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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.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction	9
1.1 Research Question and Objectives.....	9
1.2 “ Bridge Framework ” : Comparative Philosophy and Intercultural Hermeneutics	14
1.2.1 The Bridge Framework: Constructing a Common Ground for Dialogue	14
1.2.2 Positioning the Method	16
1.3 A Review of Contemporary Research.....	18
1.3.1 Comparative Studies of Zhang Zai and Western Philosophy: State of the Field, Prevailing Issues, and Future Horizons	19
1.3.2 Comparative Studies on Scheler and Confucianism: State of the Field, Prevailing Issues, and Future Horizons	22
1.4 Chapter Outline	26
Part One: The Macrocosm: Dynamics of Ultimate Reality	28
Chapter 2 Zhang Zai’ s Cosmic Dynamics: The Dynamic Interaction of Dual Poles (<i>erduan</i>) at the Cosmological Level.....	28
2.1 Zhang Zai on Cosmos (<i>tian</i>)	29
2.1.1 Prelude to Zhang Zai’ s Cosmology: Cosmologies of Pre-Qin Daoism and Confucianism, and Han Dynasty Confucianism	29
2.1.2 The Fourfold Significance of the Cosmos	36
2.1.3 The Cyclical Cosmos: Five Stages of Dual-poles Inductance in the Cosmos.....	40
2.2 Dynamism in the Cosmology: The Dynamic Interaction at Dual Poles	43
2.2.1 The Feature of Cosmic motion: The Ultimate Quiescent Origination, the Instantaneous Emergence and Non-Intentional Becoming	43
2.2.2 The Numinous (<i>shen</i>): the Infinite Force Inherent in the Emergence of Motion from Cosmic Stillness	46
2.2.3 The Nature (<i>xing</i>): Fundamental Element Penetrating the Duality of Opposing Poles	50
2.3 Patterns of Interaction between Dual Poles in the <i>Zhou Yi</i>	54

2.3.1 A Numerical Representation of the Cyclical Cosmology and the Concept of Transformations (<i>bianyi</i>).....	56
2.3.2 Movement in Stillness: The Dynamic Model of the “Heaven-Earth Heart” (<i>tiandi zhixin</i>) in the Hexagram of Reversion.....	58
2.3.3 The Emphasis on the <i>Kan</i> and <i>Li</i> Hexagrams.....	63
Chapter 3 Scheler’ s Cosmological Dynamics and Ultimate Reality: the Becoming of the World, Forceful Substance and Resistance in his Late Works	66
3.1 The World as History (<i>Geschichte</i>): Scheler on Cosmos and the Becoming of the World (<i>Weltwerden</i>).....	67
3.1.1 Intellectual Lineage: From the Ancient <i>Kosmos</i> to the Phenomenological World.....	68
3.1.2 Scheler’ s Project of a Holistic Cosmology: The World as Lived Totality	71
3.1.3 <i>Weltwerden</i> : The Emergence, Process, and Telos of a Historicized Cosmos.....	75
3.1.4 The Relationship between the World Process and God	80
3.2 The Dynamics of the Cosmos: Scheler’ s Active Absolute Being and its Self-Positing Force	83
3.2.1 The Distinction between Metaphysical Forces and Physical Forces ..	84
3.2.2 The Self-positing Absolute Being and its Attributes.....	86
3.2.3 The Relationship between World Process and the Absolute Being with Attributes.....	90
3.3 The Reality in the Cosmos: The Dynamics of Passive Resistance in the Drive	92
3.3.1 World, Resistance and Real positing (<i>Realsetzung</i>): the Metaphysical Problem of the Becoming of Reality	93
3.3.2 Resistance, Drive and Will: The Moment of Reality when Drive and Will Become One.....	98
3.3.3 The Inevitability of Resistance in Scheler’ s Cosmology and the Importance of Becoming.....	100
Chapter 4 Beyond Cosmic Dualities: A Comparative Summary of Dynamics in Zhang Zai’ s and Scheler’ s Cosmologies	103
4.1 Commonalities in the Cosmic Dynamics Discourse between Zhang Zai and Scheler.....	104

4.1.1	Eternal Cosmic Motion	105
4.1.2	Self-generated Cosmic Motion	107
4.1.3	Unity Through Tension: A Shared Non-Dual Cosmology	108
4.2	Divergence in the Philosophical Discourse on Cosmic Motion Patterns between Zhang Zai and Scheler	109
4.2.1	Two Patterns of Cosmic Change	110
4.2.2	The Interaction Modes of Dual Poles	111
4.2.3	Divergent Telos: Cyclical World-Affirmation vs. Linear Redemptive Becoming	113
4.3	A Concluding Assessment of Two Cosmologies.....	115
Part Two: The Microcosm and Mesocosm: The Transformation of Force in the Human and Communal Spheres		
		116
Chapter 5 The Human Microcosm in the Macrocosm: Dynamics of <i>Qi</i> -Transformation and Self-Cultivation in Zhang Zai’ s Dual-Layered Cosmology		
		116
5.1	A Theory of Human Nature within a Two-Tiered Cosmology: The Heavenly-and-earth Bestowed Nature and the Temperamental Nature	118
5.1.1	The Threefold Role of the Great Void: The Cosmological and Ontological Foundation of the Theory of Human Nature.....	119
5.1.2	The Dual Poles of Human Nature: Heavenly-Endowed Nature and Temperamental Nature.....	140
5.2	Active Cultivation in the Cosmos of the Heart: The Transformation from the Temperamental Nature (<i>Qizhi zhixing</i>) to the Heaven-and-earth Bestowed Nature (<i>Tiandi zhixing</i>).....	146
5.2.1	A Cognitive Revolution of “Expanding the Heart” (<i>Da Qi Xin</i>): Transcending the Empirical Limitations of Temperament.....	147
5.2.2	The Dynamic Praxis of Ritual (<i>li</i>) and Learning (<i>xue</i>): Concrete Pathways for Temperamental Transformation	159
5.2.3	The Practical Construction of the “Mesocosm” : Familial Ethics, Economic Equity, and Familialized Politics	164
5.3	The Conforming Cultivation of the Macrocosm (<i>da yuzhou</i>): The Ultimate State of Ignorance (<i>wuzhi</i>) and Alignment with Heaven (<i>rentian</i>)	169
5.3.1	The Boundaries of the Cosmos of the Heart: The Transcendence from “Knowledge” to “Ignorance”	170

5.3.2 The Pedagogical Wisdom of the Sage: Realizing Alignment with Heaven (<i>shuntian</i>) through the Exhaustion of Innate Nature	175
Chapter 6 Scheler on Sublimation of Force: The Dynamic Interaction among Human beings, the Cosmos and God.....	179
6.1 The Early and Middle Periods	181
6.1.1 Spiritual Intuition: Direct Experience and Knowledge of the Cosmos	183
6.1.2 The Order of Love: Primordial Force for Cosmic Harmony and the Transformation of Destiny	191
6.1.3 Faith and the Self-Revelation of God: The Ultimate Ground of Cosmic Harmony	197
6.1.4 A Summary and Critical Reflection on Early and Middle Period Accounts of Religious Experience.....	201
6.2 The Late Period.....	203
6.2.1 Self-aggregation, Objectification and Ideation: Key Features of Spirit in Scheler' s Late Thought	205
6.2.2 The Human Being in Inner Conflict: The Interplay between Spirit (<i>Geist</i>) and Drive (<i>Drang</i>) in the Late Writings.....	214
6.2.3 The Essence of Education, Ignorance and the Microcosmos: Knowledge as a Relationship of Being	223
6.2.4 The Mesocosmic Dimension: From Axiological Order to Sociological Dynamics	236
6.3 Comparative Analysis of Early and Late Thought.....	242
6.3.1 The Evolution of the Concept of Spirit: From Spiritual Intuition to the Dialectics of Spirit and Drive	243
6.3.2 Human - Cosmos Relations: From Divinely Ordained Analogy to Dynamic Participatory Generation	244
6.3.3 The Role of Education: From Divine Self-Revelation to Human Self-Construction.....	248
Chapter 7 Summary: A Comparative Study of Zhang Zai and Max Scheler on the Transformation of Force at the Individual Level and Its Relation to the Cosmos.....	252
7.1 The Dual Structure of Human Nature and the Path of Its Transformation ..	254
7.1.1 Zhang Zai: The Tension between the Nature of Physical Endowment and the Nature of Heaven and Earth, and the Path of Its Transformation ..	254

7.1.2 Scheler: The Structural Tension between Spirit and Drive, and the Mechanism of Sublimation	256
7.1.3 Comparison and Analysis	257
7.2 The Mirrored Structure of the Cosmos: Dual Cosmic Orders and the Role of the Individual	259
7.2.1 Zhang Zai: From the Great Void to the Practical Mirroring of the Cosmos in the Human Heart	260
7.2.2 Scheler: From Sacred Analogy to the Spiritual Participation in Cosmic Becoming	261
7.2.3 Human as Microcosm: A Comparative Perspective.....	262
7.3 The Classification of Knowledge and the Aims of Education: From Knowing to the Wisdom of Unknowing	264
7.3.1 Zhang Zai: From Empirical Cognition to Virtuous Knowing and Enlightened Unknowing	264
7.3.2 Scheler: The Three Forms of Knowledge and the Learned Ignorance	266
7.3.3 Comparative Analysis: The Epistemic Ladder and the Wisdom of Ignorance.....	268
7.4 The Architecture of the Mesocosm: Familial Order versus the Value-Community	271
7.4.1 Zhang Zai: The Mesocosm as a Familialized and Economically Grounded Order	271
7.4.2 Scheler: The Mesocosm as a Value-Driven Community of Persons	273
7.4.3 Comparison: Communal Harmony versus Personalistic Becoming.	274
7.5 Beyond Contrast: Ontological Architectures of Tension	276
Part Three: Beyond Comparison: A Cross-Cultural Constructive Dialogue	277
Chapter 8 Mutual Illumination: Reciprocal Insights from Zhang Zai and Scheler ...	277
8.1 The Possible Enlightenment of Zhang Zai’ s Thought for Scheler: Grounding Metaphysics in a Lived Praxis	278
8.2 The Possible Inspiration of Scheler’ s Thought for Zhang Zai: A Metaphysical and Axiological Deepening.....	282
Bibliography and References	286
Acknowledgements	296

Curriculum Vitae	298
Propositions	299