

# Chang Tsai's Thought on the View of Saints

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**Abstract:** *Chang Tsai constructed a holy entity that is rooted in heaven, oriented towards humans, and ultimately attributed to sincerity, starting from the two aspects of "obtaining heaven with utmost sincerity" and "becoming a saint through nature"; Subsequently, two theoretical paths of sanctification were proposed around the scope of "Da'erhua" and "Chengxing". Among them, "Da'erhua" is a leap from sage to saints, while "Chengxing" is a direction for all scholars' efforts. Finally, Chang Tsai used "QiongShenZhiHua" to characterize the holy virtue of the unity of sainthood and heaven.*

**Keywords:** Chang Tsai; The view of the sage; Chengxing; Sincerity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chang Tsai (1020-77), born in Mei County, Shaanxi Province, was known as the Master of Heng-chu. He was a famous thinker and educator of the Northern Song Dynasty and founded the Guan School. Chang Tsai, like other Daoists in the Northern Song Dynasty, believed in learning to be a saint, that is, one can reach the realm of a saint through acquired learning[1]. How can one learn to be a saint? It is necessary to build a comprehensive theoretical framework around saints, which involves at least three aspects: firstly, what are saints? Secondly, how to become a saint? Thirdly, how is the virtue of saints reflected? This article starts from these three aspects to discuss Chang Tsai's concept of sages.

## 2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAGE: "OBTAINING HEAVEN WITH UTMOST SINCERITY" AND "BECOMING A SAGE BY NATURE"

What is Saint? Regarding this, Chang Tsai has two expressions: One is "The highest sincerity in heaven is the holy; Another is "Becoming a saint by nature". Based on the two aspects of "heaven" and "nature", Chang Tsai constructed a noumenon of holy that can not only reach the extreme of heaven but also be implemented to humans, answering the question of "what is the meaning of sainthood[2].

Starting from "heaven", Chang Tsai said, "The sage is utmost sincerity in obtaining heaven." [2] The so-called "utmost sincerity" refers to what is said in "The Doctrine of the Mean": "Sincerity is achieved through deliberate or purposeful diligence and contemplation." The so-called "heaven" includes two aspects: "The Tao of Heaven" and "The Virtue of Heaven", as Chang Tsai said, "The Tao of Heaven is change; The Virtue of Heaven is transformation. Virtue, its noumenon; Tao, its use." [2] He also said, "Is there anything I can do to reach the state of unity of heaven and humanity? It is the natural cultivation of virtue that leads to it." [2] Therefore, "Sincerity obtaining heaven" refers to integrating with heaven without purposeful diligence and contemplation, naturally achieving obedience to the Heavenly Tao and bowing to the Heavenly Virtue. Among them, "without purposeful diligence and contemplation" [2] is the state of holiness, and "unity with heaven" is the manifestation of holiness. Man is the starting point of holiness, and 'utmost sincerity' means the perfection of work; Heaven is the ultimate destination of holiness, and 'obtaining heaven' means returning to the essence of holiness. To be honest, the essence of holiness lies in the heavens and points to people, which is the ultimate state or ideal personality that connects heaven and people.

How does Saint point to people? How can humans unite with heaven? Starting from the concept of "nature" in the book "The Doctrine of the Mean", the individual's nature has been linked to destiny. Destiny has naturally become the root of nature and has been accepted by Confucianism. In the Song Dynasty, Confucianism proposed the pure and good "nature of destiny" as the moral essence of human beings, as Chang Tsai said: "After an individual is born, they develop a 'The nature of temperament'. By cultivating in an appropriate way, the original 'nature of heaven and earth' can be preserved and nurtured." Therefore, Chang Tsai proposed that "By achieving the 'nature of heaven and earth', one can become a saint and thus master the virtues of heaven." [2] He also pointed out that "The purpose of cultivating virtue is to achieve the nature of heaven and earth. Once this goal is achieved, Unity of Heaven and humanity can become one." [2] Sanctification is achieving the nature of heaven and earth and Unity of Heaven and humanity. Through "nature", the connection between heaven and man has been completed, that is,

"The individual's heart conforms to the tao of heaven". [2] At the same time, in Chang Tsai's view, "sincerity" refers to "nature-becoming". He said, "The unity of nature and the tao of heaven coexists in sincerity ."[2]"nature-becoming"can ultimately point to the thing-in-itself of utmost sincerity and complete the theoretical transformation from "nature-becoming"to"sage-becoming".

Tang Chun-i believes that Chang Tsai's way of thinking is not completely divorced from the tradition of unity of Heaven and humanity of Han Confucianism[3]. It can be proved by Chang Tsai's construction of the concept of saint that his definition and interpretation of saint, whether from "heaven" or "nature", can not be separated from the Unity of Heaven and humanity, and will ultimately fall into the word "sincerity". From the perspective of 'heaven', it is the sincerity that leads to heaven; From the perspective of "nature", it is sincerity that leads to nature-becoming.And the reason why it all falls on "sincerity" is "utmost sincerity" not only means the completeness of work, as stated in "The Doctrine of the Mean": "Only the utmost sincerity of the world can guide the work of becoming a saint", but also represents the state of holiness, which is "obtained without thinking, not being encouraged to be in the middle". At the same time, it is also a manifestation of nature naturally flowing into the Tao of Heaven, as stated by Chang Tsai: "If a saint, then nature and the Tao of Heaven have nothing to encourage." [2]We cannot leave heaven to make the holy lose its roots and basis, nor can we talk about becoming holy without getting rid of humans. Therefore, the holy itself has both an ideal side and a practical side.

### 3. THE PATH OF BECOMING SAGE: FROM GREAT TO HOLY AND NATURE-BECOMING

How to become sage? Based on Chang Tsai's construction of the Holy Communion, the theoretical path of sanctification also needs to be discussed separately. From the perspective of heaven, Chang Tsai utilized "The Virtue of Heaven" and "The Tao of Heaven" to construct a path of becoming a saint of "From great to holy" and "Creating a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven"; From the perspective of human nature, Chang Tsai also proposed that "Becoming a Sage by Nature", implementing the "Creating a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven" into human nature[2]. However, because nature is based on heaven, whether it is "From great to holy" or "Nature-becoming", its essence points is the realm of sincerity and Unity of Heaven and human.

From the perspective of heaven, Chang Tsai believes that Becoming a saint is the process of "creating a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven", [2] and inherits Mencius' theory of "great and transforming is called holy". He divides the theory of sanctification into: "great and transforming". Scholars must first become "great", and then "transform" on the basis of "great". Lin Lechang summarized that scholars, phenomenons, and sages are the three stages of Chang Tsaicheng's natural practice[4]. However, it is extremely difficult to complete the process from a phenomenon to a sage. Chang Tsai said, "To follow the principles of the heavens without violating them, and to carry them out with the highest principles, knowing that there are no disagreements. Although those who are appointed as saints can be encouraged to do so, they are still uncivilized. The distance between phenomenons and sages is very close, once the transcendence from phenomenons to saints is completed, it will be create a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven." [2] There is little distance between the phenomenons and the saints, and If the phenomenons can complete this transcendence, they will be "create a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven". [2] Although the two are not far apart, it is not easy to achieve the transcendence. For scholars, as long as they are diligent, they can reach the realm of phenomenons, but this realm is not a supreme realm. Chang Tsai explained to this, "The realm of adulthood can be achieved through hard work, but the transcendence from adulthood to sage is not achieved through hard work, rather through the natural maturity of morality. The Book of Changes states that 'Exhaust the Tao of heaven and know the virtue of heaven' is the result of the natural maturity of the seeds of morality, rather than deliberate force." [2] It means that the subject can strive to achieve the realm of 'great', but for 'great and transformed', it cannot be strengthened through 'intelligence'. The transcendence of 'great and transformed' is a natural and smooth transformation within the body, It is impossible to achieve success solely by individual efforts. The term 'great and transformed' refers to 'mature', which refers to natural maturity, gradually developing and expanding on a large foundation, and finally 'the seeds of morality mature naturally', completing the transcendence of 'great and transformed'. It should be noted that although "great and transformed" has completed the transcendence from adults to sages, this transcendence is a gradual one, not a sudden one. The process of natural maturity also represents the process of "transformation".

Although 'greatness and transformation' cannot be achieved with diligence, it cannot completely abandon the achievements of diligence. Therefore, Chang Tsai pointed out: "Benevolent people must strive to do, at the beginning, they must be encouraged; at the end, they will return to nature. People must always keep this in mind, and when they are familiar with it, they may forget it." [2] He also said: "People lazy in the cultivation of morality,

since not become a virtuous gentleman will be encouraged to encourage, to the desire not to exceed the moment can be put down, shallow will can not learn. People are lazy in the cultivation of morality. A gentleman who is not virtuous must be encouraged, until he do not exceed the limit of their own desires, and those who are weak in virtue will can not learn eventually." [2] It means that from "not virtuous" to "not exceed the limit of their own desires" [2] is the process of "starting with encouragement, and finally returning to nature" [2]. At the beginning, one must strive to cultivate one's virtue and become great, while at the end, one should restore nature because one needs to become great and mature in benevolence. Therefore, Chang Tsai warns gentlemen and benevolent people to maintain a heart of striving for excellence and progress from beginning to end, and not to be lazy or lax.

Moreover, Chang Tsai regarded "laziness" and "shyness" as diseases that scholars must eliminate. He believed that as long as "laziness" and "shyness" are eliminated, they can become saints. When explaining the Da Zhuang hexagram, he said, "The reason why people cannot be themselves is that they tend to slack off when encountering difficulties and retreat when encountering things that are different from tradition. Only those who are not afraid of criticism and ridicule from others and follow the principles of righteousness are broad-minded people. Scholars need to constantly eliminate laziness and shyness. Only by completely overcoming these two weaknesses can they become true saints." [2] In Chang Tsai's opinion, there are two main reasons why people cannot do themselves: The laziness in times of adversity and The shyness of being different from others. Therefore, those who practice themselves should exert the power of self restraint and great virtue, use their own strength to inspire righteousness and overcome laziness and timidity. Here, Chang Tsai regards "Restrain oneself and Resumption of ceremony" [2] as a necessary virtue achievement, and points out that the essence of self restraint is to abide by the virtue of heaven and to retreat from personal desires through righteous battle. All of these indicate that "self restraint" is an important means of becoming a saint. Chang Tsai used the term "retreat from battle" to emphasize that the process of self restraint is like a battle, indicating that those who self deprecate must have strong and sturdy virtues in order to become saints. Therefore, initiating the work of self restraint and eliminating the two diseases means that the principles and righteousness have completely defeated the private self, and virtue has returned to nature through diligence, marking the completion of "greatness and transformation" and the completion of sanctification.

From the perspective of heaven, Chang Tsai utilized "The Virtue of Heaven" and "The Tao of Heaven" to construct a theory of sanctification based on the principles of "greatness and transformation" and "creating a parallel relationship between the virtue of heaven". However, to implement this theory into human beings and ethical practice, it is necessary to start from the perspective of nature. Chang Tsai said, "One becomes great without selfishness, then returning to nature on the basis of greatness is a saint." [2] "Returning to nature on the basis of greatness" means "great and transformed," and the ethical direction of "transformed" is "returning to nature". What is nature? Chang Tsai said, "All things in the world that are called nature, such as the hardness of gold, the heat of fire, the nature of cattle, and the nature of horse, are inherent. Everything has its own nature, and there is a distinction between people and things due to the opening of the barrier. There is a difference between wisdom and foolishness due to the thickness of the barrier. A strong barrier cannot be opened, a thick barrier can be opened, but it is also difficult to open. A thin barrier is easier to open. Once scholars open up the barriers of nature, they can reach the Tao of heaven and become saints." [2] For both humans and objects, nature is indistinguishable and inherent, but the existence of nature can be divided into 'open, closed' states. For things, nature is in a completely blocked state, while the blocked is firm and cannot be opened, so for things, there is no matter of intelligence or enlightenment; For people, nature is in a state of openness, but the degree of openness is influenced by the thickness of barrier. Those who have thick barrier are foolish, so it is difficult to open, while those who have thin barrier are wise, so it is easy to open. Therefore, the essence of Chang Tsai's "Returning to nature" is to "eliminate cheating and open up nature".

Chang Tsai has his unique response to how to return to nature, that is, through propriety and wisdom. Chang Tsai's idea of "returning to nature through propriety and wisdom" comes from his interpretation and invention for the Book of Changes. The Book of Changes states: "Wisdom is noble, and propriety is humble. The nobility of wisdom is modeled after the heavens, and the humbleness of propriety is modeled after the earth. Heaven and earth are established and the tao of change is carried out within them. The existence of propriety is the gate of morality and righteousness." Here, "wisdom" and "propriety" respectively represent the nobility of heaven and the humbleness of the earth, and "wisdom" and "propriety" have become typical ethical characteristics for people to imitate heaven and earth, It is precisely based on the special ethical significance bestowed by "wisdom" and "propriety" in the Book of Changes, as well as the logic of "Heaven and earth are established and the tao of change is carried out within them" that Chang Tsai developed his own theory of "Returning to nature through wisdom and propriety" [2]. Although there are some disagreements in the current academic community regarding the specific connotations of "wisdom" and "propriety", as well as the overall grasp of the "returning to nature through wisdom and propriety",

it is generally recognized that Chang Tsai regarded "wisdom" and "propriety" as two aspects that must be attached equal importance to return to nature[5]. In Chang Tsai's view, "knowledge" and "rites" are regarded as the ethical expression of man imitating the way of heaven and earth. Therefore, if we want to achieve the nature of saints, we must start from the "knowledge" of heaven and the "rites" of earth, and take both of them as the methods and ways of nature. In Chang Tsai's view, "wisdom" and "propriety" are seen as ethical manifestations of human imitation of the tao of heaven and earth. Therefore, in order to achieve the nature of a sage, one must start with the "wisdom" of the heavens and the "propriety" of the earth, both of which should be regarded as methods and approaches to achieve nature, and should be equally emphasized and parallel. Chang Tsai said, "What causes us to constantly uphold our moral spirit? It's nature-becoming. Sincerity is the meaning of 'become'. Sincerity is the ability to achieve success in moral aspect, just as benevolent people and filial sons fulfill their moral mission. Liuxia Hui keeps peace throughout his life; Boyi, maintain a pure and lofty attitude from beginning to end; Having completed their nature in the realm of purity and harmony, they can be called saint. However, purity and harmony is still a part of nature, is not the full and correct nature. Only through knowledge and propriety, morality and righteousness will emerge from this." [2] That is to say, although the Boyi keeps peace throughout his life and Liuxia Hui maintain a pure and lofty attitude from beginning to end are nature-becoming, it is only a form of nature at one aspect. They cannot achieve the complete and correct nature. If we start from the two typical ethical characteristics of "wisdom" and "propriety" with principle significance, we should use the scope of "wisdom" and "propriety" to create a practical path of "morality and righteousness emerge from this".

Since becoming nature means becoming holy, can one who accomplish one aspect of nature-becoming be called a saint? This is a question that must be asked in the face of "the pure and lofty of Boyi" and "the peace of Liuxia Hui". Regarding this, Chang Tsai said, "Those who have no impurities are at the extreme of purity, while those who treat everything the same are at the extreme of harmony. The purity achieved through diligence is not the purity of a saint; The peace that one strives to achieve is not the peace of saints. The so-called sage is someone who arrives without diligence or consideration." He also said, "Cultivating morality and advancing one's studies is for the purpose of becoming one's nature, which means the unity of mind and nature. So nature-becoming is called the sage, such as the purity of Boyi and the harmony of Liuxia Hui, which do not need to be encouraged. But they just become nature in one portion, Confucius becomes nature through greatness." [2] That is to say, Chang Tsai believes that the sage is a person who becomes a man without deliberation and diligence. The purity of saints do not need deliberate exertion, the same goes for the peace of saints. Because neither the purity of Boyi nor the peace of Liuxia Hui need to encourage", the purity is the sage's purity and the peace is the sage's peace. Boyi and Liuxia Hui become nature in the purity and peace. Therefore, they can be called the sage. But they become nature only in one portion, not through greatness. This means that although Boyi and Liuxia Hui can also be called saints, there is a certain gap between them and the saints who were formed by "learning- greatness - transformation (sainthood)" in Chang Tsai's thought.

#### **4. MANIFESTATION OF HOLY VIRTUE: "POOR THE VIRTUE OF HEAVEN AND KNOW THE TAO OF HEAVEN"**

Starting from the noumenon, Chang Tsai believes that the holy noumenon is based on heaven. From the perspective of connotation, what should saintly virtue manifest? In other words, since becoming a saint means "being in heaven's virtue", what are the characteristics of a saint who "being in the virtue of heaven"? Chang Tsai proposed: "Poor the virtue of heaven and know the tao of heaven, the prosperity of virtue is also" [2].

Chang Tsai said, "the virtue and tao of heaven is the goodness of heaven, not the power of human beings. Therefore, we must first achieve unity with heaven, and then be able to poor the virtue of heaven and know the tao of heaven." [2] He also said, "God is the virtues of heaven, transformation is the tao of heaven. Virtue, its noumenon. Tao, its use." [2] God and transformation is the capacity of heaven, not the capacity of human beings. However, if a person can achieve the "greatness that unity with heavenly virtues," he was already a saint which can poor the virtue of heaven and know the tao of heaven and be integrated with heaven. God is the virtue of heaven and transformation is the tao of heaven, therefore 'poor God and know transformation' means that a saint can poor the virtue of heaven and know the tao of heaven, the virtue of a saint is combined with heavenly virtue, the daily use of a saint is combined with heavenly tao, and the body of a saint is combined with heavenly body. Therefore, Chang Tsai said, "'poor God and know transformation and unity with heaven is beyond my ability to encourage? It is due to the prosperity of virtue." [2] The virtue of heaven and the tao of heaven stand for the highest moral and behavioral basis. "Poor God and know transformation" reflects the high consciousness of saints towards moral conscience and the high rationality of objective things and their operations. But it is important to note that "Poor God and know transformation" only means that the sage has the virtue of conforming to heaven and the ability to conform

to heaven, not mean that the sage has become a religious deity[6].

In fact, when the "poor the virtue of heaven and know the tao of heaven" erases the color of heaven and is implemented in personality cultivation, it is manifested as the "convergence of benevolence and wisdom". When it is implemented in life practice, it is reflected as the "honest and transformation of great virtue". Firstly, Chang Tsai believes that the process of "the convergence of benevolence and wisdom" is actually the process of "transforming into saints", that is, seeking sincerity through applying force at a bias towards, just like the "the constant benevolent" or "the constant wise". Then seeking enlightenment from sincerity, and finally becoming saints that converge benevolence and knowledge. He said, "Those who are benevolent are called benevolent because they are constantly benevolent; A wise person is constantly wise, so it is called wisdom; This is called Zhi Qu. Qu can generate sincerity, sincerity leads to change, transformation leads to the integration of benevolence and wisdom, then becomes a sage." [2] However, this is not Chang Tsai's creation. It is Chang Tsai's inheritance of The Doctrine of the Mean. In the book "The Doctrine of the Mean", it is said: "Qu can generate sincerity. Sincerity leads to form, form leads to manifestation, manifestation leads to clarity, clarity leads to movement, movement leads to change, and change leads to transformation. Only the utmost sincerity in the world can be transformed." Secondly, Chang Tsai pointed out that "honest and transformation of great virtue" is a manifestation of the unity of body and function. He said, "Being honest but not transforming is a manifestation that having noumenon but not having function. Transforming and losing oneself, sacrificing oneself for personal gain. Great virtue is cultivated, and then benevolence and wisdom are combined to prepare for the affairs of saints. Conforming to nature is the ability to exist in God, and conforming to changes is the ability to be transformed." [2] From the perspective of heaven, being honest represents the virtue of heaven, which is the body; the transformation represents the tao of heaven, which is the function. Therefore "honest and transformation of great virtue" means "god and transformation". From the perspective of human being, being honest is the embodiment of benevolence and the manifestation of conforming to the virtue of heaven; Transformation is the embodiment of wisdom and the manifestation of knowing the tao of heaven. Therefore, "honest and transformation of great virtue" is the unity of body and function. All in all, When the "God and Transformation" of heaven is reflected on the individual's personality cultivation, it is the common manifestation of benevolence and wisdom. When the transcendence of "poor god and know transformation" is implemented in human life practice, it is the the unity of body and function.

From the above discussion, we can find that the noumenon basis of Chang Tsai's saint is heaven, the final direction of saint is also heaven. And the process of individual sainthood is the process of unity of heaven and humanity, that is, individual virtue gradually integrates with the virtue of heaven and individual behavior gradually integrates with the tao of heaven. So how to connect the metaphysical heaven with real people? Chang Tsai introduced "nature" to complete the connection. Nature was bestowed on humans by heaven, so it replaced heaven as the end of sanctification. In this sense, becoming holy is actually becoming nature, so how do we characterize the state of becoming nature? Chang Tsai introduced the concept of "sincerity", which means that Individuals do not have to force themselves, they naturally follow their nature, and their actions align with the highest good in their nature. Since becoming saint is becoming nature, becoming nature has become the focus of scholars' efforts. At the same time, Chang Tsai emphasized the process of transitioning from a phenomenon to a sage with the phrase "great and transform". In fact, "great and transform" is the final stage of the completion of nature-becoming. What is the state of a saint after being sanctified? Chang Tsai used the phrase 'poor God and know transformation' to express the realm. 'God' and 'Transformation' are originally functions of heaven. Chang Tsai used 'God' and 'transformation' to express the realm of saints, which also indicates that the ultimate goal of saints is heaven. When the concept of 'poor God and know transformation' falls into human cultivation and practice, it includes two aspects: the first is the 'convergence of benevolence and wisdom'; The second is the unity of morality and practice.

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