

# Yamaga Sokō's Essential Lexicography of Sagely Confucian Teachings (*Seikyō yōroku*)

## Chapter Three

Translated by John Allen Tucker

East Carolina University

### (1) Human Nature (J. *sei* 性)<sup>1</sup>

When principle (*ri*理) and generative force (*ki*氣) mysteriously combine, there is ceaseless production and reproduction (*seisei*生生).<sup>2</sup> Human nature is that [aspect of us] which can experience and understand (*kantsū chishiki suru mono* 感通知識者).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 opens chapter three of the *Seikyō yōroku* 聖教要録 with a discussion of “human nature,” while Chen Beixi’s 陳北溪 (1159-1223) *Xingli ziyi* 性理字義 (The meanings of Neo-Confucian terms), the Chinese philosophical text on which the *Seikyō yōroku* was most obviously modeled, presents its discussion of human nature at its opening, immediately following a discussion of “the decree” (*mei*命). Sokō’s positioning of “human nature” thus represents an inversion of Chen’s text, one implying that the topic was more abstract and removed from “elementary learning,” conveyed at the opening of both works, than Chen assumed. Significantly, while Chen followed his discussion of “human nature” with analyses of “the mind” (心), “human feelings” (情), “capabilities” (才), “purpose” (志), and “ideas” (意), Sokō’s account of “human nature” is succeeded by discourses on “the mind,” “ideas and human feelings,” and “purpose, generative force, and thought” (志氣思慮). Sokō’s clustering of these terms, differing only mildly from Chen’s, reveals that despite his inversion of them within his lexicon, he saw them, as Chen did, as intrinsically related categories. In this respect Sokō subverts, through inversion, Chen’s lexicography, even while conspicuously endorsing significant portions of it. Tensions between Sokō’s philosophical worldview and that of received Neo-Confucianism as expressed by Chen and promoted earlier in Tokugawa Japan by Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657) are apparent, yet the lexicographic resonances reveal greater affinity than difference. What most distinguishes Sokō’s lexicography from Chen’s and Razan’s was the socio-political context of the former: Sokō was a popular *rōnin* teacher in Edo, while Chen was a gentry-scholar in late-Song China, and Razan a former Buddhist turned Confucian intellectual, employed by the *bakufu*.

<sup>2</sup> Despite Sokō’s ostensible rejection of Song and Ming Confucianism, and his proclaimed return to the teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, his formulation of a metaphysics grounded in “principle” (*ri*) and “generative force” (*ki*) clearly links him to Neo-Confucianism. Much the same can be said of his view that their mysterious combination results in “production and reproduction.”

<sup>3</sup> Sokō’s position here is hardly a return to ancient Confucianism. Rather it is a variant of the Neo-Confucian discussion of human nature via ethico-epistemological categories. However,

Everything that is produced and reproduced, including human beings and things of the world, is [endowed with] heaven's decree (*tenmei* 天命). Therefore the *Doctrine of the Mean* explains, "What heaven decrees is called the nature."<sup>4</sup>

As principle and generative force interact, through their intercourse the mysterious activities of human nature (*myōyō no sei* 妙用之性) occur. Within all-below-heaven, where any phenomena exists, its nature must exist also. Now things are produced inevitably, and whenever they are produced, so necessarily are their natures. With those natures, there are feelings (*jō* 情) and ideas (*i* 意). Where the latter are found, the moral way (*michi* 道) must prevail as well. If the moral way prevails, ethical teachings (*kyō* 教) must too. [Thus, as the *Mean* suggests,] the way of heaven and earth (*tenchi no michi* 天地之道) consists simply in perfect sincerity (*shisei* 至誠).<sup>5</sup>

The natural endowments of humanity and the world (*jinbutsu no sei* 人物之性) have only one source (*ichigen* 一原).<sup>6</sup> Yet in the intermingling of principle and generative force, surpluses and deficiencies naturally appear, as do differences in the mysterious responses (*myōyō* 妙用) and experiences (*kantsū* 感通) of those natures. Thus, while human beings receive essentially the same natures from heaven and earth, differences in people appear even among the various barbarian tribes. How much more so do the birds, beasts, and myriad things differ!

One should not speak of human nature as good (*zen* 善) or evil (*aku* 惡). When Mencius said "human nature is good,"<sup>7</sup> he meant that in reference to Yao and Shun.<sup>8</sup>

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while Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) often defined human nature as principle, Sokō here emphasizes the cognitive activities of human nature. The latter, according to Zhu Xi, more properly were assigned to the mind-and-heart. Sokō makes similar remarks in the opening lines of section 9 of his *Seigaku* 聖學 (Sagely Confucian learning), *Yamaga gorui* 山鹿語類 (Yamaga's classified conversations) (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1911), ch. 41, p. 391. For a more recent edition (abridged) of the *Yamaga gorui*, see *Yamaga Sokō*, *Nihon shisō taikai*, vol. 32, comp. Tahara Tsuguo 田原嗣郎 and Morimoto Junichirō 守本順一郎 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> *The Mean*, ch. 1; in Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, ed., *Daigaku • Chūyō* 大学 • 中庸 (The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean), in *Chūgoku kotensen*, vols. 6-7 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978), pt. 2, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *The Mean*, ch. 25; in *Daigaku • Chūyō*, pt. 2, pp. 162-67. "Confucius said, 'Perfect sincerity is ceaseless.... The way of heaven and earth can be summed up concisely: it is not deceitful.'"

<sup>6</sup> Discussing "the decree," Chen Beixi states, "the natural endowment of humanity and the world (*renwu zhi xing* 人物之性) consists of nothing other than the generative force of *yin* and *yang* and the five processes. Most fundamentally, there is one generative force (*yiqi* 一氣). But it can be analyzed as either *yin* or *yang*, and the latter can be analyzed in terms of the five processes" (*Xingli ziyi*, 1632 edition, 1:2a; hereafter *XLZY*). Although Sokō defines the "natural endowment of humanity and the world" in different terms, his approach to this theme, emphasizing a unitary source, recalls Chen's discussion of the same topic. Also, if Sokō's position is interpreted intertextually in terms of Chen's, then Sokō is plausibly asserting that the "one source" of human nature is generative force.

<sup>7</sup> *Mencius* 6A/2; in *Lunyu yinde • Mengzi yinde* 論語引得 • 孟子引得 (Concordance to the *Analects* and *Mencius*, hereafter, *LYYD* in reference to the *Analects*, and *MZYD* for the *Mencius*), ed. Hong Ye et al. 洪業 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 42. "Human nature is naturally good, just as water tends to flow downward."

Later generations did not realize this.<sup>9</sup> Believing human nature to be originally good, later scholars established practices for cultivating their innate goodness. Such errors confused students all the more. Because later scholars liked to claim that human nature is good, the schools of mind (*shingaku* 心学) and principle (*rigaku* 理学) eventually appeared. Yet as Confucius observed, the human natures with which people are endowed are similar. It is due to the practices flowing from their physical dispositions (*kishitsu no narau* 氣質之習) that they differ.<sup>10</sup> Song and Ming scholars lapsed into heterodoxies (*itan* 異端) simply because of this [i.e., that they liked to claim that human nature is good].

One who cultivates the moral way, following the nature that heaven decreed, is a sage (*seijin* 聖人), an ethically refined person (*kunshi* 君子).<sup>11</sup> One who [indulges] his

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<sup>8</sup> Sokō's view is similar to that of Hu Hong 胡宏 (1106-61) who explained that Mencius declared human nature to be good, meaning the latter attribute simply as a form of praise. Hu's views are found in his *Huzi zhiyan* 胡子知言 (Master Hu's words of wisdom). Zhu Xi disputed Hu's claims, and defended those of the Cheng brothers who claimed that Mencius's statement about the goodness of human nature was a reference to the fact that human nature was principle. Of course, Sokō has no use for the Cheng-Zhu claim that human nature is principle, despite his appropriation of principle within his metaphysics. Zhu Xi's essay, "Huzi Zhiyan yiyi" 胡子知言疑義 (Doubts about Master Hu's words of wisdom), is found in the *Huian xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集 (Master Zhu's collected works), vol. 2, ch. 73 (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1986), pp. 5418-19. Also noteworthy is that Sokō's position on human nature foreshadows that of Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728), *Benmei* 弁明 (Discerning the meanings of philosophical terms), which also suggests that human nature is neither good nor evil. In effect, the Sokō-Sorai line is a modified version of Xunzi's 荀子 position, which declares that human nature is evil, but more emphasizes the importance of instruction in defining the ethical goodness or badness of anyone. Sokō and Sorai stress this latter aspect of Xunzi's view, without endorsing the more sensational claim that human nature is evil.

<sup>9</sup> Sokō's polemic against the mistakes of later generations, of course, is well grounded in Confucian discourse. It might be added, however, that Chen's discussion of "human nature" concludes with a diatribe launched at "the mistakes of later generations that have discussed human nature." See Chen Beixi, *XLZY*, 11b-12a; Wing-tsit Chan, transl., *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained: The Pei-hsi tzu-i, by Ch'en Ch'un* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986; hereafter *NCTE*), pp. 55-56. While Chen denounces as "fabricators" those who claim that human nature is what is inborn and extols the Cheng-Zhu interpretation of Mencius, his attack on those who "love to engage in lofty discussions" foreshadows Sokō's criticisms of "later scholars" who enjoyed declaring that "human nature is good."

<sup>10</sup> *Analects*, 17/2; in *LYYD*, p. 35. "The Master said, 'Regarding human nature, people are similar, but differ in practice (*xi* 習).'" In speaking of people being "similar" in their nature, but different due to "practice," Sokō paraphrases a classic statement in the *Analects*. However, in linking people's "practices" to their "physical dispositions" (*kishitsu*), Sokō participates conspicuously in Neo-Confucian discourse.

<sup>11</sup> While ancient Confucians identified certain figures before them as sages, they did not typically enunciate formulae whereby a person could become a sage. Beginning most notably with Zhou Dunyi's (1017-73) *Tongshu* 通書 (Understanding the Book of Changes), which explained that "sincerity is the foundation of the sage," Neo-Confucians more characteristically defined sagehood as a goal attainable by anyone. In offering a clear prescription for sagehood, cultivating the moral way and following the nature decreed by heaven, Sokō is closer to Neo-Confucianism

physical dispositions in practice, submitting to his [selfish] feelings (*jō* 情), is a petty person (*shōjin* 小人), a barbarian (*iteki* 夷狄). Human nature depends on instruction and practice (*shūkyō* 習教). One falls prey to heterodoxies in seeking after an originally good nature (*honzen no sei* 本膳之性) without following the sagely Confucian teachings.

The sage Confucius did not distinguish the nature that heaven decreed from the nature of the physical endowment (*kishitsu no sei* 氣質之性).<sup>12</sup> Dichotomizing them, one ends up severing heaven from humanity, and principle from generative force. Human nature emerges from the interaction of principle and generative force; this is true for heaven and earth, human beings, and all things in the world. Scholars have [often] made the mistake of bracketing out the physical disposition while discussing human nature. Making finer and finer distinctions, their remarks do not benefit the sagely Confucian learning. Claims like (1) human nature is what human beings are born with (*sei* 生), (2) human nature is evil (*sei'aku* 性惡), (3) human nature is a mixture of good and evil (*zen'aku* 善惡), (4) human nature is neither good nor evil, (5) human nature is function (*sayō* 作用), and (6) human nature is principle (*ri*)<sup>13</sup> misconstrue human nature. Explaining human nature does not require many words!

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than to ancient Confucianism. At the same time, it must be admitted that most Neo-Confucians did not speak of the sage and the ethically refined person as though they were synonymous categories, as Sokō does. Rather, Neo-Confucians more typically implied that sagehood was a distinctly higher level of practical embodiment of Confucian ideals.

<sup>12</sup> Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucians claim that the heaven-decreed nature is principle, and that principle is morally good. They also attributed the nature of the physical endowment to the decree, but distinguished it from the original nature. Chen Beixi, discussing “The Decree,” notes that there is a decree of principle and one of generative force. The former is the original nature while the latter is the physical disposition. *XLZY*, 1a-b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 37. However, Chen also explains, later, that human nature and the decree cannot be entirely separated, just as principle and generative force cannot be completely divided from one another. *XLZY*, 6a-b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>13</sup> (1) *Mencius*, 6A/3; *MZYD*, p. 42. This is Gaozi’s position, against which Mencius argues. See *Mencius*, 6A/3, p. 42. “Gaozi 告子 said, ‘Human nature refers to that with which we are born.’” (2) *Xunzi*, “The Nature is Evil,” *Xunzi yinde* 荀子引得 (Concordance to the *Xunzi*; hereafter, *XZYD*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), pp. 86-90. (3) Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.-18 C.E.), *Fayan* 法言 (Model sayings); Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 289-90. (4) Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 (1036-1101), *Dongpo wenji* 東坡文集 (Collected literary works of Su Shi), ch. 3. (5) Chen Beixi, “Human Nature,” *XLZY*, 11b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 54. Chen states, “Buddhists consider function (*zuoyong* 作用) to be nature.” (6) This is the Cheng-Zhu position found in many texts. In numerous respects, Sokō’s discussion of human nature here takes issue with that found in Chen Beixi, “Human Nature,” *XLZY*, pp. 5a-12b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, pp. 46-56. Space does not permit a full listing of the parallels. Noteworthy, however, is that Chen Beixi also offers a brief catalogue of positions on human nature, much as Sokō does here. Like Sokō, he dismisses virtually all of these views as mistaken. However, Chen does extol the Cheng-Zhu view of human nature as principle, while Sokō subscribes to a view most similar to that of Hu Hong that human nature is neither good nor evil. Chen rejects Hu’s view.

## (2) The Mind (*kokoro, shin* 心)<sup>14</sup>

Although human nature fills the physical body (*keitai* 形体), it cannot be identified with any physical aspect (*hōkei* 方形). Yet the ground in which human nature does dwell is the mental viscera (*shinkyō* 心胸).<sup>15</sup> The mind is the center of the entire body (*isshin no chūō* 一身之中央), and the premier of the five viscera (*gokyō* 五胸). As the site of one's spiritual intelligence (*shinmei* 神明) and the ground of human nature and feelings (*seijō* 性情),<sup>16</sup> the mind is also the master of the body (*isshin no shusai* 一身之主宰).<sup>17</sup>

The mind is associated with the element of fire.<sup>18</sup> It produces and reproduces ceaselessly. Because the mind never rests, its active processes stream forth continually.<sup>19</sup> When speaking of human nature and feelings, the ancients signified the mind as well. Also whenever they referred to the mind, they meant human nature and feelings too.

Viewing consciousness (*chikaku* 知覺) as the mind and principle as human nature<sup>20</sup> results from a desire to dichotomize the mind and human nature. This mistaken

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<sup>14</sup> Sokō's thoughts on "the mind" are set forth in greater detail in the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 42, "Seigaku," section 10, pp. 360-82.

<sup>15</sup> Chen Beixi, "The Mind," *XLZY*, p. 13a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 57. "The mind resembles a vessel. Generally, it contains human nature. Shao Yong commented, 'The mind is the city wall encompassing human nature.'"

<sup>16</sup> Zhang Zai 張載, *Zhangzi quanshu* 張子全書 (Complete works of Zhang Zai), SBBY ed., 5:12a. "The mind coordinates human nature and feelings." Also see, Chen Beixi, "The Mind," *XLZY*, p. 16a. Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 60, where the same remark is found. Here Sokō endorses a basic tenet of Cheng-Zhu thinking on the mind, namely that it commands and coordinates human nature and human feelings.

<sup>17</sup> Chen Beixi, "The Mind," *XLZY*, p. 12b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 56. Beixi's first remark about the mind is, "The mind is the master of the body (*yishen zhi zhuzai* 一身之主宰)." Sokō's remark repeats Beixi's verbatim. While there are numerous other Neo-Confucian texts, such as the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, ch. 5, pp. 144-45, which state, "The mind is the master of human nature and feelings.... The mind is the master of the body," from which Sokō might have gleaned his characterization of the mind, Chen's occurs within a work which is both generically similar to Sokō's, and referred to on any number of occasions by Sokō in his own *Yamaga gorui*.

<sup>18</sup> Sokō is here referring to the "five processes" or "five elements" theory which linked all aspects of being and becoming with the forces of fire, water, metal, earth, and wood. Most likely, Sokō's remark linking the mind to fire was meant as a critique of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian position which often described the mind as being like still water or a clear mirror (metal). Emphasizing the mind's vivacious nature, Sokō links it to fire.

<sup>19</sup> In emphasizing the activity of the mind, Sokō's account is not entirely different from that developed by Chen Beixi, "The Mind," *XLZY*, 13b-15a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, pp. 57-58, where Chen states that "the mind is an active thing (*huowu* 活物), not something submissive, quiet, and deadly still (*tiejing siding* 帖靜死定)." Beixi's lengthy (by comparison) account of the mind, however, includes much that Sokō would have rejected, including recognition of an essential state of "mirror-like stillness" that can be experienced most fully before one engages the world of activity. Sokō's views advance those of Chen regarding the activity of the mind, but pass over in silence those affirming the mind's quiescent foundation.

<sup>20</sup> *Zhuzi yulei*, ch. 5, pp. 134, 137. Also, *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句, vol. 8, p. 15 (450). Additionally, see Chen Beixi, "The Mind," *XLZY*, 16b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 61, which quotes Zhang Zai as stating, "In the unity of nature and consciousness (*zhijue*) there is the mind." Chen

tendency derives from the view that human nature is originally good. On the contrary, however, the sagely classics speak of “the mind of man and the mind of the way,”<sup>21</sup> and of “correcting the mind,”<sup>22</sup> signifying that the human mind is replete with both consciousness and principles.

### (3) Ideas and Feelings (*ijō* 意情)

Ideas are emanations (*hatsudō* 發動) of human nature<sup>23</sup> which have yet to attain palpable form (*ato* 迹). As ideas acquire such form, they become feelings.<sup>24</sup> Subtle and unapparent emanations are ideas; they are simply the inclinations of the mind. Human nature and the mind are substance (*tai* 体), while ideas and feelings are function (*yō* 用).<sup>25</sup>

One’s sense of compassion (*sokuin* 惻隱), shame (*shūo no kokoro* 羞惡之心), deference (*jijō* 辭讓), and right and wrong (*zēhi* 是非) are human feelings.<sup>26</sup> In their emergence and contact with the world, feelings are nothing other than *yin* and *yang* and the five elements. By means of the moral virtues of humaneness, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, the sage Confucius ensured that human feelings could be duly expressed.

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later explains that “nature comes from principle,...while consciousness comes from generative force,” but emphasizes that when “human nature and consciousness are combined” the mind “comes into existence.” Chen’s view is not entirely different from Sokō’s on the relationship of consciousness, human nature, and the mind, though Chen does distinguish among these three in order to explain both their diversity and their unity.

<sup>21</sup> *Book of History*, “Counsels of Great Yu,” in James Legge, *Chinese Classics* (hereafter, *CC*) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), vol. 3, p. 61: “The mind of man is precarious; the mind of the way is subtle.” Chen Beixi discusses this distinction in “The Mind,” *XLZY*, p. 13a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> *Great Learning*, ch. 1, in *Daigaku • Chūyō*, pt. 1, p. 62: “Wishing to cultivate themselves, the ancients corrected their minds.”

<sup>23</sup> Sokō’s views here modify those of Chen Beixi, “The Ideas,” *XLZY*, p. 22a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 67. Chen states, “Ideas are emanations (*fadong* 發動) of the mind,” and “feelings are the activities of human nature,” while Sokō see ideas as coming from human nature. Once ideas have taken form, they are feelings. For more of Sokō’s thoughts on “Ideas and Feelings,” see the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 42, “Seigaku,” section 10, pp. 382-84. In one of the discussions of “ideas,” one of Sokō’s disciples asks him to comment on Chen Beixi’s remark that “feelings are the function of human nature, while ideas are emanations of the mind,” as compared to Zhu Xi’s claim that “the feelings move a person generally, while ideas are more specific in their emphasis.” Sokō responds that while Zhu Xi highlights the vector of ideas, his own view emphasizes the subtlety of their emanation. Regarding Chen, Sokō explains that human feelings are associated with the mind, and ideas with human nature. That, Sokō claims, is the source of his errors.

<sup>24</sup> See Chen Beixi, “Ideas,” *XLZY*, p. 22a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, pp. 67-8. For Chen ideas are an emanation of the mind, while human feelings are activities of the nature.

<sup>25</sup> The substance/function dichotomy is basic to Neo-Confucian thought from Song times forward. Sokō’s appeal to it is somewhat surprising, given his overall reluctance to dichotomize.

<sup>26</sup> *Mencius*, 2A/6; *MZYD*, p. 13. Also see Chen Beixi, “The Feelings,” *XLZY*, p. 17b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 62: “Compassion, shame, etc... refer to the feelings.”

#### (4) Purpose, Generative Force, Thought (*shi ki shiryō* 志氣思慮)

Purpose means where the mind wishes to go,<sup>27</sup> i.e., it refers to the set inclinations of our ideas and feelings. Purpose necessarily follows the generative force of a person. Thought (*shiryō*) refers to what can be discerned within our ideas and feelings.<sup>28</sup> Unless followed to its conclusion, thought becomes incoherent. The *Book of History* does relate that “thought” (*shi* 思) produces intelligence, while the *Great Learning* explains that deliberation (*ryo* 慮) refers to how to achieve things.<sup>29</sup> Yet the sage Confucius did not dissect notions like human nature and the mind, ideas and feelings, purpose and generative force, or thought and deliberation. Such analyses were the clever dichotomies of later scholars. How could the sagely Confucian way have been so fragmented?

#### (5) Production of Humanity and the World (*jinbutsu no sei* 人物之生)

With the intermingling of principle and generative force, myriad things are produced.<sup>30</sup> When their source is *yang* they become male; when *yin*, female. In the production of things, there is neither first nor last in relation to heaven, earth, and the myriad things of the world. But if forced, I would say that heaven and earth appeared, and then humanity and the world followed.<sup>31</sup>

As principle and generative force mysteriously intermingle, excesses and deficiencies always exist. Therefore, myriad kinds of beings arise. Of them, mankind

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<sup>27</sup> This is a verbatim reiteration of Chen Beixi’s first remark on “Purpose” in the *XLZY*, p. 19b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 64. Also see the *Zhuzi yulei*, ch. 5, p. 155, where Zhu Xi gives the same account. Since the *Zhuzi yulei* was not published in Japan until 1668, three years after the *Seikyō yōroku*, the *Ziyi*, which was first published in a sizable Japanese woodblock edition in 1632, was Sokō’s probable source. For more of Sokō’s thoughts on “purpose, generative force, and thoughts,” see the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 42, “Seigaku,” section 10, pp. 386-87.

<sup>28</sup> In concluding his discussion of “ideas,” Chen Beixi relates that mental activities such as “thought” (*shiryō*) and “calculation” (*nenryō* 念慮) are all ideas. See Chen, “Ideas,” *XLZY*, p. 22b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> *Book of History*, “The Great Plan,” in Legge, *CC*, vol. 3, p. 327. *Great Learning*, “The Text,” Shimada, *Daigaku • Chūyō*, pt. 1, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> Also see the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 43, “Seigaku” section 11, pp. 411-15, where Sokō discusses the production of humanity and the world resulting from the mysterious combination of principle and generative force. In this context, one of Sokō’s disciples asks him about a passage from Chen Beixi’s *Ziyi*, which he quotes at length. In the passage, (Chen, “The Decree,” *XLZY*, pp. 3a-b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 40), Chen explains the different fates people encounter in terms of the different generative force with which they are endowed. In this context, Chen suggests that while Confucius received the purest generative force, during his day that of the world was in a state of decline, thus reducing the sage to wandering about from place to place as a “traveling man.” Sokō responds to the question with great praise for the achievements of Confucius. Apart from the disparaging use of Confucius, Chen Beixi’s account of the constitution of a human seems to be, at least in part, the basis of Sokō’s analyses here. The section of Chen’s text prior to the one quoted in Sokō’s *Yamaga gorui* is entitled “Discussion of Humanity and the World as Grounded in One Generative Force,” and it opens with the statement that “in the production of humanity and the world, nothing goes beyond the generative force of *yin* and *yang* and the five processes.” Chen Beixi, “The Decree,” *XLZY*, p. 2a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> *Book of Changes*, “Treatise on the Sequence of the Trigrams,” Legge, *I Ching*, p. 435.

alone is most correctly endowed with *yin* and *yang* and the five elements, but even humans vary in the excesses or deficiencies in their endowments. Thus some people are born worthies and others unworthies. Nevertheless, that some people become gentlemen while others achieve no higher status than that of a commoner is simply due to the former people studying and learning Confucius's teachings.

Human beings are endowed with correct generative force (*seiki* 正氣) whereas animals and the remaining entities of the world possess its partial character (*henki* 偏氣).<sup>32</sup> Generative force in its correctness means [that it manifests] the correctness of principle (*ri no tadashiki* 理之正). Generative force in its partial character means generative force is too thick.

### (6) The *Changes*' Notion of the Great Ultimate (*Eki ni taikyoku ari* 易有太極)<sup>33</sup>

The great ultimate, while comprising the symbols (*shō* 象) and numbers (*sū* 數) of the *Book of Changes*,<sup>34</sup> is traceless prior to manifestation. The great ultimate also indicates the absolute ultimate (*shikyoku* 至極)<sup>35</sup> which, through the mysterious joining

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<sup>32</sup> Chen Beixi, "The Decree," *XLZY*, pp. 2a, 3a-b; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, pp. 39-41. "As *yin* and *yang* divide and combine in their operation,...they produce irregularities and inequalities...people receive generative force in its correctness (*qi zhi zheng* 氣之正), whereas things receive its partial character (*qi zhi pian* 氣之偏)... Regarding the different kinds of people, their moral endowment from heaven is the same, but in physical endowments they vary in purity and turbidity, thickness and thinness. Sages receive the purist generative force.... Worthies receive mostly clear, but nevertheless a little impure, generative force.... Those below the great worthies may be half pure and half impure.... By learning, people can transform their physical natures, turning darkness to light." Sokō's account follows Chen Beixi's, but borrows relatively little directly from it, at least in the *Seikyō yōroku*.

<sup>33</sup> For more of Sokō's thoughts on the "great ultimate," see the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 43, "Seigaku," ch. 11, pp. 393-411. Not surprisingly, in his lengthy discussions of the great ultimate, Sokō introduces his students to Chen Beixi, citing Zhu Xi's remark that his teachings would find a voice in the south due to Chen. While praising him as a high disciple of Zhu Xi, Sokō criticizes Chen's emphasis on the great ultimate as principle (p. 397). Sokō also disagrees with his view that the great ultimate existed prior to heaven, earth, and the myriad things (*Ibid.*). Elsewhere Sokō takes issue with Chen's view that the words *wuji er* only explain the formlessness of principle (p. 406). On another occasion, Sokō cites Chen's analysis of the origin of the expression *wuji*, with only minor modification (p. 410). While Sokō cited Zhu Xi's views far more often than those of Chen Beixi, there can be little doubt that Chen's views figured prominently in Sokō's revisionist approach to Neo-Confucianism.

<sup>34</sup> *Book of Changes*, "Appended Judgements," Legge, *I Ching*, p. 373. "In the *Book of Changes* there is the great ultimate, which produces two significant forms (broken and unbroken lines). The latter produce the four forms, which in turn produce the eight hexagrams."

<sup>35</sup> The expression "absolute ultimate" (*zhiji* 至極) appears in the section title for the first section in Chen Beixi's analysis of the meaning of "the great ultimate." See *XLZY*, p. 59a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 115. Chen, however, most typically uses this phrase in reverse, as *jizhi* 極至, meaning "the ultimate utmost," to modify principle, which he sees as the real equivalent of the great ultimate. Sokō does not equate the great ultimate and principle, even though he does see principle and generative force, as they mysteriously intermingle, as essential to the great ultimate. Chen is insistent that the great ultimate "cannot be described in terms of generative force or



of principle and generative force, is magnificent, lacking nothing even among the world's majestic changes and transformations, and even as stars above shine in full luminosity. As the symbols harbored within the great ultimate become manifest, heaven and earth come forth as works of magnificence; the four seasons begin to change extending their influence everywhere; the sun and moon illuminate things; clouds move, rains fall, and myriad things crystalize.

When principle and generative force mysteriously join, the great ultimate necessarily is amidst the abstruseness of even that subtle, imperceptible being. For all of heaven and earth, humanity and the world at large, there is only one great ultimate. In relating to things, the sage Confucius [focused on] the great ultimate. All things between heaven and earth follow rules and embrace myriad principles. Thus, even before things emerge, the great ultimate harbors their forms and numbers. [As the sage Confucius] experienced things, he comprehended them completely. When he reflected, there was nothing he did not understand. Therefore, when Confucius discussed change, he did so in terms of the great ultimate.<sup>36</sup> The great ultimate is replete with the forms and numbers of the sixty-four hexagrams and the 384 lines [found in the *Book of Changes*].

However, Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73) devised his *Taiji tushuo* 太極圖說 (Explanation of the diagram of the great ultimate) which greatly perplexed later scholars. That was because neither he nor they understood the way of the sage Confucius! “The Yellow River produced the map, and the Luo River produced the chart.”<sup>37</sup> Both the Yellow River map and the Luo River chart comprised natural forms (*shizen no shō* 自然之象). Why would anything else be needed? Master Zhou added “the ultimate of nonbeing and also” (*mukyoku shikashite* 無極而) atop “the great ultimate,”<sup>38</sup> thus acting like a criminal against the sagely Confucian way (*seijin no zainin* 聖人之罪人). His “Explanation” was a latter-day heterodoxy (*kōgaku no itan* 後學之異端).<sup>39</sup> If Master Zhou meant that apart from the great ultimate, there is no ultimate of nonbeing, then his

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physical form.” Beixi even suggests that the great ultimate existed prior to heaven, earth, and the myriad things. Sokō sees the great ultimate as the productive and transformative processes intrinsic to the world as it is in a continual state of becoming.

<sup>36</sup> Sokō accepted the traditional account that Confucius authored the “Appended Judgements” to the *Book of Changes*.

<sup>37</sup> *Book of Changes*, “Appended Judgements;” Legge, *I Ching*, p. 374. This remark claims to account for the origin of the *Book of Changes*' hexagrams. According to legend a dragon horse emerged from the Yellow River with markings on its back. Those markings inspired Fu Xi to devise the trigrams. From the Luo River emerged a tortoise with markings on its back, which in turn inspired the sage ruler, Yu, to devise the hexagrams.

<sup>38</sup> Zhou Dunyi, “Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate,” in *Shushi no senku* 朱子の先驅, ed. Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋徹次 and Yasuoka Masahiro 安岡正篤 (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1976-78), in *Shushigaku taikai* 朱子学体系, vol. 2, p. 127. “The ultimate of nonbeing and also great ultimate.” Chen Beixi also calls attention to Zhou's addition of the words *wuji er* before *taiji*, but suggests that these words only meant to convey the “infinity” of principle, which is beyond concrete form. See Chen, “Great Ultimate,” *XLZY*, p. 60a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 116. Here again, Sokō inverts Chen Beixi's claims in defining his own, highly revisionistic Neo-Confucian worldview.

<sup>39</sup> While Sokō vilifies Zhou Dunyi, Chen Beixi's *Ziyi* had praised him, declaring that “prior to Zhou Dunyi and his ‘Diagram of the Great Ultimate,’ the meaning of the great ultimate had not been clear.”

remarks were unnecessary. If he meant that before the great ultimate, there was the ultimate of nonbeing, then his claims are heterodoxies. The sagely Confucian teachings consist solely of [lessons] for everyday practice (*nichiyō* 日用). The great ultimate embraces past and future, roots and branches. It is perfection! It is exhaustive!

### (7) The Origin of the Way (*dōgen* 道原)

The great origin of the way proceeds from heaven and earth. Those who understand this and can well embody their understanding in action are sages like Confucius. The sagely Confucian way, like that of heaven and earth, involves no [artificial] action.<sup>40</sup> Rather the creative forces of heaven and the receptive forces of earth simply change. The ancient sages thus saw heaven and earth as their companions. Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 (ca. 179-ca. 104 B.C.E.) remarks on the great origin, however, are shallow.<sup>41</sup>

Neither the way of heaven and earth nor the teachings of the sage Confucius involve many words. Nor do they consist of abstruse explanations (*kisetsu* 奇説) or artificial behavior (*zōi* 造為). They can be conveyed simply with natural principles (*shizen no nori* 自然之則): with a single remark, one can exhaustively express them. Without realizing it, people use them daily. Past and present generations have followed the sagely Confucian way, yet it has not been diminished. Nonetheless by tampering with its spirit (*seishin* 精神), identifying it with human nature and the mind, one veers from the sagely Confucian way by a considerable distance.

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<sup>40</sup> Chen Beixi, "Virtue," *XLZY*, p. 58a; Chan, transl., *NCTE*, p. 114: "The way is the natural way of heaven and earth; it is not the product of human effort."

<sup>41</sup> Ban Gu 班固, "Biography of Dong Zhongshu," *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han dynasty), 56:18a: "The origin of the way proceeds from heaven." Sokō emphasizes that *both* heaven and earth, and not simply heaven as Dong claimed, are the source of the way. Also see Chen Beixi, "The Way," *XLZY*, p. 34a; Chan transl., p. 109, discusses this passage in detail. For Sokō's other thoughts on "The Origin of the Way," see the *Yamaga gorui*, ch. 43, "Seigaku," section 11, pp. 388-93.