



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Shi, Y.

Citation

Shi, Y. (2026, February 25). *A comparative study of cosmology and its dynamics in Zhang Zai and Max Scheler*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4293605>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4293605>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Propositions

I. Propositions Relating to the Subject of the Dissertation

1. Zhang Zai's cosmology unfolds as a harmonious cycle of resonance, a thoroughly immanent system in which cosmic motion arises from a potent stillness (*jing*) within the great void (*taixu*). This motion is perpetuated through the restorative balance of its dual poles (*erduan*), without reliance on any transcendent creator. (Based on Chapter 2)
2. Scheler's late metaphysics articulates a tension of progressive becoming, where cosmic history is propelled forward by the unresolvable antagonism between a powerless spirit (*Geist*) and a powerful drive (*Drang*), with reality (*Realität*) being actualized only through the experience of resistance (*Widerstand*). (Based on Chapter 3)
3. The foundational divergence between Zhang Zai's cyclical, world-affirming teleology and Scheler's linear, redemptive becoming demonstrates that their respective macrocosmic architectures represent two rival solutions to the problem of ensuring the perpetuity of cosmic motion. (Based on Chapters 2, 3, and 4)
4. The foundational divergence between Zhang Zai's cyclical and Scheler's linear-progressive models of the macrocosm is shown to directly determine their respective accounts of the human being as a microcosm: Zhang Zai's praxis of alignment (*gongfu lun*) aims to restore a pre-existing cosmic harmony, while Scheler's model of sublimation (*Sublimierung*) constitutes a creative participation in an unfinished cosmic becoming. (Based on Chapters 5, 6, and 7)
5. The cosmological systems of Zhang Zai and Max Scheler are best understood not as convergent philosophies but as two rival, yet mutually illuminating, metaphysical architectures for grounding ethics in a dynamic ontology: Zhang Zai's harmony of cyclical resonance and Scheler's tension of progressive becoming. (Based on Chapters 4, 7, and 8)
6. Zhang Zai's systematic theory of self-cultivation (*gongfu lun*), with its concrete praxis of "expanding the heart" (*da qi xin*) and cultivating a *potent stillness (jing)*, provides a necessary practical grounding for Scheler's late account of the spirit's sublimation of drive. (Based on Chapters 2, 5 and 8)
7. Scheler's late metaphysics—grounding reality in resistance and defining the person through a tragic spirit–drive tension—supplies Zhang Zai's *qi* cosmology with a speculative depth it brackets, revealing the philosophical cost of subordinating the individual to cosmic harmony. (Based on Chapters 3, 7, and 8)

II. Propositions Relating to the Field of the Dissertation's Subject

8. Comparative studies of Scheler and Confucianism have been disproportionately confined to his middle-period ethics of value, thereby overlooking the more philosophically generative dialogue between his late metaphysics of force and the sophisticated cosmological systems of the Song-Ming period.
9. Any metaphysical system that seeks to unify ontology and ethics must confront a fundamental trade-off between a cosmology of immanent coherence that brackets speculative origins (as exemplified by Zhang Zai) and a tragic, personalistic vision of becoming that relinquishes systemic unity in pursuit of speculative depth (as exemplified by Scheler).

10. The future of comparative metaphysics lies not in seeking conceptual equivalence but in the critical juxtaposition of rival ontological architectures to illuminate the unthought premises and fundamental choices that structure different philosophical traditions.
11. A philosophical methodology grounded in a “bridge framework” allows for a rigorous comparison of comprehensive systems by treating core problems (such as cosmic dynamics) as the shared ground for dialogue, thereby avoiding both the impasse of incommensurability and the flattening tendencies of universalism.

III. Propositions on Societal Subjects

12. In response to ecological crisis and global modernity, philosophy must move beyond technical reason to recover cosmology as inquiry into humanity’s place within a meaningful whole, with Zhang Zai’s cosmic kinship (*minbao wuyu*) and Scheler’s *ordo amoris* offering non-anthropocentric models for re-enchanting nature and grounding planetary responsibility.