009) of his three works in one book, the *Meditation Essentials* is included in its entirety as an appendix. Alas, I do not know if that appendix is a novelty of this publication, or if it was already there in any of the earlier editions of his three works (which were first published in 1917, 1918 and 1955 respectively). Xìnghuái writes in his 1929 editor's preface (to the *Meditation Essentials*) that in his efforts to find the ideal meditation work, he first read Jiǎng Wéiqiáo before coming across the *Meditation Essentials.*[151] This all points to a relationship between the two, although the exact quality of this relationship is yet to be established.

Another well-known author of early modern China to write about *"jìngzuò",* Dīng Fúbǎo (1874–1952)[152], is also influenced by the *Meditation Essentials*, according to the editor of the most recent reprint of the *Meditation Essentials.* He claims that Dīng's 1920 *The Essential Meaning of Meditation Methods*[153], although seemingly tracing its content to the *Small Calming and Contemplation* and the *Dàzhì dù lùn*, is actually based on the *Meditation Essentials*.[154] I can find no proof of this in Dīng's text, however, there being no mention as far as I can see of the *Meditation Essentials* in it*,* despite the style of citing extensively and explicitly.

Nonetheless, there does seem to be a connection of some kind between the *Meditation Essentials* and these early modern works on meditation—and the circle around them. At the very least it exists retrospectively as a perceived one, judging by the claim of mentioned editor. It would seem that the style and vocabulary of the *Meditation Essentials,* and above all using the term *jìngzuò*, by lucky coincidence made it compatible with the new demands and categories of modernity, avoiding the "superstition" label of the new "religion-science-superstition triangle".[155]

We see this first in the preface of Xìnghuái, where the *Meditation Essentials* is framed in a modern discourse of medicine, health and "health-preservation" (*wèishēng* 衛生, today meaning more specifically "hygiene")—much like Jiǎng Wéiqiáo wraps in his own works.[156]

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[150] Jiǎng, *Yīnshìzǐ wèishēng shíyàn tán*, 101.
[151] Xìnghuái, "Jiàokān …", 34.
[152] 丁福保. Renowned above all for his dictionary *Fóxué dà cídiǎn* 佛學大辭典 ("Comprehensive dictionary of buddhology").
[153] Dīng 丁, *Jìngzuòfǎ jīngyì* 靜坐法精儀 (Shànghǎi: Shànghǎi Gǔjí Chūbǎnshè, 1990).
[154] Yán 嚴 ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣, 25.
[155] On the introduction of these new modern categories to China, including the quoted term (p. 91), see Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China.*
[156] Yán 嚴 ed. , *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣, 26–7. Jiǎng, *Yīnshìzi jìngzuò yǎngshēng fǎ* 因是子养生静坐法. For example, Jiǎng avoids certain "unscientific" words, such as *dāntián* 丹田 ("cinnabar field"), which he replaces with *zhòngxīn* 重心, "centre of gravity", not due to

In the latest 2013 edition we see the same in a slightly updated variation, the emphasis now being on the stress and unfulfilment of modern city life.[157] According to the same editor, based on his experience as both student and teacher, "the *Meditation Essentials* is indeed an excellent book in that it suits the demands of modern people studying meditation."[158]

Only a couple of years later, in 1934, the *Meditation Essentials* was published again as a single book, this time by a Buddhist publishing house in Shànghǎi called "Buddhology Publishing House" (佛學書局).[159]

After 1934, the next printing of note is the *Quintessence of the Daoist Canon*[160], where according to Mabuchi the *Meditation Essentials* is included in the second volume.[161] Mabuchi says this was published as early as 1929,[162] but from what I can gather, that is mistaken; this 75-volume collection of Daoist classics and newer Daoist works from the Míng-Qīng period was published between 1956 and 1992.[163] Quite regardless of publication date, that a treatise on Buddhist meditation written by a Confucian scholar should be deemed as belonging to the "quintessence" of the Daoist canon, is fascinating, to say the least.[164]

Xìnghuái's redaction was republished in 1985 in Taiwan and reprinted in 2004,[165] whereas the redaction from the *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* is republished whenever that collection is, which happened at least in 1988, as part of the series "Beijing library's collection of rare ancient books",[166] and in 2006, as part of the new *Collected Works of Yuán Liǎofán* (*Yuán Liǎofán wénjí* 袁了凡文集).[167]

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any discrepancy or novelty in actual content, but because of the unwanted connotations of *dāntián.* Jiǎng, *Yīnshìzǐ Jìngzuòfǎ* 因是子靜坐法, 20.

157 Yán 嚴 ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué*, i–ii.

158 Yán 严 ed., *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡静坐要诀, 98.

159 Yuán, *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣 (Shànghǎi: Fóxué Shūjú, 1934).

160 *Dàozàng jīnghuá* 道藏精華, edited by Xiāo Tiānshí 蕭天石. (Not to be confused with *Dàozàng jīnghuá lù* 道藏精華錄, edited by Dīng Fúbǎo 丁福保 and first published in 1922.)

161 Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ", 95.

162 Ibid.

163 Rèn 任, *20 shìjì Zhōngguó xuéshù dàdiǎn: zōngjiào xué* 20世纪中国学术大典：宗教学，191. Verified by searching the catalogues of various university libraries in Taiwan, e.g. that of National Taiwan Normal University, where the first entry is from 1958 (http://www.lib.ntnu.edu.tw/, "道藏精華"). Komjathy has instead 1963, according to Poul Andersen, Review of *Title Index to Daoist Collections* by Louis Komjathy, 407.

164 And reminiscent of this biographical detail of Liǎofán (that we also visited in chapter one): the Daoist prognosticator whom Liǎofán met outside a Buddhist monastery incidentally was surnamed Kǒng 孔. Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn*, 876a–b.

165 Yuán, *Jìngzuò yàojué* (Taipei: Xīnwénfēng Chūbǎn Gōngsī, 1985).

166 Yuán, *Liǎofán zázhù*, in Běijīng túshūguǎn gǔjí zhēnběn cóngkān 北京图书馆古籍真本丛刊, vol. 80 (Běijīng: Shūmù Wénxiàn Chūbǎnshè, 1988).

167 Yuán, *Yuán Liǎofán wénjí* 袁了凡文集 (Jiāshàn: Xiànzhuàng Shūjú, 2006). This is a new comprehensive collection of Liǎofán's works with a beautiful emulation of traditional Chinese thread binding current in the late Míng. Responsible for the publishing is a local governmental committee of none other than Liǎofán's home county.

The latest edition from 2013 I have already mentioned.[168] This is also based on the Xìnghuái redaction, but as opposed to the 1985 edition includes extensive editorial material (aimed at neither Buddhist nor academic specialists, i.e. the common man) and is published on the mainland. There is, however, also a traditional character version of it, with moderately rewritten and extended editorial parts, published in Taiwan.[169]

And so, more than 400 years after its first publication, the *Meditation Essentials* is more alive than ever.

[168] Yán 嚴， ed. , *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣 (Shànghǎi: Shànghǎi Gǔjí Chūbǎnshè, 2013).
[169] Yán 严， ed. , *Yuán Liǎofán Jìngzuò yàojué* 袁了凡靜坐要訣 (Taipei: Dàzhǎn Chūbǎnshè Yǒuxiàn Gōngsī, 2013). The editorial parts are all slightly rewritten.

CHAPTER 3:
THE RELATION BETWEEN MERIT ACCUMULATION AND MEDITATION

We have now seen how Yuán Liǎofán's reconstruction of the *Sequential Gateway,* though subtle, is in fact quite extensive. He strips away much of its theoretical framework, and in the arguably only one major such framework he retains, namely its emphasis on sequentiality, he makes a very significant adjustment by reordering two of the practices and placing them last. By presenting the quality of Zhìyǐ's sequential scheme, I have already demonstrated one aspect of why I think this reordering is significant. In the following I will continue by showing why Liǎofán's reconstruction of the *Sequential Gateway* entails also a radical reconceptualization of meditation. This I will do by turning to the relation between those two practices, and their relation in turn to the practice of accumulating merit through the keeping of morality ledgers. Or, in terms of the concepts on which these practices depend: the relation between "no-desire" and "humaneness" in meditation, and their connection to the ideal "no-mind" important for merit accumulation. Far more than empty ideas, these three are thought to be the attainable mental states: No-mind (*wú-xīn* 無心) is described as the state of mind indispensable for karmically effective accumulation of merit. No-desire (*wú-yù* 無欲) and humaneness (*rén* 仁), by virtue of concluding the meditative crescendo, in the *Meditation Essentials* are portrayed as the result and goal of meditation. That this is not inconsequential for the pivotal question of this thesis—why meditate?—will become clear when we delve into the philosophical implications and interrelatedness of the concepts no-mind, no-desire and humaneness.

Before that, however, we must tackle the question of whether meditation was at all part of the same realm, so to speak, of self-cultivation; and look at what concrete evidence there is for a connection between the *Meditation Essentials* and the works collectively known as the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán.*

3.1. Correspondences between the *Four Admonitions* and the *Meditation Essentials*

Above I have touched upon both the possibility that Liǎofán perceived meditation as irrelevant to the practice of "establishing one's fate" through morality ledgers, and the other possibility that they were part of the same program—the inner and outer aspects of self-cultivation. The question, then, is: Was meditation part of an altogether different realm of self-cultivation, transcending any this-worldly concerns; or was it rather the "root" to the "branch" in the quest for both moral perfection and material rewards in the present life?

What is clear—but makes the rest of the questions difficult to answer—is that if there is any connection between the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* and the *Meditation Essentials*, it is made explicit nowhere in either works. The complete lack in the *Meditation Essentials* is unsurprising, inasmuch as the practices are derived from the *Sequential Gateway* and Liǎofán lays claims to represent the "legacy of the Tiāntāi [tradition]". The absence the other way is more puzzling. The only mention of meditation in all of the *Four Admonitions* is this slightly disdainful remark in the *Essay on Establishing One's Fate:*

> Because of this [the confirmation of the most detailed of Kǒng's prognostications], my belief that all change is the result of fixed fate, deepened further. I turned indifferent and without any aspirations. Then I entered Yàndū [Běijīng] on a *gòngshēng* scholarship, where I stayed for one year. [During this period] I spent my days sitting in meditation (終日靜坐) and did not read.[170]

This comment makes one wonder whether meditation represented merely an early stage in the development of Huáng's outlook—a concomitant of his fatalism and something he discarded the moment he had his personal awakening. The placing of that paragraph as a setup to the life-changing meeting with Yúngǔ further strengthens this suspicion.

As we saw in the previous chapter (section 2.5), however, the *Meditation Essentials,* or at least its preface, was among the last texts Liǎofán ever wrote.

Furthermore, towards the end of his biography in the *Biographies of Laymen,* his only one to mention meditation, we learn:

> He regularly recited sutras and mantras and practiced *dhyāna* contemplation (禪觀), with fixed daily courses (課程).[171]

The placement of this description towards the end of the biography possibly signifies that it pertains to the later periods of his life. It might not, but the presence of daily schedules seems in any case incompatible with the "pre-awakening" indifference and introversion he describes in the previous account. It seems then that these habits were something that at least took place post-awakening also, and with a central role—if we are to believe the *Biographies of Laymen.*

For these reasons, although it remains an open question just how crucial mediation was for Yuán Liǎofán, I think we at least can exclude relegating it to a discarded stage on a developmental path—something he scrapped as soon as he awoke to the theory of "establishing one's fate". It is necessary then to probe deeper into the texts and contexts, and see if any clue to their possible connection may be spotted. One thing we might look for is

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[170] Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn*, 877a2–3.
[171] Péng, "Yuán Liǎofán zhuàn", p0267a23.

the presence of any elements of an idealist outlook in his theory of ledger use—in the sense of attributing importance to intentions, states of mind etc. with regard to moral value and karmic efficacy. Brokaw has pointed out his and Yúngǔ's emphasis on *wú-xīn* 無心, "no-mind", also described through similar terms, such as "no and no thought" 無思無慮. Yúngǔ says to Liǎofán: "All supplications to heaven for the establishing of one's own fate must be made from a mind free of reflection and free of deliberation (無思無慮) in order to evoke a response."[172] The actual term "no-mind", in the previous account replaced by "no reflection" and "no deliberation" occurs only twice in the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán*, and both times from the mouth of Yúngǔ. Nevertheless, it does encapsulate a belief that runs through all of these works: that good deeds performed with any conscious awareness of possible favourable retribution, will not be efficacious at all.[173] For example, in "Method for Accumulating Goodness" ("Jī shàn zhī fāng" 積善之方, second of the Four Admonitions), in which he lays out his conception of the good, Liǎofán codifies "goodness" (*shàn* 善) into eight different parameters, "real/fake", "upright/crooked", "*yīn/yáng*", "correct/wrong", "slanted/straight", " half/full", "big/small" and "difficult/easy".[174] The distinctions between them are somewhat floating, with some overlaps, but most of them concern the intentions that lie behind actions. The latter three make it clear, as Brokaw has also noted, that destitute people has as big a potential to amass "goodness" and good karma as richer people—two pennies being potentially much more karmically "worth", for example, than a "thousand gold". Especially evocative of the *Meditation Essentials* is the "upright/crooked" parameter:

> It goes for all aspirations to accumulate goodness that they cannot submit to [the wants of] the eyes and ears; rather, one should follow the latency at the bottom of one's heart, and indistinctly cleanse it from there. A mind set on nothing but the benefits of society is upright; if one preserves even the slightest bit of wanting to impress society, it is [instead] crooked. A mind set on nothing but the love for others is upright; if one preserves even the slightest bit of resentment towards society, it is crooked. A mind set on nothing but respect for others is upright; if one preserves even the slightest bit of scorn towards society, it is crooked.[175]

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[172] Yuán, Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn*, 881a–b. Translation modified after Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 83. Brokaw renders 無思無慮 as "free of conscious thought and free of reflection". *Sī* 思 and *lǜ* 慮, both denoting something very close to English "(conscious) thought", are nonetheless quite complicated to translate, especially when there is seemingly made a nuance between them, as in this saying by Yúngǔ. It seems to me that Brokaw gets the nuance wrong. Based on my own encounters with them, 思 often has an implication of reflection on past events, whereas the object of 慮 is usually in future. No English glosses capture these nuances in full, but at least the etymological metaphor implicated in English "reflect", of turning one's thought *back* on something, makes it as I see it the best candidate for 思 (and not 慮).

[173] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 83–5.

[174] Respectively: 真假，端曲，陰陽，是非，偏正，半滿，大小，難易. Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* 7 883a.

[175] Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* 885a.

The concern with intentions is equally conspicuous in the content, structure as well as selection of types of meditation practices in the *Meditation Essentials,* as I have already demonstrated in chapter two. Of the in all six chapters, three deal exclusively with intentions and desire, and one of them, "Chapter on Distinguishing the Will", serves as the opening chapter that frames the rest—and contains moreover the largest amount of original writing among all the chapters. The opening of this chapter follows the first chapter of Zhìyǐ's *Sequential Gateway*, but in Liǎofán's summation nonetheless closely resembles the "upright/crooked" paragraph of goodness quoted above:

> In all meditation practices, one must first distinguish intentions. As soon as there is a slight error in the will, one will descend into evil ways. Just like how the archer will first establish his target: If the target is on his east and his arrow shoots west, how will he hit the mark? According to the Tiāntāi school, there are ten forms of heretical cultivation practices, which I will here summarize into four:
> [1] If the practitioner vows to meditate for the sake of fame and riches, then his intentions classify as deceitful. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'hell'.
> [2] If he on the other hand meditates for the sake of turning his stupidity into brightness and surpassing others, then his intentions classify as 'competitive'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'demigod'.
> [3] If he meditates for reason of fear towards worldly worries and karmic retributions, and admiration towards philanthropy and happiness, then his will classifies under 'likes and dislikes'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'men and gods'.
> [4] If he meditates, not for fame and riches, nor for brightness or good karma, but solely for the reason of escaping the "thousand births and myriad *kalpas*" and the endlessness of life and death, only in order to seek the right path and quickly attain *nirvāṇa*, then his will classifies as 'finishing for oneself'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'the two wagons, ['voice-hearer' and 'individually enlightened']'.
> Although there are differences among these types of practitioners—in the degree to which they are either good or evil, and in the extent to which they are either fettered or liberated—in terms of heretical practice they are all the same. (ME 33b9–34a8)

Here too, for the practice to be efficacious the practitioner must rid himself of all selfish intentions, including even the intention to reach *nirvāṇa*. When all such intentions are discarded, *rén* 仁 ("humaneness", but notoriously difficult to translate) remains:

> True cultivation practice is encapsulated in the single notion of humaneness (*rén* 仁). "To regard Heaven–and–Earth and the myriad things as one substance" [Chéng Yí], and "to make manifest illustrious virtue throughout the world" [*Great Learning*], this is what is meant by 'humaneness'. Translated into Chinese, '*Śākya-muni'* means the two notions "to be able to be humane" (*néng rén*). '*Bodhi'* means "enlightened", or "to ferry over, liberate". '*Sattva'* means "affectionate", or "all living creatures". '*Bodhisattva'* thus means "enlightened and compassionate", or "to save all living creatures". Buddhism regards only *bodhisattva*-hood as the Middle Way. *Arhat*-hood, on the other hand, is seen as exceeding the three realms and

> thus realizing the karmic effect of 'not returning'. The Buddha deeply detests *arhats*, denouncing them as withered buds and failed seeds, regarding them as only saving themselves and no others. The *Śūraṃgama-sutra*[176] states: "As long as there is one among all living creatures that has not attained Buddhahood, then one should not obtain *nirvāna*." And furthermore: "Offering this body and mind to the defiled, secular world, this is what is called 'repaying the benevolence of the Buddha'." Truly, its purport is profound! (ME 34a8–34b7)

Though the linking of *rén* to Buddhist meditation practice would be quite preposterous to orthodox Neo-Confucians, the understanding of its (antithetical) relation to selfish intentions and desire is quite in line with the Sòng Neo-Confucian masters (whom we will return to later). Liǎofán here describes it as the sort of compassionate attitude one must bring into meditation in order for it to be efficacious—similar to the role of no-mind in ledger keeping. At the same time, however, he also portrays it as an *effect* of meditation, something one must cultivate gradually through meditation practice. For the last chapter entitled "Chapter on Expanding Love" is devoted to contemplations that cultivate "love" (*ài* 愛). "Love" in turn is closely connected with "humaneness"—in the view of Liǎofán as well as most Confucians: some paragraphs after his definition of humaneness as "regarding the myriad beings of Heaven-and-earth as one substance", he writes that "humaneness is loving others" (ME 35a2), which seems to reflect Zhū Xī's more subtle definition that "humaneness is the not-yet-materialized state of love; love is the already-materialized state of humaneness." Or the related qualification made by Chéng Yí 程頤 (1033–1107) that humaneness is an aspect of man's nature (*xìng* 性), whereas love belongs to man's feelings (*qíng* 情).[177] A more general way of stating this is that humaneness is substance (*tǐ* 體) whereas love is its function (*yòng* 用). Analyzing it further, Chéng Yí invokes yet another related term *gōng* 公, "impartiality; disinterestedness", and says that the general underlying principle is not humaneness but disinterestedness; but this principle when/as embodied in man is called humaneness; and the application of benevolence in turn is called love.[178]

Liǎofán's explication of humaneness as loving others, and then a chapter on cultivating love, seems to indicate that the attainment of "humaneness" should also be understood as an effect of meditation. This is equally true of the dispelling of personal intentions: The mentioned "Chapter on Expanding Love" is preceded—and thus set up—by the "Chapter on Eliminating Desire" which deals exclusively with meditative contemplations designed to weed out selfish desire. One can only cultivate love and compassion *after* desire

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[176] *Lèngyán jīng* 楞嚴經*, Śūraṅgama-sūtra* (T19n0945). Immensely popular sūtra during the late Míng, also among non-Buddhists.
[177] Zhū Xī, quoted in Qián 錢, *Zhūzi xīn xúe'àn* 朱子新學案, 167.
[178] Chéng Yí, quoted in Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, 97.

is eliminated (or at least has begun being eliminated). One wonders if Liǎofán would not endorse Zhū Xī's nuancing of the definition by Chéng Yí of humaneness as "regarding the myriad beings of Heaven-and-earth as one substance":

> 'Selflessness' is the antecedent of humaneness. 'Regarding the myriad beings of Heaven-and-earth as one substance' is the consequent of humaneness. Only after selflessness [is attained] can there be humaneness; only after humaneness [is attained] can there be 'regarding Heaven-and-earth and the myriad beings as one substance'. What humaneness ultimately is must be discerned in between these two.[179]

The structure these two chapters together constitute thus closely parallels the internal structure of "Chapter on Distinguishing the Will" in which one must first distinguish and discard attitudes that are adverse to meditation and then apply the correct "humane" attitude. In the first chapter this is presented as a condition for meditation; in the last two as crucial effects. This seems to lead to a circular argument, in that absence of desire and presence of humaneness are at the same time the precondition and the effect of meditation. However, if we think of meditation as a gradual practice, whereby initial effects will propel the long-term effects, this circularity is not a problem.

I propose that it is in this believed effect of meditation of weeding out desire and cultivating compassion in its place that the link between the *Meditation Essentials* and the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* is to be sought, and that the point of connection lies in the three concepts 'selflessness', 'humaneness' and 'no-mind'. The ideal of a no-mind devoid of calculation of personal benefits was to be sure a lofty one, and was bound to have met with considerable challenges, all the more so when combined with the explicit practice of doing just that: calculating personal benefits through Ledgers of Merit and Demerit. It seems likely that Liǎofán conveyed his difficulties to Chán master Yúngǔ, who then in true "skilful means" spirit taught the practices he deemed most relevant for this layman. As shown in the previous chapter, that the selection of practices in the *Meditation Essentials* reflects Liǎofán's own concerns more than those of his teacher, becomes evident when we contrast them with the types of meditations Hānshān Déqīng practiced, which are altogether different from those of Liǎofán, despite the fact that the two shared a principal meditation teacher in Yúngǔ.[180]

That the connection between 'humaneness', 'no desire' and 'no-mind' goes deeper than a mere superficial semblance becomes apparent when we take a closer look at each of them. Seeing that Liǎofán in the *Meditation Essentials* centres his discussion of these virtues on *rén*, humaneness, I will also make it the starting and revolving point of the following

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[179] Zhū Xī, *Zhūzǐ yǔlèi* 朱子語類, ch. 6, para. 109.
[180] Eifring, "Meditative Pluralism in Hānshān Déqīng", 117, 126.

discussion, the main goal of which is to establish the philosophical interrelatedness in Neo-Confucianism of the terms humaneness, no-desire, and no-mind.

3.2. *Rén* 仁

Rén, what I gloss as "humaneness", is a concept with a history almost as long as Chinese culture, and so even beginning to untangle its meanings and genealogy is far beyond bounds of feasibility. However, considering its pivotal place in Confucianism and the Neo-Confucian quest of sagehood, as well as its decisiveness for understanding the significance of no-desire and no-mind, I think a very short historical treatment is in order.

According to Chén Lái 陳來, *rén* started out with the very limited denotation as "love towards one's kin" (*ài qīn* 愛親), which by the time of Confucius (6th Century BCE) had been extended to the basic meaning "love towards others" (*ài rén* 愛人).[181] This is a serious misconception, which I suspect stems from China's earliest comprehensive dictionary, the *Shuō wén* 說文 (finished 100 CE), where *rén* is defined as kinship love (仁親也). It has been well established that *rén,* far from denoting or connoting "love" (in its early stages, that is), likely has a martial origin. Lin Yü-sheng argues that *rén,* derived from the homonymous *rén* 人 (”man”), had the pre-Confucian meaning of ”manliness”, or ”manhood”, ”connoting the daring quality of man, without any moral implication”.[182] Though close to the mark, it seems that Lin, too, commits an anachronism. If we believe Graham, 人 at this point in time denoted not ”man” generally, but was rather the term the aristocratic clans of Zhōu 周 used to distinguish themselves from the common people, i.e. something like ”nobleman”, ”nobility”. Accordingly, for its usage in pre- and early Confucianism, Graham glosses *rén* 仁 as "noble"—the stative verb corresponding to the nobleman, and later, to the gentleman (*jūn zǐ* 君子).[183]

In the centuries the *Analects* was composed (c. 500–c. 250)[184] we find both this meaning and a proto-Mencian meaning of a general benevolence towards all people, (as in the negative form of the Golden Rule)[185], reflecting the evolving meaning of the corresponding noun 人 (”nobleman”; ”man”), societal developments, as well as the

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[181] Chén 陈, *Rénxué Běntǐlùn* 仁学本体论, 16.
[182] Lin 林, "The Evolution of the Pre-Confucian Meaning of Jen 仁", 178–80.
[183] Graham, *Disputers of the Tao,* 19. Following Lin, we might specify *Eastern* Zhōu (770–256), since the word is not among the earliest Chinese characters and appears neither in oracle bones and bronze inscriptions nor in historical documents dating from the Western Zhōu (1046–771). See Lin Yü-sheng 林毓生, "The Evolution of the Pre-Confucian Meaning of Jen 仁", 172–5.
[184] Using the revisionist dating by the Warring States Project. See Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects*, 5.
[185] "Not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself". ICS Lunyu: 12.2/30/24. Translation by Legge.

philosophical evolution of Confucianism. We might say that the denotation of *rén* shrinks in scope in terms of virtue—from a general characterisation of the noble to a narrower empathy—but expands in terms of the universality of this virtue, both *who* may embody it (all people, as part of their heavenly endowed nature) and *whom* its object is (also all people).

For comprehending the Neo-Confucian understandings of *rén*, no classical Confucian thinker is more important than Mencius (372–289), who in many respects was more influential on Neo-Confucianism than Confucius himself. Mencius consolidates the new narrow denotation of *rén* as benevolence—what Luo Shirong calls a ”single-dimensional, first-order virtue”, as opposed to Confucius' “overarching, multidimensional, second- or higher-order virtue”.[186] *Rén* is now one virtue among many—distinct from and juxtaposed with ”rightness” (*yì* 義), ”ritual propriety” (*lǐ* 禮) and ”knowledge” (*zhì* 智), together the Confucian (or rather Mencian) four cardinal virtues—now strictly moral values firmly located within the heart/mind (*xīn* 心). Its centrality is not diminished, however, as it is by far the most important asset of a good ruler (仁政), which in the *Analects* was instead accorded *zhī lǐ* 知禮, ”knowing propriety”.[187]

Mencius' conception of *rén* was an important part of his larger claim of the goodness of human nature. He couples the four virtues, or “powers” (*dé* 德), with the four ”emergent sprouts” (*duān* 端), our inborn basis for these virtues. The metaphor is that of a sprout and a full-grown plant. If cultivated the proper way, it lies in the *nature* of the sprout to grow into the consummate plant. And if, of two seeds of the same species, one plant turns out consummate, the other crooked, this proves only a discrepancy in environment, not an inborn difference in the sprouts themselves. Moral growth is just like physical growth.

The corresponding ”sprout” for *rén* was a ”sympathetic heart” (惻隱之心).[188] Mencius' famous analogy is that of a child about to fall into a well. The line of reasoning is that any human put in this situation would immediately and inevitably be filled with alarm and sympathy—not due to any ulterior motive, like being rewarded for saving it, but out of the goodness of his heart. This proves for Mencius the goodness of our nature—in this case the part of our nature pertaining to the virtue of *rén*.[189] Furthermore, it points to the importance of proper cultivation—assisting the sprouts to fruition so to speak. Another Mencius quote on self-cultivation popular with the Neo-Confucians (we will see it in chapter four), was ”do not let your heart forget it, but do not help it grow either”.[190] This quotation

[186] Luo, “Setting the Record Straight: Confucius' Notion of *Ren,*” 41.
[187] Ibid., 42.
[188] ”A sympathetic heart is the emergent sprout of *rén*”. ICS Mencius: 3.6/18/8. Translation modified after Graham, *Disputers,* 126.
[189] ICS Mencius: 3.6/18/4–12.
[190] ICS Mencius: 3.2/16/3. Translation modified after Graham, *Disputers,* 127.

would inevitably evoke the story that follows it, of the farmer who, concerned that his sprouts did not seem to be growing fast enough, started tugging at them to assist their growth—which of course merely lead to them all having withered the next day.[191]

As Graham observes, this view of nature is not only descriptive, but also prescriptive: *Xìng* is both an observable fact about how a thing will become when the required circumstances are present, and how it *ought to* develop: "the course of *sheng* [生, "live; life"] *proper* to a thing" (my emphasis).[192]

It was largely this view of *rén*—man's potential for good, his good nature, brought to its utmost fruition (*jìn xìng* 盡性)—that the Neo-Confucians adopted, and which throws the most light on Yuán Liǎofán's application of it. At the same time, however, Confucius' "higher-order" conception of *rén* was to some extent retained in a tendency of the Neo-Confucian to regard it also as an all-inclusive virtue, or force, *containing* within it the three other virtues. Moreover, their conception of *rén* was compounded by everything that happened with it in the one and a half millennia between Mencius and the Sòng dynasty. Particularly significant was the development in the fields of metaphysics and cosmology. The Neo-Confucians retained the Mencian *ethics* of *rén,* but at the same timed strived to synthesize it with particularly Hàn 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE) cosmology. Indeed, one of the most defining characteristics of Neo-Confucian philosophy more generally, was precisely its effort to merge ethics with metaphysics and cosmology—to find metaphysical grounds for Confucian ethics, spurred on by the challenge posed by Buddhism and its highly developed metaphysics.[193] Yuán Liǎofán is not notably concerned with such metaphysical aspects of *rén,* except for the concept of everything in the universe sharing the same "body" or "substance" (*tóng tǐ* 同體), so except for this theory I won't treat the historical development of metaphysic *rén* here in any length.

Suffice it to say that in the *Yì zhuàn* 易傳 appendix to the *Book of Changes*, *rén* was coupled with the "primordial" (*yuán* 元), a cosmogonical concept denoting the early stages of

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[191] ICS Mencius: 3.2/16/4–6.

[192] Graham, *Disputers,* 127. At this point we should bear in mind an aspect of "nature" in Chinese, particularly Mencian, philosophy that makes it slightly different from nature as understood in Western philosophy, namely its emphasis on potentiality: A man's nature is not the same as his *inborn* qualities, but rather the natural qualities that will mature *if nourished rightly*. Thus, man could have inborn (故 *gù*) cravings without them belonging to his nature (*xìng* 性). This was pointed out by Angus Graham, who describes the Chinese "nature" thus: "The *xìng* (nature) of an animate thing [...] meant the course on which life completes its development if sufficiently nourished and not obstructed or injured from the outside". Graham, *Disputers,* 124. As we shall see in the next section, the most significant such obstructions in Neo-Confucianism were those of self-centredness and desire (*sī* 私, *yù* 欲). (And not many qualifications are needed for the same claim to apply to Buddhism and philosophical Daosim as well.)

[193] Hon, "Zhou Dunyi's Philosophy of the Supreme Polarity," 4–9.

the cosmos, as well as the creative principles of heaven-and-earth—the ”generation of life” (*shēng shēng* 生生). *Rén* was now the source not only of good (*shàn* 善), but of no less than the whole cosmos, and the ”moving force and cause” of life.[194] Later, the *Book of Rites,* developing a tendency already latent in Mencius,[195] couples *rén* with *qì* (”ether”[196]). We see this development in Zhū Xī's saying that "*Rén* is the creative [*shēng*] ether of Heaven-and-earth".[197] Having been associated with *qì*, *rén* was then further described as the "mind of Heaven" (*tiān xīn* 天心), and the ”mind of Heaven-and-earth” (*tiān-dì zhī xīn* 天地之心), understood as the source of all movement in the universe—that by which the generation of all life (*shēng shēng* 生生) was guided. By analogy to how the human body is guided by its mind, this force was then called the ”mind of Heaven-and-earth” (though any conscious *primus motor* was never implied).[198]

When we reach the Sòng dynasty and the advent of Neo-Confucianism, this notion of the ”mind of Heaven” was coupled with the ontological theory of *tóng tǐ* 同體, which situated man's nature not primarily in each individual, where it was for Mencius, but as part of the substance of everything. There was to be no distinction between inner and outer. Consequently, the mind of Heaven-and-earth was more decidedly understood as a ubiquitous (and impersonal) entity, running through man and all other beings.[199] Synthesizing pre-Confucian "noble", Mencian "benevolence" and Hàn "mind of Heaven", *rén* was now defined as man's inherent ability to be conscious of this unity. In the next chapter we will see Lǐ Yánpíng's (1093–1163) definition of *rén* as "simply perception[200] in its thoroughly clarified state." A particularly terse saying by Chéng Yí, who is also the origin of defining *rén* in terms of perception, reads: "*Rén* then one, not *rén* then two."[201]

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[194] Chén, *Rénxué Běntǐlùn*, 16.
[195] The self-cultivation anecdote of the farmer tugging at his seedlings is actually an elaboration of Mencius' idea of a ”flood-like *qì*”, which though described here as the goal of self-cultivation is rather mystic and otherwise never really explained.
[196] In Neo-Confucian metaphysics, *qì* basically denotes the material force of which everything in the universe is constituted, the opposite of *lǐ* 理, principle. Common translations are "(cosmic) pneuma" and "ether" (a less common one is "matter"); I follow Graham and opt for "ether".
[197] Zhū Xī, quoted in Qián, *Zhūzǐ xīn xúe'àn,* 379.
[198] Chén, *Rénxué Běntǐlùn,* 17.
[199] Ibid., 18.
[200] *zhījué* 知覺. Another possible gloss is ”awareness”. The Chinese term, as conceived by the Neo-Confucians, involves something more active than what we usually think of as ”perception”. The compound word seems to be interchangeable with the second graph *jué* 覺 (and not with *zhī* 知), a term that is no less complicated, but which never escapes it basic meaning of ”waking up” and ”being wake”. Asked what the difference between the two morphs is, Yáng Shí 楊時 (h. Guìshān, 1053–1135) replies that *zhī* (”know”) is what we do with affairs (*shì* 事), whereas *jué* is what we do with principle (*lǐ* 理). In other words, we know affairs, and a few of us also perceives *lǐ* 理. Thanks to Anders Sydskjør for sharing this insight. See Zhū Xī, *Zhūzǐ yǔlèi*, ch. 17, sec. 3, para. 7.
[201] Quoted and translated in Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers,* 97.

In the Daoist-inspired "monist" tradition of Neo-Confucianism, there was a tendency of conceptualising this universality in terms of a common source, either a spring (*yuán* 源) from which everything flows and diverges into streams (*liú* 流), or a root (*běn* 本) from which branches grow. In the more rationalist "dualist" tradition, there was a tendency to rather reduce everything to a single, underlying "principle" or "pattern" (*lǐ* 理).[202] These two competing trends are in fact represented by the two nearly identical versions of the definition of *rén* as forming one substance with all things. Chéng Hào's 程顥 (1032–1085) version was: "*Rén* is being indivisibly of the same substance as all beings"; Chéng Yí's, which is the one Liǎofán employs, reads: "*Rén* is regarding Heaven-and-earth and the myriad beings as one substance".[203] They seem to express the exact same idea, and was indeed used interchangeably by later Neo-Confucians, but, knowing who uttered each of them, reflect two slightly different conceptions of *rén.* Above we saw Chéng Yí's analysis of the relation of *rén* to "impartiality", calling *rén* the principle of impartiality as it is embodied in man. Both are principles, and instantiations of the most generalised "heavenly principle" (*tiān lǐ* 天理), *rén* only being a more specific principle than "impartiality". Becoming *rén* is then a matter of discovering and extrapolating (*tuī* 推) this principle through the "investigation of things", either things and affairs out there in the natural and social worlds, or in bookish learning, or in the mind within. Then one will be able to "regard Heaven-and-earth and the myriad beings as one substance."

For those with monist inclinations, on the other hand, embodying *rén* seems to be more of a mystic or religious *experience*, feeling the common source of everything, regaining sensation in the parts of one's being that were previously numb, "*being* of the same substance as Heaven-and-earth and the myriad beings". We shall see a quintessential example of such a mystic understanding, as applied to meditation, in the next chapter when looking at Luó Hóngxiān (1504–1564). In the School of Mind, which roughly corresponds with Graham's monist category, this commonality was to be sought through one's own mind.

3.3. "No-desire"

What the monists and dualists share, however—and which makes the distinction not so significant for our purposes—is the belief that self-centred desires (*yù* 欲) and intentions (*yì*

[202] On the monist and dualist traditions in Neo-Confucianism, see Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers,* xxvii–xx. Graham does not spell it out, but it is my impression that the two categories correspond roughly with the School of Mind and School of Principle respectively.
[203] "渾然與與物同體" and "以天地萬物為一體" respectively. In Chéng 程 and Chéng 程, *Hénán Chéng shì yí shū* 河南程氏遺書, fasc. 2a, p. 4b; and ibid., p. 2b.

意) are *not* part of our heaven-endowed nature, either it is understood in terms of principle or a common source.

The term Liǎofán employs is "(having) no desire", *wú yù* 無欲*,* a term that in pre-Sòng times had had a Daoist and Buddhist affinity, but which nonetheless took on philosophical import for the Neo-Confucians. It was Zhōu Dūnyí (1017–1073) who first assigned it a central place. Usually, the terms implied are "no self-centred desire" (*wú sī'yù* 無私欲), or "no human desire" (*wú rényù* 無人欲); most Neo-Confucians did not dispute the naturalness or desirability of desires relating to subsistence, like eating, or the desire to become a sage (though Wáng Jī is a possible exception)[204]. What was detrimental, and unnatural, were desires that arose from the idea—the illusion—of an essential distinction between oneself and others. Such a distinction would lead to craving (*yù* 欲) that which lay beyond oneself, and scheming (*yì* 意) to obtain them, whereas realizing the unity of things would leave one content with the awareness that one is already in possession of them by virtue of being human—but also to the will (*zhì* 志) to "establish others" (*lì rén* 立人).[205]

The opposite of *sī* 私, self-centredness, is *gōng* 公, "impartiality". Common for all the Chinese traditions is the idea that self-centredness is a kind of *partialness*, a failure to remain objective. For the Neo-Confucians, due to our attachment to our selves we are unable to perceive and judge a thing or situation according to its actual, objective properties, and thus to respond to it in an unmediated way in accordance with the Way and our actual nature.

The *locus classicus* on "no-desire" is this exchange between Zhōu Dūnyí 周敦頤 (1017–1073), and a disciple:

> Q. Can sagehood be learnt?
> A. Yes.
> Q. Is there any essential [approach]?
> A. Yes.

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[204] It seems that for Wáng Jī, who took Yángmíng's emphasis on spontaneity even further, *aspiring* to follow the Way amounts to an externalization that in turn leads to dualism, e.g.: "The Changes is the Way. If you desire to follow it, this will be of a kind with dualism (二). Dualism leads to straying away [from the Way]." More generally, the School of Mind emphasised that man by nature already possesses sagehood within him; becoming a sage is more a process of realizing and then trusting wholeheartedly this inherent goodness than it is searching for the Way in books, past paragons of virtue or "things" in society and nature, i.e. *outside* the mind, as it was for the Chéng-Zhū school.

[205] The concept of "establishing others" (*lì rén*) in fact stems from one of the definitions of *rén* in the *Analects* (c. 262 BCE): "As for the man of *rén*, wanting position himself, he gives position to others (*lì rén*); wanting to advance himself, he advances others. To be able to judge the needs of others by one's own—this may be described as the method of *rén*." We saw the negative form of the Golden Rule earlier; this is the positive version. ICS Lunyu: 6.30/14/17. Translation modified after Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers,* 98–9; and Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects,* 176. Brooks renders *lì rén* politically as "positioning others", which I think is correct, yet we should bear in mind that Neo-Confucians of the Sòng and Míng would have read this *lì rén* in a much wider, ethical sense, best represented by "establishing others". We will meet the phrase again shortly.

> Q. I request to hear it!
> A. Oneness (*yī* 一) is of the essence. *Oneness is having no desire.* When having no desire one is void while quiescent and upright while active. [...][206]

Zhōu Dūnyí, who was also the first to introduce the centrality of sagehood, deems ”no desire” the essential way to obtain it, which when Zhū Xī ranked Zhōu Dūnyí as the first Neo-Confucian patriarch secured its centrality in later Neo-Confucianism. Indeed, Yuán Liǎofán opens his ”Chapter on Eliminating Desire” by referring to it:

> In his expositions on the Sagely Learning [i.e. Confucianism], Zhōu Liánxī [Dūnyí] held 'no-desire' to be essential.” (ME 60b5)

We also see that Dūnyí's definition of “no desire” is basically identical to Chéng Yí's definition of *rén,* which later lead to their being equated, and subsequently to Zhū Xī's refutation of such a simplistic definition, and his explication of their relation that we saw above, calling *rén* the consequent of selflessness. He was also fond of explaining the relationship by resorting to water metaphors:

> Water muddled by sand is necessarily not the original [state] of water. When the sand is removed, then as a matter of course we have water [in its original state]. It cannot be claimed that the absence of sand [per se] equals water.[207]

What does water represent in this metaphor? *Rén* of course:

> When one achieves [a state in which one is] thoroughly cleansed of selfish desires, so that the Heavenly principles may flow [freely], this will be *rén.*[208]

And in a similar simile:

> *Rén* may be spotted only when there is no selfish desire. Just like water only can move when there is no clogging.[209]

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[206] Zhōu Dūnyí, *Tōng shū* 通書, sec. 20.
[207] Zhū Xī, quoted in Qián, *Zhūzǐ xīn xúe'àn*, 162–3.
[208] Zhū Xī, *Zhūzǐ yǔlèi,* ch. 6, para. 105. Reminiscent of this saying by Huìnéng 慧能 (for whom the concepts “no-thought” (*wú-niàn* 無念) and “no-mind” were essential): “'The other shore' means ever separating from all objects so there is no arising-and-perishing, like water constantly flowing everywhere without obstruction”. Trans. Yampolsky, quoted in Ziporyn, “The *Platform Sūtra* and Chinese Philosophy,” 172.
[209] Zhū Xī, in Qián, *Zhūzǐ xīn xúe'àn*, 164.

Such a conception may stem from his teacher Lǐ Yánpíng 李延平. Lǐ Yánpíng, paraphrasing one of the Chéng brothers—in the same letter as where he eventually advocates the practice of meditation, which we will look at in the next chapter—writes to Zhū Xī:

> The notion of *rén* is hard to explicate. In the *Analects* [Confucius] only tell his disciples how to pursue it, so that they may know how to exert their minds. It seems that when selfish desire sinks, the Heavenly principles may be viewed, and one will then know *rén.*[210]

In all these explications, self-centred desire is an obstruction, preventing us from perceiving, embodying and acting out the principle of *rén.*

Overcoming desire was therefore an important *gōngfū* "spiritual effort" for most all the Neo-Confucians, as it also was for Confucius and Mencius. Mencius stressed the importance of "diminishing desire" (*guǎ yù* 寡欲) for "nourishing the heart" (*yǎng xīn* 養心). Zhōu Dūnyí advocated the practice of "maintaining quiescence" (*zhǔ jìng* 主靜) as a means for maintaining the oneness we saw above (*zhǔ yī* 主一). Zhū Xī and others often stressed "restraining oneself and returning to ritual propriety" (克己復禮) as way of overcoming desire (and also of discovering *rén*).

Wáng Yángmíng (1472–1529), for whom uncovering our innate knowledge of the good (*liángzhī* 良知) was the overriding concern, "removing human desire" (*qù rényù* 去人欲) became the only essential *gōngfū*. The term appears 24 times in his collected works. Huáng Zōngxī 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) deems "removing human desire and preserving the Heavenly principles" one of Yángmíng's three essential teachings, the two other being "the unity of knowledge and action" and the "extension of innate knowledge".[211] For Yángmíng, the innate knowledge, a term originating from Mencius and associated with Chéng Hào, is emphatically something we are endowed with from birth. Becoming a sage is simply a matter of uncovering it. What keeps us from doing that is precisely "human desire". "Simply apply

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[210] Lǐ Yánpíng 李延平 and Zhū Xī, *Yánpíng dá wèn* 延平答問, para. 54. This bears conspicuous resemblance to, and was likely inspired by, the following saying of Chéng Hào 程顥: "*Rén* is most difficult to describe in words. Thus, Confucius said only: 'Wanting to establish yourself, you establish others; wanting to advance yourself, you advance others. To be able to judge the needs of others by one's own—this may be described as the method of *rén*.' By making us look at *rén* from this point of view, he wanted us to grasp its substance." Incidentally, Chéng Hào quotes here the saying from the *Analects* that we just met in note 205. Since it here comes from the mouth of a Neo-Confucian, I render *lì rén* instead as "establishing others". Chéng Hào, *Hénán Chéng shì yí shū*, fasc. 2a, p. 3a.

[211] "In teaching people, his most crucial points lay in 'removing human desire' and 'preserving the heavenly principle' (存天理); this was elaborated with the doctrine of the 'unity of knowledge and action' (知行合一); while the most essential place ultimately was accorded the 'extension of innate knowledge' (致良知). Even with a hundred thousand words, none would not be somehow derived from one of these three sayings." Huáng Zōngxī, *Míng rú xué'àn* 明儒學案, fasc. 10, para. 14.

effort (用功) to the removal of human desire and the preservation of Heavenly principle, and that's it."[212]

The concern for the removal of desire is no less omnipresent in Wáng Jī (1498–1583),[213] Yángmíng's perhaps most influential disciple, and teacher for several years of Yuán Liǎofán. Drawing on a distinction made by Yángmíng in his later years, in turn borrowed from Buddhism, Wáng Jī emphasises the indispensability of eliminating desire particularly for those with a disposition not belonging to the "sharp faculties" (*lì gēn* 利根). Due to the habits (*xí* 習) such people—most people—have amassed through interaction with an imperfect society, they must "diminish desire" (opting for the Mencian term): "The human mind is originally void (虛)[214]; that which is not void is due to the piling on of desire. The mind having desire is like the eye being covered by dust. (...) The gentleman [avails himself of the spiritual effort of] diminishing desire in order to arrive at voidness."[215] Similar statements abound.[216] The quest for "no-desire" is no less than the origin of pedagogy: "The establishing of teachings (教) by the men of old was originally devised to counter the presence of desire."[217] Moreover, no-desire is for him not only crucial for *gōngfū,* but also a qualifier of ontological substance (*tǐ* 體): "No-desire is the original substance (本體) of the mind."[218]

3.4. "No-mind"

The water metaphors for selflessness and *rén* by Zhu Xi and his teacher ring highly reminiscent of a description by Wm. Theodore de Bary of what "no-mind" entailed in Neo-Confucianism:

> "Having no mind" meant emptying it of self and simultaneously allowing it to be completely filled with the mind of Heaven-and-earth, that is, to reflect the moral universe just as it is. (...)

[212] Wáng Yángmíng, *Chuán xí lù* 傳習錄, ch. 1, para. 4.
[213] As stated by Zhōng 鍾, "Wáng Lóngxī de běntǐ lùn yǔ gōngfū lùn" 王龍溪的本體論與工夫論, 104.
[214] *Xū.* This term is traditionally Daoist, recurring in the *Zhuāngzǐ* in particular. On the surface, and in ordinary parlance, *xū* is synonymous with *kōng* 空, "empty", the word opted for by the Buddhists to render Sanskrit *śūnyatā.* In order to distinguish the two, the common English translation of *xū* is "void." Barry Allen, trying to avoid Western connotations of absolute "nothingness", uses instead "virtual"—in opposition to "actual" (*yǒu* 有, "have"), thus foregrounding the Chinese keenness for constant transformation, and the quality of this pair of each being able to transform into the other.
[215] Quoted in Fāng 方, "Wáng Jī de xīntǐ lùn," 155.
[216] See for example Zhōng, "Wáng Lóngxī de běntǐ lùn yǔ gōngfū lùn", 108.
[217] Ibid., 104.
[218] Ibid.

> Emptiness was the wellspring of activity in a life that joined the active and contemplative modes (...).[219]

Indeed, for the early Neo-Confucians the denotations of "no-desire" and "no-mind" were basically identical, according to Dèng Kèmíng,[220] This is true, but only partly so. First, we might nuance this (in an analogous way to Zhū Xī's treatment of selflessness and *rén*) and say that the referent of "no-mind" is a state of mind unclouded by personal cravings, intentions and scheming. In other words it is the state of mind *resulting* from thinking and acting selflessly. More importantly, and as Dèng's account also shows, application of the term "no-mind" had a rich history within both the Buddhist and Daoist traditions; therefore, it inevitably encompassed if not denotations then at least connotations that were unwelcome to strict Neo-Confucians and that entailed possibilities of misunderstanding that rendered its application bothersome. Thus, according to Zhū Xī, whenever students used "no-mind", Chéng Yí would reply: "'No-mind' is not right, one should only speak of 'no self-centred mind'."[221]

The first, most obvious misunderstanding that would have to be avoided was viewing the term as an ontological rejection of the existence of the human mind, i.e. "*there is* no mind", which linguistically speaking is a perfectly sound reading of the term. Indeed, this was one of the meanings of the term in Buddhism, i.e. the same as asserting the "empty" (*kōng* 空, Skt. *śūnyatā*) ontological status of the mind.

Subtler, and perhaps more consequential, differences lay in the referents of the term in Buddhism and Daoism that were basically the same as the Confucian one, namely *wú- xīn* as a state of mind, or attitude. The aspect of "non-attachment" was more explicit and had a much larger scope in the applications of "no mind" in these two traditions. As we have seen, in early Neo-Confucianism it was mainly the attachment to self, i.e. self-centredness, that was seen as incompatible with and detrimental to right judgement-making in all parts of life. The Confucian Classics; paragons of virtue; social and moral norms; as well as human rationality still had important roles to play in all human effort. In philosophical Daoism, *all* these were part of the obstructions that separated man from the Way. Not only considerations of self, but any preconceived standard had to be discarded, and the discriminative and conceptualizing powers of the mind dispensed with, were he to approximate the Way. What the Confucians deem knowledge—as well as artificial propriety, righteousness and humaneness—is for

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[219] de Bary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and Enlightenment," 165. See also 184–8 on "Neo-Confucian 'emptiness'".

[220] Dèng 鄧, "Wáng Yángmíng xīnxué zhōng zhī 'wú-xīn' de yìyì" 王陽明心學中之「無心」的意義, 122.

[221] Zhū Xī and Lǚ Zǔqiān 呂祖謙, ed., *Jìn sī lù* 近思錄, fasc. 2, p. 27b.

Zhuāngzǐ "little knowledge", which is to be dispensed with in Great Knowledge (*dà zhī* 大知). The *Zhuāngzǐ* is a work of many hands, and thus the interpretation of what this Great Knowledge actually is, differs. For Guō Xiāng 郭襄, forefigure of Neo-Daoism (*xuán xué* 玄學) and most influential commentaror on the *Zhuāngzǐ*, it is simply the discarding of all conceptual knowledge through *míng wù* 冥物, what Brook Ziporyn creatively translates as "vanishing into things". In the words of Barry Allen

> There is no superior cognition that rises above our aberrant nature and finally gets things right. Knowledge at its best cannot penetrate *ziran* ["self-so"; "natual"] process, which will not stop long enough to constitute an "object." Every "object" is a phase in a network that has already transformed by the time we react to its traces. Nothing endures; all that is left are these traces. It is these that language names. (...) The alternative to such futile cognition is to vanish into things.[222]

Another important hermeneutical term for Guō Xiāng was in fact no-mind. Allen continues:

> To vanish into things is to interact with them without obstructive, forceful desires, or "self". To achieve this trackless mind is to overcome the mind, to reach no-mind (*wu xin*). The heart is not extinguished, only become imperceptible.[223]

Similar non-attachment was sought by the Buddhists. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, dualism, such as existence/non-existence, *nirvāṇa/saṃsāra*, as well as conceptualization in general, were ultimately seen as distortions made by the human mind; and part of the way to bodhisattva-hood lay in realizing and then discarding our attachment to the mind and its conventional knowledge. This was, especially by Chán monks, occationally referred to as "no-mind".[224]

Meditation was in both traditions, especially Buddhism, one of the means by which such non-attachment was sought.

These reasons for the Song Neo-Confucians' abstentions from the term no-mind became precisely the basis, it would seem, for its resurrection and application by the Neo-Confucian philosophers in the mid and late Míng.

The great philosophical contribution to Neo-Confucianism during the Míng period (1368–1644) was Wáng Yángmíng's reapplication and reinterpretation of "innate knowledge", or "pure knowledge", *liáng zhī* 良知 (literally "good knowledge"). Ever since

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[222] Allen, *Vanishing Into Things*, 104.
[223] Ibid.
[224] In particular the late Táng monk Huángbò Xīyún 黃蘗希運 (d. 850): "Mind is Buddha; no-mind is the Way. Simply do not give rise to conceptual thoughts, thinking in terms of existence and nothingness, long and short, others and self, subject and object." Quoted and translated in Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way*, 170–1.

Mencius (who is also the origin of the term), great faith had in Confucianism been accorded the moral powers of man; as we saw above, goodness was part of man's natural inclinations. But it was not until Wáng Yángmíng that this trust was formulated so unequivocally and formed the absolute basis of not only ethics but all philosophical inquiry. In terms of *lǐ* 理, the heavenly principle was exhaustively represented within the mind ("mind is principle"), and seeking it, and the Way, outside the mind—in the Classics or in the phenomenal world—served merely to divert one's attention from their actual source—one's own mind.[225] For Yángmíng the mind in its pure, original, natural state—*liángzhī*—was the sole ethical standard in relation to which anything could be evaluated. Every man (and woman?) possessed this mind—in a more or less tarnished state—and so he himself, based on his own conscience, had to make his own decisions between right and wrong. Indeed, preconceived conceptions of right and wrong were bound to inhibit the full, unrestrained (and spontaneous) exertion of his innate knowledge. Ultimately, even intentions of doing good were if not obstructive to innate knowledge then at least rendered useless by it. Yángmíng's metaphor is that of motes of dust (stagnant thoughts) covering the eye (Innate Knowledge); it does not matter if the dust consists of gold or jade (good thoughts)—clear sight will be equally inhibited.[226] Even more recurrent is the mirror metaphor, often seen as an obvious case of Chán influence, but going in fact as far back as to the *Zhūangzǐ*.[227] The mind is like a mirror, and when in its original untarnished—natural—state (Innate Knowledge for Wáng Yángmíng, Buddha Nature for the Buddhists, Great Knowledge for Zhuāngzǐ) like a mirror free of dust and scratches, reflecting everything as it is, unmediated, while leaving no trace (*jì* 跡) of them when they disappear.[228]

For Wáng Yángmíng too, egoism represented the most grave blemishes to the mirror—indeed, we have seen that removing self-centred desire (去私欲) was the most crucial *gōngfū* of all in uncovering the "innate knowledge". And yet, the other, less strictly

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[225] See for example *Chuán xí lù*, ch. 2, para. 52.

[226] Quoted in Dèng, "Wáng Yángmíng xīnxué zhōng zhī 'wú-xīn'", 142. Another metaphor, which instead leaves good thoughts irrelevant rather than obstructive, is that of the sun (innate knowledge) revealing itself after the dispersing of clouds (evil thoughts); harbouring good intentions in this state of mind is like lighting a torch in full sunlight. See Wáng, *Chuán xí lù*, ch. 13, para. 15. On a side note, the fact that Zhū Xī in an analogous metaphor uses instead the moon to symbolize the mind, is indicative I think of the differences between the two in the relative significance of the mind. Both metaphors seem to be, at least partly, Chán influence. They are in fact combined in this saying by Huìnéng: "Good friends, sagacity is like the sun, and wisdom is like the moon. Sagacity and wisdom are always bright, but through being attached externally to sensory realms, the floating clouds of false thoughts block the self-nature, rendering it obscure." *Liù zǔ tán jīng* 六祖壇經 (T48n2008), p0354b27. Translation by McRae, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,* 51.

[227] See Fraser, "Heart-Fasting, Forgetting, and Using the Heart Like a Mirror".

[228] For Wáng Yángmíng's application, see for example *Chuán xí lù,* ch. 2, para. 7.

Confucian, connotations of ”no mind”—of transcending preconceived ethical standards, intellectual deliberation, etc.—were not unwelcome either.

Though Lù Xiàngshān 陸象山 (1139-1192), Yángmíng’s doctrinal forerunner of the Southern Sòng, was quite averse to the term “no-mind” per se,[229] similar statements on goodness can be found in his works.[230] Both of them are far from unequivocal on this matter—statements to the seemingly contrary also abound—and thus much controversy surrounding their ultimate stand on and conception of ethical goodness ensued. One conclusion that is commonly agreed upon at least in modern scholarship is that the goodness of innate knowledge somehow *transcends* conventional notions of goodness.[231] The latter is then the goodness that is to be discarded through the attitude of “no-mind”, whereas the transcendent goodness of innate knowledge is discovered and brought into full exertion in the *state* of virtual and spontaneous “no mind”—at which point one will be a sage.

Where other followers of the Yángmíng School steered away from this unorthodox strain in their master, Wáng Jī—perhaps the most influential of his disciples for decades to come—instead emphasised it, including the actual term “no mind”, and made it one of his key strategies of explicating innate knowledge.[232] Wáng Jī picked up on a paradoxical saying from Yángmíng’s later years called the “Four Phrase Teaching” (*sì jù jiào* 四句教): ”There being a mind is reality, there being no mind is illusion; there being a mind is illusion, there being no mind is reality.”[233] According to Móu Zōngsān, Wáng Jī understood the first sentence to refer to the ontological status of the mind (mind as *běntǐ* 本體), and the second to refer to its application through spiritual effort (mind as *gōngfū* 工夫),[234] i.e. the spontaneous selflessness necessary for letting the Way work through one.

As we have seen, Wáng Jī was none other than the teacher of Yuán Liǎofán for several years. Liǎofán would thus no doubt be very familiar with the term when introduced to it by Yúngǔ, and Yúngǔ would no doubt be equally aware of the extent of the term’s application in all three traditions.

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229 Dèng, “Wáng Yángmíng xīnxué zhōng zhī ‘wú-xīn’,” 121–2.
230 Okada, ”Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism”, 122.
231 Deng, “Wáng Yángmíng xīnxué zhōng zhī ‘wú-xīn’,” 146–7.
232 See Zhōng, ”Wáng Lóngxī de běntǐ lùn yǔ gōngfū lùn”.
233 Yángmíng, as recorded by Wáng Jī, cited in Zhōng, ”Wáng Lóngxī de běntǐ lùn yǔ gōngfū lùn”, 110.
234 Móu Zōngsān 牟宗三 quoted in ibid., 110n17.

3.5. Conclusion

As should be clear by now, in Confucianism having “no mind” was in effect the same as possessing—or rather *embodying—rén* as a result of clearing away its obstructions. For practically all Neo-Confucians, “orthodox” and “heterodox” alike (with an exception in Hé Xīnyǐn and possibly Lǐ Zhì)[235], self-centredness represented the definite bulk of such obstructions—for many the sole component. Bringing this finally back to the case of Yuán Liǎofán, the prerequisite of having “no-mind” in ledger practice on the one hand and the description of meditation practice as encapsulated in the notion of *rén* on the other, are clearly expressions of the same fundamental concern. A mind rid of any considerations of personal gain was a precondition for the efficacy of both practices. But the connection between the two, is not restricted, I think, to such an attitude having an analogous function *within* each of the two practices; in other words, the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán* and the *Meditation Essentials* do not merely each express this common concern independently; there seems in addition to be a conditional relationship between the two, in which cultivation of virtues through meditation is a precondition for virtuous action through morality ledgers. Only after the weeding out of selfish desire and the cultivation of love in its place—through sitting in meditation—may one hope to attain “having no mind”.

One might object that the mere ordering of the chapters hardly is enough evidence for postulating a connection between meditation and ledger practice—a connection that nowhere is made explicit. However, as I showed in the introductory section on the *Sequential Gateway,* the ordering—*sequencing*—of the practices in that work is of utmost significance. And this emphasis on progression is maintained in the *Meditation Essentials*, as is indicated by the author/editor Yuán Liǎofán in the preface, as well as by the content of the first two chapters

[235] Hé Xīnyǐn 何心隱 (1517–1579) radically revalued egoism and human desires. The most telling indication of this is his novel interpretation of a famous epithet of Confucius (that we will revisit in a minute, when Liǎofán alludes to it): ”The Master eschewed four things: He avoided being opinionated; he avoided being apodictive; he avoided being stubborn; he avoided being self-centred.” In Xīnyǐn’s reading this was turned on its head: instead of “avoiding being self-centred”, which was the undisputed reading, Confucius’ “eschewed avoiding being self-centred”, in other words he embraced it! (“Self-centred” here being a gloss of *wǒ* 我, “me; self”, not *sī*.) Hé Xīnyǐn was one of the most radical of the Tàizhōu affiliates, and indeed of *all* prominent Confucians throughout history. See de Bary, “Individualism and humanitarianism in late Ming thought”, 181–3. Quotation in ICS Lunyu: 9.4/20/13; translation by Harbsmeier, Thesaurus Linguae Serica.

As for Lǐ Zhì 李贄 (1527–1602), his affirmation of self-centredness and selfish desire is discussed by both Brook and de Bary. On self-centredness de Bary cites Lǐ Zhì as saying: “Selfishness is the mind-and-heart of man. Men must be selfish so that what is in their minds can be known. If there is no selfishness, there is no mind.” Brook summarizes Lǐ Zhì’s takes on selfish desire thus: “(...) Li Zhi makes an unusual suggestion: Rather than curb selfish behaviour with force or restraint, why not mobilize self-interest?” See de Bary, ibid., 200; and Brook, *Troubled Empire,* 180. 199–201 and 179–82 respectively for larger discussion.

(first “distinguishing the will”, then “preparing practice”). When he then goes in and moves the “Four Boundless Mentalities” practice from its original point in the sequence—between the “Four *Dhyānas*” and the “Four Formless Concentrations”—to the very end, *after* his ”Chapter on Eliminating Desire”, this is clearly a consequential recasting—reflecting a very conscious choice. It is the only place in the text where Liǎofán’s progression deviates from that of Zhìyǐ in the *Sequential Gateway.*

When we add to this fact two facts that I hope I have substantiated in the preceding sections, (1) the framing of the whole practice as encapsulated in the Confucian virtue of *rén,* ”humaneness”, and (2), this virtue’s connection with the required mind-set in ledger practice as best epitomized in the notion of ”no-mind”—then the connection between meditation and ledger practice, as well as the *function* of meditation, becomes quite clear. Through sustained meditation one may hope to weed out self-centred desire and cultivate love in its place, thus attaining the no-mind required for karmically effective merit accumulation.

Indeed, the attainment of the ideal of no-mind is set up perfectly in the very last paragraph of the final chapter of the *Meditation Essentials.* After having performed sequential contemplations on “boundless loving-kindness”, “boundless compassion” and “boundless joy”, the meditator is finally asked to transcend all these in a state of “boundless equanimity”:

> [4. The Contemplation of Boundless Equanimity]
> From this point in the ‘concentration of joy’, you think of loving-kindness and that you give happiness to all the sentient beings, you think of compassion and wish to uproot their suffering, you think of joy and that you cause them to be joyful. However, calculating one’s own benefit, without forgetting prior events, would not be to practice the superior activities. For example, a compassionate father bringing benefit to his son, without seeking favour—that is real love.
>
> Subsequently, you should reflect on the fact that when sentient beings obtain happiness, each will owe it to their own particular causes and concomitances, and that it will never only be thanks to you. If you on the other hand state, ”I am able to confer happiness”, then this is not a mind of modesty.
>
> Then you reflect that the mind of loving-kindness and its conferring happiness, are both but empty aspirations: The sentient being in front of you is not in fact obtaining happiness, and believing it to be real is an act of distortion (*viparyāsa*).
>
> Then you reflect that if there is even the slightest generation of sadness or happiness upon witnessing sentient beings experiencing suffering, then this belongs to the obstructions, and any attainment of liberation will thus be complicated.
>
> Think: ”Now I wish to purify my practices of cultivation, therefore I should not attach myself to the *dharmas* of being opinionated, apodictive, stubborn or self-centred.[236] Now I

[236] The latter part of this sentence is an allusion to the epithet of Confucius mentioned in the previous note (ICS Lunyu: 9.4/20/13). Attachment (著) and especially *dharma* (法), and on the other hand, are

> should rid myself of this clinging infatuation.” Consequently, your pure mind (*śuddha-citta*) arises. There will be no hatred and no love whatsoever. At first, pick your loved ones, and picture them achieving the power of concentration (*samādhi-bāla*) while experiencing non-suffering and non-happiness, clearly, distinctly—finally extending this visualization to the Ten Aspects of Time and the Five Paths (*pañca-marga*), there being no-one in the world that are not experiencing this.
>
> This is what is called the state of Boundless Equanimity (*upekṣā*). (ME 66a3–b4)

The *Meditation Essentials* thus ends on a note of—and leaves the meditator in a state of—complete uninhibited poise, in which even feelings of love and compassion are transcended.

We might also say that Liǎofán, by moving this “mundane” practice to the end of his text, leaves the meditator back in the realm of form (*sè jiè*), ready to commence on his project of altering his own karma for the purpose of material rewards. Indeed, whereas “Liǎofán” 了凡 (“Overcoming the Mundane”) presents the theory of “establishing one’s fate” and the practice of merit accumulation as the perfection of understanding, in monastic Buddhism not only bad karma but even good karma is ultimately an obstruction on the path towards enlightenment. Karma (*yè* 業) in itself is part of our clinging to this world; producing karma—including accumulating merits (*jī shàn* 積善)—is ultimately what ties us to the cycle of life and death, and what *causes* our suffering. The accumulation of merit will lead to a happier rebirth, from which the prospect of enlightenment might be nearer at hand, but can by definition not of itself produce enlightenment. In Theravada (Southern) Buddhism, there is a very clear division between the roles of monks and of laity. The principle concern of the monk is supposed to be the quest for *nirvāṇa,* whereas the role of laypeople is to facilitate the monk in this pursuit, mainly through almsgiving. By this giving, they will enhance their own karma, which in turn will lead to a favourable rebirth later, from which they themselves may pursue *nirvāṇa*—through sustained meditation.

With Mahāyāna and the introduction of *bodhisattva*-hood as the primary goal and ideal, this division of roles is theoretically obliterated, in that both monks and laypeople may reach *bodhisattva*-hood, and that the referential point of enlightenment is no longer the individual, but “all sentient beings”. A *bodhisattva* will not obtain *nirvāṇa,* but return to the world to pull others onto her “greater wagon” (*mahā yāna*). Nonetheless, in Mahāyānist Chinese Buddhism, too, there is a greater emphasis on karma and retribution (*guǒ-bào* 果報; *yīn-guǒ* 因果) among commoners and laypeople than monastics. Indeed, karma and retribution are aspects of an idea belonging to Indian Buddhism that had clear analogues in already extant Chinese popular beliefs—including Daoism and early Confucianism—of

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unmistakably Buddhist, making the sentence something of a curiosity. Needless to say, that particular sentence stems from Liǎofán’s pen, and not from Zhìyǐ’s.

which the idea of retribution (*gǎn-yìng* 感應) is a prominent feature.[237] Unlike several other important ideas, it was thus easily translatable and endorsed by the Chinese audience. I would think even non-Buddhists (although one should be careful to use this term) would accept many aspects of the theory of karma.

For these reasons, I would claim that Liǎofán's emphasis on no-desire, no-mind, and by implication on karma, reflects concerns typical of laypeople. This "laicization" is one aspect of the secularization that is represented by and results in Liǎofán's new conception of meditation.

The other important aspect is what we might call "confucianization". In the *Meditation Essentials* this is done by stripping away soteriology from Zhìyǐ's Mahāyānist framework, and erecting in its place a new quasi-Buddhist, quasi-Confucian framework based upon the Confucian virtue of "humaneness" (*rén*) as well as its correspondence to Buddhist "compassion" (*cí-bēi* 慈悲). Appeals to Confucian authorities (Confucius, Mencius, Zhōu Dūnyí, the Chéng brothers) stand side by side with quotations from the sutras. A chapter on eliminating desire is followed by one on expanding "love", a term in Buddhist terminology basically synonymous with desire. Clearly, Liǎofán's Confucian commitments, psychologically as well as socially, keeps him from taking the last Buddhist step of realizing the emptiness (i.e. lack of self-nature) of this world, and from affirming the function of meditation as being ultimately an expedient means designed to this end. To me it seems that the *means* in the *Meditation Essentials* is to a much more morally and ontologically affirmative end, namely what we might call, simplifyingly, virtuous conduct.

Again, this is not un-Buddhist, "compassion" being one of the central tenets of Mahāyāna Buddhism. But it is also classically Confucian, and Confucianism seems to be at least part of the reason why it is this moral *aspect* of Buddhism that is emphasised, rather than more soteriologically oriented aspects. Indeed, it is possible that Liǎofán's conception of meditation was influenced not only by his Confucian background in a general sense, but also more specifically by Neo-Confucian meditation. As we shall see in the next chapter, earlier and contemporaneous Neo-Confucian meditators had conspicuously similar conceptions of meditation and its function as did Liǎofán, and this too might have exerted some influence him.

Before moving on with that discussion, I should make one concluding reservation. The emphasis on the functional relationship between meditation and merit accumulation is not to say that the preparatory considerations for merit accumulation and ledger practice are in any way *exhausted* by meditation; in other words that successful meditation alone would

[237] For a discussion of such correspondences, see Brokaw, *Ledgers,* ch. 2.

necessarily lead to successful ledger practice, as its only prerequisite. As I see it, there are two sides to the limits of meditation as it relates to ledger practice.

First are the aspects of ledger practice that eschews virtues. In the preceding discussion of ledger practice I emphasised what I called its ”idealist” aspects, i.e. that what matters for the karmic potency of one's actions is the attitude with which one performs them. In ethical terms, this would be characterized as a form of virtue ethics. However, Liǎofán's conception of karma and ledger practice also includes considerations characteristic of consequentialist ethics—for which I see no connection with the *Meditation Essentials*. Liǎofán's conception of the good is laid out in the *Method of Accumulating Goodness,* which I mentioned earlier in this chapter, then emphasising the parallels to the *Meditation Essentials*. However, two of the eight parameters of goodness, ”right/wrong” and ”slanted/straight”, are actually consequentialist perspectives on ethics, as far as I can see.[238] There is thus also a utilitarian nuance to Liǎofán's ledger practice, which bears no relation to the *Meditation Essentials.* As we saw in section 2.3 on Liǎofán's intellectual predilections, his main—and perhaps only—opposition to the Mohist (consequentialist) notion of ”Impartial Love” was that it failed to take regard of the ”right”, *yì* 義, ”clutching to one extreme”, and *not,* presumably, its utilitarianism per se.

In other words, successful ledger practice does not rely *solely* on the excellence of the heart/mind and its intentions and will.

Second, even within what we might characterise as a virtue ethics in Liǎofán's *lì mìng* theory and ledger practice, there are, in addition to Buddhist meditation, also other practices relevant to the cultivation of the heart/mind to be found in his works. For example, in the same *Method for Accumulating Goodness* he mentions his confidence in almsgiving as a means not only of helping others but also of ridding the mind of selfish attachment:

> Buddhism has a myriad of practices. Almsgiving is regarded as elemental. Almsgiving is encapsulated by the single notion of relinquishment/equanimity[239]. An accomplished [practitioner] relinquishes the six roots within and the six objects without; each and everything, there is nothing he does not relinquish. If one is not capable of this, one starts with the giving of material goods. People of the world regard clothing and food as their lifeblood and thus material wealth as the most important. Therefore I relinquish [my own wealth], *within* for the reason of destroying my stinginess; *without* for the reason of relieving the destitution of others. Initially [one's efforts] are forced; in the end it becomes effortless. [This

[238] The former gives the example of Zǐ emphasises example, maintaining that what is seemingly more virtuous from an individual's perspective, might actually not be more moral, if the consequences are that

[239] *shě* 捨. In Chinese used to render both Sanskrit *tyāga* (”relinquishment”) and *upekṣā* (”equanimity”). The latter is seen in the last chapter of the *Meditation Essentials* (”On Expanding Love”). There it is clear from context; here, the ambiguity is unresolved.

> practice] is most capable of cleansing out selfish feelings and of dispelling attached stingyness.[240]

Liǎofán prefers, also in his ethics, composite systems that draw upon all that tradition—and the different traditions—might offer. Meditation, though certainly accorded a functional role, is only a part of this system.

Nevertheless, there should be no doubt as to *quality* of the relation between meditation and merit accumulation, and how the conception of meditation is subtly altered as a consequence.

[240] Yuán, *Liǎofán sì xùn,* 891a5–b1.

CHAPTER 4:
NO-DESIRE, *RÉN* AND NO-MIND IN THE NEO-CONFUCIAN DISCOURSE ON MEDITATION

According to Mabuchi Masaya in his article on the subject, most Confucians from the Song to the end of the Ming, i.e. the approximately seven centuries between the end of the 10th until the middle of the 17th century, practiced some form of meditation.[241] In this period, the debate among Confucians in China on the significance of meditation and what role, if any, it should play within Neo-Confucianism never ceased; and towards the end of the period, i.e. the late Míng, there finally emerged descriptions of actual methods—a trend of which the *Meditation Essentials* was a part.[242] Despite some efforts at tracing the origins of Neo-Confucian meditation back to early Confucianism—most prominently to *The Great Learning,* Mencius, or even to Confucius—meditation never completely escaped its reputation as a heterodox practice. For this reason, with the Qīng 清 reaction against what was perceived as the intellectual excesses of the late Míng, affirmations of meditation disappeared and practices were largely abandoned by Chinese Neo-Confucians in the remainder of the imperial era (17th Century–1911).[243] Then, following the advent of Western- and Japan-influenced modernity, meditation with Confucian characteristics returned in the 20th century, first and foremost in the 1914 *Meditation Method of Master 'Therefore'* (*Yīnshìzi Jìngzuòfǎ* 因是子靜坐法).

An awareness of this debate on meditation within Neo-Confucianism is essential for understanding the *Meditation Essentials.* Although the practices expounded within it are exclusively Buddhist, they are understood partly within a Confucian framework, and at certain points in the text, especially in the preface and in introductory parts framing the chapters (i.e. where wherever we find his unique writing), Liǎofán actively and consciously engages with this discourse, thus revealing for us influences and intended audience belonging to the Confucian realm. But of course, a full treatment of this debate from the Sòng to the Míng will be far too comprehensive for a thesis of this scope.[244] Accordingly, after a short

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241 Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ," 63.
242 Ibid., 91.
243 Ibid., 101. Though there are exceptions, most notably Zēng Guófán 曾國藩 (1811–1872), the famous Qīng scholar and general responsible for quenching the Tàipíng rebellion. On his practice, see Nakajima, *Jìngzuò,* 176–85.
244 Those interested are instead referred to Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ"; Nakajima, *Jìngzuò*, 81–132; Yáng, "Sòng rú de jìngzuò shuō"; and for a survey of existing research, to Shǐ, "Dōng-Yà rúxué jìngzuò yánjiù de gàikuàng". To my knowledge, no full historical treatment

presentations of the inception of Neo-Confucian meditation, I will turn to the argumentative purpose of the chapter, which is primarily to discover parallels and possible influences to Liǎofán's conception of meditation, and secondarily to demonstrate again the connection between no-desire, *rén* and no-mind, now specifically in meditation, thus reinforcing the argument made in the previous chapter. This will be done through looking at five short texts on meditative practices by four notable Neo-Confucian meditators: Lǐ Yánpíng, Luó Hóngxiān, Gāo Pānlóng and Liú Zōngzhōu.

The first three are discussed together in the part following the general presentation. Here the purpose is to look at parallels to Liǎofán's application of meditation as weeding out desire and cultivating *rén.* In the next part on Liú Zōngzhōu, I turn to the more specific variant of such an application that Liǎofán evinces, namely the view of meditation as playing a direct role in relation to the practice of keeping morality ledgers. Intriguingly, Liú Zōngzhōu, despite being a critic of Liǎofán's Ledger of Merit and Demerit, has a remarkably similar conception of not only meditation and morality ledgers, but also of their joint practice and their functional relation.

Liǎofán's own short description of the inception of meditation, which constitutes the very first paragraph of the preface and thus the whole treatise, provides us with a nice point of departure for our discussion:

> The knack of sitting meditation originates from the Chán school, and is not something we Confucians originally possessed. After Masters Chéng saw people meditate and hailed it as an excellent field of study, and Master Zhū used meditation to supplement the skill of restraining the mind [expounded] in the *Small Learning*—only then did Confucians get to know how to consult and perform this practice.

The first sentence seems to refer to Zhū Xī's concession that the practice of meditation was brought to China by Bodhidharma, the semi-mythical first patriarch of the Chinese lineage of the Chán school.[245] Buddhist meditation was in fact practiced in China long before the advent of the Chán school, and there were Daoist meditative practices that were even older, but that need not concern us here. I will merely point out that Liǎofán's agreement with Zhū Xī on

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exists in English, but Rodney T. Taylor has articles on the meditative practices of Zhū Xī ("Chu Hsi and Meditation") and Gāo Pānlóng ("Meditation in Ming Neo-Orthodoxy").

[245] Zhū Xī making this, albeit inaccurate, concession goes against the picture that is usually painted of him as one who borrowed extensively from Buddhism only then to do what he could to hide this influence behind harsh criticisms of Buddhism. The cynic would perhaps assert that in this case, playing with open cards was his only option, inasmuch as meditation was so closely associated with Buddhism that there was no way of obscuring the debt.

this point seems to reveal a somewhat superficial knowledge of Buddhist meditation literature.[246]

In the next sentence he then reproduces a stock phrase concerning the Chéng brothers' dealings with meditation. Beyond this—that they commended the practice—not much is known about what role exactly meditation played in their thought. One modern scholar asks what "excellent" in "excellent field of study" actually entailed.[247] Liú Zōngzhōu provides an answer in his version of the same stock phrase:

> Whenever Masters Chéng saw people sitting in meditation, they hailed it as an excellent field of study. What is meant by "excellent field of study" is that only this is an appropriate spiritual effort (*gōngfū* 工夫) for the pursuit of letting go of the mind.[248]

As we shall see later, Liú Zōngzhōu understands "letting go of the mind" (*fàng xīn* 放心, also "calming the mind; calming down") as closely related to selflessness and no-mind.

One thing we do know about the meditation practice of the brothers Chéng, is that they combined it with the practice of "observing the equilibrium of the four emotions in their incipient (lit. not-yet-manifested) [state]" and "observing the latent signs of the ether of the four emotions before they are manifested".[249] More specifically, this observing or contemplation was the *content* of the meditation; or from the opposite perspective: meditation

[246] Whether it does in fact reveal a superficial knowledge hinges on two questions: The first is whether or not this was a common misconception also in Buddhist circles. If it was, Liǎofán can hardly be blamed. This is far from my field of expertise, but I regard it as highly unlikely that anyone well versed in the Buddhist Tripiṭaka would be unaware of the translations of Buddhist meditation texts by Ān Shìgāo 安世高 (fl. 148–180) and Kumārajīva (334–413), or that these two predated Bodhidharma (dates, and even existence, unknown, but conventional dating is 5th century). The other question seems more debatable: Might it be that Liǎofán by *chán mén* 禪門, literally the "the *dhyāna* gateway" meant not the Chán *school*, but Buddhism as a whole? The term possesses this meaning as well, and thus this is indeed a possibility. My reason for opting out of reading *chán mén* as "Buddhism" is that I would think that the more common *Fó mén* 佛門 would have been used if that were in fact the intended referent.

[247] Yáng, "Zhǔ jìng yǔ zhǔ jìng" 主靜與主敬, 132.

[248] Liú Zōngzhōu 劉宗周, *Liú Jíshān jí* 劉蕺山集, fasc. 11, p. 29b.

[249] 觀喜怒哀樂未發之中 and 觀喜怒哀樂未發前氣象 respectively. What I render as "latent sign of the ether" is *qì xiàng* 氣象, a word in ordinary parlance meaning among other things "bearing; manner". *Xiàng* as a Neo-Confucian technical term denoted basically a latent stage of *qì* (ether) before it takes concrete form, represented also by the diagrams in the *Book of Changes,* which are also called *xiàng*. Graham translates it as "image". (See Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers* 19–21.) Graham actually also encounters the compound *qì xiàng,* in a different context*,* rendering it then as "outward signs of the ether [*qì*]", thus demonstrating the relation to "bearing; manner". Using "outward sign" in our phrase would be misleading, however, inasmuch as we have here to do with something going on inside the body, or inside the mind. Yet as the presence of *qì* demonstrates, we admittedly seem to be dealing with something materialistic here. This is interesting, inasmuch as some Neo-Confucians, most notably Wáng Yángmíng, would insist that "mind is principle", as opposed to being materialistic ether.

was a technique by which one could practice this contemplation on the four emotions (*xǐ-nù-āi-lè* 喜怒哀樂, lit. "joy, anger, sadness and happiness").[250]

4.1. Lǐ Yánpíng, Luó Hóngxiān and Gāo Pānlóng

Lǐ Yánpíng (1093–1163), who will be my first example, further developed this connection between meditation as a technique and the struggle for emotional "equilibrium", and assigned both a crucial place in his theories on cultivation. His saying "sit in silence (默) and purify the mind, [thereby] recognizing first-hand the Heavenly principles" indicates this cruciality: meditation was not merely a technique by which one could concentrate or calm down the mind, but an essential practice for the ultimate purpose of recognizing the Heavenly principles, which in Yánpíng's view must be done through the mind itself.[251]

In a letter to his student Zhū Xī (written in 1162, one year before his passing), we may spot how this was connected to selflessness and *rén*—and to meditation. One of their correspondences was dedicated to a broad discussion of *rén*—what it is and how to achieve it. We encountered a quotation from one of these letters in the previous chapter, where Yánpíng provided his take on what Confucius' understanding of *rén* was. To recapitulate, Yánpíng summarizes the spiritual effort required for attaining *rén* as: "(…) when selfish desire sinks, the Heavenly principles may be viewed, and one will then know *rén*." Towards the end of that same letter he arrives at what in his opinion is the most crucial practice for the actual implementation of this spiritual effort, and thus ultimately how to realize *rén*:

> The notion of humaneness is simply perception (*zhījué* 知覺) in its thoroughly clarified state. If you do not put in spiritual effort to make it [humaneness] thoroughly clear, how will you make out (*jiàndé* 見得) the minute distinctions of our root source (*běnyuán* 本源)? If you do not possess thorough understanding of this matter, then you will not be able to simultaneously uphold essence and function (*tǐ/yòng* 體用). This is precisely the point from which we may simultaneously uphold both the essence and function of our original source; the establishment of the Way of humanity (*rén dào* 人道) is precisely here. (...)[252] Generally speaking, most practitioners are diverted [from the Way] by selfish desire. As a result, they are unconcentrated (*bù jīng* 不精) in their exertion of effort (*yòng lì* 用力) and derive no effects from it. If you wish to make any progress in

[250] Yáng, "Sòng rú de jìngzuò shuō" 宋儒的靜坐說, 59–60.

[251] Yáng, "Sòng rú jìngzuò shuō", 60–3. Yánpíng quotation on p. 61.

[252] The part I have omitted is a short discussion of how *rén* corresponds to cosmological concepts in the *Book of Changes*, as follows: "The single notion of humaneness is just like the primordial (*yuán* 元) of the four virtues [in the *qián* 乾 hexagram of the *Yìjīng* 易經], whereas the two notions humaneness and duty is just like [the two pairs of *Yìjīng* divination constituents] *yīn* and *yáng*—the establishers of the heavenly Way, and *róu* and *gāng*—the establishers of the earthly way; they are all embedded in these two notions [of humaneness and duty]."

this matter, you must cut off all [diverting] paths [of study], sit in meditation and silently discern—so that the muddy dregs [of the mind] gradually vanish. If [you do] not [practice], then it is merely [unsubstantial] talk. [I advise you to] consider it carefully![253]

Though Yánpíng emphasises a slightly different aspect of *rén* (its connection with perception), the function he attributes to meditation, and the effects he believes it to incur, are remarkably similar to what we see in the *Meditation Essentials.* Echoing (or rather being echoed by) the water metaphor by Zhū Xī that we saw in the previous chapter, selfish desires are likened to "muddy dregs" in water. These must be filtered out by turning the attention inward towards one's own mind while sitting in meditation. Only then may "perception" be "thoroughly clarified"—and this state of mind is what is called "humaneness". Meditation is a way to apply the spiritual effort of having selfish desires sink—or what Confucius called "restraining oneself", Mencius and Wáng Jī called *guǎ yù* 寡欲, Yángmíng "removing human desires"—and, Yuán Liǎofán, *qiǎn yù*, "eliminating desire".

In Luó Hóngxiān 羅洪先 (1504–1564) we see how this effort could be connected with—perhaps lead to—a dramatic meditative experience of embodying *rén*:

(...) Before long I went into the deep mountains, to a quiet and remote place where I was completely isolated from human affairs. Every day I sat on a mat by myself, not opening any book. Like this I had kept on for over three months, when my illness gradually vanished. Then, at a time of extreme quiescence I perceived in a flash the contentless void silence (*xū jì* 虛寂) of my mind, penetrating and boundless, like the flow of air (氣) in the sky; it was without limit, with no distinction between inner and outer or quiescence and action; all the directions of space and ages of time merged into one single mass—like the so-called "being [virtually] everywhere without being [actually] present"; my entire person is the aperture through which it manifests itself; it is certainly not something that may be limited by outer shape. This is why, when I point my gaze at something, Heaven-and-Earth do not lose my vision; when I incline my ears, Heaven-and-Earth do not elude my hearing; and when I vanish my heart, Heaven-and-Earth do not escape my thinking.[254]

The humans of old are long gone. [But] the extent of their spirit is the same as my spirit, and is therefore not gone. If this were not the case, would we feel enlightened and roused by their conduct? The Four Seas are far away [from each other]. [But] the pains of the people [walking the earth between them] are all interconnected—they are my pain too, and

[253] Zhū Xī, *Yánpíng dá wèn* 延平答問, para. 54.

[254] Especially this paragraph is fraught with allusions to this saying by Lù Xiàngshān: "The four directions and up and down are what is called *yǔ* 宇. From antiquity to present is what is called *zhòu* 宙. *Yǔzhòu* ("universe") is my (or "our") mind; my mind is *yǔzhòu*. When sages emerged a thousand myriad years ago, [theirs] was the same as this mind and this principle; when sages emerge a thousand myriad years from now, [theirs] will be the same as this mind and this principle. Sages emerging from the Eastern Sea and the North-Western Sea are of the same mind and the same principle." Lù Jiǔyuān 陸九淵 (Xiàngshān 象山), *Lù Jiǔyuān jí* 陸九淵集, fasc. 22, para. 16.

are therefore not far away. If this were not the case, would we feel pity and sorrow when we learnt of the misfortunes of others?

For these reasons, we are moved by our kin to act out our kinship-love (*qīn*). There is no distinction between ourselves and our kin. If we make a distinction between ourselves and our kin, then it is not kinship-love. [Correspondingly,] we are moved by the people to act out humaneness in relation to them. If we make a distinction between ourselves and the people, then this is not humaneness (*rén*). [Lastly,] we are moved by beings to act out love in relation to them. If we distinguish between ourselves and other beings, then this is not love (*ài*).

This is obtaining it from heaven. Only when it has become a matter of course can you match Heaven [*pèi tiān*]. Therefore it is said [by Chéng Hào]: 'Humaneness' is being of the same substance as other things. 'The same substance' means: what is present in oneself is also present in others; uniting oneself and other beings and sharing one substance. Hence the above-mentioned 'penetrating insight from void silence, regarding all as one by merging all directions of space, all ages of time, inner and outer, action and quiescence'—making them one.

For Hóngxiān, *rén* is more unequivocally a matter of—what we might call mystic—*experience*. The unity of all things is not first and foremost something to be rationalized by appealing to a common principle. Rather, it is to be experienced first-hand, through our mind that by nature is connected to everything else in the world. It might not be coincidence, then, that he avails himself of Chéng Hào's version of this unity ("*rén* is being indivisibly of the same substance as other beings") rather than that of Chéng Yí ("*rén* is regarding Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad beings as one substance").

For Hóngxiān it was sustained, quite extreme, meditation that led to this experience of mystical unity—as embodied, in his opinion, in the notion of *rén.*

Gāo Pānlóng 高攀龍 (1562-1626), too, speaks of *rén* in relation to meditation, and also explicitly of recognizing something first-hand (*tǐrèn* 體認), in his case the "original form of our root nature"—which, if we invoke the language of Hóngxiān, Chéng Hào and Lù Xiàngshān, is precisely what connects us to each other and everything else. Gāo Pānlóng was one of the initiators of the Dōnglín movement, a reaction to the corrupted state of the government and the perceived moral relativism of the Tàizhōu school, two phenomena that its affiliates saw as interrelated. Their antagonism towards Buddhism did not keep him from assigning meditation a central place in his thought, however—though it did preclude him from drawing explicitly on Buddhist meditation as Liǎofán did. In his writings we find some of the most detailed and original descriptions of meditation by any Confucian thinker. Mabuchi sees him, along with Liǎofán, as representing a very important trend in the late Míng of providing Neo-Confucian meditation with concrete techniques and standards.[255]

As for the *purpose* of meditation, he lays that out in *Sayings on Meditation* (*Jìngzuò shuō* 靜坐說), a small text written some years after the *Meditation Essentials* in 1613:

[255] Mabuchi, "Sòng-Míng shíqí rúxué duì jìngzuò de kànfǎ," 91.

> (...) [The aim of meditation is] simply to recognize first-hand [*tǐrèn*] the original form of our root nature—returning it to its pellucid state. Generally speaking, if you attach yourself to even the smallest intention or the slightest judgement, you will not obtain [this state]. As soon as a single thought is added, the original form is lost. Proceeding from quiescence to action, is simply acting from this constant[256] and pellucid state. While quiescent and while active, it is one form; while active and while quiescent, it is one form. It is one form because it is constant. Therefore it is said: ”There is no action and no quiescence”. Practitioners are simply availing themselves of meditation in order to recognize the substance of this ”no action and no quiescence”. Deriving strength (*dé lì* 得力) from quiescence is the true deriving of strength from action. Deriving strength from action is the true deriving of strength from quiescence. What is called ’reverence’ is this; *what is called ’humaneness’ is this*; what is called ’sincerity’ is this. *It is the Way of returning to one’s nature.*[257]

For Gāo Pānlóng humaneness*,* along with sincerity and reverence, is part of “returning to one’s nature”, which in turn can be achieved through the practice of meditation.

Through these examples we see not only the connections between no-desire and humaneness and their relation in turn to sitting meditation; moreover, it is possible to spot how the quest for becoming selfless and humane is part of the essential Neo-Confucian project of becoming a sage, expressed in the previous quotations as “discerning our original source” (Lǐ Yánpíng), “perceiving the virtual silence of the mind”, “matching heaven” (Luó Hóngxiān) and “recognizing first-hand the original form of our root nature” (Gāo Pānlóng). Indeed, another way of describing the self-cultivational goal of “becoming a sage” (*chéng shèng* 成聖) for the Neo-Confucians was ”becoming *rén*” (*chéng rén* 成仁). How ”no-desire” is connected to this quest we saw also in the previous chapter, above all through the authoritative statement by Zhōu Dūnyí. His terse reply to how sagehood may be learnt deserves repetition:

> Oneness (一) is of the essence. Oneness is having no desire (無欲). When having no desire one is void while quiescent and upright while active. [...]

Meditation is a way to apply the spiritual effort of “maintaining oneness”, or in the words of Lǐ Yánpíng, having “selfish desires sink”. This in turn will lead to the “discerning” and “understanding” (Yánpíng), or the experience and embodiment (Pānlóng, Hóngxiān), of *rén.* And this, finally, is “the Way of returning to one’s nature”, of “seeing the Heavenly principles”—of becoming a sage.

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[256] *píngpíng chángcháng* 平平常常. Reminiscent of (and probably influenced by) Chán monk Mǎzǔ Dàoyī’s 馬祖道一 (709–788) seminal adage: ”the ordinary mind is the Way” (平常心是道), which according to Allen is another version of Chán ”no-thought” and no-mind. See Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way*, 182–6; and Allen, *Vanishing Into Things,* 152 (151–8 for no-mind in Chán in general).

[257] Gāo Pānlóng 高攀龍. *Gāozǐ yí shū* 高子遺書, fasc. 3, para. 83. My emphasis.

We will continue to see these connections when we now turn to Liú Zōngzhōu, who furthermore brings no-mind into the equation. However, as will become clear, this individual's conception of meditation is analogue to Liǎofán's also in a much more concrete way than the previous three. Accordingly, after a general presentation of his meditation practice and its application of no-mind and no-desire, my discussion will turn to his thoughts on the "roots and branches" of self-cultivation, and the integral role accorded to meditation.

4.2. Liú Zōngzhōu

Towards the last decades of the Míng, the rhetoric against Buddhism and Daoism—and the Confucians associating with them—grew even harsher. Liú Zōngzhōu 劉宗周 (1578–1645), also a Dōnglín affiliate and regarded as the last of the great Neo-Confucian philosophers, criticized Pānlóng for incorporating Buddhist elements in his teachings, but nevertheless accorded sitting meditation a prominent place in his self-cultivation program. Inasmuch as Zōngzhōu was still greatly invested in the quest for sagehood, this incidentally seems to indicate that the reason for the loss of Confucian interest in meditation in the Qīng was due more to the fading away of the quest for sagehood than the rejection of Buddhism.

According to Huáng Zōngxī (1610–1695), author of *Míng rú xué'àn* 明儒學案 ("Case studies of Míng Confucians") and student of Liú Zōngzhōu, the doctrinal essence of his teacher was that of *shèn dú* 慎獨 ("vigilance in solitude"), a doctrine all Confucians spoke of "but only he acquired the truth".[258] *Shèn dú,* also translated as being "watchful over oneself when alone", is an expression that appears in both the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning*, the two Confucian self-cultivation classics. In both it denoted a cautiousness against the incipient tendencies of evil thoughts and self-deception when alone. For Zhū Xī, *dú* 獨, "solitude", meant not simply the state when one is physically alone, but also "when one is mentally alone, that is, the state of one's innermost being which is known only to oneself".[259] Wáng Yángmíng, committed to his project of erasing the borders between quiescence and action (靜/動) and essence and function (體/用), further emphasised the timelessness of *shèn dú;* along with the "extension of knowledge" (*zhì zhī* 致知) and "rectification of affairs" (*gé wù* 格物), it runs through inactivity and activity, and is in the end the same task as these two, though it emphasises a different aspect.[260] For Zōngzhōu, through vigilance in solitude the ether (*qì* 氣) of the mind can be made perfectly still, a state from

[258] Huáng Zōngxī, *Míng rú xué'àn*, f. 62, para. 15. Translation modified after Cheng, "Liu Zongzhou on Self-Cultivation," 338.
[259] Cheng, "Liu Zongzhou on Self-Cultivation", 339.
[260] Shun 信, "Three Kinds of Confucian Thought," 24–5.

which one then can proceed to observe and direct the stirrings of the mind's ether*,* i.e. the arising of thoughts.[261]

Sitting meditation was one of the most important techniques for practicing vigilance in solitude—the "point from which one could set about" (*xià shǒu chù* 下手處) being vigilant:

> At this time [c. 1631] he concentrated on revealing the doctrine of vigilance in solitude for the practitioners [in his *Zhèngrén huì* 證人會, "Society for bearing witness to humanity"]. Someone asked of the point from which one sets about on vigilance in solitude. [Zōngzhōu] replied: "Just sit in meditation". [The student] further asked: "If while meditating [lit. "in quiescence"] one is increasingly aware of the disturbance of deluded thoughts, what should one do?" He replied: "If the mind is not able to quiet down, it is only because there are roots [for disturbance] still present. For this reason, Liánxī [Zhōu Dūnyí] taught people to make sure that they first are without desire (*wú yù* 無欲). This [desire] is the reason [for the disturbance from deluded thoughts].[262]

In *Sayings on Meditation* (*Jìngzuò shuō* 靜坐說）, a text from the year after the Q&A above took place, Zōngzhōu elaborates his thoughts on sitting in meditation as an effort for practicing vigilance in solitude as well as the related "mastering quiescence" (*zhǔ jìng* 主靜). Significantly for our purposes here of establishing the connections between meditation, humaneness, "no desire" and "no-mind", although he opposed the Tàizhōu school and also the teachings Wáng Jī developed from Wáng Yángmíng, he nevertheless employs the term "no-mind":

> From birth, man spends his day in disorder. The only point at which he goes back to his roots and returns to his heavenly fate, is at dusk. Of the myriad beings of Heaven-and-Earth, none eludes this principle (*lǐ* 理). Hence, one may realize (*wù* 悟) that the primary purpose of scholarly enterprise is simply 'maintaining quiescence' (*zhǔ jìng* 主靜). This spiritual effort is most difficult to set about, and so I have tentatively devised a provisional method for practitioners, teaching them to sit in meditation.
>
> In your daily practice, if you find yourself with some spare time apart from dealing with affairs, then sit in meditation. While sitting, all matters are gone, and thus you respond with having no matters yourself. There are no matters, *and also no mind. The mind of no-mind is none other than the original mind.* If [a thought] fleetingly arises, simply let it go; if [the mind] is slightly obstructed, then sweep [the obstruction] away. Simply sustain your clear-headedness. The trick at this point is to not close the eyes, not cover the ears, not be seated in lotus position, not count the breath, not examine *huàtóu* (話頭)*,* but merely implementing it in the midst of your daily tasks. Whenever you get fatigued, rise; whenever you are moved [into action by something], respond. While walking, standing, sitting and lying—always maintain this [mode of] quiescent contemplation; while eating, resting, rising and abiding—always bring about this quiescent intuitive comprehension.

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[261] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 131.
[262] Liú Zōngzhōu, quoted in Fān, "Liú Zōngzhōu duìyú 'zhǔ jìng' yǔ 'jìngzuò' de fǎnxǐng," 67–8.

> This [meditative mode] is the true essence of what men of old called between ”not letting [your heart] forget and not helping [it] grow”,[263] and not to occasion the slightest strain (*lì* 力). For this reason, whenever Masters Chéng saw people meditate, they hailed it as an excellent field of study. What is meant by “excellent field of study” is that only this is an appropriate spiritual effort for the pursuit of letting go of the mind. By way of this [i.e.. meditation], one both sets out and reaches the ultimate limits [of scholarly enterprise]; it is not merely some small provisionality. When you master it, you establish yourself in the realm of sages; when you don’t, you spend your whole days in a frenzied gallop. There are no other methods from which to proceed.
>
> If you don’t yet master sitting in meditation, then simply learn to sit. If you can’t [even] learn how to sit, then what other learning can there possibly be to speak of? [At first,] sit like a corpse; when you are thus seated, you proceed from an orderly and solemn [attitude and posture], upon which you slowly enter into a natural [effortlessness]. (...)[264]

When the mind is not stimulated into action by external affairs, the mind can respond itself by not giving rise to any internal affairs (thoughts). This is the state of “no-mind”, which equals the “original mind”, i.e. the true nature of the mind—the goal of self-cultivation. It seems that this “no-mind” refers to the same state as the “solitude” mentioned earlier, in which the ether is perfectly stable. Having experienced and maintaining this state of mind, it is then possible to while “walking, standing, sitting and lying—always maintain this [mode of] quiescent contemplation”. Stated in terms of ether, this would mean that when the ether of the mind is stirred, it is held in equilibrium. As he states elsewhere: “If a thought is like its origin [i.e. purely good], then the feeling (情) returns to its nature. Where there is movement containing nothing that is not good, then movement is also stillness.”[265]

A striking quality concerning Liú Zōngzhōu as I see it is that unlike most Neo-Confucian meditators, he developed a repertoire of *different* kinds of meditation. This provides us with the opportunity to compare the meditation outlined above with his other meditations, and see whether the purpose of meditation, and its connection with “no-mind”, is presented in any equal or similar manner. In *Rén pǔ* 人譜 (”Schemata of Man”, or ”Manual for Man”), his seminal work on self-cultivation, he details a technique-heavy repentance-like method highly different from the one described above. The professed effects and purpose of the two, however, closely resemble each other. There is no mention of “no-mind” explicitly, but in a conspicuously similar turn of phrase he uses instead (another Buddhism-inspired term) ”true face” (*zhēn miànmù* 真面目), and just before that speaks of ”being at one with the great void” (*tài xū* 太虛):

[263] A paraphrase of the same Mencius quote we saw in chapter three (ICS Mencius: 3.2/16/3).
[264] Liú Zōngzhōu, *Liú Jíshān jí* 劉蕺山集, fasc. 11, pp. 24a–25a. My emphasis.
[265] Zōngzhōu quoted and translated in Brokaw, 131.

... Shortly after [having performed the repentance], a thread of clear and bright ether slowly comes forth, as if [you are] facing the Great Void. This mind [of ours] “is of the same substance” as the Great Void. Then you know that the past [transgressions] were all [due to] ‘false conditions’ (*wàng yuán* 妄緣)[266]. Being false, they are not true, and as soon as [you regain the] truth, you also regain your natural self-composure.

Pellucid and limpid; when you receive it nothing comes, when you follow it nothing leaves; *it is in fact the original true face [of the mind].* At this moment, you must preserve it [i.e. the true face]; if suddenly a mote of dust [i.e. a thought] arises, you blow it away. You then preserve it a while longer, and when again a mote of dust suddenly arises, you blow it away. This is then repeated several times. “Do not [let your heart] forget it, but do not help it [grow] either.” Do not enquire of its effects. Then swiftly straighten yourself and rise. Stay shut in your apartment the whole day.[267]

The subsection where this repentance is found is called ”Method for Litigating Transgressions” (*Sòng guò fǎ* 訟過法), and is part of the chapter ”Ledger for Mending Transgressions” (*gǎi guò gé* 改過格). The observant reader will recognize the similarity of this chapter title to the name for the morality ledgers our own Yuán Liǎofán used, *gōng-guò gé* 功過格. The similarity is not coincidental. As already hinted at above, Liú Zōngzhōu in fact wrote the whole *Manual for Man* mainly as a response to Liǎofán’s method of merit accumulation.[268] Here he criticizes Liǎofán for distancing himself from the Way by associating with the Buddhists and their doctrine of retribution (*yīn-guǒ* 因果), thus turning to the way of profit (*lì* 利) and selfishness (*sī* 私). Following the approach to morality ledgers of more orthodox Confucians such as Liǎofán’s contemporary Lǚ Kūn 吕坤 (1536–1618), Zōngzhōu eliminates merits from the equation, leaving only demerits—
or ”faults”, ”transgressions”, since they are not defined in opposition to merits. Or rather there is no longer any ”equation” at all, since retribution plays no role. If we invoke the distinction between ”moral fate” and ”material fate” used earlier, Zōngzhōu is as Mencius only interested in the moral fate—fulfilling one’s heaven-endowed moral potential.[269] In other words, the ”demerit ledger” is kept simply to make oneself aware—vigilant—of one’s faults and help one correct them, thereby assisting the project of returning to one’s nature. Performing good deeds is not inconsequential for this project, but they are left out from the act of recording, for fear that this would lead to profit-seeking and the dangerous thought that

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[266] Also a Buddhist term, consisting of two equally undeniably Buddhist concepts *wàng* 妄 (”deluded”, *mithyā*) and *yuán* 緣, (”conditions”, *pratyaya*).
[267] Liú Zōngzhōu, *Rén pǔ* 人譜, end of ch. 4 (”Gǎi guò gé” 改過格). My emphasis. I must admit that this rather enigmatic quotation has been especially challenging to translate, as is presumably reflected in its awkwardness. The translation should be regarded as tentative, and anyone is more than welcome to improve it.
[268] Liú Zōngzhōu, *Rén pǔ*, preface (“Zì xù” 自序).
[269] Brokaw, *Ledgers,* 136–7.

merits may cancel out demerits. In the opinion of Zōngzhōu, this is exactly what Liǎofán's approach degenerates to.

Nevertheless, the two approaches are in practice very similar, and so are the larger systems of self-cultivation of which they are part. Significantly, Liú Zōngzhōu *explicitly* places meditation in a context of keeping morality ledgers—which is only implicit in Liǎofán.

Not only that: elsewhere he also explicitly draws upon the ”root-and-branch” paradigm to explain this relationship. When confronted by a student with the common criticism pitted against him that his emphasis on quiescence and solitude neglected action and its *gōngfū,* Zōngzhōu replies:

> It is like trees: Only when there is a root will there be branches and leaves. If one does not derive strength from preservation in quiescence (*jìng cún* 靜存), as soon as joy and anger arise, they will go awry. At this point how may one apply spiritual effort?[270]

His point with invoking the root-and-branch metaphor is to emphasise the integrity, interrelatedness, mutual dependence and synchronic application of action- and quiescence-based effort, while at the same time giving quiescence priority.[271] From the question we can see that the "root" refers to practices such as vigilance in solitude, and thus also sitting in meditation. The "branches" refer, I think, to such practices as recording and mending one's transgressive actions, as in ledger keeping. The two are integrated to the point that it is hard to delineate where quiescence starts and action begins.

The comparison with Liú Zōngzhōu and the resultant "root-and-branch" generalization furthermore points back to a possible further distinction to be made for Liǎofán's self-cultivation program. For the "branch" in Zōngzhōu' program, though a ledger practice just as that of Liǎofán, concerns itself only with faults, corresponding to the *demerits* in Liǎofán's scheme. This brings to mind one work in Liǎofán's corpus of self-cultivation texts, namely the *Repentance Method of Mr Yuán* (*Yuán-shēng chànfǎ* 袁生懺法). I have not had the occasion to look at this text yet, but as another pointer beyond this thesis I would like to raise the possibility that this work plays a role in relation to "correcting faults" analogue to that of meditation in relation to accumulating merit. Another of the *Four Admonitions of Liǎofán,* that has received relatively little attention in this thesis, is the "Method for Correcting Demerits" (*Gǎi guò zhī fǎ* 改過之法), where Liǎofán explains how one should weed out and avoid faults—demerits. Just as "Method for Accumulating Goodness", this text has a clear orientation towards changing *behaviour*, yet at the same time emphasises the need for a ”pure mind", without which the mere avoidance of bad deeds is fruitless, and quite

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[270] Liú Zōngzhōu, quoted in Fān, "Liú Zōngzhōu duìyú 'zhǔ jìng' yǔ 'jìngzuò' de fǎnxǐng," 78.
[271] Ibid., 78–9.

likely unsustainable. Where meditation is the root to merit accumulation, could repentance function as the root to "demerit annulation"? Where mediation *transforms* the psychological *source* for merit, is repentance the way to thoroughly transform the source of demerit?

Finally, the wheel has turned full circle, and we return again to our etic definition of meditation posed in the introduction. By now the reader is forgiven for having forgotten what that was, so I will repeat it: Meditation is "attention-based techniques for inner transformation."[272] I admitted in the introduction that this definition might be problematic, as etic definition are concerned, due to its focus being so exclusively on psychological phenomena. But when juxtaposed with how, as I argue, some Míng meditators conceived of meditation, we see that it fits perfectly. I have argued that the function of meditation as conceived by Yuán Liǎofán (and Liú Zōngzhōu) is as a requisite for successful ledger practice—and that this relationship is best represented by the root-and-branch paradigm of the *Great Learning*. The root in this paradigm concerns itself with the inner (*nèi* 內) aspects of self-cultivation, of the underlying source or substance (*tǐ* 體)—or even virtuality (*xū* 虛)—for our actual (*shí* 實) actions and functions (*yòng* 用). Where "branch" cultivation goes in on the function end of self-cultivation, to transform our habits and patterns of behaviour "root" cultivation instead aims to transform directly the source of those habits—to bring about our *inner transformation.*

One important characteristic of late Míng self-cultivation was its emphasis on action (branch) and the often concomitant belief that by their transformation one could slowly effectuate also a transformation of one's person (root). Be that as it may, the two remarkably similar cases of the highly different individuals Yuán Liǎofán and Liú Zōngzhōu demonstrate with full force that this could nonetheless be combined with more introvert attention-based practices aimed directly at the unmediated transformation of one's inner being.

Another mantra of much late Míng thought was the "unity of substance and function" (體用合一). For some this meant the impossibility and fallacy of making a distinction between the two at all. It would seem that another way of conceptualizing this unity was by giving space in one's self-cultivation *both* to practices that sought a transformation of the substance *and* those that sought a transformation of its functions—and, rather than positing an opposition between the two, emphasised the mutual enrichment of their joint practice.

Meditation as an aid in merit accumulation instantiates, I think, such a perspective on self-cultivation.

[272] Eifring and Holen, "The Uses of Attention", 1.

CONCLUSION

Buddhist meditation and its experiences of transformation and enlightenment are not reifyable constants; neither can there be an isomorphic relationship between meditative techniques and meditative experience.[273] Rather, the application of a technique and its resulting experience, as well as the interpretation of that experience, will inevitably depend upon context: upon the individual and his or her cultural, social, economic and intellectual surroundings.

In this thesis I have made an attempt to assess the meditative experience of one individual living in 16th century China, by way of first contrasting the short text he edited with the longer text on which it was based, and then fitting the text into his larger program of self-cultivation. Although the focus has been placed firmly on this individual' unique conception of meditation, by pointing out its possible underlying causes and comparing it to contemporary intellectuals, it is hoped that the study may contribute also to our understanding of the late Míng intellectual landscape in general, as well as to the cultural history of meditation in China. In particular, the discovery of a link between the two practices of meditation and morality ledgers possesses such a potential for wider implications. The same is true for the related but more general application of meditation to weed out desire and cultivate *rén.* Indeed, I have shown that these are not mere potentialities—in the former case through a comparison with Liú Zōngzhōu, in the latter case through a discussion of Neo-Confucian meditation more generally, as well as specific examples by Lǐ Yánpíng, Luó Hóngxiān and Gāo Pānlóng.

Owing to the same considerations for wider implications, I have also all the while strived to throw light on the underlying processes responsible for this new conception of meditation. Significantly, I argue that one of them might be termed "confucianization". This might also be described more generally as secularization, due to the reorientation of meditation towards this-worldly concerns that the Confucian framework occasions. It is for this reason that I title the inner transformation of Yuán Liǎofán's meditation "cultivating Confucian virtues". This is not to say that these virtues are not *also* Buddhist; the correspondence between humaneness in Confucianism and compassion in Buddhism is precisely the foundation for the attractiveness of Buddhist meditation. Rather, what I mean to argue is that the *Meditation Essentials,* as well as its author's conception of meditation, was shaped—in partially predictable ways—by his Confucian background, and that it situates

[273] A point made by Sharf in "Buddhist Modernism", p. 269, though to a different effect, as elaborated in the introduction.

itself within a Neo-Confucian discourse on meditation, without which it would not exist as it does. As we have seen, the function Liǎofán accorded meditation had clear analogues in the Neo-Confucian discourse on meditation from the 12th to 17th centuries. In a way, we may view the *Meditation Essentials* as a culmination of this discourse. It thus represents an apotheosis of two crucial characteristic and concurrent developments in China's Míng dynasty: on the one hand, the discourse on meditation within Neo-Confucianism; and on the other, the syncretism of the Three Teachings, more specifically in our case the general tolerance for Buddhism within Confucian circles. Both these developments were then slowly reversed towards the end of the Míng dynasty, a reversion further fuelled and then fixed after the Manchu takeover in 1644.

Were we to broaden our perspective even further, we may say that the *Meditation Essentials* also, in its concern with egoism, reflects a characteristic of Chinese thought more generally. Whether we call the ultimate goal of self-cultivation discovery of our "original nature", approximation of "the Way" or attainment of "*nirvāṇa",* it is clear that in all the Three Teachings, at least in their late Míng manifestations, egocentrism in its different forms represents the most crucial obstacle on the road to its fruition. Here we see not only a reason for the Neo-Confucian interest in meditation, but also, I think, one important basis for the ecumenical atmosphere of the late Míng.

In this concern for egocentrism—"egocentrism-centrism"—we see also yet another paradox, inasmuch as a third important characteristic of the late Míng was the development of a "Chinese individualism", seemingly at odds with the ubiquitous call for selflessness. Yuán Huáng is part of this trend too, evidenced not only by his intellectual independence, but also his development of the *lì mìng* theory, through which the individual was thought to be in complete—almost existential, to use a term from Western philosophy—power of his own moral and material fate. Thus, two developments in the late Míng of on the one hand a "Chinese individualism" and on the other a profound philosophical distrust of the value of egoism, come together and are both expressed in Yuán Liǎofán's program of self-cultivation.

I believe an appeal to the socio-economic conditions of the period might help explain this seeming paradox. As I see it, the "selfless self-promotion" we see in Yuán Huáng's thought answers one very basic characteristic of late Míng society: the unprecedented competitiveness and social mobility. Of the gentry, many were eager to seize the opportunities suddenly available to them and climb the social ladder, yet at the same time distressed by the immorality created by that very same ambitiousness. The self-cultivational scheme of Yuán Huáng was a way to affirm personal ambition while at the same time alleviating the moral distress this ambition created. While a complete lack of selfish intentions may have been philosophically and psychologically impossible, is it not probable

that a conscious gradual weeding out of egoism did in fact lead to more genuinely selfless behaviour, thus alleviating one momentous moral problem with the practice of merit accumulation? From the practitioner's point of view, the selflessness may very well have been *perceived* as complete. At the very least, it seems probable that such a program had the potential of leading to an overall feeling of clean consciousness and moral fulfilment. Where Yuán Huáng's critics, both in his day and today, emphasized the mutual incompatibility between on the one hand doing something for oneself and on the other hand for other people, and between karmic considerations and spontaneity free of intentions and deliberations, Yuán Huáng viewed humaneness rather as a compatible corrective to selfishness. Yet at the same time, neither self-centredness (*sī* 私) nor material desires (*rényù* 人欲) are by any means ascribed any positive valour in his system. Yuán Huáng was no rigorous philosopher. Rather, in the context of a dynamic late Míng society and economy, as well as an emerging intellectual trend of valuing practicality, he answered to an intuitive ethics he perceived in himself and others. He devised a program of self-cultivation that secured him both moral and material fulfilment in a highly competitive society.

In common with the other radical intellectuals of the late Míng, Liǎofán had recognized the new potentialities of the individual. His program of self-cultivation was a way of harnessing, yet at the same time affirming and spurring on, individual ambition—placing it firmly within both Buddhist and Confucian moral frameworks. As a consequence, however, those frameworks were also reshaped. The fixed hierarchy of Confucianism and its social obligations were reconciled with social fluidity and individual ambitiousness. The Buddhist concern for enlightenment, on the other hand, was reconciled with the highly secular concern for individual fulfilment and societal harmony, becoming enlightenment as "a natural condition or quality, something man may employ in his striving for integrity as a man, not Enlightenment as the final and transcendent goal of Buddhism."[274]

Buddhist sitting meditation possessed the potential of being a means by which *both* types of "enlightenment" could be sought. Thus, when in the hands of Yuán Liǎofán it was recontextualized and reconceptualized within the system of merit accumulation through the keeping of Ledgers of Merit and Demerit, its function was subtly yet radically transformed. No longer a step on the path toward nirvāṇa, it became an *affirmation* rather than renunciation of saṃsāra—an expedient means for the continuous perfection, fulfilment—and regeneration—of self and of society.

[274] de Bary (on the Chéng brothers), "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and Enlightenment", 165.

Appendix A:
Partial Translation of the *Meditation Essentials*

A1. Notes on translation and conventions

The following partial translation of *Jìngzuò yàojué* 靜坐要訣 is based on the redaction in the *Miscellaneous Writings of Liǎofán* (*Liǎofán zázhù* 了凡雜著) from 1605 (2006 reprint)[275], which is the only one without textual errors, as far as I have been able to detect. This redaction is without punctuation, so where unsure about parsing I have consulted the 1985 reprint of the 1929 Xìnghuái redaction,[276] which contains simple traditional Chinese punctuation.

In the resulting translation, I have for reasons of readability strived to keep additions in square brackets to a minimum. This does not mean that I have not added English words that were not there in the original—this is necessary in any translation both in order to produce idiomatic language *and* to try convey the original meaning, and all the more so when the input language Classical Chinese, which is highly elliptic; it rather means that I do not bracket this information, except for cases where I have deemed that not doing so presents a distorted picture of the original.

The bulk of such brackets appear where I have added subheadings (which do not appear at all in the original) or numbers in listings (which the author sometimes employs, sometimes not—in the former case they will of course not be bracketed).

Abbreviations (seen in annotation):

DDB	Digital Dictionary of Buddhism
HDC	*Hànyǔ dà cídiǎn* 汉语大词典 (“Chinese Comprehensive Dictionary”)
PDB	*Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*

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[275]Yúan 袁, *Liǎofán Zázhù* 了凡雜著, in *Yuán Liǎofán Wénjí* 袁了凡文集 (Jiāshàn 嘉善: Xiànzhuàng Shūjú 線裝書局, 2006). The *Meditation Essentials* is found on pp. 33a–67b.

[276] Yuán 袁, *Jìngzuò yàojué* (Taipei 台北: Xīnwénfēng Chūbǎn Gōngsī 新文豐出版公司, 1985, second print 2004).

A2. Translation of Preface and Chapters 1, 5 and 6

Preface

The knack of sitting in meditation originates from the Chán school, and is not something we Confucians originally possessed. After Masters Chéng watched people meditate and hailed it as an excellent field of study, and Master Zhū used meditation to supplement the skill of restraining the mind—only then did Confucians get to know how to consult and perform this practice.

In former times, there was the case of Chén Liè, who suffered from memory loss but after having meditated for a hundred days suddenly obtained perfect memory. This is merely a case of rudimentarily restraining the floating dust, of slightly purifying our lucid *qì*. Still, mediocre Confucians hold it as a supreme standard, without pursuing advancement beyond it. This is a mistake. For ever since birth, the human mind spends its days galloping about[277]; it pursues things and forgets to return. When we are moving, it is certainly muddled; when we are sitting, it is also in chaos. In this state of mind, if we restrain our thoughts just a little bit, we will perceive the resulting state as limpid. If we then skew out of course, and have no wise teacher to guide us, to show us the cruces, then some of us will regard what little we have obtained as complete, others will on the contrary contract illnesses. I truthfully lament this situation!

Generally speaking, as for the methods of meditation, there are steps through which one embarks on cultivation, and there are truths of which one strives for realization. Make a slight inaccuracy, and you will never be able to develop deep *dhyāna*.

My teacher, Great Master Yúngǔ, meditated for over twenty years, and possessed subtle understanding of the doctrinal legacy of the Tiāntāi tradition, which he discussed in detail with me. I have also associated with Master Miàofēng, who believed deeply in the teachings of Tiāntāi, and viewed *dhyāna* as an essential gateway to the Pure Land[278].

The Great *Dharma* has been abandoned for a long time, and I wish contribute to its revival. The two masters, too, have both passed away. For the sake of expounding the purport of the teachings they left behind as well as exploring the legacy of the Tiāntāi school, I have compiled this treatise. I now share it with the aspiring.

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[277] This word, 馳驟 *chízhoù* ”gallop”, has a secondary metaphorical meaning of ”struggle for fame and wealth”, which is presumably also active here. Using horse (and also monkey) metaphors for the wandering mind was common in Chinese Buddhism.

[278] Pure Land is also the name of a school within East Asian Buddhism, so in addition to the meaning which is chosen in the translation, the meaning of ”an essential gateway for Pure Land Buddhism” is also in play (淨土要門). Chán and Pure Land mixing was one important characteristic of late Míng Buddhism.

Chapter [1:] On Distinguishing the Will[279]

[1. Heretical Meditation Practice]

In all meditation practices, one must first distinguish one's will. As soon as there is a slight error in the will, one will descend into evil ways. Just like how the archer will first establish his target: If the target is on his east and his arrow shoots west, how will he hit the mark? According to the Tiāntāi school, there are ten forms of heretical cultivation practices, which I will here summarize into four:

[1] If the practitioner vows to meditate for the sake of fame and riches, then his intentions classify as deceitful. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'hell'.

[2] If he on the other hand meditates for the sake of turning his stupidity into brightness and surpassing others, then his intentions classify as 'competitive'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'demigod'.

[3] If he meditates for the reason of fear towards worldly worries and karmic retributions, and admiration towards philanthropy and happiness, then his will classifies under 'likes and dislikes'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'men and gods'.

[4] If he meditates, not for fame and riches, nor for brightness or good karma, but solely for the reason of escaping the "thousand births and myriad *kalpas*"[280] and the endlessness of life and death, only in order to seek the right path and quickly attain nirvana, then his will classifies as 'finishing for oneself'. Thus he sows the karmic cause of 'the two wagons, [*srāvakayāna* and *pratyekabuddhayāna*]'.

Although there are differences among these types of practitioners—in the degree to which they are either good or evil, and in the extent to which they are either fettered or liberated—in terms of heretical practice they are all the same.

[2. True Meditation Practice]

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[279] 辨志 *biàn zhì*. The folk etymology of the character 志, and also how Zhū Xī explained it, was 心之所之, "where the heart goes". "Intentions" is another possible gloss, especially considering its Latin etymology (*intendere, in* "towards" and *tendere* "stretch; tend"), which is similar to that of *zhì*. However, "intention" is commonly used to translate *yì* 意 (which, by the way, is the character used to define none other than *zhì* in the *Shuō wén* 說文, thus indicative of their similarity).

[280] 千生萬劫 *qiān shēng wàn jié*. I have chosen a literal, Buddhist translation over the more ideomatic, vernacular sense of "generation after generation". 劫 *jié* is the shortened form of 劫波 *jiébō*, phonetic loan of Sanskrit *kalpa,* the Buddhist concept of "eon".

True meditation practice is encapsulated in the single notion of ’*rén*’ 仁. [“]To regard Heaven–and–Earth and the myriad things as one substance[”][281], and [“]to make manifest illustrious virtue throughout the world[”][282], this is what is meant by ‘*rén’*. Translated into Chinese, ‘*Śākyamuni’* means the two notions *néng rén* 能仁, [“to be able [to be]” *rén*]. ‘*Bodhi’* means ”enlightened”, or ”to ferry over, liberate”. ‘*Sattva’* means ”affectionate”, or ”all living creatures”. ‘*Bodhisattva’* thus means ”enlightened and compassionate”, or ”to save all living creatures”. Buddhism regards only bodhisattva-hood as the Middle Way. *Arhat*-hood*,* on the other hand, is seen as exceeding the three realms and thus realizing the karmic effect of ”not returning”. The Buddha deeply detests *arhats*, denouncing them as withered buds and failed seeds[283], regarding them as only saving themselves and no others. The *Śūraṃgama-sutra* states: “As long as there is one among all living creatures that has not attained Buddhahood, then one should not obtain *nirvāna*.” And furthermore: ”Offering this body and mind to the defiled, secular world, this is what is called ’repaying the benevolence of Buddha’.” Truly, its purport is profound!

Some might ask: “How is this different from Mòzǐ’s 墨子 theory of ‘Impartial Love’[284]?” My answer is: ‘Self-Preservation’[285] and Impartial Love are both commendable. Impartial Love is *rén*; Self-Preservation is *yì* 義—how indeed are these not virtues! Mencius’ reason for being hostile towards Yángzǐ and Mòzǐ, was simply their clutching to one extreme: Either clutching to Self-Preservation and neglecting Impartial Love, thereby harming *rén*; or clutching to Impartial Love and neglecting Self-Preservation, thereby harming *yì.* It is merely for this reason that Mencius remained hostile towards these doctrines.

The scholars of antiquity practiced Self-Preservation; so how can Confucians not be self-preserving? *Rén* is loving other people; so how can Confucians not practice Impartial

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281 以天地萬物為一體. Direct quotation of a saying attributed to Chéng Yí 程頤. See discussion in chapter three.

282 明明德於天下. Direct quotation from the *Dàxué* 大學 (“Great Learning”), originally a chapter of *Lǐjì* 禮記 (*Book of Rites,* 42/2).

283 *bài zhòng* 敗種, ”failed seed”. The two characters are usually taken together as a word meaning ”coward” or ”scoundrel”. However the seed metaphor seems here not to be coincidental.

284 兼愛 *jiān’ài.* Utilitarian ethical system advocated by and attributed to Mozi (c. 470–391 BC), pacifist philosopher of the Warring States period (戰國時代 *zhànguó shídài*). Popular in that period, together with the larger Mohism tradition (墨家 *mò jiā*) of which it was part, but gradually lost influence to Legalism (法家 *fǎ jiā*) and later Confucianism.

285 為我 *wèi wó.* Ethical system attributed to 楊朱 Yáng Zhū (c. 440–360 BC), contemporary of Mòzǐ. Less is known about this theory and its originator, but they are generally agreed to be ”somehow related to Taoism” (Cree 1970: 38). Graham glosses it instead as “doing for oneself”. I opt for “self-preservation” in order to preserve the terseness of Liǎofán’s paragraph. Doing so I must specify that this Yangist concept has little to do with Wáng Gěn’s *bǎo shēn* 保身, which is also translatable as ”self-preservation”. For his acute speculations regarding the Yangist school, see Graham, *Disputers,* 53–64.

Love? Confucianism regards striving for *rén* as the ethos of its doctrinal transmission. At the same time it has never abandoned *yì*. The parallel application and mutual compatibility of *rén* and *yì* is what is regarded as the Middle Way. If one did not practice Self-Preservation or Impartial Love, then how indeed could one do what is right? Clutching to the theories of Yáng and Mò, and clutching to Confucianism, are equally perverse!

Some might ask: "The way of the *bodhisattva* specializes in saving all sentient beings. Why then would one seclude oneself in the deepest mountains, abandon all the living, sit in meditation and pursue *dhyāna*?"[286] My answer would be: This is what makes *bodhisattva*-hood the Middle Way. Saving all living beings requires that one's virtues are lofty and one's actions well prepared, that one's awakening is sublime and gnosis divine.[287] Without *dhyāna* any virtuous behaviour is without depth; without *dhyāna* any awakening and any wisdom will remain undeveloped. For this reason one temporarily abandons the sentient beings to sit in meditation and pursue the Way.

Just like when people fall ill they consume medicine and take temporary leave from their undertakings. Only when they have recovered will their activities return to normal. The *bodhisattvas* are also like this. Even when their body temporarily abandons the sentient beings, in their minds they still take pity. Situated in a serene place they administer the medicine of *dhyāna-samādhi*, attain real gnosis, expel the afflictions, give rise to the six supernormal powers, and extensively save all sentient beings. Just like Confucians when they live in seclusion: Can it be that they simply purify themselves and forget about this world?

This is precisely what is called the will of '[regarding] the myriad things [of heaven and earth] as one entity. When they live in seclusion, they never fail to constantly bear in mind the will of 'the myriad things are one body'; when they come out, they never fail the Way of 'the myriad things are one body'. Consequently, the reason why the exploits by Yǔ and Jì of 'passing [the house] three times without entering' cannot be said to exceed Yánzǐ's happiness from living miserly, is precisely because that when it comes to this will, there is no differentiation.[288]

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[286] Zhìyǐ and Liǎofan here tackles what was one of the most common criticisms launched at Buddhist (as well as Daoist) meditation by Confucian scholars, namely that is self-centred (私). By those Neo-Confucians who embraced meditation practice, this view was also used to distinguish the kind of meditation they advocated from Buddhist (and Daoist) types of meditation. See for example the summation of the differences between the meditation practices of the three traditions made by Sòng Neo-Confucian scholar Chén Chún 陳淳 (1159–1223, student of Zhū Xī), quoted in Nakajima, 108.
[287] Syntactic reordering of *júemiào* 覺妙 and *shénzhì* 神智.
[288] Two allusions are invoked in this last sentence, the first from *Mencius* (in the fifth chapter 滕文公上), the second from the sixth chapter 雍也 of the *Analects*. The first tells of how Yǔ 禹 (c. 21st century BC, mythic inventor of flood control and founder of the semi-mythic Xià 夏 dynasty (2nd millennium BC) during his eight years of designing and constructing China's irrigation and flood control sytem, passed his house own house three times without ever entering to visit his family or

Chapter [5:] On Eliminating Desire

[1. Introduction]

In his expositions on the Sagely Learning [i.e. Confucianism], Zhōu Liánxī[289] held no-desire to be essential.

Desire is born out of affection. The method of diminishing desire starts from cutting off affection. The opposite of affection is detestation. If one habitually observes what is detestable with an object, then that will be the end of one's attachment to it. For this reason, Śākyamuni provided the Contemplation on Impurity.

Whenever there is birth, there must also be death. Death is eternal separation from the realm of gracious love, invariably detested by those who possess life. Even though we know it is detestable, none of us are able to escape it. At present I am alive; before long I will certainly die. One day passed entails one day closer [to death], for we are scurrying along while gazing at death. How then can we hanker after music and sex, and fame and wealth? It is truly like the moth throwing itself at a lamp, admiring void names while willingly seeking real misfortune. How foolish!

[2. The practice]

The student who wishes to practice the Contemplation on Impurity should first contemplate on the time of recent death. Words of disconsolation, smells of incense; the last breath having departed, never to return; the body cold, without consciousness; the four elements without a master; the deluded consciousness gone off to some unknown place. Frightening. Dreadful. Hence, attachment and desire will weaken and diminish by themselves; compassion and wisdom will increase and brighten by themselves.

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plow the fields, thus being a paragon of unrelenting service and self-sacrifice. Jì 稷, though not said to have done the exact same thing, is treated in the same paragraph on sagely self-sacrifice, in his case through educating the people in tilling.

The second tells of the thriftyness of Yánzi, disciple of Confucius. He lived and ate extremely frugally, and did not let the happiness he found in this be affected by other people not being able to endure it.

The two anecdotes are then brought together and likened in the eight chapter 離婁下 of *Mencius.* Yǔ and Jì, in a time of the world being brought to order, ”passed the house three times without returning”, whereas Yánzi, in a time of disorder, lived and ate in poverty and reclusion. Mencius goes on to say that the three in effect ”followed the same Way” and each would all have done the same thing as the others if their places were swapped. The word *zhì* 志 is not explicitly mentioned, but the reason for their compatability seems to be the underlying extreme sense of empathy and responsibility—thus a sagely ”will”.

[289] 周濂溪 (1017–1073), better known as Zhōu Dūnyí 周敦頤, see subsection “No-desire” in chapter three.

From this point onwards, there are many approaches.

[2.1. The Nine Contemplations]

One approach is the Nine Contemplations, [which consist of the following nine steps]:

1. Contemplation on Swelling, denoting the swelling like a leather bag of a corpse.
2. Contemplation on Destruction, denoting the dismemberment of the four limbs and the foul bodily fluids of the five viscera.
3. Contemplation on the Smearing of Blood, denoting the smearing of blood on the ground, the desecration and foulness.
4. Contemplation on Putrefaction of Pus, denoting the stream of pus and putrefaction of the flesh.
5. Contemplation on Bruises, denoting the blackening of clogged blood and the stench of bruises, after the clearing up of pus and blood.
6. Contemplation on Eating, denoting being devoured by maggots, and the resulting rupture and dilapidation.
7. Contemplation on Disintegration, denoting the breaking off of sinew and separation of bones, head and feet lying across each other.
8. Contemplation on Bones, denoting the disappearance of skin and flesh, leaving only the white skeleton.
9. Contemplation on Cremation, denoting cremation of the corpse; the fracturing of the bones, and the stench of the smoke.

Then you will understand that speech and laughter, mirth and amusement, all belong to provisional syntheses; that freshness and warmth, that slenderness and softness in the end are all empty. Ultimately, the same is true even for this body of mine. What indeed then is it that is so worthy of our attachment, of our craving? After mastering the Nine Contemplations, you must continue contemplating and repeat practicing, thus making yourself skilled and sharp in this meditation.

Along with these contemplations, your mind will accordingly reach concentration; your thinking and attitude will be clear and unchaotic. There is simply nothing that surpasses the destruction of desire and elimination of craving.

[2.2. The Ten Contemplations]

Another approach is the Ten Contemplations:

1. Contemplation on Impermanence, denoting how conditioned factors are subject to a process of endless renewal and arising and ceasing, changing with every instant, never pausing for even a moment.

2. Contempletion on Suffering, denoting the oppression of the six sense organs, the torment of the myriad things, the suffering of sentient beings and the non-existence of happiness.
3. Contemplation of No-Self, denoting how factors are born out of conditions, inherently without self-nature.
4. Contemplation on the Impurity of Eating, denoting that even when the food is still in the mouth, there is brain saliva running down. After mixing[290] with the saliva, thereby producing taste, the food is then swallowed—really no different from spitting it out—upon which it enters the stomach, and finally turns into shit.

[No. 5 is missing![291]]

6. Contemplation on Death, denoting the fact that as soon as breath is disconnected, you will perish.
7. Contemplation on Impurity, denoting the Thirty-Six Parts of the human body, as well as the Five Bodily Impurities.
8. Contemplation on Severance [of the passions and delusions].
9. Contemplation on Detachment.
10. Contemplation on Exhaustion [of karmic bonds].[292]

Attaching oneself to *nirvāṇa* and severing the fetters of affliction is called Contemplation on Severance. Thus severing and thereby attaining detachment is called Contemplation on Detachment. Thus attaining detachment and thereby attaining exhaustion is called Contemplation on Exhaustion.

The Nine Contemplations is an introductory practice; the Ten Contemplations is the accomplishment. The Nine Contemplations can be likened to binding a thief, the Ten Contemplations then killing him off. Herein lies the only difference between them.

[2.3. Skeleton Contemplation]

Yet another approach is the Skeleton Contemplation, which is extracted from the Nine Contemplations.[293] Whenever you perform the Nine Contemplations or the Ten Contemplations, you should always keep your posture straight and sit upright, and adjust the

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[290] For the very concrete mixing of two substances here, Liǎofán (or rather Zhìyì) uses the same verb as in the more abstract ”synthesis” used in relation with ”causes and concomittances”.

[291] In *Sequential Gateway* the fifth is “Contemplation on the Impossibility of Happiness in the World” (*yíqiè shìjiān bù kě lè xiǎng* 一切世間不可樂想, SG p0539c22–p0540a14). As for the reasons for the omission, we can only speculate. That Liǎofán simply accidently skipped it seems to me to be the most likely candidate.

[292] On the last three Liǎofán offers no explanation.

[293] I am not quite sure what he means by this. Possibly the eighth of the Nine Contemplations?

breath. Only after having your mind stilled for a good while should you commence the [Skeleton] Contemplation.

Now, commencing the Skeleton Contemplation, you should at first bind your thoughts to the big toe on the left foot. Carefully contemplate on the outer half of the toe, and have a blister grow from it. Make it extremely distinct. Then have it burst. Visualize this half toe, and make it extremely white and clean, as if there were white light emanating from it. Then contemplate on the whole toe. Have the flesh cut away, all now covered in white light. Then contemplate on the second toe and the third toe, then all five toes, up till all ten toes of the feet. The bones should be distinct. Bind your mind like this, and don't let it wander off. If it does, retain it and have it return. When the contemplation is accomplished, you will notice that your whole body is warm. Thereupon, the gastral cavity turns hot, the name for this being "the binding of the mind becoming settled."

Now that the mind is settled, you should again take up your contemplation. Split open the flesh at the instep of the foot, so that you see the knuckles. Make this picture extremely distinct. Next, turn your attention to the anklebone, then the shinbone, and after that the hipbone, all being stripped to the bone. Picture the bones as white as pure snow. After this you turn to the ribs, and the spine and shoulder blades. From the shoulder you reach the elbow, from the elbow down to the wrist; from the wrist to the palm, from the palm to tips of the fingers. In all cases you have the flesh split open, revealing the skeleton—of, at this point, half the body.

Now move on to the scalp. See the meninges, see the brain, see the fat, see the pharynx and larynx, see the lungs, the heart, the liver and the gallbladder, the spleen and the stomach, the large and small intestines, the kidneys—all the organs of the heart, being covered by countless worms savouring the pus and blood! Make the visualization distinct. Next, watch as the worms exit through the throat. Then have the small intestine, liver, lungs, spleen and kidneys flow into the large intestine before they too come out through the mouth and fall to the ground in front.

On this stinking spot, the shit and urine and the roundworms get tangled up. In the mouths of the worms, pus and blood comes pouring out. Everything is suffused with impurity!

After this part of the contemplation is complete, you picture your own body as white snow [i.e. as a skeleton]; again, joint after joint connected to each other. If you see yellow or black, then you should repent.

This was the first Skeleton Contemplation.

[2.3.2. Second Skeleton Contemplation]

In the second Skeleton contemplation you bind your thoughts to the forehead, settling in on the centre of the forehead, an area the size of a nail. Be careful lest scattered thoughts appear. Contemplating the forehead like this will allow your mind to calm, not producing other thoughts, thinking only of the forehead.

Thereafter, you contemplate the skull: white as the colour of glass[294].

Picture all the bones of the body like this, one after the other—shiningly white, every joint mutually connected.

Having completed this part of the contemplation, you turn next to a second skeleton, and then a third, all the way up to ten skeletons. When you have pictured ten skeletons, you move up to twenty, then thirty, then forty—picture a whole room full of skeletons! In front of you, behind you, to the left and to the right, they line up in columns next to each other, each raising their right hand, facing you. At this point, you gradually expand the visualization. First you picture a large hall full of skeletons, lined up in columns next to each other, their bones white as clean snow. Next, picture a whole town of skeletons, then a city, a province, and finally the whole world under heaven, populated by nothing but skeletons. Having pictured this, your body and mind will be peaceful and happy, without alarm, without fear. Having pictured this, you will see skeletons both when you leave and enter *samādhi*. You will see that mountains, rivers, cliffs—and all the things in the world, are all going through change, just like a skeleton. Having seen this, you picture the four oceans in the four directions, their currents swift and their colour white as milk. Picture all the skeletons sinking. When you have finished this contemplation, repent. Picture purely water, surging to the sky. Then have the water calm.

This is called the Contemplation of the Mind-Sea of Ordinary Men and Objects of Life-and-Death.

Chapter [6:] On Expanding Love

[Introduction]

Confucius once said: ”[My aspirations are:] To bring peace to my elders, to place trust in my friends, and to take good care of my juniors.”[295] In society there are only these three kinds of [relationships between] people. Of seniors, there are two types: My elders and the elders of other people. Of friends, there are close ones and distant ones; there are those that were close at first, but later became distant; there are relations of gratitude as there are of animosity. Of

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[294] 白如玻璃色. Whether he means the same colour as what we think of when we read ”glass” is open to question. I myself was expecting something whiter in this simile.

[295] “老者安之，朋友信之，少者懷之。” ICS Lunyu: 5.26/11/20.

juniors, there are also two kinds: My juniors and the juniors of others. Of my elders and juniors, even among immediate family there are gradations; and among the elders and juniors of others is included gradations of gratitude and animosity, distance and proximity—all kinds of variables.

[The practice]

Initially, I proceed from my elders. I vow to do what I can to bestow calm, to make sure that they have what they need in terms of food, drink and dwelling. When you begin this practice, pick the persons most beloved to you, such as your parents or the like. Wholeheartedly attach your thoughts to this person. If other thoughts arise, retain them and make them return. Make the visualization in your mind distinct. Picture the elders among your close relatives experiencing peace, and then expand this vision to the elders of other people, ultimately extending it to those of your enemies and barbaric tribes. There are none for whom you do not wish peace. Repeat the practice for friends and juniors.

Chán masters call this the Contemplation of a Compassionate Mind, or the Four Boundless Mentalities[296]. The merit of this practice is immense. The Four Boundless Mentalities are: (1) loving-kindness, (2) compassion, (3) empathetic joy and (4) equanimity[297].

[1. Boundless Loving-Kindness]

At first, you think with compassion on all people, bestowing calm on your elders, trust on your friends, and care on your juniors. Have one thought follow the next, and keep your efforts firm. Approaching calmness of mind, visualize your beloved ones experiencing

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[296] *Sì wúliàng xīn* 四無量心. This rendering of the term is borrowed from Sheng-yen, *Hoofprint of the Ox*. DDB (Muller and Achim Bayer, "四無量心") has "four immeasurable states of mind", PDB ("apramāṇa") has the four "boundless states". The meanings of the Chinese character *liàng* 量 contains both "measure" (v/n) and "limit" (n), and *xīn* in this context covers all the different renderings, so really all options are sound. 無量 describes first the extent of the intent to benefit others in the mind of the *bodhisattva*, secondarily the objects of that intent and benifit (all sentient beings), and, according to Dīng Fúbǎo 丁福保, the good fortune/blessings/merit (*fú* 福) thus produced, quoting *Jùshè lùn* 俱舍論—an aspect invoked also by our author in the section under the first subheading (using *gōngdé* 功德 instead of 福).

[297] The Chinese characters are *cí* 慈*, bēi* 悲*, xǐ* 喜 and *shě* 捨, in everyday language with the respective meanings "compassion", "grief", "delight" and "to abandon". In the Buddhist nomenclature, they take on slightly different connotations. The Sanskrit terms they are used to render are respectively *maitrī, karunā, muditā* and *upekṣā,* the common English translations in turn being "loving-kindness", "compassion", "(empathetic) joy" and "equanimity" or "impartiality". Confusingly, the 喜 used in Chapter 3 on the *dhyāna* stages, which I there translated as "rapture", translates Sanskrit *prīti.* Conversely, the *dìngxīn* 定心, "equanimity", of the same chapter, is in Sanskrit the same term (*upeksā*) as that which in Chinese is rendered 捨 in this chapter.

happiness. Their bodies and minds are delighted, their countenance carefree; make them clear and distinct. Picture your loved ones attaining joy. Then picture strangers, and at last your enemies in the same situations. While in the calmness of mind, first picture one person, then ten, then thousand, then ten thousand—ultimately reaching all people in the world, each and every one experiencing joy. While abiding in concentration, you picture strangers experiencing joy, and so your inner concentration deepens, transparently calm and unmoving.

This is what is called Boundless Loving-Kindness.

When people of this world are at odds with the masses, the first thing that arises within us is *aversion*. This aversion steadily grows, while we mull it over and become attached to it, causing it to take up residence in the mind. At this point it is called *hate*. When this hate accumulates, we wish to hurt others. At this stage it is called *vexation*. Everything that ruins and damages virtue, originates from aversion, hate and vexation; while the only thing that can get rid of them is the compassionate mind. From this we understand that the merit of a compassionate mind is boundless.

Further, the compassion of the Buddha[298] has three levels: (1) the compassion based on awareness of the suffering of all sentient beings; (2) the compassion based on awareness of the true nature of phenomena; and (3) compassion without attachment.

Not trying to bring benefit to one person, but seeking benefit on behalf of all the countless, borderless people—that is the compassion based on awareness of the suffering of all sentient beings.

Not thinking merely of the physical calm of one's seniors, but also their mental calm, causing them to achieve real happiness—this is the compassion based on awareness of the true nature of phenomena.

As for "compassion without attachment", it is something possessed only by sages. A sage does not dwell in conditionality, nor does he dwell in unconditionality[299]. He wants

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[298] *Shì shì* 釋氏. A highly polysemous term. 釋 is an abbreviation of *Shìjiā* 釋迦, the Chinese transliteration of Śākyamuni's (i.e. the historical Buddha) surname Śākya. 氏 means (roughly) "clan", and when following a surname denotes either a particular clan with that surname, or, more commonly, one particular member within that clan in a respectful manner, thus approximating English "mister". In our case the referent would with the former interpretation be the Śākya clan, and with the latter, Śākyamuni ("Mr. Śākya). Yet another meaning is "Buddhist practioner", and by extension even "Buddhism".

[299] *Wú wéi* 無為 and *yǒuwéi* 有為 respectively. The Sanskrit terms are *asaṃskṛta* and *saṃskṛta.* Here we touch upon the laws of causality so fundamental to Buddhism. *Saṃskṛta,* "conditioned" describes impermanent phenomena, those that are produced through the never-ending process of the concomitance of causes and conditions, and *asaṃskṛta,* "unconditioned", the opposite, i.e. the few factors that are, according to some schools, not conditioned nor impermanent, most commonly nirvāṇa. (PDB: "saṃskṛta", "asaṃskṛta").

peace for his seniors, trust for his friends, and care for his juniors. But he himself cannot know whether they are peaceful, whether they are trusted, whether they are cared for. The so-called ”compassion without attachment”, means to devote oneself to all living things.

[2. Boundless Compassion]
When the practitioner is in the concentration of compassion, he incessantly reflects on the desire to realize all the wishes of all sentient beings. Whenever he sees sentient beings experiencing toil and suffering, pity arises in his mind. Thus he vows to rescue them. At first he picks a visualization of one of his loved ones experiencing suffering. He ties his mind to this thought, and the compassion he then feels will be without limit. Then he expands this to all the people in one particular locality and then to all people under the four heavens, picturing them all suffering, and yearning for their rescue. His compassionate mind thus deepens, transparently calm and unmoving.

This is what is called Boundless Compassion.

[3. Boundless Joy]
Upon entering the concentration of compassion, you take pity on all the sentient beings and wish to remove all their sufferings and joys. At this point, deeply contemplate on sentient beings: Even though they experience suffering and vexation, this is nevertheless illusory and unreal. There was never anything to get rid of to begin with. So you teach them the wondrous method of purification, so that they can obtain *nirvāṇa* and eternal happiness. Retain your mind, enter into concentration, and picture all the sentient beings experiencing joy, also here proceeding from your loved ones and finally to the whole world.

This is what is called Boundless Joy.

[4. Boundless Equanimity]
From this point in the concentration of joy, you think of loving-kindness and that you give happiness to all the sentient beings, you think of compassion and wish to uproot their suffering, you think of joy and that you cause them to be joyful. On the other hand, calculating your own benefit, without forgetting prior events, that would not be to practice the superior activities. For example, a compassionate father bringing benefit to his son, without seeking favour, that is real love.

Subsequently, you should reflect on the fact that when sentient beings obtain happiness, each will owe it to their own particular causes and concomitances, and that it will never only be thanks to you. If you on the other hand state: ”I am able to confer happiness”, then this is not a mind of modesty.

Then you reflect that the mind of loving-kindness and its conferring happiness, are both but empty aspirations: The sentient being in front of you is not in fact obtaining happiness, and believing it to be real is an act of distortion.

After which you reflect that if there is even the slightest generation of sadness or happiness upon witnessing sentient beings experiencing suffering, then this belongs to the obstructions, and any attainment of liberation will thus be complicated.

Think: ”Now I wish to purify my practices of cultivation, therefore I should not attach myself to the *dharmas* of being opinionated, apodictive, stubborn or self-centred.[300] Now I should rid myself of this clinging infatuation.” Consequently, your pure mind arises. There will be no hatred or no love whatsoever. At first, pick your loved ones, and picture them achieving the power of concentration while experiencing non-suffering and non-happiness, clearly, distinctly; finally extending this visualization to the Ten Aspects of Time and the Five Paths, there being no-one in the world that is not experiencing this.

This is what is called Boundless Equanimity.

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[300] The latter part of this sentence, “不應著意必固我之法” contains an allusion to an epithet of Confucius which appears in *The Analects*: ”The Master eschewed four things: He avoided being opinionated; he avoided being apodictive; he avoided being stubborn; he avoided being self-centred.” (“子絕四：毋意；毋必；毋固；毋我”, ICS Lunyu: 9.4/20/13; translation by Harbsmeier, TLS.) This is thus the second comparison of the meditation described in the present chapter to sagely behaviour (the second being the more explicit one that appears towards the end of the first subheading ”[1. Boundless Loving-Kindness]”).

Incidentally, this paraphrase is reminiscent of the statement that immediately precedes the quotation by Confucius (ICS Lunyu: 5.26/11/20) that introduces the present chapter, namely Yán Huí’s 顏回 take on his own aspirations: ”I hope not to brag about excellence, and not to make a show of my own efforts.” (“願無伐善，無施勞”, ICS Lunyu: 5.26/11/19, trans. by Harbsmeier.)

Appendix B:
Copy of The Original Text (靜坐要訣)

For referrals, and also in order to make available the most reliable version of the text, the 1605 edition of the *Meditation Essentials* is appended below. It is copied from *Yuán Liǎofán Wénjí* 袁了凡文集 ("Collected works of Yuán Liǎofán"), edited by Hé Huìqín 何慧琴 et al. (Jiāshàn 嘉善: Xiànzhuàng Shūjú 線裝書局, 2006), where it covers pages 33a to 67b. These page numbers are retained and can be found on the bottom right of each double-page, and correspond to the page referrals made throughout the thesis. Line numbers are counted from right to left on each single page. For example, "ME 36b7" would be double-page 36, side b, line 7, which is on the bottom left quarter of page number 115 of this thesis. Two double-pages from the original are fitted into one single page here.

了凡雜著靜坐要訣二卷

前進士東吳袁黃坤儀甫編

靜坐之訣原出於禪門吾儒無有也自程子見人靜坐卽嘆其善學朱子又欲以靜坐補小學收放心一段工夫而儒者始知所從事矣昔陳烈苦無記性靜坐百餘日遂一覽無遺此特浮塵初斂清氣少澄耳而世儒認爲極則不復求進誤矣蓋人之一心自有生以來終日馳驟逐物忘歸動固紛紛靜亦擾擾稍加收攝便覺朗然中間曲折無明

師指授不得肯綮或得少爲足或反成疾患余寔哀之大都靜坐之法其修也有從入之階其證也有自得之實一毫有差永不發深禪定矣吾師雲谷大師靜坐二十餘載妙得天台遺旨爲余譚之甚備余又交妙峯法師深信天台之教謂禪爲淨土要門大法久廢思一振之二師皆往矣余因述其遺旨幷攷天台遺教緝爲此篇與有志者共之

辨志篇

凡靜坐先辨志志一差卽墮邪徑矣如射者先認的的東而矢西其能中乎天台有十種邪修今約之爲四如學者爲名聞利養發心靜坐則志屬邪僞因種地獄矣如爲志氣昏愚欲聰明勝人而靜坐則屬好勝之志種修羅之因如畏塵勞苦報慕爲善安樂而靜坐則屬欣厭之志種人天之因如不爲名聞利養不爲聰明善業專爲千生萬劫生死未了惟求正道疾得涅槃而靜坐則發自了之志種二乘之因此等學者善惡雖殊縛脫有異其爲邪僻則一而已矣若眞正修行祇是仁之一字以天地萬物爲一體而明

明德於天下是也釋迦牟尼以夏音釋之卽是能仁二字菩者覺也薩者有情也衆生也菩薩二字爲覺有情又爲度衆生佛氏惟菩薩爲中道羅漢出三界之外成不來之果而佛深惡之斥爲焦芽敗種以其不度人而自度耳楞嚴經云有一衆生不成佛求不於此取泥洹又云將此身心奉塵剎是卽名爲報佛恩其旨深矣或曰如此與墨子兼愛何別荅曰爲我兼愛皆是好事兼愛是仁爲我是義豈非美德所惡楊墨者爲其執一耳執爲我則不知兼愛而害

於仁執兼愛則不知爲我而害於義故孟子惡之耳古之學者爲己儒者何嘗不爲我仁者愛人儒者何嘗不兼愛孔門以求仁爲學脉而未嘗廢義仁義並行而不悖此所以爲中道也不然卽使不爲我不兼愛又豈得爲正哉執楊墨與執儒皆病也問曰菩薩之法專以度衆生爲事何故獨處深山棄捨衆生靜坐求禪乎答曰此菩薩所以爲中道也度一切衆生須德高行備覺妙智神一切德行非禪不深一切覺智非禪不發故暫捨衆生靜坐求道如人有病將身

服藥暫息事業疾愈則修業如常菩薩亦然身雖暫捨衆生而心常憐憫於閑靜處服禪定藥得實智慧除煩惱病起六神通廣度衆生卽如儒者隱居豈絜己而忘世哉正爲求萬物一體之志耳其隱也萬物一體之志念念不離其出也萬物一體之道時時不錯故以禹稷三過不入之功不能加於顏子簞瓢陋巷之樂者正爲此志無加損也

豫行篇

凡坐禪須先持戒使身心清淨罪業消除不然決不

能生諸禪定若從幼不犯重罪或犯已能戒皆係上知利根易於持戒倘惡業深重或屢戒屢犯則謂殘闕之軀不能上進此不聞醍醐妙法而甘於自暴者也法華開經偈云假令造罪過山岳不須妙法兩三行何過不可滅何戒不可持哉學者有三法一深達罪源二大心持戒三不住於戒何謂深達罪源一切諸法本來空寂尚無有福何況有罪種種業障皆由心作反觀此心從何處起若在過去過去已滅已滅之法則無所有無所有法不名爲心若在未來未來

未至未至亦無有不得名心若在現在現在之中剎那不住無住相中心不可得如是觀之不見相貌不在方所當知此心畢竟空寂旣不見心不見非心尚無所觀豈有能觀無能無所顛倒想斷旣顛倒想斷則無無明亦無三毒罪從何生又一切萬法悉屬於心心性尚空何況萬法若無萬法誰是罪業若不得罪不得無罪觀罪無生破一切罪以一切諸罪根本性空常清淨故維摩詰謂優婆離彼自無罪勿增其過當直爾除滅勿擾其心又普賢觀經說觀心無心

法不任法我心自空罪銷無主一切諸法皆悉如是無任無壞如是持戒於一念中百戒俱完萬罪俱滅何謂大心持戒起大悲心憐憫一切衆生妄執有為而起無明造種種業吾代一切衆生懺無量無邊重罪吾為一切衆生求得涅槃而持戒吾若清淨即一切衆生清淨吾若破戒即一切衆生破戒是故寧此身受刀屠萬段終不以此身破衆生大戒如是持戒最廣最大何謂不住於戒華嚴經言身是梵行耶心是梵行耶求身心不可得則戒亦不可得是故不見

已身有持戒者不見他身有破戒者菩薩持戒於種種破戒緣中而得自在知此則戒定慧與貪嗔痴同為妙法矣如此持戒於念念中即諸罪業念念自滅身心清淨可修禪矣修禪之法行住坐臥總當調心但臥多則昏沉立多則疲極行多則紛動其心難調坐無此過所以多用耳然人日用不得常坐或職業相羈或衆緣相絆必欲靜坐遂致蹉跎學者須隨時調習此心勿令放逸亦有三法一繫緣收心二借事鍊心三隨處養心何謂繫緣收心唐人詩云月到上

方諳品靜心持半偈萬緣空自俗人言之心無一物萬緣始空今云心持半偈萬緣空此理最可玩索蓋常人之心必有所繫繫之一處漸束漸純半偈染神萬妄俱息故云繫心一處無事不辦究實論之即念佛持呪及參話頭之類皆是妄念然借此一妄以息羣妄大有便益學者知此日用間或念佛或持呪或參一公案行住坐臥綿綿密密無絲毫間斷由是而讀書作文由是而應事接物一切衆緣種種差別而提撕運用總屬此心吾參祖師活公案不參凡夫死

公案又何間斷之有何謂借事鍊心常人之心私意盤結欲情濃厚須隨事磨鍊難忍處須忍難捨處須捨難行處須行難受處須受如舊不能忍今日忍一分明日又進一分久久煉習胸中廓然此是現前真實功夫也古語云靜處養氣鬧處煉神金不得火煉則雜類不盡心不得事煉則私欲不除最當努力勿當面蹉過何謂隨處養心坐禪者調和氣息收斂元神只要心定心細心閑耳今不得坐須於動中習存應中習止立則如齋手足端嚴切勿搖動行則徐徐

舉足步與心應言則安和簡默勿使躁妄一切運用皆務端詳閑泰勿使有疾言遽色雖不坐而時時細密時時安定矣如此收心則定力易成此坐前方便也

修證篇

凡靜坐不拘全跏半跏隨便而坐平直其身縱任其體散誕四肢布置骨解當令關節相應不倚不曲解衣緩帶稍有不安微動取便務使調適初時從動入靜身中氣或未平舉舌四五過口微微吐氣鼻微微

納之多則三四五徧少則一徧但取氣平為度舌抵上腭唇齒相着次漸平視徐徐閉目勿令眼瞼大急常使眼中朧朧然次則調息不麤不喘令和細綿綿若存天台禪門口訣止教調息觀臍息之出入皆根於臍一心締觀若有外念攝之令還綿綿密密努力精進自此而後靜中光景種種奇特皆須識破庶可進修初時有二種任心之相人心泊境妄念遷流如火焰焰未嘗暫止因前修習心漸虛凝不復緣念名利冤親等事此名麁心息也外事雖不緣念而此心

微細流注剎那不停愈凝愈細內外雙泯此名細心任也此後有二種定法當此細心任時必有持身法起此法發時身心自然正直坐不疲倦如物持身於覺心自然明淨與定相應定法持身任運不動從淺入深或經一坐無分散意此名欲界定也後復身心泯泯虛豁忽然失於欲界之身坐中不見巳身及牀坐等物猶若虛空此名未到地定也將入禪而未入禪故名未到地從此能生初禪矣于未到地中證十六觸成就是為初禪發相何謂十六觸一動二痒三

涼四煖五輕六重七澁八滑復有八觸謂一掉二猗三冷四熱五浮六沉七堅八輭此八觸與前八觸雖相似而細辨則不同合為十六觸也十六觸由四大而發地中四者沉重堅澁水中四者涼煖輭滑火中四者煖熱猗痒風中四者動掉輕浮學者於未到地中入定漸深身心虛寂不見內外或經一日乃至七日或一月乃至一年若定心不壞守護增長此時動觸一發忽見身心凝然運運而動當動之時還覺漸漸有身如雲如影動發或從上發或從下發或從腰

發漸漸徧身上發多退下發多進動觸發時功德無量略言十種善法與動俱發一定二空三明淨四喜悅五樂六善生七知見明八無累解脫九境界現前十心調柔輭如是十者勝妙功德與動俱生莊嚴動法如是一日或十日或一月一年長短不定此事旣過復有餘觸次第而起有徧發十六觸者有發三四觸及七八觸者皆有善法功德如前動觸中說此是色界清淨之身在欲界身中粗細相違故有諸觸證初禪時有五境一覺二觀三喜四樂五定心也初心覺悟爲覺後細心分別爲觀慶悅之心爲喜恬澹之心爲樂寂然不散爲定心十六觸中皆有此五境第六又有默然心由五境而發者皆初禪所發之相也夫覺如大寐得醒如貧得寶藏末世諸賢以覺悟爲極則事然欲入二禪則有覺有悟皆爲患病學者於初禪第六默然心中厭離覺觀初禪爲下若知二法動亂逼惱定心從覺觀生喜樂定等故爲粗此覺觀法障二禪內淨學者旣知初禪之過障于二禪今欲遠離常依三法一不受不着故得離二訶責故得離

三觀析故得離由此三法可以離初禪覺觀之過覺觀旣滅五境及默然心悉謝已離初禪二禪未生於其中間亦有定法可得名禪但不牢固無善境扶助之法諸師多說爲轉寂心謂轉初禪默然也在此定中須依六行觀厭下有三曰苦曰粗曰障欣上有三曰勝曰妙曰出約言之祇是訶讚二意耳夫玄門三年溫養九年面壁未嘗不靜坐而不發大智慧不發大神通不發深禪空者以其處處戀着也得一境界即自以爲奇特愛戀不捨安能上進故須節節說破事事指明方不耽着方肯厭下欣上離苦而求勝去粗而即妙捨障而得出到此地位方知法有正傳師恩難報昔陳白沙靜坐詩云劉郎莫記歸時路只許劉郎一度來陳公在江門靜坐二十餘年惜無明師指點靜中見一端倪發露即愛戀之巳而弃此端倪亦失竭力追尋不復可見故其詩意云爾學者靜中有得先須知此六行觀若到初禪不用此觀則多生憂悔憂悔心生永不發二禪乃至轉寂亦失或時還更發初禪或弃初禪亦失所謂爲山九仞一簣爲難

切當自慎學者心不憂悔一心加功專精不止其心澹然澄靜無有分散名未到地即是二禪前方便定也經云不失不退其心豁然明淨皎潔定心與喜俱發亦如人從暗中出見外日月光明其心豁然明亮內淨十種功德俱發具如初禪發相但以從內淨定俱發爲異耳二禪有四境一內淨二喜三樂四定心何名內淨遠而言之對外塵故說內淨近而言之對內垢故說內淨初禪中得觸樂時觸是身識相應故名外淨二禪心識相應故名內淨初禪心爲覺觀所動故名內垢二禪心無覺觀之垢故名內淨既離覺觀依內淨心發定皎潔分明無有垢穢此內淨定相也喜者深心自慶於內心生喜定等十種功德善法故悅豫無量也樂者受喜中之樂恬澹悅怡綿綿美快也初禪之喜樂由覺觀而生與身識相應此中喜樂從內心生與意識相應所以名同而實異定心者受樂心息既不緣定內喜樂復不緣外念思想一心不動也此四境後亦有默然心但比初禪更深耳謂之聖默然定欲進三禪又當訶二禪之過此二禪定

雖從內淨而發但大喜湧動定不牢固當即捨棄如上用三法遣之一不受二訶責三觀心窮檢既不受喜喜及默然自謝而三禪未生一意精進其心湛然不加功力心自澄靜即是三禪未到地於後其心泯然入定然入定不依內外與樂俱發當樂發時亦有十種功德具如前說但無湧動之喜爲異耳綿綿之樂從內心而發心樂妙美不可爲喻樂定初生既未即徧身中間多有三過一者樂定既淺其心沉沒少有智慧之用二者樂定微少心智勇發故不安穩三者樂定之心與慧力等綿綿美妙多生貪着其心迷醉故經言此樂惟聖人能捨餘人捨爲難三禪欲發有此三過則樂定不得增長充滿其身學者須善調適亦三法治之一者心若沉沒當用意精進策勵而起之二者若心勇發當念三昧定法攝之三者心若迷醉當念後樂及諸勝妙法門以自醒悟令心不着若能如是樂法必定增長徧滿身分百骸萬竅悉皆欣悅所以佛說三禪之樂徧身而受也按初禪之樂從外而發外識相應內樂不滿二禪之樂雖從內發然

從喜而生喜根相應樂根不相應樂依喜生喜尚不徧況於樂乎三禪之樂從內發以樂爲主徧身內外充滿恬愉亦有五境一捨二念三智四樂五定心也捨者捨前喜心幷離三過也念者既得三禪之樂念用三法守護令樂增長也智者善巧三法離三過也樂者快樂徧身受也定心者受樂心息一心寂定也欲得四禪又當訶斥三禪之樂初欲得樂一心勤求大爲辛苦既得守護愛着亦爲苦一旦失壞則復受苦故經說第三禪中樂無常動故苦又此樂法覆念令不清淨學者既深見三禪樂有大苦之患應一心厭離求四禪種不動定爾時亦當脩六行及三法除遣即三禪謝滅而四禪未到修行不止得入未到地定心無動散即四禪方便定於後其心豁然開發定心安穩出入息斷定發之時與捨俱生無苦無樂空明寂靜善法相扶類如前說但無喜樂動轉爲異耳爾時心如明鏡不動亦如淨水無波絕諸亂想正念堅固猶如虛空學者住是定中心不依善亦不附惡無所依倚無形無質亦有四境一不苦不樂二捨三

念清淨四定心也此禪初發與捨受俱發捨受之心不與苦樂相應故言不苦不樂既得不苦不樂定捨勝樂不生厭悔故云捨禪定分明智慧照了故云念清淨定心寂靜雖對衆緣心無動念故名定心此後亦有默然心如前說也又此四禪心常清淨亦名不動定亦名不動智慧於此禪中學一切事皆得成就學神通則得學變化則得故經說佛於四禪爲根本也外道服食勤煉遠望延年勞形弊骨萬舉萬敗間有成者自負深玄豈知造業爭如求禪一切變化無不立就轉粗形爲妙質易短壽爲長年特其細細者耳從此以後又有四定一空處定二識處定三無有處定四非有想非無想處定學者至四禪時有視爲微妙得少爲足畫而不進者有覺心識生滅虛誑不實便欲求涅槃寂靜常樂者不遇明師指授不知破色與斷色繫縛之方直強泯其心斷諸思慮久久得心無憶念謂證涅槃既未斷色繫縛若捨命時即生無想天中此爲大錯故須求空處定應深思色法之咎若有身色則內有飢渴疾病大小便利臭穢弊惡

等苦外受寒熱刀杖刑罰毀謗等苦從先世因緣和合報得此身即是種種衆苦之本不可保愛復思一切色法繫縛於心不得自在即是心之牢獄令心受惱無可貪戀由是求滅色之法須滅三種色一滅可見有對色二滅不可見有對色三滅不可見無對色經言過一切色相滅有對相不念種種相過一切色相者破可見有對色也滅有對相者破不可見有對色也不念種種相者破不可見無對色也學者於四禪中一心諦觀己身一切毛道及九孔身內空處皆

悉虛疎猶如羅穀內外相通亦如芭蕉重重無實作是觀時即便得見既得見已更細心觀察見身如簁如甑如蜘蛛網漸漸微末身分皆盡不見於身及五根等內身既盡外道亦空如是觀時眼見色源故名過色耳聲鼻臭舌味身觸覺壞故名有對相於二種餘色及無數色種種不分別故名不念種種相一切色法既滅一心緣空念空不捨即色定便謝而空定未發亦有中間禪爾時慎勿憂悔勤加精進一心念空當度色難於後豁然與空相應其心明淨不苦不

樂益更增長於深定中唯見虛空無諸色相雖緣無邊虛空心無分散既無色縛心識澄靜無礙自在如鳥之出籠飛騰自在此爲得空處定也從此而進舍空緣識學者當知虛空是外法入定定從隨韋應舍安穩識處是內法緣內入定則多寧謐觀緣識之受想行識如病如癰如瘡如刺無常苦空無我和合而有欺誑不實（此即是入聖種觀）一心繫緣在識念念不離未來過去亦復如是常念於識欲得與識相應加功專至不計旬月即便泯然任運自住識緣因此後豁然

與識相應心定不動而於定中不見餘事惟見現在心識念念不住定心分明識慮廣闊無量無邊亦於定中憶過去已滅之識無量無邊及未來應起之識亦無量無邊悉現定中識法持心無分散意此定安穩清淨心識明利爲得識處定也從此而進又思前緣空入定是爲外定今緣識入定是爲內定而依內依外皆非寂靜若依內心以心緣心入定者此定已依三世心生不爲眞實惟有無心識處心無依倚乃名安穩於是又觀緣識之受想行識如病如癰如瘡

如刺無常苦空無我和合而有虛誑不實即捨識處繫心無所有處內靜息求不同一切心識之法知無所有法非空非識無爲法塵無有分別如是知巳靜息其心惟念無所有法其時識定即謝無所有定未發於其中間亦有證相學者心不憂悔專精不懈一心內淨空無所依不見諸法心無動搖此爲證無所有處定也入此定時怡然寂絶諸想不起尚不見心相何況餘法從此而進又復上求訶責無所有定如癡如醉如眠如暗無明覆蔽無所覺了無可愛樂觀

於識處如瘡如箭觀于無所有處如醉如痴皆是心病非眞寂靜亦如前法離而棄之更求非有想非無想定前識處是有想無所有處是無想今雙離之即便觀于非有非無何法非有謂心非有何以故過去現在未來求之都不可得無有形相亦無處所當知非有云何非無無者是何物乎爲心是無乎爲離心是無乎若心是無則無覺無緣不名爲心若心非無更無別無何也無不自無破有說無無有則無無矣故言非有非無如是觀時不見有無一心緣中不念

餘事於後忽然眞實定發不見有無相貌泯然寂絶心無動搖恬然清淨如涅槃相是定微妙三界無過證之者咸謂是中道定相涅槃常樂我淨愛着是法更不修習如蟲行至樹表更不復進謂樹外無高可憫也殊不知此定雖無粗煩惱而亦有十種細煩惱凡夫不知悞謂眞實世間外道入此定中不見有無而覺有能知非有非無之心謂是眞神不滅若有明師傳授方知是四陰和合而有自性虛誑不實從此不受不着即破無明入滅受想定獲阿羅漢果是謂

九次第定也大抵初禪離欲界入色界二三四禪皆色界攝四定離色界入無色界滅受想定則出三界證阿羅漢果生西方入淨土此爲最徑之門

調息篇

天台禪門口訣祇言調息爲修禪之要乃諸方法厥有多途即以調息一門言之一者六妙門一者十六特勝三者通明觀六妙門者一數二隨三止四觀五還六淨也於中修證又分爲十二如數有二種一者修數二者數相應乃至修淨與淨相應亦如是何謂

修數學者調和氣息不澁不滑安詳徐數或數入或數出皆取便爲之但不得出入皆數從一至十攝心在數不令馳散是名修數何謂數相應覺心任運從一至十不加功力心息自任息既虛凝心相漸細患數爲粗意不欲數爾時學者應當捨數脩隨隨一心依隨息之出入心住息緣無分散意是名修隨心既漸細覺息長短徧身出入任運相依意慮恬然凝靜是名與隨相應覺隨爲粗心厭欲捨如人疲極欲眠不樂衆務爾時學者應當捨隨修止三止之中但用制

心止也制心息諸緣慮不念數隨凝靜其心是名脩止復覺身心泯然入定不見內外相貌如欲界未到地定法持心任運不動是名止相應學者卽念心雖寂靜而無慧照破不能脫離生死應須照了卽捨止求觀於定心中以心眼細觀此身中細微入出息想如空中風皮筋骨肉臟腑血液如芭蕉不實內外不淨甚可厭惡復觀定中喜樂等受悉有破壞之相是苦非樂又觀定中心識無常生滅剎那不住無可着處復觀定中善惡等法悉屬因緣皆無自性是名修

觀如是觀時覺息入出徧諸毛孔心眼開明徹見筋骨臟腑等物及諸蟲戶內外不淨衆苦逼迫剎那變易一切諸法悉無自性心生悲喜無所依倚是名與觀相應觀解既發心緣觀境分別破析覺念流動非眞實道卽捨觀脩還既知觀從心發若隨析境此則不會本源應當返觀此心從何而生爲從觀心生爲從非觀心生若從觀心生則先已有觀今數隨止三法中未常有觀若非觀心生爲滅生爲不滅生若不滅生卽二心並若是滅生滅法已謝不能生現在若

言亦滅亦不滅生乃至非滅非不滅生皆不可得當知觀心本自不生不生故不有不有故卽空空無觀心若無觀心豈有觀境境智雙忘還源之要是名修還從此心慧開發不加功力任運自能破析返本還源是名與還相應學者當知若離境智欲歸於無境智總不離境智之縛心隨二邊故也爾時當捨還修淨知道本淨卽不起妄想分別受想行識亦復如是息妄想垢是名修淨舉要言之若能心常清淨是名修淨亦不得能修所修及淨不淨之相是名修淨作

是修時忽然心慧相應無礙方便任運開發無心依倚是名與淨相應證淨有二一者相似證謂似淨而實非淨也二者眞實證則三界垢盡矣又觀衆生空名為觀觀實法空名為還觀平等空名為淨又空三昧相應名為觀無相三昧相應名為還無作三昧相應名為淨又一切外觀名為觀一切內觀名為還一切非內非外觀名為淨又從假入空觀名為觀從空入假觀名為還空假一心名為淨此六妙門乃三世諸佛入道之本因此證一切法門降伏外道所謂十六特勝者一知息入二知息出三知息長短四知息徧身五除諸身行六受喜七受樂八受諸心行九心作喜十心作攝十一心作解脫十二觀無常十三觀出散十四觀欲十五觀滅十六觀棄捨一知息入二知息出此對代數息也學者既調息綿綿專心在息息若入時知從鼻端入至臍息若出時知從臍出至鼻由此而知粗細為風為氣為喘則粗為息則細若覺粗時即調之令細入息氣迫常易粗出息澁遲常易細又知輕重入息時輕出息時重入在身內則身

輕出則身無風氣故覺重又知澁滑入常滑而出常澁何也息從外來氣利故滑從內吹出滓穢塞諸毛孔故澁又知冷暖入冷而出暖又知因出入息則有一切衆苦煩惱生死往來輪轉不息心知驚畏譬如關者守門人之從門出入者皆知其人兼知其善惡善則聽之惡則禁之當此之時即覺此息無常命依於息一息不屬即便無命知息無常即不生愛知息非我即不生見悟無常即不生慢此則從初方便已能破諸結使所以特勝于數息也三知息長短者此對欲界定入息長出息短心既靜住於內息隨心入故入則知長心不緣外故出則知短又覺息長則心細覺息短則心粗蓋心細則息細細則入從鼻至臍微緩而長出息從臍至鼻亦爾心粗則息粗息粗則出入皆疾矣又息短則覺心細息長則覺心粗何也心既轉靜出息從臍至胷即盡入息從鼻至咽即盡是心靜而覺短也心粗則從臍至鼻從鼻至臍道里長遠是心粗而覺長也又短中覺長則細長中覺短則粗如息從鼻至胷即盡行處雖短而時節大久

久方至臍此則行處短而時節長也粗者從鼻至臍
道里極長而時節却短欻然之間即出即鼻此則路
長而時短也如此覺長短時知無常由心生滅不定
故息之長短相貌非一得時覺悟無常更益分明證
欲界定時猶未知息相貌故此爲特勝也四知息徧
身者對未到地定當彼未到地時直覺身相泯然如
虛空爾時實有身息但心粗眼不開故不覺不見今
特勝中發未到地時亦泯然入定即覺漸漸有身如
雲如影覺息出入徧身毛孔爾時亦知息長短相等

見息入無積聚出無分散無常生滅覺身空假不實
亦知生滅刹那不住三事和合故有定生三事既空
則定無所依知空亦空於定中不着即校前未到地
爲特勝也五除諸身行者對初禪覺觀境身者欲界
身中發得初禪則色界之身來與欲界身相依共住
也身行即觀境此從身分生知身中之法有所造作
故名身行也學者因覺息徧身發得初禪心眼開明
見身中腑臟三十六物臭穢可厭覺四大之中各各
非身此即是除欲界身也於欲界中求色界之身不

可得即除初禪身也所以者何前言有色界造色爲
從外來乎爲從內出乎爲在中間住乎如是觀時畢
竟不可得但以顛倒憶想故言受色界觸者細觀不
得即是除初禪身身除故身行即滅又未得初禪時
於欲界身中起種種善惡行今見身不淨則不造善
惡諸業故名除身行六受善者即對破初禪喜境初
禪喜境從有垢覺觀而生既無觀慧照了多生煩惱
故不應受今於淨禪觀中生有觀行破析連觀性空
當知從覺觀生喜亦空即於喜中不着無諸罪過故

說受喜如羅漢不着一切供養故名應供也又直實
知見得真法喜故名受喜七受樂者對初禪樂境彼
禪既無觀慧樂中多染故不應受今言受樂者受無
樂知樂性空不着於樂故說受樂八受諸心行者此
對破初禪定心境心行有二故說諸一者動行二者
不動行有謂從初禪至三禪猶是動行四禪已上名
不動行今說覺觀四境名動行定心境名不動行初
禪入定心時心生染着此應不受今知此定心虛誑
不實定心非心即不取着既無罪過即是三昧正受

故說受諸心行九心作喜者此對二禪內淨喜彼二禪之喜從內靜而發然無智慧照了多所戀着今觀此喜即知虛誑不着不受矣不受此喜乃爲眞喜故名心作喜十心作攝者此對二禪定心境彼二禪之喜雖正不無涌動之患今明攝者應返觀喜性空寂畢竟定心不亂不隨喜動故云作攝十一心任解脫者此對破三禪樂彼三禪有徧身之樂凡夫得之多生染愛受縛不得解脫今以觀慧破析證徧身樂時即知此樂從因緣生空無自性虛誑不實不染不着

心得自在故名心作解脫十二觀無常者此對破四禪不動也四禪名不動定凡夫得此定時心生愛取今觀此定生滅代謝三相所遷知是破壞不安之相故名觀無常十三觀出散者此對破空處也出者即是出離色界散者即是散三種色又出散者謂出離色心依虛空消散自在不爲色法所縛也凡夫得此定時謂是真定今初入虛空處時即知四陰和合故有本無自性不可取着所以者何若言有出散者爲空出散乎爲心出散乎若心出散則心爲三相所遷

過去已謝未來未至現在無住何能耶若空是出散者空本無知無知之法有何出散既不得空定則心無受着是名觀出散十四觀離欲者此對識處蓋一切受着外境皆名爲欲從欲界乃至空處皆是心外之境若認虛空爲外境而我顧受之則此空即欲矣今識處空緣於內識能離外空即離欲凡夫得此定無慧照察謂心與識法相應認爲眞實即生染着今得此定時即觀破析若言以心緣識心與識相應得入定者此實不然何者過去未來現在三世識皆不

與現在心相應乃是定法持心名爲識定此識定但有名字虛誑不實故名離欲也十五觀滅者此對無所有處蓋此定緣無爲法塵心與無爲相應對無爲法塵發少識故凡夫得之謂之心滅多生愛着今得此定時即覺有少識此識雖少亦有四陰和合無常無我虛誑譬如糞穢多少俱臭不可染着是名觀滅十六觀棄捨者此對非想非非想蓋非想非非想乃是雙捨有無具捨中之極凡夫得此定時認爲涅槃今知此定係四陰十二入三界及十種細心數等和

合而成當知此定無常苦空無我虛誑不實不應計爲涅槃生安樂想不受不着是名觀棄捨棄捨有二種一根本棄捨二涅槃棄捨永棄生死故云觀棄捨學者深觀棄捨即便得悟三乘涅槃如須跋陀羅佛令觀非想中細想即獲阿羅漢果今明悟道未必定具十六或得二三特勝即便得悟隨人根器不可定也第三通明觀學者從初安心即觀息色心三事俱無分別觀三事必須先觀息道云何觀息謂攝心靜坐調和氣息一心細觀此息想其徧身出入若慧心明利即覺息入無積聚出無分散來無所經由去無所涉履雖復明覺此息出入徧身如空中風性無所有此觀息如也次則觀色學者既知息依於身離身無息即應細觀身色本自不有皆是先世妄想因緣招感今生四大造色圍空假名爲身一心細觀頭腹四肢筋骨臟腑及四大四微一一非身四大四微亦各非實尚不自有何能生此身諸物耶無身色可得爾時心無分別即達色如矣次觀心學者當知由有心故有身色共來動轉若無此心誰分別色色因誰

生細觀此心藉緣而生生滅迅速不見住處亦無相貌但有名字名字亦空即達心如矣學者若不得三性別異名爲如心學者若觀息時既不得息即達色心空寂何者謂三法不相離故也觀色觀心亦爾若不得息色心三事即不得一切法何以故由此三事和合能生一切陰入界衆等煩惱善惡行業往來五道流轉不息若了三事無生則一切諸法本來空寂矣學者果能如是觀察三性悉不可得其心任運自任眞如泯然明淨此名欲界定於此定後心依眞如泯然入定與如相應如法持心心定不動泯然不見身色息心三法異相一往猶如虛空即是通明未到地也從此而發四禪四定最爲捷速

遣欲篇

周濂溪論聖學以無欲爲要欲生於愛寡欲之法自斷愛始愛與憎對常見其可憎則愛絕矣故釋氏有不淨觀焉夫有生必有死死者乃永離恩愛之處有生之所共憎雖知可憎無能免者我今現生不久必死過一日則近一日盖望死而趨也豈可貪戀聲色

名利之欲哉眞如撲燈之蛾慕虛明而甘實禍何其
愚也學者欲習不淨觀當先觀人初死之時言詞惆
悵氣味焄蒿息出不反身冷無知四大無主妄識何
往觀想親切可驚可畏愛欲自然淡薄悲智自然增
明從此而修有多門焉曰九想一脹想謂死尸脹如
韋囊也二壞想謂四體破碎五臟惡露也三血塗想
謂血流塗地點汚惡穢也四膿爛想謂膿流肉爛臭
氣轉增也五青瘀想謂膿血消盡瘀黑青臭也六噉
想謂蟲蛆唼食決裂殘缺也七散想謂筋斷骨離頭

足交橫也八骨想謂皮肉已盡但見白骨也九燒想
謂焚燒死尸骨裂煙臭也但將吾所愛之人以上九
想觀之乃知言笑懽娛盡屬假合清溫細軟究竟歸
空即我此身後亦當爾有何可愛而貪着哉學者修
九想既通必須增想重修令觀行熟利隨所觀時心
即隨定想法持心澄然不亂破欲除貪莫此爲尚矣
曰十想一無常想謂有爲之法新新生滅須刻變遷
無暫停息也二苦想謂六情逼迫萬事煎熬有生皆
苦無有樂趣也三無我想謂法從緣生本無自性即

體離體孰爲我身也四食不淨想謂食雖在口腦涎
流下與唾和合成味而咽與吐無異下入腹中即成
糞穢也六死想謂一息不屬便爾沉淪也七不淨想
謂身中三十六物五種不淨也八斷想九離想十盡
想緣涅槃斷煩惱結使名斷想斷而得離名離想離
而得盡名盡想九想爲初學十想爲成就九想如縛
賊十想如殺賊此爲異耳又有白骨觀乃就九想中
略出者凡作九想十想等觀皆當正身危坐調和氣
息使心定良久方可作想令作白骨觀學者先當繫

念左脚大指細觀指半節作皰起令極分明然後作
皰潰想見半指節極令白淨如有白光次觀一節令
肉擘去皆有白光次觀二節三節乃至五節及兩足
十節白骨分明如是繫心不令馳散散即攝之令還
想成時覺舉身溫軟心下熱時名繫心住心既住已
當復起想足趺披肉見白骨極令了了次觀踝骨次
脛骨又次髖骨皆使骨落見白骨如珂雪從此觀脇
骨及脊骨肩骨從肩至肘從肘至腕從腕至掌從掌
至指端皆令肉相向披見半身白骨次觀頭皮觀膜

觀腦觀肪觀咽喉觀肺心肝膽脾胃大小腸腎等諸藏有無數諸蟲咂食膿血會見分明又見諸蟲從咽喉出又觀小腸肝肺脾腎皆令流注入大腸中從咽喉出墮於前地此想成已卽見前地屎尿臭處及諸蚘蟲更相纏縛諸蟲口中流出膿血不淨盈滿此想成已自見已身如白雪又節節相拄若見黃黑當更悔過此爲第一白骨觀第二觀者繫念額上定觀額中如爪甲大愼莫雜想如是觀額令心安住不生諸想惟想額上然後自觀頭骨白如頗梨色如是漸見

擧身白骨皎然明淨節節相拄此想成已次想第二骨人次想三骨人乃至十骨人見十骨人已乃想二十骨人三十四十骨人見一室中徧滿骨人前後左右行列相向各擧右手向於我身是時學者漸漸廣大見一庭內滿中骨人行行相向白如珂雪漸見一鄉皆是骨人次觀一邑一省乃至天下皆是骨人見此事已身心安樂無驚無怖學者見此事已出定人定恒見骨人山河石壁一切世事皆悉變化猶如骨人見此事已於四方面見四大水其流迅駛色白如乳見諸骨人隨流沉沒此想成已復更懺悔但純見水涌注空中後當起想令水恬靜此名凡夫心海生死境界之想也

廣愛篇

孔子云老者安之朋友信之少者懷之盡世間只有此三種人就此三種人中老者有二吾之老人之老朋友有親者有疎者有始親而絡疎者有恩與仇者少者亦有二吾之少人之少吾之老少雖在同室亦有等殺人之老少便包恩仇遠近種種不齊矣先從

吾之老者發願貽之以安飮食起居悉令得所學者初修時取最所親愛若父母之類一心緣之倘有異念攝之令還使心想分明見吾親人老者受安之相然後及於人之老者乃至怨仇蠻貊無不願其安樂朋友少者亦皆如是禪家謂之慈心觀又謂之四無量心功德最大四無量者慈悲喜捨也初時慈念衆人老者願貽之以安朋友願貽之以信少者願貽之以懷心心相續道力堅固卽於定心中見所親愛人受快樂之相身心悅豫顏色和適了了分明見親人

得樂已次見外人乃至怨人亦復如是於定心中見一人次見十人乃至千人萬人及普天率土之人悉皆受樂學者於定中見外人受樂而內定轉深湛然無動此名慈無量也世人與衆不和初生爲瞋瞋漸增長思量執着住在心中名爲恨此恨既積欲損於他名爲惱敗道損德皆原於此惟一慈心能除嗔恨惱三事以是知慈心功德無量也又釋氏之慈有三等衆生緣慈法緣慈無緣慈也不利益一人而求利益無數無邊之人是爲衆生緣慈老者不獨思安其身而兼思安其心使之得受性眞之樂朋友少者皆然此爲法緣慈若無緣慈惟聖人有之蓋聖人不住有爲亦不住無爲老則願安友則願信少則願懷而吾亦不知其安不知其信不知其懷所謂無緣慈力赴羣機也學者於慈定中常念欲遂衆生諸願見衆生受諸勞苦心生憐愍卽發願救拔先取一親愛人受苦之相繫心緣之慈悲無極乃至一方四天下之人皆見其受苦而思濟拔悲心轉深湛然不動是名悲無量也學者入悲定中憐愍衆生除苦與樂爾時

深觀衆生雖受苦惱虛妄不實本爲消除授以清淨妙法念獲涅槃常樂攝心入定卽見衆生皆得受喜亦初從親人次徧天下此名喜無量也學者從喜定中思念慈與衆生樂悲欲拔苦喜令懽喜而計我能利益不忘前事卽非勝行譬如慈父益子不求恩德乃曰眞親又念衆生得樂各有因緣不獨由我若言我能與樂則非不矜不伐之心又念慈心與樂俱是空懷在彼衆生實不得樂若以爲實卽是顛倒又念衆生受苦若有纖毫愛喜之生卽屬障碍難得解脫我今欲清淨善法不應着意必固我之法今當捨此執戀卽發淨心毫無憎愛先取所親之人見其亦得定力受不苦不樂之相了了分明乃至十世五道莫不皆爾是爲捨無量也

靜坐要決二卷終

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