

Su Shi's Commentary on the *Book of Changes*

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Su Shi (蘇軾 1037-1101) is commonly regarded as a great literary writer. But he saw himself primarily as a Confucian scholar, and he regarded his commentary on the *Book of Changes*, *Dongpo Yizhuan* (東坡易傳) as the most important work in his life. He was also regarded as the leader of one of the two major Confucian schools (*shuxue* 蜀學) in his own time, competing with the school (*luoxue* 洛學) led by the Cheng brothers. In this paper, I argue that in spite of its long neglect by the Chinese scholars, *Dongpo Yizhuan* is a great work, with profound insights in Confucian moral and political philosophy. Su Shi's philosophy as expressed in his commentary on the *Book of Changes* can be interestingly compared with that of Cheng Yi (程頤). They represent two rival ways to interpret the Confucian tradition. Among other things, Su Shi argues for the importance of *qing* (情) in human nature, the plasticity of human morality, the unreasonableness of fixed codification, the need for the recognition of individuality, and the danger of the pursuit of a utopia. Examining Su Shi as a transmitter of the Confucian classics helps to bring out key ideas and debates within the Confucian tradition, and hopefully a better understanding of the richness and soundness of the Confucian tradition.