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A comparative study of cosmology and its dynamics in Zhang Zai and Max Scheler

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**A Comparative Study of Cosmology and its Dynamics in
Zhang Zai and Max Scheler**

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Abstract: This dissertation reconfigures the metaphysical problem of cosmic dynamics by systematically confronting two rival architectures of being: the Neo-Confucian Zhang Zai's (1020–1077) harmony of cyclical resonance and the German phenomenologist Max Scheler's (1874–1928) tension of progressive becoming. In forging the first substantive dialogue between Zhang Zai's *qi*-based cosmology and Scheler's late metaphysics of force, this study moves beyond established scholarship to reveal how each thinker's solution to the problem of dynamics provides a distinct foundation for ethical life.

The core argument demonstrates that these two architectures are governed by irreducibly distinct principles at the macrocosmic level. Zhang Zai's cosmology is shown to be an immanent system of cyclical resonance, in which reality is eternally renewed through the restorative equilibrium of its dual poles (*erduan*). In contrast, Scheler's late thought articulates a progressive becoming propelled by the unresolvable antagonism between a powerless spirit (*Geist*) and a powerful drive (*Drang*), a structure that renders cosmic history a tragic and open-ended teleology.

This foundational divergence in macrocosmic dynamics is then shown to determine their respective accounts of the human being as a microcosm and the community as a mesocosm. Zhang Zai's path of self-cultivation consequently emerges as a praxis of alignment aimed at restoring the self to a pre-existing cosmic harmony. Scheler's model of sublimation (*Sublimierung*), conversely, constitutes a generative praxis in which the person (*Person*) must creatively actualize value within an unfinished and contingent cosmic drama.

By placing these two systems in a critical dialogue, this study reveals the profound trade-offs between a cosmology of immanent coherence and one of tragic, personalistic becoming. It concludes that Zhang Zai and Scheler offer not a synthesis, but two competing, fully-realized paradigms for re-grounding ethics in ontology. This research thus provides contemporary process philosophy and ecological thought with two distinct, powerful alternatives to the disenchanting worldview of modernity.

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