Is there a human nature shared by all people? If so, what exactly is it? The followers of China’s first philosopher, Kongzi (Kung Tzu, Confucius) could not agree. Mengzi (Meng Tzu, Mencius) held that human nature was essentially good, while Xunzi (Hsun Tzu) argued that it was essentially evil. Dong Zhongshu (Tung Chung-shu) argued that human nature consisted of both good and evil in constant opposition. Dong Zhongshu thus found a middle ground between the views of Mengzi and Xunzi, although his ideas were probably closer to Xunzi’s. He agreed with Mengzi that human nature contains the “seeds” of goodness, but he disagreed that this means human beings are by nature good. The “seed” of goodness, he explained, is not actual goodness any more than a tomato seed is a tomato, or an egg is a chicken. In order to become good, that “seed” must be nurtured. In this sense, Dong Zhongshu shared Xunzi’s emphasis on the necessary role of government to educate people to become good citizens.

Dong Zhongshu also developed a theory, somewhat like that of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, that our innate human nature must compete with our inborn tendencies to greed and selfishness. Like Plato, Dong Zhongshu proposed a model of human psychology in which opposing forces are in constant conflict with one another. Unlike Xunzi, he did not include both forces within “human nature,” nor did he claim that they came from Heaven and Earth, as Xunzi held. Rather, Dong believed that both sides of our nature came from Heaven.

Dong Zhongshu’s ideas also incorporated principles from the Yin/Yang school of thought (which Confucianism had absorbed around 200 BCE). Yin and yang are considered universally complementary forces. Yin is the submissive, yielding force; yang, the aggressive, active force. Dong Zhongshu considered both yin and yang as derived from Heaven. Moreover, everything and everyone consists of a blend of these two forces. Just as Heaven consists of both yang and yin, so does every human being contain yang, which makes us want to be socially cooperative, giving, and caring, and yin, which causes our more selfish feelings.
With Dong’s thinking, Chinese philosophy established a highly developed philosophical tradition in which the ideas of other schools of thought were incorporated and absorbed. This tradition became the official, orthodox position in China after unification and the basis of the Chinese civil service examination system. Unlike earlier Confucianists, Dong Zhongshu also proposed a complex cosmology drawn from many earlier ideas; for example, *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements, or Five Changes (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water). According to his model, the universe contains ten elements—Heaven, Earth, Yin, Yang, Wood, Fire, Soil, Metal, Water, and man.

As you read Dong Zhongshu, ask yourself whether you find his theory of human nature convincing. What is the difference, if any, between the “beginning” or “sprouting” of goodness and the “seeds” of human nature? Does Dong’s theological interpretation of Heaven constitute a step backwards philosophically? In your opinion, how do philosophy and religion relate? Is there a role for religious thinking in philosophy, and vice versa?

Why does the *Spring and Autumn Annals* value the origin highly and talk about it? The origin means the beginning. It means that the foundation must be correct. It expresses the kingly way. The king is the beginning of man. If the king is correct, then the original material force will be harmonious, wind and rain will be timely, lucky stars will appear. and the yellow dragon will descend. If the king is not correct, then strange transformations will take place in heaven above and bandits will appear.

It is only the Sage who can relate the myriad things to the One and tie it to the origin. If the source is not traced and the development from it followed, nothing can be accomplished. Therefore in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* the first year is changed to be called the year of *yüan* (origin). The origin is the same as source (*yüan*). It means that it accompanies the beginning and end of Heaven and Earth. Therefore if man in his life has a beginning and end like this, he does not have to respond to the changes of the four seasons. Therefore the origin is source of all things, and the origin of man is found in it. How does it exist? It exists before Heaven and Earth. Although man is born of the force of Heaven and receives the force of Heaven, he may not partake the origin of Heaven, or rely on its order and violate what it does.

Therefore the first month of spring is a continuation of the activities of Heaven and Earth, continuing the activities of Heaven and completing it. The principle is that [Heaven and man] accomplish together and maintain the undertaking. How can it be said to be merely the origin of Heaven and Earth? What does the origin do? How does it apply to man? If we take the connections seriously, we shall understand the order of things. The Sage did not want to talk about [the behavior] of animals and such. What he wanted to talk about was humanity and righteousness so as to put things in order. . . .

What the *Spring and Autumn Annals* regulates are others and the self. The principles with which to regulate others and the self are humanity and righteousness. Humanity is to give others peace and security and righteousness is to rectify the self. Therefore the word “humanity” (*jen*) means others (people, *jen*) and the word “righteousness” means the self. The distinction is made in the terms themselves. . . . The principle of humanity consists in loving people and not in loving oneself, and the principle of righteousness consists in rectifying oneself and not in rectifying others. If one is not rectified himself, he cannot be considered righteous even if he can rectify others, and if one loves himself very much but does not apply his love to others, he cannot be considered humane. . . .

Love without wisdom means love without discrimination. Wisdom without humanity means knowledge not translated into action. Therefore humanity is to love mankind and wisdom is to remove its evil.

What is meant by humanity? The man of humanity loves people with a sense of commiseration. He is careful and agreeable and does not quarrel. His likes and dislikes are harmonized with human relations. He does not harbor the feeling of hate or a desire to hurt. He has no intention to conceal or to evade. He has no disposition of jealousy. He has no desires that lead to sadness or worry. He does not do anything treacherous or cunning. And he does not do anything depraved. Therefore his heart is at ease, his will is peaceful, his vital force is harmonious, his desires are regulated, his actions are easy, and his conduct is in accord with the moral law. It is for this reason that he puts things in order peacefully and easily without any quarrel. This is what is meant by humanity.

What is meant by wisdom? It is to speak first and then act accordingly. It is to weigh with one’s wisdom whether to act or not and then proceed accordingly. When one’s weighing is correct, what he does will be proper, what he handles will be appropriate, his action will bring result, his fame will become glorious, benefits will gather around him with no trouble, bless-
ings will reach his offspring, and benefits will be bestowed on all his people. Such were the cases of wise kings T’ang and Wu. When one’s weighing is wrong, what he does will be improper, what he handles will be inappropriate, his action will bring no result, his name will become a shame, injuries will gather around him, his posterity will be cut off, and his state will be ruined. Such were the cases of [wicked kings Chieh and Chou]...

One becomes a king only after he has received the Mandate of Heaven. As the king, he will determine which day is to be the first day of the year for his dynasty, change the color of clothes worn at court, institute systems of ceremonies and music, and unify the whole empire. All this is to show that the dynasty has changed and that he is not succeeding any human being, and to make it very clear that he has received the mandate from Heaven. . . . Therefore T’ang received the mandate and became king. In response to Heaven he abolished the Hsia dynasty [whose system was symbolized by red]. He called his dynasty Yin (Shang). The system was corrected to be that symbolized by white. . . . King Wu received the mandate. . . . Therefore [in the beginning of] the Ch’unch’iu period [of the Chou dynasty], in response to Heaven, he undertook the business of a new king. The system was corrected to be that symbolized by black. . . . The Three Correct Systems began with the system symbolized by black. . . . The material force (ch’i), integrated by Heaven, begins to penetrate and transform things. It is evident that buds beginning to appear in plants are black (or dark, still closed). Therefore the color of clothes worn at court is black. . . . In the system symbolized by white. . . . the material force integrated by Heaven begins to form things. They begin to sprout. The color is white. Therefore the color of clothes worn at court is white. . . . In the system symbolized by red. . . . [the material force integrated by Heaven extends to all things and things begin their activity. The color is red]. . . . The reason why the Three Systems are called the Three Correct Systems is because they make things operate. When the integration is extended to cover the material force of all things, their will all will respond [to Heaven]. As the correct system is rectified, everything else will be rectified. . . . The present generation is ignorant about human nature. Speakers on the subject differ from each other. Why not try to go back to the term “nature” (hsing)? Does not the term “nature” mean what is inborn (sheng)? If it means what is inborn, then the basic substance naturally endowed is called man’s nature. Nature is the basic substance. If we inquire into the basic substance of nature by applying the term “good,” will that be correct?
If not, why still say that the basic substance is good? The term “nature” cannot be separated from the basic substance. When it is separated from the basic substance, as in the case of hair, it will no longer be nature. This should be clearly understood. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* examines the principles of things and rectifies their names. It applies names to things as they really are, without making the slightest mistake. Therefore in mentioning [the strange event of] falling meteorites, it mentions the number five afterward [because the meteorites were seen first and their number discovered later], whereas in mentioning the [ominous event of] fishhawks flying backward, it mentions the number six first [because six birds were first seen flying away and upon a closer look it was then found that they were fishhawks]. Such is the care of the Sage (Confucius, its author) to rectify names. [As he himself said], “With regard to his speech, the superior man does not take it lightly.” His statements about the five meteorites and the six fishhawks are good illustrations of this.

It is the mind that keeps the various evil things weak within so that they cannot be expressed outside. Therefore the mind (*hsin*) is called the weak (*jen*). If in the endowment of material force (*ch’i*) one is free from evil, why should the mind keep anything weak? From the name of the mind I know the real character of man. In his real character man has both humanity (*jen*) and greed. The material forces responsible for both humanity and greed are found in his person. What is called the person is received from Heaven (*T’ien*, Nature). Heaven has its dual operation of yin and yang (passive and active cosmic forces), and the person also has his dual nature of humanity and greed. There are cases when Heaven restricts the operation of yin and yang, and there are cases when the person weakens his feelings and desires. [The way of man] and the Way of Heaven are the same. Consequently as yin functions, it cannot interfere with spring or summer (which correspond to yang), and the full moon is always overwhelmed by sunlight, so that at one moment it is full and at another it is not. This is the way Heaven restricts the operation of yin. How can [man] not reduce his desires and stop his feelings (both corresponding to yin) in order to respond to Heaven? As the person restricts what Heaven restricts, it is therefore said that the person is similar to Heaven. To restrict what Heaven restricts is not to restrict Heaven itself. We must know that without training our nature endowed by Heaven cannot in the final analysis make [the feelings and desires] weak. If we examine actuality to give names, when there has been no training, on what ground can nature be so called (as good)?
Therefore man’s nature may be compared to the rice stalks and goodness to rice. Rice comes out of the rice stalk but not all the stalk becomes rice. Similarly, goodness comes out of nature but not all nature becomes good. Both goodness and rice are results of human activity in continuing and completing the creative work of Heaven, which is outside of Heaven’s own operation, and are not inherent in what Heaven has produced, which is within its operation. The activity of Heaven extends to a certain point and then stops. What stops within the operation of Heaven is called human nature endowed by Heaven, and what stops outside the operation of Heaven is called human activity. Man’s activity lies outside of his nature, and yet it is inevitable that [through training] his nature will become virtuous. The term “people” (min) is derived from the term “sleep” (ming, ignorant, literally, closing one’s eyes). If nature is already good [at birth], why are people so called? Take the case of meteorites. If they were not supported in place, they would be rolling wild. How can they be good?

Man’s nature may be compared to the eyes. In sleep they are shut and there is darkness. They must await the awakening before they can see. Before the awakening it may be said that they possess the basic substance (quality) to see, but it cannot be said that they see. Now the nature of all people possesses this basic substance but it is not yet awakened; it is like people in sleep waiting to be awakened. It has to be trained before it becomes good. Before it is awakened, it may be said to possess the basic substance to become good but it cannot be said that it is already good. It is the same as the case of the eyes being shut and becoming awakened. If we leisurely examine this matter with a calm mind, the truth becomes evident. Man’s nature being in sleep, as it were, and before, awakening is the state created by Heaven (Nature). To follow what Heaven has done and give it a name, we call the creatures “people” (min). By that is meant that they are in sleep (ming). If we inquire into principles according to their names and appellations, we shall understand. Thus names and appellations are to be rectified in accordance with [the principles] of Heaven and Earth. Nature and feelings are produced by Heaven and Earth. Both nature and feelings are the same in a state of sleep. Feelings are [part of] nature. If we say that nature is already good, what can we say about feelings [which are sources of evil]? Therefore the Sage never said that nature is good, for to say so would be to violate the correctness of the name.

That the person possesses nature and feelings is similar to the fact that Heaven has yin and yang. To say that there is no feeling in man’s basic sub-
stance is like saying that there is yang in Heaven but no yin. Such absurd ideas are never acceptable. What we call nature does not refer to the highest type of man nor to the lowest, but to the average. The nature of man is like a silk cocoon or an egg. An egg has to be hatched to become a chicken, and a silk cocoon has to be unravelled to make silk. It is the true character of Heaven that nature needs to be trained before becoming good. Since Heaven has produced the nature of man which has the basic substance for good but which is unable to be good [by itself], therefore it sets up the king to make it good. This is the will of Heaven. The people receive from Heaven a nature which cannot be good [by itself], and they turn to the king to receive the training which completes their nature. It is the duty of the king to obey the will of Heaven and to complete the nature of the people.

Now to claim on the basis of the true character of the basic substance of man that man’s nature is already good [at birth] is to lose sight of the will of Heaven and to forgo the duty of the king. If the nature of all people were already good, then what duty is there for the king to fulfill when he receives the mandate from Heaven? To give an incorrect name and as a consequence to abandon one’s solemn duty and to violate the great Mandate of Heaven is not to use any word in an exemplary way. In using terms the *Spring and Autumn Annals* approaches from the external aspect of a thing if its internal aspect depends on the external aspect [for its full meaning]. Now the nature of all people depends on training, which is external, before it becomes good. Therefore goodness has to do with training and not with nature. If it had to do with nature, it would be much involved and lack refinement, and everyone would become perfect by himself and there would be no such people as worthies and sages. This is an erroneous doctrine of highly respected people of our time but not the way in which terms are used in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Unexemplary words and unfounded doctrines are avoided by the superior man. Why utter them?

Someone says, “Since nature contains the beginning of goodness and since the mind possesses the basic substance of goodness, how can nature still not be regarded as good?”

I reply, “You are wrong. The silk cocoon contains [potential] silk but it is not yet silk, and the egg contains the [potential] chicken but it is not yet a chicken. If we follow these analogies, what doubt can there be? Heaven has produced mankind in accordance with its great principle, and those who talk about nature should not differ from each other. But there are some who say that nature is good and others who say that nature is not good. Then what is
meant by goodness differs with their various ideas. There is the beginning of goodness in human nature. Let us activate it and love our parents. And since man is better than animals, this may be called good—this is what Mencius meant by goodness. Follow the Three Bonds and the Five Relationships. Comprehend the principles of the Eight Beginnings. Practice loyalty and faithfulness and love all people universally. And be earnest and deep and love propriety. One may then be called good—this is what the Sage meant by goodness.”

Therefore Confucius said, “A good man it is not mine to see. If I could see a man of constant virtue, I would be content.” From this we know that what the Sage called goodness is not easy to match. It is not simply because we are better than animals that we may be called good. If merely activating the beginning and being better than animals may be called goodness, why is it not evident [from the beginning]? That being better than animals is not sufficient to be called goodness is the same as being wiser than plants is not sufficient to be called wisdom. The nature of people is better than that of animals but may not be regarded as good. The term knowledge (wisdom) is derived from the word sagelness. What the Sage ordered is accepted by the world as correct. To correct the course of day and night depends on the polar star, and to correct suspicions and doubts depends on the Sage. From the point of view of the Sage, the generation without a king and people without training cannot be equal to goodness. Such is the difficulty to match goodness. It is too much to say that the nature of all people can be equal to it. If evaluated in comparison with the nature of animals, the nature of man is of course good. But if evaluated in comparison with the goodness according to the way of man [as it should be], man’s nature falls short. It is all right to say that human nature is better than that of animals, but it is not all right to say that their nature is what the Sage calls goodness. My evaluation of life and nature differs from that of Mencius. Mencius evaluated on the lower level the behavior of animals and therefore said that man’s nature is good [at birth]. I evaluate on the higher level what the Sage considers to be goodness, and therefore say that man’s nature is not good to start with. Goodness is higher than human nature, and the sage is higher than goodness. The Spring and Autumn Annals is concerned with the great origin. Therefore it is very careful in the rectification of names. If a name does not come from its proper origin, how can we talk about nature not being good or already being good?” . . .

Heaven has Five Agents (i.e. Elements): the first is Wood; the second, Fire; the third, Earth, the fourth, Metal; and the fifth, Water. Wood is the
beginning of the cycle of the Five Agents, Water is its end, and Earth is its center. Such is their natural sequence. Wood produces Fire, Fire produces Earth, Earth produces Metal, Metal produces Water, and Water produces Wood. Such is their father-and-son relationship. Wood occupies the left, Metal occupies the right, Fire occupies the front, Water occupies the rear, and Earth occupies the center. Such is their order as that of father and son, and the way in which they receive from each other and spread out. Therefore Wood received from water, Fire from Wood, Earth from Fire, Metal from Earth, and Water from Metal. Those that give are fathers and those that receive are sons. It is the Way of Heaven that the son always serves his father. Therefore when Wood is produced, Fire should nourish it, and after Metal perishes, Water should store it. Fire enjoys Wood and nourishes it with yang, but Water overcomes Metal and buries it with yin. Earth serves Heaven with the utmost loyalty. Therefore the Five Agents are the actions of filial sons and loyal ministers. The Five agents are so called because they are tantamount to five actions. That is how the term was derived. The sage knows this and therefore he shows much love and little sternness, and is generous in supporting the living and serious in burying the dead. This is to follow the system of Heaven. It is the function of the son to receive and to fulfill. For him to support is like Fire enjoying Wood, to bury one’s father is like Water overcoming Metal, and serving the ruler is like Earth showing respect to Heaven. People like these may be said to be good in their actions.

Each of the Five Agents succeeds the others according to its order. Each of them performs its official function by fulfilling its capacity. Thus Wood occupies the eastern quarter and controls the forces (ch’i) of spring, Fire occupies the southern quarter and controls the forces of summer, Metal occupies the western quarter and controls the forces of autumn, and Water occupies the northern quarter and controls the forces of winter. For this reason Wood controls production, Metal controls destruction, Fire controls heat, and Water controls cold. It is the course of Nature that people must be employed according to their order and officials appointed according to their capacity. Earth occupies the center and is the natural benefactor. It is the helper of Heaven. Its character is abundant and beautiful and cannot be identified with the affairs of any single season. Therefore among the Five Agents and the four seasons, Earth includes them all. Although Metal, Wood, Water, and Fire each have their own functions, their positions would not be established were it not for Earth, just as sourness, saltiness, acridness, and bitterness would not become tastes were it not for savoriness. Savoriness is the basis of the five
tastes, and Earth is the controlling factor of the Five Agents. The controlling factor of the Five Agents is the material force of Earth. It is like the fact that with savoriness the five tastes cannot help being tastes. Therefore among the actions of the sage, nothing is more valuable than loyalty, for it is the character of Earth. The great office of men, the function of which need not be mentioned, is that which they receive from each other. The great office of Heaven, the origin of which need not be mentioned, is Earth.

Heaven is characterized by the power to create and spread things, Earth is characterized by its power to transform, and man is characterized by moral principles. The material force of Heaven is above, that of Earth below, and that of man in between. Spring produces and summer grows, and all things flourish. Autumn destroys and winter stores, and all things are preserved. Therefore there is nothing more refined than material force, richer than Earth, or more spiritual than Heaven. Of the creatures born from the refined essence of Heaven and Earth, none is more noble than man. Man receives the mandate from Heaven and is therefore superior to other creatures. Other creatures suffer troubles and defects and cannot practice humanity and righteousness; man alone can practice them. Other creatures suffer troubles and defects and cannot match Heaven and Earth; man alone can match them. Man has 360 joints, which match the number of Heaven (the round number of days in a year). His body with its bones and flesh matches the thickness of Earth. He has ears and eyes above, with their keen sense of hearing and seeing, which resemble the sun and moon. His body has its orifices and veins, which resemble rivers and valleys. His heart has feelings of sorrow, joy, pleasure, and anger, which are analogous to the spiritual feelings (of Heaven). As we look at man’s body, how much superior it is to that of other creatures and how similar to Heaven! Other creatures derive their life from the yin and yang of Heaven in a non-erect way, but man brilliantly shows his patterns and order. Therefore with respect to the physical form of other creatures, they all move about in a non-erect and incumbent position. Man alone stands erect, looks straight forward, and assumes a correct posture. Thus those who receive little from Heaven and Earth take the non-erect posture, while those receiving much from them take the correct posture. From this we can see that man is distinct from other creatures and forms a trinity with Heaven and Earth.

Therefore in the body of man, his head rises up and is round and resembles the shape of heaven. His hair resembles the stars and constellations. His ears and eyes, quick in their senses, resemble the sun and the moon. The breathing of his nostrils and mouth resembles the wind. The penetrating
knowledge of his mind resembles the spiritual intelligence [of Heaven]. His abdomen and womb, now full and now empty, resemble the myriad things. The myriad things are nearest to the earth. Therefore the portion of the body below the waist corresponds to earth. As the body resembles heaven and earth, the waist serves as a sash. What is above the neck is noble and majestic in spirit, which is to manifest the feature of heaven and its kind. What is below the neck is full and humble, comparable to the soil. The feet are spread out and square, resembling the shape of the earth. Therefore in wearing ceremonial sash and girdle, the neck must be straight to distinguish it from the heart. What is above the sash (the waist) is all yang and what is below the sash is all yin, each with its own function. The yang is the material force of heaven, and the yin is the material force of the earth. Therefore when yin and yang become operative and cause man to have ailment in the foot or numbness in the throat [for example], the material force of the earth rises to become clouds and rain. Thus there is resemblance in the correspondence. The agreement of heaven and earth and the correspondence between yin and yang are ever found complete in the human body. The body is like heaven. Its numerical categories and those of heaven are mutually interwoven, and therefore their lives are interlocked. Heaven completes the human body with the number of days in a full year. Consequently the body’s 366 lesser joints correspond to the number of days in a year, and the twelve larger joints correspond to the number of months. Internally the body has the five viscera, which correspond to the number of the Five Agents. Externally there are the four limbs, which correspond to the four seasons. The alternating of opening and closing of the eyes corresponds to day and night. The alternating of strength and weakness corresponds to winter and summer. And the alternating of sorrow and joy corresponds to yin and yang. The mind has calculations and deliberations, which fact corresponds to that of periods of time and number of degrees of distance. Man’s conduct follows the principles of human relations, which fact corresponds to the relationship of heaven and earth. All this, whether obscure or obvious in the body, is born with man. When it is matched with heaven and earth and compared, it is found to be fitting. In what may be numbered, there is correspondence in number. In what may not be numbered, there is correspondence in kind. They are all identical and correspond to Heaven. Thus [Heaven and man] are one. Therefore present the formed so as to make manifest the formless and get hold of what may be numbered to [make manifest what may not be numbered]. Spoken of in this way, it is quite proper for things to correspond to each other in kind. It
is like the form [of the body]. Its [correspondence to heaven] is correct by virtue of its numerical categories.

If now water be poured on level ground, it will avoid the dry area and run to the wet area, whereas if two identical pieces of firewood are exposed to fire, the fire will avoid the wet piece and go to the dry one. All things avoid what is different from them and follow what is similar to them. Therefore similar forces come together and matching tones respond to each other. This is clear from evidence. Suppose the seven stringed and the twenty-five stringed lutes are tuned and played. When the note F in the one is struck, the note F on the other will respond to it, and when the note G in the one is struck, the note G in the other will respond to it. Among the five notes each one that matches will sound of itself. There is nothing supernatural in this. It is their natural course that they do so. A beautiful thing calls forth things that are beautiful in kind and an ugly thing calls forth things that are ugly in kind, for things of the same kind arise in response to each other. For example, when a horse neighs, it is horses that will respond, [and when an ox lows, it is oxen that will respond]. Similarly, when an emperor or a king is about to rise, auspicious omens will first appear, and when he is about to perish, unlucky omens will first appear. Therefore things of the same kind call forth each other. Because of the dragon, rain is produced, and by the use of the fan, the heat is chased away. Wherever armies are stationed, briers and thorns grow. All beautiful and ugly things have their origins and have their lives accordingly. But none knows where these origins are.

When the sky is dark and it is about to rain, a person’s sickness affects him first, because the force of yin rises in response. When the sky is dark and it is about to rain, people want to sleep, because the material force of yin is at work. People who are sad want to lie down, because the yin of sadness and lying down seek each other. And people who are happy do not want to lie down because the yang of happiness and staying up require each other. Because of the night, the water level rises in some degree. Because of the east wind, the wine becomes further fermented. When the night comes, the sick person’s sickness becomes worse. When the day is about to dawn, cocks all crow and press on each other, their force becoming more and more refined. Therefore the yang reinforces the yang and the yin reinforces the yin, for the forces of yin and yang can naturally augment or diminish things because of their similarity in kind.

Heaven possesses yin and yang and man also possesses yin and yang. When the universe’s material force of yin arises, man’s material force
of yin arises in response. Conversely, when man’s material force of yin arises, that of the universe should also arise in response. The principle is the same. He who understands this, when he wishes to bring forth rain, will activate the yin in man in order to arouse the yin of the universe. When he wishes to stop rain, he will activate the yang in man in order to arouse the yang of the universe. Therefore the bringing forth of rain is nothing supernatural. People suspect that it is supernatural because its principle is subtle and wonderful. It is not only the material forces of yin and yang that can advance or withdraw according to their kind. Even the way misfortunes, calamities, and blessings are produced follows the same principle. In all cases one starts something himself and other things become active in response according to their kind. Therefore men of intelligence, sageliness, and spirit introspect and listen to themselves, and their words become intelligent and sagely. The reason why introspection and listening to oneself alone can lead to intelligence and sageliness is because one knows that his original mind lies there. Therefore when the note of F is struck in the seven-stringed or twenty-one stringed lute, the F note in other lutes sound of themselves in response. This is a case of things being activated because they are similar in kind. Their activity takes place in sound and is invisible. Not seeing the form of their activity, people say that they sound of themselves. Furthermore, since they activate each other invisibly, it is thought that they do so themselves. In reality, it is not that they do so themselves, but that there is something that causes them. In reality things are caused, but the cause is invisible. According to the tradition mentioned in the commentary of the Book of History, when the House of Chou was about to arise, some big red crows holding some seeds of grain in their bills gathered on the roof of the king’s house. King Wu (r. 1121–1116 B.C.) was happy and all great officials were glad. The Duke of Chou (d. 1094 B.C.) said, “Make greater effort. Make greater effort. Heaven shows this in order to exhort us.” The duke was afraid that people depended on [Heaven].