

RECONSTRUCTING THE CONFUCIAN DAO: ZHŪ XĪ'S APPROPRIATION OF ZHŌU DŪNYÍ.

By Joseph A. Adler. SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014. Pp. x + 331. Hardcover, \$95.00; paper, \$26.95.

Zhū Xī's (1130–1200) canonized *dàotǒng* 道統 (“succession of the Way”) famously ascribes the role of Confucian reviver, following a lean period of 1300 years, to the Sòng dynasty scholar Zhōu Dūnyí (1017–1073). Zhū did this against the broad consensus of his day; indeed, it was Chéng Hào (1032–1085), Zhōu's nephew, who first recovered the Dào since Mencius's time (tr. 372–289 BCE). Zhū so established the standard story of doctrinal lineage for both emic historiography and, until recently, neo-Confucian studies. In this fascinating and erudite book, Adler, professor emeritus of Asian and Religious Studies at Kenyon College, explores what exactly prompted Zhū Xī to defy contemporary views and, against all odds, place the Daoist-minded Zhōu Dūnyí in such prominent position. Based on an in-depth reading of a wide range of primary sources—well-crafted annotated translations of Zhōu's *Tàijí túshuō* 太極圖說 and *Tōngshū* 通書 as well as Zhū's corresponding commentaries are included in the second part of the book (147–307)—Adler aptly argues that certain issues in Zhū's own religious practice (self-cultivation) were in fact decisive for the religio-philosophical accolade he conferred on Zhōu. Specifically, Zhōu's notion of the “interpenetration of mental activity and stillness,” inferred from his understanding of the concept of *tàijí* 太極 and presented in his *Tàijí túshuō* and *Tōngshū*, gave Zhū the required solution to his “spiritual crisis” through which he could define and reconcile the seemingly distinct

cultivation practices of quiet sitting, on the one hand, and active study and social practice on the other. Subsequently, elaborating on *tàijí*, Adler, notably, clarifies that its most crucial meaning (attributed by Zhū) as the principle of interpenetration of activity and stillness is best expressed in English by the rendering “supreme polarity.” It is a rare pleasure to follow throughout such a perceptive and brilliantly witty line of reasoning. Adler indeed combines an enthralling narrative with novel insights that redefine our understanding of the subject; a must-read for the student of Confucianism.

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