Person-in-the-World:
A neo-Confucian Ecological Humanism

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Abstract
Within the neo-Confucian writings of Wang Fuzhi one finds a complex and comprehensive natural cosmology and philosophical anthropology. Through hermeneutic exposition this dissertation demonstrates that his theories on the natural world and human beings are a cogent philosophical ecology. In particular, this dissertation begins and ends with the premise that the theoretical structure and terminology of Wang Fuzhi’s neo-Confucian discourse offers a rich resource for advancing the paradigm of ecological humanism.
Abbreviations of Works by Wang Fuzhi

ZYW Zhouyi waizhuan 周易外傳 (1655)
DSS Du Sishudaquan shuo 讀四書大全說 (revised 1665)
ZYXJ Zhouyi daxiang jie 周易大象解 (1676)
ZMZ Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu 張子正蒙注 (1679)
ZYFL Zhouyi neizhuan fali 周易內傳發例 (1686)
SWW Siwenlu waipian 思問錄外篇 (c. 1680)
ZYN Zhouyi neizhuan 周易內傳 (1686)
SL Songlun 宋論 (1691)

INTRODUCTION

1. Person-in-the-World and Ecological Humanism:
   Discursive and Cursory Definitions

To be a person is to be a person-in-the-world. This project aims to develop, analyze, and amplify the concept ‘person-in-the-world’ as a model of ecological humanism. This model is based on the natural cosmology and philosophical anthropology of Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692). The terminology of “ecological humanism” is here appropriated from Kerry Whiteside’s (2002) work in philosophy of ecology. As Whiteside presents it, ecological humanism is a theoretical paradigm based on the belief that persons and the natural world are inextricably interrelated historical events. “The concepts of nature and humanity are bound together in historical-cultural processes, such that what nature is can be understood only in relation to human practices, hopes, and fears—and vice versa” (ibid., p. 73). Ecological humanism maintains that nature has no essence in itself (Whiteside 2002, pp. 75 ff.). It rejects the mode of thought that ontologically dichotomizes persons, individually and collectively, from their natural and social environments. The intention is to enrich the paradigm by representing it in terms of neo-Confucian discourse.

Ecological humanism is a complex systems theory. A person-in-the-world is a complex system. The constituents of the complex system are holistically interconnected processes. These processes function on multiple levels of organization. The organizational structure is a nested hierarchy. In this model, each level is recursively interrelated: constituent processes at every organizational level mutually inform and transform processes at every other level.
A person-in-the-world is constituted by nested patterns of energy, *qizhili* 氣之理: these patterns integrate the person’s internal embodied energy with the person’s external environmental energy. Wang Fuzhi conveys this line of thought as such: “Filling the space between the heavens and earth, inside and outside of the lived body, there is nothing that is not energy” (DSS 1991, p. 857).¹ Elsewhere, he continues to develop this idea: “The merging of nature and persons just is continuity of energy” (DSS 1991, p. 1051).² Wang maintains that energy always structures itself into coherent patterns. There is no amorphous energy without coherence (DSS 1991, p. 857). By the same token, Wang categorically denies the existence of any metaphysical principle apart from energy. Thus, the energy continuum of nature-and-persons, *tianrenyiqi* 天人一氣, is also formulated as continuity of patterns, *tianrenyili* 天人一理.

Wang understands patterns of energy as nested hierarchical structures. “Myriad patterns systemically unite in one pattern; one pattern contains myriad patterns; they are interconnected and inter-nested” (DSS 1991, p. 1110).³ The person-in-the-world is a nested hierarchical structure. So, energy continuously flows and transforms between levels and throughout the system. An ecosystem is a paradigmatic example of a nested hierarchy. An ecosystem has at least two hierarchical levels of systemic organization: a level of environment and a level of organism (Keller and Golley 2001, p. 22). The energy internal to a person’s body exchanges energy with the external systems of the person’s environment without interruption. As Wang Fuzhi has it, “energy is transferred among things through reciprocal interactions of giving and receiving” (DSS 1991, p. 962).⁴

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2. Synoptic Overview

The project at hand is a work in interpretative philosophy. The interpretation aims at disclosing Wang Fuzhi’s worldview from both an internal and external perspective. The former looks to represent his philosophy on its own terms. The latter looks to creatively advance his philosophy by interpreting it from the post-modern view of ecological humanism. The methodology requires establishing the external point of view by providing an exposition of ecological humanism. The exposition begins by disambiguating the sense of “humanism” as it is used in context of ecological humanism. In this context, the meaning of “humanism” is quite distinct from the sense that the term has in the discourse of modernity. In reference to the traditions of the European Enlightenment or modern era of philosophy, “humanism” signifies “anthropocentrism.” Ecological humanism rejects the anthropocentric narrative of modernity. Indeed, ecological humanism is an entirely different paradigm than modern humanism. As such, ecological humanism is post-modern. Both modern humanism and post-modern ecological humanism advocate programs of humanizing nature. Following the traditions of modernity, “humanizing” nature has come to mean “dominating” nature. The post-modern shift into ecological humanism replaces the unilateral power relationship envisioned by modernity with the relationship of reciprocity.

The initial engagement with Wang’s cosmology in the second chapter follows François Jullien (1989) and Allison Black (1989) in establishing Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy in contrast to theistic creationism. In contrast to the metaphysical dualism of creationism, Wang Fuzhi asserts a naturalistic cosmology. His insistence on naturalism provides cogent support for the interpretive project of this thesis. Wang adopts Xunzi’s account of tian 天 as an impersonal,
nonpurposive, natural world. Moreover, he makes significant use of the Daoist terminology of *ziran* 自然 to describe the world as spontaneous self-generating processes. Insofar as he advances the categories of *tian* and *ziran* from Xunzi and classical Daoism, Wang’s use of *tian* is contrasted against the anthropomorphic connotations of *tian* found in the *Analects* of Confucius and the book of *Mencius*. In the context of Wang’s work, one finds ample justification for interpreting his use of *tian* in terms of the English *nature*. This justified interpretation thereby opens Wang’s discourse on the *continuity of nature and persons* 天人合一 and relations between *nature and persons* 天人之際 for a responsible interpretation from the external perspective of ecological humanism. Chapter two continues the contextualization of Wang’s cosmology by looking to his creative advance of the Song dynasty, neo-Confucian, doctrinal statements of Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤 1017–1073) and Zhu Xi (朱熹 1130–1200). Wang argues for analytically understanding Zhou Dunyi’s *Statement on the Diagram of the Supreme Limits* as a doctrine of immanent cosmological creativity. In this vein, he also reproaches Zhu Xi by insisting on the immanence and dynamism of *li* 理, the autopoietic patterns of the natural world that organize it into a complex yet coherent structure.

Chapter three finds further support for interpreting Wang’s work as model for ecological humanism through analysis of his master categories *tianrenzhiji* 天人之際, *zairenzhitian* 在人之天, *zaitianzhitian* 在天之天: “between nature and persons,” “nature within persons” and “nature within nature.” Through analysis of these categories, one finds Wang Fuzhi in agreement with ecological humanism’s fundamental premise of reciprocity. Again, analysis

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5 “*Statement on the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*” is here offered as a translation of the title of Zhou Dunyi’s treatise, *Taiji tushuo* 太極圖說.
further demonstrates that Wang’s theory provides great potential for adding profound depth to
the paradigm of ecological humanism.

The discussion moves from Wang’s philosophical anthropology into his adoption of the
*Book of Changes* as a kind of complex systems theory. The attempt to approach Wang Fuzhi’s
philosophy from a perspective internal to its historical context is carried forward in chapter four
by translating and analyzing Wang Fuzhi’s methodological prescriptions for reading the *Yijing.*
The internal perspective is additionally fleshed out by comparing and contrasting Wang Fuzhi’s
commentaries on the *Yijing* with two divergent schools of thought found within his hermeneutic
horizons—namely, the school of Meaning and Pattern and the school of Image and Number,
respectively referred to in Chinese as the *yili* 義理 and *xiangshu* 象數. Study of the *Yijing*
provides a unique and profound complex systems theory of the world.

Having developed a concept of person-in-the-world based on Wang’s cosmology and
anthropology, the final component of the model is added by way of an axiology. The discussion
looks to identify the modalities of the persons-in-the-world through which they find significance,
understanding, and value in their situation. The theme of humanizing nature is revisited with the
addition of the structure and value found in the Confucian philosophy and praxis of ritual
propriety, *li* 礼. Wang’s religiosity is finally disclosed by identifying his assent to the
illocutionary sense of Zhang Zai’s (张载 1020–1077) statements on the situatedness of persons-
in-the-world. This religious dimension of Wang’s worldview expresses a felt-intimacy, a
consummately human experience, in relation to the heavens, the earth, and the myriad things.
3. Biographical Introduction

Wang Fuzhi’s biography is an account of an orthodox Confucian scholar during the Ming-Qing transition period of imperial China. Bearing witness to the fall of the Ming and rise of the Qing, he was directly acquainted with the sufferings of social degradation, political capitulation, war and alienation. Wang Fuzhi was born and raised within a family of orthodox Confucian scholars. As a youth he was versed in the classical Confucian canon by his eldest brother, and educated in the polemics of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism by his father, Wang Chaopin. Under the tutelage of his uncle he acquired a deep interest in poetics. “At the same time he was eager to learn about practical affairs, through study in such areas as geography, military techniques…” (Yan 1994, pp. 80–81). As he would demonstrate throughout his long life of authorship, he loved learning haoxue 好學. On this line, Kang Chuan-Cheng (2008) points one’s attention to the presence of astronomy, calendar methodology, and numerology in Wang’s fields of study, and notes that Wang Fuzhi was particularly adept at classical studies, historiography, and literary criticism (p. 87).

He undertook his early curriculum in earnest: at the age of twenty-four Wang Fuzhi passed the prefectural level xiucai 秀才 civil service examination in his native Huguang Prefecture (modern day Hunan Province) with an essay on the classical Spring and Autumn Annals (Wong 1987, p. ix). Shortly thereafter he had intended on traveling North to Beijing to take the imperial level zhusheng 諸生 examinations, but as the Ming fell into political collapse,

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6 This claim is based in part on Wong Siu-kit’s “Introduction” to his translation of Wang Fuzhi’s Notes on Poetry from the Ginger Studio (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987) p. viii. Wong’s “Introduction” provides a concise and informative sketch of Wang Fuzhi’s early biography.

an outbreak of civil unrest and violence occurred. Due to the escalating turmoil, Wang was forced to cancel his plans and return to his home in Hengzhou (Hengyang).

In 1644, when Wang was twenty-five, his father was taken political prisoner by the rebel army of the warlord Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 (1606–1644). Wang Fuzhi seriously injured himself so that Zhang’s army would not want to conscript him. He is said to have then hidden his brother, and have himself taken to his father’s prison to negotiate his release. By “some expedient measure,” he secured his father’s freedom (Yan 1994, p. 82). That same year, Beijing was overrun by Manchu invaders from the North, and the reigning Ming emperor, Chongzhen 崇禎 (1611–1644), hanged himself. When Wang heard this news, he mourned his “ruler-father and refused food for many days” (Yan 1994, p. 86).

In the several years that followed, Wang first took up arms with a band of Ming loyalists in resistance to the encroachment on southern China by the “northern barbarian” Manchu army. His military resistance was soon overrun by the conquest of the Manchurian Qing dynasty. During this time, the remnants of the Ming government relocated and organized an auxiliary capital in the South, Nanjing. Wang then served as counsel in the refugee court of the displaced Ming prince, Yongming 永明. Bearing witness to political infighting and corruption in the court, Wang became disillusioned with the estranged Ming. In 1651, at the age of thirty-three, he fled from the conflicts of politics and war, and took the dao of an orthodox Confucian eremitic scholar.  

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8 For a corroborating account, see Wong 1987, p. viii.
9 For a corroborating account, see Platt 2007, p. 10.
10 In reference to Wang’s plight, Wai-Yi Lee (2006) points out: First, eremitism is a familiar ideal in the Chinese tradition—a defined niche in the ordering of reality. It summons visions of a world in which engagement and disengagement, service and withdrawal, are complementary attitudes, depending on whether one’s circumstances are straitened (qiong 窮) or conducive to action (da 達). It implies equanimity, conscious choice, and a context that accepts this behavior as reasonable. (p. 8)
Wang’s biography speaks for a life lived according to the prescriptions of Confucian ritual propriety, *li* 禮. He strictly practiced actions befitting a filial son, a respectful brother, and a loyal scholar-official in his situation. Based on both his biography and the tenets of his Confucian philosophy, the roles and relationships that Wang Fuzhi observed must have been central to his self-understanding. As the socio-political structure that supported his personal identity collapsed under the weight of duplicity, partisanship, and stagnant ineffectiveness, Wang Fuzhi was thrown into an existential crisis.\(^{11}\) One the one hand, he was committed to acting on a humanistic concern for the survival of his family, social order, and cultural heritage.\(^{12}\) On the other hand, he became increasingly aware of his own lack of power against the complex historical forces that ultimately caused the fall of his dynasty. Faced with the apparent death of the socio-political order and the cultural inheritance with which he had identified himself, he was forced into questioning his personal integrity, alienation, and *raison d’être*. He viewed the death of the empire as his own. Conveying his struggle in verse, he composes the “Poem of Sorrow and Wrath” in which he refers to the Ming as “falling peach blossoms” (Yan 1994, p. 86). And in his self-elegy epitaph, he writes of himself as “nursing solitary wrath” and “carrying enduring sorrow” (Platt 2007, p. 10).\(^{13}\)

Looking for a resolution to this crisis, Wang turned to nature. “Wang Fuzhi considered reclusion a way of dying: ‘Life and death are the affairs of *tian*. How can humans intervene? Action and concealment are my way of living and dying’ 死生，天事也，於人何預？行藏者，\(^{11}\) For an extended discussion of the existential crisis faced by Wang Fuzhi and his contemporaries, see Wai-Yi Lee (2006).\(^{12}\) Yan Shoucheng demonstrates that Wang Fuzhi headed the Confucian injunction to “save the world by putting it in order (*yi kuang tianxia* 一匡天下)” (*Analects* 14.17). Yan continues, “In the late-Ming crisis, Wang Fuzhi’s high-spirited forwardness was rather for ‘saving the empire from collapse’ than for his own career or fame” (1994, pp. 81–82).\(^{13}\) In order to penetrate Wang’s experience, it is important to understand that he shared this crisis with his compatriot scholar-officials. “There were intense debates on the meanings of, and justifications for, martyrdom and survival. This may in part explain the popularity of the genres of ‘self-elegy’—the tomb epitaph inscription written for oneself (*ziwei muzhi ming* 自為墓誌銘)” (Lee 2006, p. 4).
He moved deep into the remote mountainous region of central Hunan, where he spent the remaining four decades of his life seeking refuge, guidance and fortitude in philosophical study and reflection (Platt 2007, p. 10). In his final 17 years, he lived in a “mud hut” at the foot of “Stone Boat Mountain” from which he took his penname, Wang Chuanshan (Lee 2006, p. 13). As is evidenced by the depth and breadth of his extant works, the author is a literatus par excellence. Wang Fuzhi spent his adult life in material poverty, “borrowing the brushes and paper he used for writing from friends and disciples” (Platt 2007, p. 10). And yet the author’s wealth is found in his writings: encyclopedic knowledge, philosophical acumen, sincerity, and intellectual vigor. On this note, Siu-Kit Wong praises Wang’s oeuvre: “The sheer quantity is formidable, and both the range and quality could only have been achieved by an intellectual giant” (1987, p. x).

Wang Fuzhi’s authorship is here interpreted within its philosophical-historical context. In response to the threat of intellectual eclipse by the rich neo-Daoist and Buddhist metaphysics that had achieved a ubiquitous presence in the intellectual culture of the preceding Tang dynasty (618–907), Song dynasty neo-Confucians looked to the Yijing as the locus classicus for a Confucian cosmological vision. “In Wang Fuzhi’s view, the philosophy of Zhang Zai (張載 1020–1077)—whom he admired most highly among the Neo-Confucian masters—is no more than the application of the Way of Changes,” yizhidao易之道 (Yan 1994, p. 88 n. 51). Zhang Zai’s Correcting Youthful Ignorance, Zhengmeng, is a Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) appropriation, interpretation, and reconstruction of the Yijing, a text originating in China’s high

antiquity.¹⁶ Zhang’s work stands alongside the Explanation of the Taiji Diagram 太極圖說 authored by Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) as two pillars of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism. Wang Fuzhi takes up this commentarial tradition in the lineage of Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), and bases his own philosophy by and large on his personal reading of the Yijing.

Wang Fuzhi embodies an inherited hermeneutic disposition for interpreting experience under the categories of neo-Confucian cosmology and philosophical anthropology. In light of his biography, poetry, and philosophy, I understand Wang’s angst as an estrangement from or “death” of his social self—that is, his self-understanding as the locus of interpersonal network. I suggest, over the course of his forty year sojourn in nature and textual study, the author sublimated his angst by developing a more inclusive and comprehensive vision of self, an ecological self—a self that is constituted by its relations to the heavens-and-earth and myriad patterns of existence. Although this foray into the psychology of the author may be contested on philosophical grounds, it cannot be denied that Wang Fuzhi held an integrative and holistic understanding of persons and the natural world.

4. Note on Sources and Translations

Though Wang Fuzhi is a significant figure in Chinese intellectual history, there is a dearth of English resources currently available on his work. Indeed, Allison Harley Black’s (1989) Man and Nature in the Philosophical Thought of Wang Fu-chi (1619–1692) is the only

¹⁶ Jacques Gernet calls attention to the same point of interest: L’ouvrage principal de Zhang Zai, L’initiation correcte (Zhengmeng), est une explication générale de l’univers fondée sur une interprétation du livre des Mutations et tout spécialement sur son Grand commentaire ou Appendice, le Xici. Il peut être considéré lui-même comme une sorte de commentaire philosophique au livre des Mutations (Gernet 2006, p. 33).

The principle work of Zhang Zai, the Zhengmeng, is a general explication of the universe founded on an interpretation of the Book of Changes, especially on its Great Commentary or Appendix, the Xici. It could be considered, in itself, as a sort of philosophical commentary on the Book of Changes. (my translation)
available English monograph in the field. Given the lack of resources for accessing such a profound philosopher and significant figure in the history of Chinese philosophy, this dissertation offers a contribution to the field of philosophy by providing a substantive amount of translation and research drawn from Wang’s original work, contemporary Chinese articles, and French scholarship on Wang’s thought.

Two French texts in particular are useful for the study of Wang Fuzhi’s thought. Firstly, Jacques Gernet’s (2005) *La raison des choses: Essai sur la philosophie de Wang Fuzhi* provides a valuable roadmap to the vast terrain of Wang Fuzhi’s complete works. Gernet has compiled a thematic compendium of passages from Wang’s classical Chinese texts alongside his translations into French. His commentary on these passages is minimalistic but insightful. Gernet does not set out to argue for a particular philosophical thesis: his work is predominantly sinological. François Jullien’s (1989) *Procès ou Création: Une Introduction à la pensée des lettrés chinois* provides a focused interpretation of Wang Fuzhi’s commentaries on Zhang Zai and the *Yijing* in terms of process philosophy and correlative cosmology. Unlike Gernet, Jullien’s study of Wang Fuzhi contains little by way of translation. Nonetheless, Jullien’s philosophical discourse adds a wealth of language to the interpretive project carried out in this dissertation.

In addition to the above French and English resources, the ensuing discussion draws from a number of twenty-first century Chinese writings on Wang Fuzhi’s naturalistic cosmology, philosophical anthropology, and philosophical ecology. First and foremost, Li Zhecheng 李哲承 (2003) confirms that the neo-Confucian worldview of Wang Fuzhi offers a theoretical model and terminology for the study of philosophical ecology. Li’s thesis demonstrates that Wang Fuzhi critically appropriates elements of the Daoist conception of nature as a spontaneous self-generating event. In this vein, his identification of the influence of classical Chinese naturalism
on Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy is instrumental to the exposition of natural cosmology in this dissertation. Li shows that although Wang adopts a Daoist concept nature, he steadfastly rejects the Daoist philosophical anthropology. Li’s thesis further discloses the critical posture that Wang took toward the both Confucius’s and Mencius’s view of tian. Though Wang is critical of this aspect of classical Confucianism, he whole-heartedly accepts its philosophical anthropology.

Xiong Lümao 熊吕茂 and Yang Zhengzheng 杨铮铮 (2003) detail the components of Wang Fuzhi’s humanism. The conclusion of their work supports an understanding of Wang’s humanism as a non-anthropocentric inclusive humanism. Their argument is particularly informative in that it situates the “humanistic” components of his worldview within his broader cosmology.

Zhou Bing 周兵 (2005) has written an extensive and intensive dissertation on Wang Fuzhi’s study of the Four Books. As is seen in the ensuing discussion, Zhou identifies the concept of tianrenzhiji 天人之際, the relations between nature and persons, as the organizing paradigm of Wang’s DSS. Zhou’s responsible and extensive citations of Wang’s original work provide an expedient means for identifying significant discussions of major themes in Wang’s original work.

Finally, Zheng Xiong 郑熊 (2006) provides a contrastive study of the difference between the different meanings of tian from the pre-Qin perspective of Confucius and the Ming perspective of Wang Fuzhi. Zheng’s insight is that besides the fact that the same character, tian 天, is used in the work of Wang Fuzhi and Confucius, there is no commonality between these two authors on meaning of the term. As seen in the ensuing discussion, Zheng’s article provides
an analysis of Wang’s categorical distinction between tian and persons. All translations of the French and Chinese texts (including the work of Wang Fuzhi) are my own. In each instance of translation, the original foreign language text is given by way of footnote.

5. Setting Forth on the Discourse

By taking up the position of ecological humanism in the hermeneutic engagement with this neo-Confucian perspective, the intention is to demonstrate that the theoretical components inherent in his historically-rooted worldview may provide a potent resource for post-modern philosophies of human nature and the natural world. Wang Fuzhi’s uniquely analytic, critical, and literal reading of the neo-Confucian tradition represents the discourse as an undeniable naturalistic account of persons and the world. The naturalistic representation establishes the discourse as a resource for advancing philosophical ecology. Conversely, the philosophy of ecology (or philosophical ecology) provides a place for recovery and reconstruction of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism in the twenty-first century. The thesis of this dissertation indicates the potential for creative advance of neo-Confucianism and philosophical ecology if and when the hermeneutic horizons of these disparate theories are fused. Developing neo-Confucian philosophical ecology has the potential for advancing knowledge in a post-Darwin/post-Einstein era of natural science while contemporaneously cultivating qualitative, subjective and intersubjective experiences that are rightly called religious. A neo-Confucian philosophical ecology offers a fusion of naturalism and humanism. It offers a model of ecological humanism.

17 See bibliography for complete details.
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Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in the beginning of his *Nature*, “I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me.” Writing this dissertation has taught me to appreciate this sentiment. I am forever indebted to my wife, Amy, my son, Sage, and my daughter, Alethea, for their bedrock of support—especially during those days when I spent more time staring at a book or computer than playing with them. I am indebted to my mother and father for their unflagging patience and understanding when I needed their support over the years that it took to compile the research and formulate the argument of this dissertation. We all learned together just how difficult and demanding pursuing a Ph.D. in comparative philosophy can be. The achievement of this dissertation belongs as much to my family as it does to me.

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CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY

1. Introductory Overview

This study is intended to convey a neo-Confucian understanding of Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy. At the same time, the intention is to disclose the significance of the Wang’s worldview as a model for ecological humanism. The former mode of understanding presents an internal perspective on the text. The latter mode presents an external perspective. The interpretive project begins with a statement on the hermeneutic method (section 2). As a point of disambiguation, ecological humanism is called “post-modern,” as opposed to the anthropocentric humanism of modern era philosophies (section 3). The paradigm is then defined, thereby providing a position from which to interpret Wang Fuzhi’s writings (section 4–6). Having established an external hermeneutic perspective, an internal perspective is then introduced by way of Li Zehou’s theory of the history of Chinese philosophy (section 7). Finally the internal perspective is widened through inquiry into Wang Fuzhi’s hermeneutic method of commentarial philosophy (Section 8).

2. Interpretation: Internal and External Perspectives

As stated at the outset of this discussion, this dissertation adopts Michael C. Kalton’s method for developing a neo-Confucian based ecology. Again, following Kalton, the intention of the work at hand is to “exemplify what happens when one uses the Neo-Confucian tradition, not as an object of study, but as a place from which to think” (1998, p. 99). Although this
dissertation provides an exposition of Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy, the exposition is not treated
here as an end in itself. The intention is not simply to recover Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy as a
vestige of a historical tradition (ibid.). The methodology of this work is hermeneutical in the
sense that it carries a message from a distant time and place to the here and now. As Wang
Fuzhi took up the Confucian classics and interpreted them in the context of the cosmological
vocabulary developed throughout the Song and Ming dynasties, so this dissertation advances a
commentary on Wang’s philosophy from the vantage point of twenty-first century philosophies
of ecology.

As a principle of hermeneutic methodology, the present interpretation is meant to be true
to the intentions embedded within Wang’s texts, and it takes into account the intellectual history
that informs his written works. In this sense, the project at hand is an attempt at interpreting
Wang Fuzhi’s theory from a perspective that is internal to its original context. According to the
prescriptions of this methodology, any attempt at accessing Wang Fuzhi’s thought must
obliquely approach his texts by taking detours through the Yiijing, the Book of Mencius, the
Analects of Confucius, the Book of Rites, neo-Confucian Study of Patterning (lixue 理學), as well
as canonical works of pre-Qin, Lao-Zhuang Daoism.

Complementary to the internal reconstruction of Wang’s worldview, this project engages
Wang’s narrative from the position of contemporary philosophical ecology. This approach
requires rethinking Wang’s original work in terms that are foreign to the text. It requires
“reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new,” to use a Confucian dictum (Analects 2.11).¹
The method is to frame a dialogue between two culturally, historically, and linguistically distinct

philosophical traditions with the goal of developing an enriched and multifaceted account of nature and person-in-the-world. By definition, no dialogue is unilateral. From a hermeneutic standpoint, a dialogue between historically, socio-culturally, and linguistically distinct traditions is only fruitful—is only possible—if the dialogical counterparts can be shown to agree on fundamental questions and a shared universe of discourse. Moreover, as in the case of dialogue, the interpretive method carried out herein results in the mutual transformation of both neo-Confucianism and post-modern ecology. Using similar language to the Analects, Wang endorses this kind of creative hermeneutic understanding. He writes, “The old and new condition each other as a means of renewing the old” (ZYW 1988, p. 1008).²

3. Two Dogmas of Humanism: Anthropocentrism and Scientism

In order advance the theory of ecological humanism, it is important to disambiguate the sense of “humanism” in this context from the sense of the term in the discourse of modernity. Ecological humanism is based on the premise that “persons” and “nature” are mutually defined. It stands as a rejection to the belief that persons and nature have discrete ontological essences. Kerry Whiteside clearly states the position:

Nature is never simply ‘out there,’ to be encountered in an unadulterated form. Neither is humanity ‘in here,’ the essence of an autonomous, reflecting subject. Nature’s nature is inseparable from organized human practices. Human nature is inseparable from the influences of a bio-physical reality. (Whiteside 2002, p. 65)

In the ensuing discussion (chapter three), we will see that this latter claim is a parallel to the humanism of Wang Fuzhi. At present, the discussion follows Whiteside’s assertion that

² Claim based on Wang’s original text: “新故相資而新其故” (ZYW 1988, p. 1008).
ecological humanism is an alternative paradigm to anthropocentric humanism. On this point, again, one finds an agreement between Wang’s Confucian humanism and ecological humanism.

Kerry Whiteside (2002) notes that “in the rhetorical field of English-speaking ecologism, ‘humanism’ often gets confounded with ‘anthropocentrism’” (ibid. p. 72). This is the sense of “humanism” inherited from the Modern Era of intellectual history, otherwise known as the European Enlightenment. That humanism is quite distinct from ecological humanism. Since its development during the Enlightenment, anthropocentric humanism has been a pervasive and prominent hermeneutic prejudice in the ongoing historical development of European and American societies. Indeed, this underlying ethic can be accredited as a significant tributary to the advent of modern secular governance, natural science, capitalistic market economy, and the technocratic development of material culture. Based on its historical roots, the anthropocentric humanism assumed in “the rhetorical field of English-speaking ecologism,” may be referred to as modern humanism. The remainder of this portion of the discussion presents a general intellectual history of modern humanism. Subsequently, the next portion moves into an exegesis of ecological humanism by way of contrasting it against the tenets of modern humanism.

Immanuel Kant’s rational morality provides a paramount expression of modern humanism. Kant maintains that human beings alone should be categorically and universally treated as ends-in-themselves, never simply as means toward some otherwise contrived end. In tandem with this categorical imperative is the belief that human beings are the sole, rational, autonomous, moral agents in the world. Only those values that are postulated by humans and rationally willed for the sake and well-being of all humans are valuable in and of themselves. In short, only humans have intrinsic value. By the same token, every non-human (non-rational,
non-autonomous) life form and non-living object is absolutely devoid of intrinsic value. Non-human entities are valuable if and only if they serve as means for achieving human ends. In short, they only have instrumental value.

“Modernity’s master narratives included a story of human progress through the domination of nature, its objectification, and its subjection to technological control” (Whiteside 2002, p. 141). Modern humanism celebrates instrumental reason and autonomy of the will. In conjunction, these powerful faculties enable persons to objectively understand and intentionally manipulate the natural forces of their environments. From the modern perspective, humanization of nature just is a rational and volitional domination of nature.

Although the idea of rational domination comes to fruition during the Enlightenment, it is rooted deep within the sedimentary layers of history that underlie modernity. The seeds of the idea are so deep that they are said to have been sown at the beginning of time—in Genesis. God created man in his image and charged him to “fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (1.29).³ The history of natural science demonstrates that modernity’s master narrative is tied to the biblical narrative of Creation. Whether justified or not, the God-given sovereign right to subdue all other life forms has been consistently and pervasively interpreted throughout history as a sanction for anthropocentric axiology. In time, the doctrine of dominion becomes the doctrine of domination.

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³ For an excellent analysis and exposition of the development of the ‘dominion’ concept, see William Leiss, Domination of Nature (Montreal, QC, CAN: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). For an account of the concept in Genesis in particular, see especially pp. 31 ff.
In 1637, with the publication of his *Discourse on Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, René Descartes ushered forth the traditional conception of ‘dominion’ into the modern era. In this text, Descartes sets forth the agenda for modern science and applied instrumental reason to come to understand the objective forces of the world in order to “render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature.” Likewise, during the early establishment of modern science, Francis Bacon sought to restore the divine mandate of dominion through science and technology, which Bacon refers to as “mechanical arts.” This approach and disposition toward nature is one of coercive control, mastery, inquisition, and conquest of nature through the methodical application of instrumental reason. Bacon proposed that science and technology should be used to “search into the bowels of nature,” and “shape nature as on an anvil.” According to the modern scientistic and technocratic understanding, persons are established as autonomous, rational, agents who are engaged in a struggle versus the objective forces of nature. The intention of science, in Bacon’s words, is “victory of art over nature” and overcoming the “inconveniences of man’s estate,” that is, the adverse conditions of persons’ natural environments (Leiss 1994, pp. 78, 83, 85). Characterizing the ideals of Descartes and Bacon, the nineteenth-century philosopher, Ludwig Feuerbach, thus remarks on the history and trajectory of modern epistemology, “Natural science has therefore no other goal

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4 Descartes’ claim to dominion is made in Part 6, paragraph 2. Source-text for Descarte’s *Discourse on Method* is found online through Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/ (accessed Dec. 21, 2011). See also, Whiteside (2002) p. 1, ff. for brief discussion of Descartes as a foil to ecological humanism.

5 “Art” is here used in the sense of its etymological roots in the Greek term “techne,” which also serves as the basis for the term “technology.”

than to more firmly establish and extend the power and domination of men over nature. But the
domination of men over nature rests solely on art [technology] and knowledge.”

In the wake of the industrial revolution, the waves of technological-advance and capital-
increase have steadily increased with unprecedented frequency and momentum. During the post-
Depression economic expansion of the twentieth-century, the anthropocentric assumption
sanctioned a growth of capitalistic consumerism to leviathan proportions. In hindsight, it is
apparent that the economic forces of consumerism and industrialization (facilitated by
technology) strengthen in positive correlation to environmental degradation. From the
anthropocentric perspective of instrumental reason, this expense is relatively inconsequential.
The ends justify the means.8

Prior to the industrial revolution and its subsequent repercussions, human civilization did
not have the means of causing the widespread and long-term damage to the environment that it
now has. Any Malthusian threat of depleting the environment of its capacity to sustain healthy
human life was always limited to localizable spatial-temporal scales. The human footprint on the
world was more superficial and smaller, and so it would seem there was relatively little need to
provide checks and balances on anthropocentric praxis. With the rate of industrial and
technological growth witnessed since the Second World War, however, the project of domination

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8 Take, for example, the steel mills and oil refineries that are built on the shores of Lake Michigan in Northwest Indiana. Both industries use the Lake as a repository for industrial waste, which consequently threatens to decrease the biodiversity of the living organisms that inhabit it. But so long as countermeasures are taken so that the Lake water can be used for healthy human consumption, this threat is justified. Moreover (as the sand turns black with oil and scores of dead fish wash ashore) even the detriment that the industries have on the natural beauty of the shoreline is given lesser utilitarian-valuation than the positive-valuation placed on the Lake qua industrial instrument.
has resulted in catastrophic oil spills and nuclear meltdowns into the world’s oceans, eradication of life sustaining-ecosystems, and widespread threats to biodiversity.

In sum, the underlying rationale of modern humanism and its attendant scientism has rendered itself irrational and consequently obsolete. During the twentieth century, ecosystems ecology and environmental ethics came into their own as specialized fields of inquiry. The advent of the new science and critical inquiry mark a paradigm shift, an ecological turn, in persons’ reflexive considerations of being-in-the-world. As a rejection of the scientism and anthropocentrism assumed by modernity, ecological humanism may be described as “post-modern.”

4. Ecological Humanism

Ecological humanism is a comprehensive theoretical paradigm. It contains epistemological, metaphysical and axiological accounts of persons-and-nature. All of the domains of the paradigm are framed within a model of mutual entailment or reciprocal influence between nature and persons. Indeed, the concept of reciprocity serves as an overarching theoretical framework for the paradigm. Within this framework, the epistemology, metaphysics and axiology are holistically interrelated as isomorphic structures. Thus, the keystone concept of reciprocity establishes the paradigm’s systematic unity.

In its metaphysics, ecological humanism recognizes that the natural ingression and presence of persons-in-the-world effectively results in the transformation of the natural environment into humanized nature. In the present context, “humanizing nature” does not refer to a unilateral-causal relation in which persons dominate the non-human aspects of the natural world. Thus, Whiteside makes the normative claim, “Reciprocity with nature must replace
mastery over it as the regulative norm of human activity” (1994, p. 175). The interactive processes involved in humanization result in the emergence (or disclosure) of novel structures, properties and propensities in the world. In the present context, “humanizing nature” also entails the collective evolution of persons in response to the causally-efficacious forces that constitute their environments. Humanizing nature is a recursive process or positive feed-back loop: persons transform and inform their environments, and the consequent transformations reciprocally inform and transform human existence.

Humanization of nature in ecological humanism is an ongoing historical event. It is “co-evolution of society and nature.” In this event, “what must be grasped is not the essential, timeless ‘nature’ of either but rather the process of their evolution” (Whiteside 2002, p. 51). With this claim, ecological humanism is established as an antithetical alternative to Aristotelian substance ontology. In this rejection of classical metaphysics, the present thesis maintains that neither nature nor persons has any existence or identity propter se. Persons and their environments are inextricably interrelated through manifold causally-efficacious interactions. As a result, persons and nature recursively institute and constitute one another (Whiteside 2002, pp. 26, 68, et passim). As in the Confucian worldview, relationships in the context of ecological humanism are internal and constitutive.

In its axiology, ecological humanism neither accepts the anthropocentric idealization of nature qua instrumental value, nor does it assent to the ecocentric thesis on nature qua intrinsic value. The categorical reciprocity of ‘persons’ and ‘nature’ precludes a centralization of intrinsic value both in persons’ self-interest and in the interest of nature in itself. If neither persons nor nature can be understood or said to exist in itself, how could either be valued as such?
Whiteside thus reinstates the metaphysics of reciprocity as a basis for developing an axiology of reciprocity: “Neither human interests nor nature exist independent of one another. There is not a nature ‘out there’ either to be perceived as a function of human interests or to be valued in and of itself” (Whiteside 2002, p. 68). Persons are fully-natural, value-additive, creative events. This is not to say, however, that values are necessarily directed toward satisfying persons’ self-interests or desires. The question of value here is not a question of who makes the judgment. Ecological humanism will not deny that persons are the world’s judges of value. However, it rejects the rationality of judging by determinate teleological principles and a priori decision making procedures. The question of value is a question of intentionality. Having denied both persons and nature the categorical priority of intrinsic value, the ecological humanist has one final option for finding a basis for developing a positive account of value, namely, the reciprocal relationships that constitute the person-in-the-world.

In its epistemology, the theory maintains that persons are most accurately and fully apprehended reflexively in relation to their environment. Persons are fundamentally ecological events. Philosophical anthropology would miss the mark were it to attempt to abstract and analyze persons apart from the concrete relationships that inform, sustain, and transform them throughout their lives. Conversely, any human understanding of nature is just that: human understanding. Knowledge of nature requires foregrounding the anthropological forces that inevitably inform and qualify the understanding. Again, reciprocity is the keystone concept: both nature and persons are rightfully grasped within the complex nexus of concrete relationships that interlink them. To be a person is to be a person-in-the-world. To preface the

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9 Persons are a necessary condition for valuation to occur, but they are not sufficient. Valuation also requires a world. The axiology mirrors the metaphysics and epistemology in this regard.
discussion to come, a person-in-the-world just is a *situated constituent* within complex systems that change over time. With the addition of time to the epistemological equation, ecological humanism historicizes and problematizes the sense and reference of “persons” and “nature.” As the historical transformations of persons and their environments are ongoing with no determinate end-in-view, so the meanings of these terms are kept open-ended and finally indeterminate.

The theory adopts a position of epistemological pluralism (Whiteside 2002, pp. 8, 58, 76–78, 90). The epistemology of ecological humanism is holistic and without one particular organizing paradigm. It shifts according to frame of reference. Ecological humanism accepts the methodology and epistemology of ecosystems ecology (physics) and evolutionary ecology (biology). Though it adopts these theoretical constructs, it is not reducible to natural science. Rather than a scientific ecology, it is *philosophical* ecology.

Epistemological pluralism partially relativizes scientific knowledge in a constellation of aesthetic, spiritual, social and ethical considerations (Whiteside., p. 67). In Whiteside’s terms epistemology can always produce a *scientific-realism moment*. As such, the position advocates an ongoing review, reevaluation, and representation of natural science as a substantial source of knowledge (ibid., p. 92). “Realism,” writes Whiteside, “manifests itself in a determination never to let go of the results of empirical research in the natural and social sciences, even as it historicizes them, probes them for hidden value assumptions, and looks for influences that cross from one domain of knowledge to another” (ibid., p. 72). Drawing heavily from the work of Serge Moscovici, Whiteside also advocates incorporating an *anthropological moment* into the

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10 “A system is an organized pattern in which interconnected subsystems create a whole that has its own properties. An ecosystem has at least two parts: organisms and an environment…. Evolution is the generation of variety and selection from that variety. It is a creative phenomenon that shapes ecological systems because it produces change” (Keller and Golley 2000, p. 10).
epistemology of ecological humanism. “In an anthropological moment, the theorist temporarily suspends belief in the truth of scientifically established information, suspends belief in scientists’ own tales of ‘objectivity,’ in order to consider our knowledge of nature as a human phenomenon” (ibid., 67, 68). Here the psychical complexities of human subjectivity are recognized as significant components of persons’ experience and understanding of themselves and their natural environments (ibid.).

David R. Keller and Frank B. Golley agree that ecology cannot provide the full picture of the natural world if it does not take into account the axiological and normative aspects of human experience. Thus they propose that philosophical ecology should adopt an epistemology of mitigated scientific realism. “According to the metaphysics and epistemology of mitigated scientific realism, ecology is informed not just through empirical investigation of material processes, but also by the aesthetic, spiritual, and social filters through which we all inevitably experience the world” (2000, p. 14). The realist and anthropological moments mutually mitigate and mediate the authority of one another. In other words, they act as epistemological checks, balances, and complements to one another. In the fullness of experience neither moment has epistemic priority over the other. The theoretical structure and methodology of epistemological pluralism allows for each modality to supersede or defer to the other in the dynamic interplay of persons and the world.¹¹

¹¹ The dialectical interplay between the different modes of experience and understanding can also be reconstructed in terms of field/focus phenomenology. While one foregrounds or focusses on the realist paradigm to interpretively understand some phenomenon, the subjective components of the interpretive experience recede from one’s attention; nonetheless, the latter continue to function as causally-efficacious, affective, forces in the tacit field surrounding the focus of one’s immediate experience. Of course, the gestalt could shift to take the anthropological moment as the focus and the realist moment as the field.
In sum, ecological humanism is a form of philosophical ecology, which dynamically and dialectically synthesizes the respective methodologies and epistemologies of the natural sciences and humanities—the natural and human sciences, the objective and subjective poles of experience. The full paradigm of ecological humanism would therefore require a multidisciplinary investigation, multifaceted explanation, and reflexive understanding of nature and persons (individually and collectively).

5. Philosophical Ecology: Naturalism, Systems Theory, and Holism

Ecological understanding refuses any and all attempts to abstract, analyze, and understand phenomena apart from their environing conditions. The term “ecology” (German Ökologie) was first used by the German naturalist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919). Haeckel identifies ecology as a new epistemology of the modern era. By his definition, the new epistemology provides an account (logos) that attempts to locate an organism or group of organisms squarely within an environment or habitat (oikos). Haeckel’s definition implies that relationships between an organism and its surroundings are fundamental to the constitution and definition of an organism. Situating a life form in an environment in this way is a method that Wang Fuzhi would have found agreeable. He would have seen this as a means of demonstrating that the inner dimensions of the personal experience and the outer dimensions of the environing world interpenetrate and mutually inform one another. From the outset the discipline of ecology opened the way for understanding contextually determined roles and relationships as constitutive.

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12 For further discussion of epistemology in philosophical ecology, see Keller and Golley (2000, pp. 14–15) and Whiteside (2002, p. 79).

13 “By ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature—the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment; including, above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact… By ecology, we mean the whole science of the relations of the organism to the environment, including, in the broad sense all the “conditions of existence” (Haeckel qtd. in Cooper 2003, pp. 4–5).
of concrete particulars, rather than categorizing them as merely accidental—as they had been regarded in the classical Aristotelian substance-based ontology.

The twentieth century witnessed a shift in philosophical and scientific models of nature from classical substance ontology and atomistic metaphysics into “nondualistic, nonreductive, integrative, systemic, holistic, and relational” paradigms (Ames and Callicot 1989, p. 17). Ecological humanism is very much a member of this new-school. Complex systems theory and holism are central to its theoretical edifice. The work of Edgar Morin in particular stands out as a particularly clear, coherent, and cogent contribution to the holistic dimension of ecological humanism. Morin writes of the twentieth-century shift as a Copernican revolution in which classical categories are overthrown: “Objects give way to systems. Instead of essences and substances, organization; instead of simple and elementary units, complex unity; instead of aggregates forming bodies, systems of systems of systems” (1992, p. 121). During this epochal movement, systems theory was taken up and applied to the still nascent science of ecology. The reconstruction of ecology in terms of complex systems theory enacted a fundamental change in how nature was to be thereafter studied and understood (Morin 1973, pp. 30–31; cf. Golley 1993, p. 35). Likewise, key concepts in Wang’s philosophy, such as change, yì 易, yīnyáng 隨陽, energy, qì 氣, and pattern, lǐ 理, delineate an architectonic structure in which persons and worlds are understood as complex holistic events. Whereas ecological thinkers came to recognize complex dynamic systems as units of study only as late as the twentieth century, Wang Fuzhi sought to develop a vocabulary in the seventeenth century for a world which he saw as interconnected patterns of energetic transformations.
Given the multifarious models proposed as units of study for ecology (e.g. super-organism, biotic community, ecosystem) ecology is more of a family of theories than a singular theory. The common genes found within this family are summarized by Keller and Golley:

1. All living and nonliving things are integral parts of the biospherical web (ontological interconnectedness).
2. The essence or identity of a living thing is an expression of connections and context (internal relations).
3. To understand the makeup of the biosphere, connections and relations between parts must be considered, not just the parts themselves (holism).
4. All life-forms—including Homo sapiens—result from the same processes (naturalism).
5. Given the affinities between humans and nonhumans, nonhuman nature has value above and beyond instrumental, resource utility for human beings (nonanthropocentrism).
6. Humans have caused serious negative impacts (pollution, anthropogenic extinction) on the earth, leading to the need for environmental ethics.\(^\text{14}\) (2003, pp. 2–3)

Although Wang would not deny Keller’s and Golley’s proposition 6, he would further qualify it by calling attention to the potential for humans to contribute to a sustainable, symbiotic, procreative system of life in the world. And although I maintain that Wang’s philosophy is consistent with proposition 5 in this list, he does maintain that persons are interpretive evaluating active presences within the world. Approaching contemporary ecological crises from Wang’s perspective, it may be argued that the negative impact persons have on the environment results from their failure to act in harmonious compliance with the functional needs and the force of circumstance presented by nature’s incessant transformations. In terms of Wang Fuzhi’s *Yijing*-based discourse, the rectification of “serious negative impacts” is better handled by having the

\(^{14}\) Parenthetical insertions are original to the text.
foresight to nip problems in the bud and act in harmonious compliance, *heshun* 和順, with forces of nature. In any event, resolving such complications requires comprehensive observation, *guan* 觀, of natural patterns, *li* 理. This observation ought to allow one to discern the incipient trajectories and propensities of change, *ji* 几 and *shi* 勢, in any concrete situation, *xing* 形.

Based on this discernment, persons ought to act in a contextually appropriate and timely manner, *yi* 义 and *shi* 時; they ought to strategically position themselves, *wei* 位, in relation to environmental forces, so that they can initiate action when the situation calls for initiating action, *gan* 感 and *jian* 健; and respond or defer when the situation calls for response or deference, *ying* 應 or *shun* 順. Indeed, the schemata of these categories—‘comprehensive observation, incipient trajectory, timeliness, strategic positioning, initiation and response, action and deference, contextually appropriate action, and harmonious compliance’—provides a conceptual basis for the ecological humanism of Wang Fuzhi.

Wang Fuzhi rejects all modes of thought that postulate, reify, or hypostatize a primary transcendent source of creativity and value in the world. In this respect, Wang Fuzhi is in agreement with Golley’s and Keller’s ecological naturalism, which “challenges positions that posit the cause and regulation of the universe as prior to or ontologically distinct from nature itself” (Golley and Keller 2003, p. 12). But the sense of naturalism applicable to Wang Fuzhi goes beyond a simple rejection of metaphysical transcendence; in addition to its negative definition, the axiom of naturalism implies axioms of ontological interconnectedness, internal relations, and holism comparable to the genetic structure of ecology outlined above.
In this vein, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong provide an apt summary of Wang Fuzhi’s naturalistic orientation:

Chinese naturalism as a primary ingredient of Confucianism in its broadest sense is characterized by an organic holism and a dynamic vitalism. The organic holism of Confucianism refers to the fact that the universe is viewed as a vast integrated unit, not as discrete mechanistic parts. Nature is seen as unified, interconnected, and interpenetrating, constantly relating microcosm and macrocosm. This interconnectedness is already present in the early Confucian tradition of the *I Ching* [*Yijing* 易經]… This sense of naturalism and holism is distinguished by the view that there is no Creator God; rather, the universe is considered to be a self-generating, organismic process. Confucians are traditionally concerned less with theories of origin or with concepts of a personal God than with what they perceive to be the ongoing reality of this self-generating, interrelated universe. (1998, p. xxvi)

Berthrong and Tucker qualify the use of the term “origin” by indicating that Confucians are not concerned with origin qua transcendent God. The next chapter shows that one must be careful with truisms along the lines of “Confucians are traditionally concerned less with theories of origin.” Concepts of originary source are actually fundamental to neo-Confucian discourse, but they must be understood in the right way.

“Person-in-the-world” denotes a fundamental relation between individuals, society and nature, namely, the relation of situatedness. Each person is a quintessential token of what it is to be a cognizant, communicative, organic system. As such, each person is a complex, psychosomatic, self-conscious system embedded within the ever-changing global systems of the natural and social worlds.15 As Morin writes, “The human being belongs to a social system, in the heart of a natural eco-system, which is in the heart of a solar system, which is in the heart of

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a galactic system: it is constituted of cellular systems, which are constituted of molecular
systems, which are constituted of atomic systems” (1992, pp. 96–97). Sunny Y. Auyang’s text
on complex systems theory defines situatedness along the following lines: An individual is
situated insofar as “it is an interactive part of a system” (1998, p. 47). For any concrete
particular individual, Auyang continues, “being situated is part of its intrinsic character and its
behavior is influenced by the situation that is determined by all individuals in the system” (p.
118). In this theory, particulars or individuals are not understood as abstract bare elements or
absolutely atomic particles (in the classical sense), which bear no internal relations to one
another (ibid., p. 47). Instead, particulars are considered constituents or participants within a
holistic totality (ibid.; cf. Whiteside 2002, p. 81). In the discussion to follow, Wang Fuzhi’s
coordinates of time and position, shiwei 時位, are presented as a hermeneutic counterpart to this
notion of situatedness. Beyond the descriptive account of situatedness, however, Wang’s theory
of positioning implies a normative proposition: one ought to occupy the environmental niche that
will allow one to most efficaciously contribute to the harmonization of a situation’s fecundate
forces.

Morin’s description of la relation écosystémique in his work Le paradigme perdu —
Paradigm Lost — discloses the structure of persons-in-the-world in a way that dialogically
resonates with Wang Fuzhi’s discourse on nature and persons:

The ecosystemic relation is not an external relation between two closed entities: It
concerns an integrative relation between two open systems where each is part of the
other… The ecological dependence and independence of man find themselves in two
overlapping perspectives, which are themselves interdependent: one of the social
ecosystem, and the other of the natural ecosystem… L’écologie or rather écosystémologie
rehabilitates the notion of nature and the rootedness of man therein. Nature is no more
disorder, passivity, or amorphous environmental condition: It is a complex totality. Man is not a closed entity in relation to this complex totality: he is an open system in relations of [relative] organizational autonomy and dependence in the midst of an ecosystem. (Morin 1973, pp. 31–32)\(^\text{16}\)

The idea of interconnected open systems characterizes the relation between persons and the world. The relationship is an articulation of “ontological interconnectedness,” to recall Keller’s and Golley’s phrase. In terms of ecosystems ecology and Wang Fuzhi’s theory alike, persons are connected to their local and global surroundings through continuous exchanges of energy and information. Morin’s description provides a poignant hermeneutic perspective for interpreting the complex structure of persons-in-the-world in the worldview of Wang Fuzhi. In particular, Morin’s understanding of *la relation écosystémique* serves as a soundboard for reflecting on the dynamic relationships between nature and persons denoted by the core terms of Wang’s philosophical ecology: (1) “continuity between nature and persons” *tianrenheyi* 天人合一; (2) “interstitial relations between nature and persons” *tianrenzhiji* 天人之際; (3) “nature within nature” *zaitianzhitian* 在天之天; (4) “nature within persons” *zairenhitian* 在人之天.

A complex system integrates multiple processes, organizational levels, and fields of information into shifting global patterns of interconnected events (Auyang 1998, pp. 9, 13; Golley and Keller 2003, p. 10). Complex systems theory allows for multiple incongruent perspectives to be equally valid at the same time. From a macroscopic perspective, for example, a landscape or system may seem relatively constant and static. From a microscopic inquiry into

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\(^{16}\) Translated from Morin’s original text:

_La relation écosystémique n’est pas une relation externe entre deux entités closes ; il s’agit d’une relation intégrative entre deux systèmes ouverts où chacun est partie de l’autre... [L’] écologie, ou plutôt, l’écosystémologie... réhabilite la notion de Nature et y enracine l’homme. La nature n’est plus désordre, passivité, milieu amorphe : elle est une totalité complexe. L’homme n’est pas une entité close par rapport à cette totalité complexe : il est un système ouvert, en relation d’autonomie/dépendance organisatrice au sein d’un écosystème._ (Morin 1973, pp. 31–32)
the same phenomenon, however, the system can be understood as dynamic and fluctuating. The self-same phenomenon can be coherently described using mutually-exclusive, yet correlative and complementary, sets of terms. The same thing can be counted twice over, so to speak.

According to complex systems theory, the set of terms that one uses to describe the world or any phenomenon depend on which level of organization, or which mode of orientation, that one uses to interpret the world. “The concepts used to characterize entities in different scales are often inconsistent. For example, water molecules are discrete particles in classical mechanics, and water is a flowing continuum in hydrodynamics. Continuity and discreteness constitute one contrasting pair…” (Auyang 1998, p. 15, cf. p. 40). Particularity and relationality, conjunction and disjunction, synthesis and analysis, constitute similar pairs. And as Morin states the matter, “A system presents itself at first as unitas multiplex, namely as paradox: considered in respect to the Whole, it is one and homogeneous; considered in respect to the components, it is diverse and heterogeneous” (1992, p. 102). Complex systems theory integrates these kinds of oppositions into one coherent worldview.

The term “holism” is a neologism coined by South African statesman, general, and philosopher, Jan Christian Smuts (1870–1950):

Both matter and life consist of unit structures whose ordered grouping produces natural wholes which we call bodies or organisms… Holism … is the term here coined for this fundamental factor operative toward the creation of wholes in the universe. Taking a plant or animal as a type of a whole, we notice the fundamental holistic characters as a unity of parts which is so close and intense as to be more than the sum of its parts; which not only gives a particular conformation or structure to the parts but so relates and

17 Golley and Keller note: “While the emphasis on discrete organisms, on the one hand, and materials and energy flux, on the other, has kept ecology from achieving conceptual unity, ecologists generally agree on three philosophical issues: (1) naturalism, (2) mitigated scientific realism, and (3) the comprehensive scope of ecology” (2003, p. 11).
determines them in their synthesis that their functions are altered; the synthesis affects
and determines the parts so they function towards the ‘whole’; and the whole and the
parts therefore reciprocally influence and determine each other, and appear more or less
to merge their individual character: the whole is in the parts and the parts are in the whole,
and this synthesis of whole and parts is reflected in the holistic character of the functions
of the parts as well as of the whole. (Smuts 1961, p. 86; qtd. in Ziporyn 2000, p. 27–28)
(Smuts 1926, p. 86; qtd. in Golley 25–26).

Brook Ziporyn explains Smuts’s position by writing that this approach posits that the self-nature
of any $x$ can only be determined insofar as $x$ is related to other phenomena (Ziporyn 2000, p. 28).
A phenomenon only finds its identity and meaning insofar as it is related to other phenomena
within a system or world. Moreover, the whole itself is determined and defined not by what it is
composed of, or by any unchanging essence, but according to its organization, that is, how its
constituent parts relate to one another. There is, thus, a reciprocal relation of identity between
the whole and its parts: any part is defined in relation to all other parts throughout the whole, and
any whole is defined as how its parts are construed, that is, how the parts are related to one
another. Holism emphasizes the conjunctive and synthetic mode of understanding and
perceiving things. In chapter 4, Wang Fuzhi’s brand of holism is qualified as omnicentric.

*There is no one way any thing is; the whole is unbound and changing without end.*

Holism is contrasted against atomistic philosophy: the view that the identity of any $x$ is
determined in and of itself, apart from its relations to other phenomena. In an atomist
metaphysical philosophy the relationships held between things must be accidental and external as
opposed to constitutive and internal. In atomism relationships do not necessarily contribute to
the identity of any thing. As Ziporyn suggests, atomism asks “What is X like when the
distortions created by the various particular contexts and relationships in which it tends to appear
have been removed”? (Ziporyn p. 28). Atomism in this sense is far removed from ecological thinking, and the concept of an isolated and abstract entity—a separable and discrete ‘this,’ which exists *propter se*—was certainly not part of Wang’s interpretive horizons. Classically speaking, the terms *atomism* and *reductionism* often refer to the same mode of thought.

“Ontological reduction is the notion that the cosmos is a composite built out of smaller, simpler units: atoms” (Golley and Keller, p. 173). However, as Morin points out, “Systems theory has reacted to reductionism, in and by ‘holism’ or the idea of the ‘whole’. But, believing to go beyond reductionism, holism has in fact brought about a reduction on the whole” (Morin 1992, p. 122). A holistic understanding based on Wang Fuzhi’s neo-Confucianism provides a dialectical reinstatement of the individual in relation to the totalistic system in which it is situated. Neo-Confucian modes of holism retain the insight of ontological interrelatedness, and yet they avoid this reverse-reduction or reification of the whole. The person-in-the-world is at once an insistent particular and a phase in a cosmic pattern of interrelated events.

6. **Systems Theory as Hermeneutic Perspective: Critique and Response**

Undoubtedly, there are objections to a project that employs systems theory as a means of interpreting Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy. Some objections come by way of claims that the idea of a *system* implies a top down structure, a governance of functions within the system by laws postulated on a meta-systemic level. Still others will argue that systems are bound and determinant kinds of entities. Finally, some may argue that systems are reducible and completely explained by purely quantitative (non-qualitative) models. Those who object to this project along these lines will of course maintain that Wang’s philosophy is not committed to a cosmology in which the world and its constituents are bound and determinate; nor does it
postulate a metaphysical, transcendent, source of order; nor does it reduce the fullness of experience to materialist accounts of the natural world.

Initial responses to these initial concerns reject the assumptions of the first two critiques. In the first case, in interpreting Wang Fuzhi’s worldview in terms of systems theory, the order of any system must be understood as sui generis and emergent from the internal dynamics of the system itself. An emergent order comes from within and is not superimposed from the top down by some meta-systemic principle. In the second case, the bifurcation of system and surrounding is not a tenable conceptual distinction in the context of Wang Fuzhi’s thought. Any system must be understood as open and porous in the sense that the system and its surroundings interpenetrate one another and hence mutually transform one another. In response to the third objection, a system in the context of the current discussion is also understood as a qualitative model, a world, an aesthetic order. If Wang Fuzhi is to be engaged from the perspective of a systems theorist, the system itself must be recognized as a qualitative experience from a particular perspective within the system—a personal perspective. The experience does not occur outside of the world-system. The felt-qualities of the experience of the person-in-the-world emerge within and serve as an axiological dimension of the world-system.

7. **Humanizing Nature: Li Zehou on the Confucian Tradition**

Based on theory of Li Zehou, “humanizing nature” can be understood and assented to from a Confucian perspective in the same sense as it is used in the context of Whiteside’s ecological humanism. Indeed, the parallels between Li’s analysis of Confucian humanism and ecological humanism provide strong support for the thesis at hand. Li defines “humanizing nature” as a phase of sedimentation in the historical development of Chinese philosophy. The
process of sedimentation, *jidian* 積澱, is a historical anthropological development of humankind’s reflexive self-understanding as sensuous, emotional, cognitive, social and natural beings. The theory of sedimentation postulates that self-conscious human-nature gradually emerges as a consequence of an evolutionary process of cultural-psychological formation (2010, pp. x, 7). In Li’s view, this self-conscious awareness is fundamentally aesthetic. “Aesthetics,” on this account, “is the sedimentation of social entities (concepts, ideals, attitudes, and meanings) onto psychological functions, particularly the emotions and sensory cognition” (2010, p. 7). From its origins in high antiquity, “the Chinese aesthetic tradition” has persistently sought to demonstrate that the individual, society, and the natural world are mutually reflexive and complementary forces (ibid., pp. 13–14).

On Li’s account of Chinese history human self-awareness as social and natural beings (persons-in-the-world) dialectically evolves through antithetical phases of “humanizing nature” and “naturalizing humans.” The former is paradigmatically expressed by pre-Qin Confucian textual accounts ritual propriety *li* 礼, music *yue* 楼, and moral excellence *de* 德—Confucian humanism. The latter is initially infused into Chinese philosophical culture by Daoist calls for retaining simplicity *pu* 朴, acting through non-coercive action *weiwuwei* 為無為, spontaneity and autopoietic regulation *ziran* 自然 in personal and social life—Daoist naturalism. As seen in the ensuing exposition of Wang Fuzhi’s natural cosmology and philosophical anthropology, Wang represents a synthesis of Confucian humanism and Daoist naturalism.

“Humanization of nature” in the context of Wang Fuzhi’s Confucian heritage has at least two interrelated meanings. In the first sense, the term refers to a purposive ordering of natural-animalistic sensuality, emotions, and behaviors for the sake of establishing an intersubjective
experience of harmony and mutual concern amongst persons. In a word, humanizing nature results in the development of morality. Indeed, from a Confucian perspective, moral emotions distinguish humans from all other animals. As the discussion moves into the domain of philosophical anthropology, this point is further addressed in terms of Mencius’s doctrine of “feelings and natural dispositions” qingxing 情性. On this account, humanization of nature is intentional regulation of persons’ dispositional psychosomatic activities. The regulative principle or end-in-view of this praxis can be analyzed into two intentions: (1) sublimate instinctive, egocentric, hedonistic desires sīyu 私欲; (2) establish an efficacious disposition of concern for others. In a second related sense, “humanization of nature” refers to the evolutionary capacity of persons to efficiently respond to the forces of their natural environment and shape these forces into cultural forms of existence. In both senses, “humanizing nature” is central to the discussion of Wang’s philosophical anthropology (taken up in chapter 3).

8. Intertextual Systems and Holistic Hermeneutics

According to the recent article on Chinese philosophical hermeneutics by Liu Xiaogan 刘笑敢, Wang Fuzhi’s commentaries on the Book of Changes and the Four Books of the classical Confucian canon rank among the works of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) as some of the most complete, mature and rigorous reflections of interpretive methodology in the history of traditional Chinese commentary (2002, p. 32). Understanding Wang’s interpretive methodology discloses a dimension of his philosophy from a perspective internal to Wang’s commentaries. Liu paints a picture of this style of

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philosophizing in broad strokes: “the basic model of the Chinese philosophical-hermeneutic tradition is to use a method of interpreting a classical text to advance a philosophical system, erect a structure, or restructure a preexisting paradigm…” (2002, p. 32). He then analyzes the model into two dialectically opposed yet necessary methodological requirements: (1) The commentary should respect, represent, and elucidate the authorial intention conveyed by the text; (2) The commentary should amplify the meaning of the classic by presenting a novel philosophical system: a worldview that articulates the commentator’s particular cultural-historical situation and personal interpretative perspective (ibid.). The former is a statement of humanistic reverence for one’s ancestors and their cultural achievements. This first principle presupposes that the books of the Confucian canon are the medium through which the sages of old transmit their enlightened insights into the existential conditions of persons-in-the-world onto later generations. Accordingly, the root-texts 本書 or classics 經 are authoritative voices on the ethics of living as persons-in-the-world. As seen in chapter 4 of this dissertation, Wang Fuzhi’s certainly expresses such an attitude toward the authorial intentions underwriting canonical texts in his account of the historical genesis of the Book of Changes, hereafter referred to by its Chinese title, Yijing 易經. In addition, his most comprehensive commentary on the Four Books, the Du Sishu daquan shuo 讀四書大全說 or Reading the Compendium of Discourses on the Four Books, likewise exemplifies the author’s respect for the tradition and the authorial intentions voiced by its canonical texts. Chen Lai’s description of the latter work calls attention to this aspect of Wang’s thought:

Chuanshan held a deep respect for Confucian tradition, Confucian classics, Confucius, Mencius, the Cheng brothers, and Zhuxi […] And Chuanshan’s Du Sishu daquan shuo is
a critical summary of Zhu Xi’s school of thought. As a matter of fact, looking through
the *Du Sishu daquan shuo* one finds that Chuanshan’s commentaries are not far from
other celebrated literati of his era. Furthermore, he also acknowledges the classical
character of the *Four Books*, the authority of the Cheng-Zhu School, the legitimacy of
Confucianism, and he takes the meanings of neo-Confucian *Daoxue*’s concepts to be
axiomatic. (2004, pp. 45–46)\(^1\)

Though he takes neo-Confucian cosmological premises as axiomatic, his interpretive
commentaries are far from dogmatic or static reiteration of tradition. Again, the second of Liu’s
requirements insists that commentators creatively advance the tradition. This latter principle
presupposes that the meanings of the classics are dynamic and open. It ensures pragmatic
plasticity and maintains the ongoing relevance of the tradition for generation after generation of
Confucian devotees. In implicit agreement with Liu, Chen also makes the case that Wang’s
hermeneutic appropriation of neo-Confucian discourse is both *critical* and *creative* (ibid.).\(^2\)

Liu further describes Wang Fuzhi’s commentarial work as a paragon of systematic and
constructive philosophy. Along these lines, he advances four necessary conditions for
constructing a philosophical *system*. “It goes without saying,” he writes, the inquiry must firstly
take a philosophical problem to be its primary concern. Secondly, the philosophy must contain a
rich and multifaceted content. Thirdly, the diverse aspects should be interwoven such that they
demonstrate a conceptually coherent unity. Finally, he reiterates that a constructive systematic

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\(^{1}\) Citation translated from Chen Lai’s original text: “其实，船山对于儒学传统，对于儒家经典，对于孔孟
程朱，都怀有真实的尊重，其传承发扬孔孟之志 […] 而船山的《读四书大全说》乃是对朱子学派的"批判
的总结" […] 事实上，通过《读四书大全说》可见，船山与同时其它著名思想家相近，也是以承认四书的
经典性、程朱的权威性、儒学的正当性、道学概念的意义性为前提的” (pp. 45–46).

\(^{2}\) See Chen Lai, “与明代为朱学者和王学者宗派性地依傍朱熹和王阳明不同, 王船山学术既具有鲜明的批
判性格 (critical), 又有其孤发独诣的创造诠释 (creative)” (2004, p. 45). Parenthetical inserts are original to
the author.
philosophy should present a comprehensive appropriation, novel interpretation and creative
advance of other persons’ theories (2002, p. 36).²¹

Over the course of his life-long eremitic authorship, Wang showed a particular concern
for understanding the manifold conjunctive and disjunctive relations that respectively unify and
differentiate persons and the natural world. In the DSS, which Wang completed in his twilight
years, he proposes a critical and creative corrective to orthodox interpretations of the Confucian
doctrinal claim that tian and persons are continuous: tianrenheyi 天人合一. It is not the case
that Wang rejects the orthodox Confucian positions regarding the continuity of tian and persons,
but he often critiques their presentations as overly-metaphorical, lacking the rigor of literal
interpretation and analytic methodology. His worry is that literati have tended to oversimplify
the complex relational structure held between persons and the natural world.

In identifying the methodological principles shared by Wang Fuzhi, Wang Bi, Zhu Xi,
and Mou Zongsan, Liu Xiaogan’s analysis is insightful and instructive; however, the author’s
exposition stands in need of a more complete philosophical development and a more rigorous
conceptual analysis than the author provides. As a case in point, for all of his analysis of the
concept of system, Liu neglects the tradition’s prominent method of situating a canonical work,
such as the Analects, within a context of an open holistic set of multiple, mutually implicative,
mutually informing texts, that is, an intertextual system. Because of this limitation, his account
of the thematic principles of Chinese philosophical hermeneutics (and its attendant worldviews)

²¹ Paraphrase based on Liu’s text: “一是他的思想必须以讨论哲学问题为主, 这一点应该是不言而喻的。二是有丰富的多侧面的思想内容[...] 三是多侧面的思想之间有内在的统一性、连贯性[...] 最后，这些讨论
应该是有相当的独特性, 创造性的, 完全综合别人已有的思想就很难称作思想体系[...] 其中王夫之继朱熹之后达到中国古典哲学诠释的另一个高峰” (2002, p. 36).
is incomplete. In other words, Liu identifies a set of necessary conditions that must be satisfied for achieving success in traditional, Chinese, interpretive philosophy, but insofar as it lacks a requirement of intertextual systematization, the set of conditions is not sufficient.

Over the past decade, several independent studies have confirmed that Mou Zongsan, Wang Bi, and Zhu Xi all read individual canonical works in light of the work’s systemic relations to other canonical texts. Referring to the Four Books and the Yizhuan as “five Confucian classics,” Refeng Tang explains, “Mou held that to have a real understanding of pre-Qin Confucianism, one must take all five Confucian classics into account…. Only in this way can we see that Confucianism not only talks about morality in Lun Yu and Mencius, but also discusses existence in Zhong Yong and Yi Zhuan” (2002, p. 32). Similarly, Rudolf Wagner makes the case in point on behalf of Wang Bi: “[S]ince the early Han, many of the best minds have attempted to tackle the problem of the system of the classics… Wang Bi’s contribution was to put this common assumption of a ‘system of the classics’ on a philosophic footing” (2000, pp. 30–31). Finally, Daniel Gardner’s exposition of Zhu Xi’s Reading of the Analects (2004) demonstrates that Zhu proceeds to develop his philosophy based on an assumption “that the canon of Confucian classics is an integrated whole” (2004, p. 46). “Such intertextual referencing,” Gardner continues, “gives legitimacy to each of the texts, making each more intelligible while emphasizing their coherence and unity of message” (ibid.). Historical and philosophical differences notwithstanding, what is here said of Wang Bi’s, Mou Zongsan’s and Zhu Xi’s hermeneutics equally serves as an apt description of Wang Fuzhi’s way of understanding the canon.
From this perspective—shared by Mou, Wang Bi, Zhu, and Wang Fuzhi—each of the books in question embodies a complex, internal, semiotic structure in itself. In the context of a book’s self-contained structure, the significations of the book’s constituent terms and claims shift according to the book’s multiple levels and fields, or semiotic substructures, in which they are situated. At the broader systemic level of intertextual reference, the meaningful constituents contained in any particular book attain novel signification as they are internalized within semiotic relations to sets of terms and claims contained in other books. Therefore, intertextual systematization opens the meaning of any particular book or component of a book beyond the stated intentions found within the book itself. The idea is expressed by Mou Zongsan’s proposition, 依义不依语: rely on the meaning, not on the language.

9. Keeping Perspective

The theoretical content of ecological humanism is carried forward through the pages to come. As the inquiry now shifts into Wang’s cosmology, Keller and Golley’s assertion of naturalism immediately comes to bear on the interpretative project. Wang’s insistent rejection of transcendence with regard to all neo-Confucian categories of cosmology qualifies him as a particularly suitable dialogical partner over the topic of philosophical ecology. The agreement of his worldview with holism and complex systems theory also emerges in the ensuing discussion of cosmology. The theories of humanization outlined above likewise reemerge in discussing Wang Fuzhi’s philosophical anthropology, which is taken up in chapter 3. And again, complex systems theory comes back around in a big way in the later interpretation of the *Yijing* (chapter 4). Finally, the ideas of epistemological pluralism and mitigated scientific
realism are carried forward in the analysis of the moral epistemology and religiosity of persons-in-the-world (chapter 5).
CHAPTER 2
NATURALISTIC COSMOLOGY

1. Introduction

During his mission in Ming Dynasty China, the Jesuit Missionary, Mateo Ricci wrote a treatise in Chinese with the purpose of arguing for the superiority of the Biblical Creationism: “Nothing is able to make itself; it must depend on an external being to make it. Pavilions and houses do not spontaneously arise; they are always made by the hand of a carpenter” (Ricci 1985, p. 76).¹ The popular analogy of the world as artifice stands in stark contrast to the quintessential expression of Chinese naturalism found in the work of Wang Fuzhi. Speaking to Ricci’s claims, Jacques Gernet explains the inconsistencies between the Jesuit and neo-Confucian traditions:

The argument reproduced by all the missionaries [in 17th century China], according to which it must be that the universe was created by a being exterior to nature, could only have been shocking in a world that did not admit anything beyond nature. The explication of the complexity and the constant evolution of living phenomena by way of a coarse model of action by an artisan on “matter,” moreover, would seem to have found difficulty in being accepted. (2005, p. 83)²

Picking up on this theme, Allison Black and François Jullien respectively present Wang Fuzhi’s cosmological philosophy as opposed to a characteristically “Western” cosmogony of creationism. Jullien’s method is to illuminate Wang’s thought by contrasting it against a paradigm that is effectively absent from Wang’s neo-Confucian horizon (1989, pp. 16–17). Likewise, Black’s

¹ Translated from the Chinese text, “凡物不能自成。必須外為者以成之。樓臺房屋不能自成。成於工匠之手.” Qtd. in Gernet 2005, p. 84.
² Translated from Gernet’s original text: 
L’argument reproduit par tous les missionnaires chrétiens d’après lequel il fallait que l’univers eût été créé par un être extérieur à la nature ne pouvait au’ étonner dans un monde où l’on n’admettait pas un au-delà de la nature. L’explication de la complexité et de l’évolution permanente de phénomènes vitaux par le modèle grossier de l’action d’un artisan sur la «matière» y semblait d’ailleurs difficilement recevable. (Gernet 2005, p. 83)
stated purpose is to delineate what Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy is by contrasting it with what it is not (1989, p. 6, et passim). Wang Fuzhi’s cosmology and the cosmogony of creationism are incommensurable. In brief, Black and Jullien share a general thesis: Creationism presupposes the existence of a transcendent external cause of natural world; the cause possesses purposive agency, and thereby creates the world according to a teleological plan. Wang Fuzhi’s cosmological philosophy makes none of these assumptions. Based on this line of thought and further textual analysis (provided below), it would be a categorical error to interpret tian 天 in the context of Wang’s worldview in terms of heaven. The case is thus made below for an alternative interpretation as nature.

The method of identifying Wang Fuzhi’s cosmological thesis by way of contrasting it against its antithesis is instrumental to identifying Wang’s natural cosmology. Foregrounding Wang’s philosophy against the backdrop of creationism is further propaedeutic to apprehending his reading of the neo-Confucian metaphysics of his Song dynasty forefathers, for Wang saw in them a tendency toward metaphysical dualism and hypostatization of metaphysical first principles. As a case in point, Wang takes a critical position with regard to Zhu Xi’s theory of patterning li 理 and energy 氣. He argues that Zhu’s theory dualistically bifurcates these two categories and reifies the former. Zhou Bing (2005) observes Wang’s reproach along these lines: “On the question of ‘li and qi,’ Wang Fuzhi expresses a continuity of qi ontology and a novel perspective on li and qi in which li and qi are not separated bodies” (p. 5). By the same token, Wang takes analytical caution with regard to his predecessors’ interpretation of taiji 太極: the

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cosmological source of the world for neo-Confucianism. The cosmological source of the world is immanent in Wang’s philosophy. Through the subtle and cosmic interactions of its inherent forces, the natural world demonstrates an autopoietic capacity to continuously engender novel forms of life and experience.

2. Creationism as Antithesis

The cosmogony of creationism depicts the origins of the world as a definite temporal beginning (Black 1989, pp. 22, 40–41; Jullien p. 78, et passim). Black introduces the fundamentals of creationism through a philological investigation into the term “create”:

The word ‘create’ in English usage is derived directly from the Latin creare… The critical event for the meaning of the word as it passed into medieval Latin and then into English was its use to translate the Hebrew bara, a verb used exclusively in the Hebrew scriptures for the creative activities of God. The consequence was that the root meaning of the word ‘create’ in English usage was inextricably associated with its theological application. (1989, p. 6)

The term bara occurs in Genesis 1.1: “In the beginning, God created (bara) the heavens and the earth.” Without pretending to give an exhaustive account of the manifold and entrenched interpretive traditions stemming from Genesis, Black and Jullien agree on salient implications of the Biblical account. In the first case, the act of God “in the beginning” is absolutely unique in the advent of the world. Jullien thus writes, “The minimal justification of God within occidental rationalism is to attribute to him the initial impulsion in the chain of causes and effects that constitute the course of the world” (1989, p. 79).⁴ Neither Jullien nor Black explicitly note the name of St. Thomas Aquinas, but analysis of the rationale behind Aquinas’s proof of God qua cause of the world supports their critique. Aquinas’s brand of Catholicism is a marked

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⁴ Translated from Jullien’s text: “La justification minimale de Dieu au sein du rationalisme occidental est de lui attribuer l’impulsion initiale dans l’enchaînement des causes et des effets qui constituent le cours du monde” (Jullien 1989, p. 79).
appropriation of Aristotelian metaphysics in order to provide deductive proofs of God’s existence. In Article III, “Whether God Exists,” of Aquinas’s *Summa Theologa*, the author concludes, “There must be found in the nature of things one first immovable Being, a primary cause, necessarily existing, not created; existing the most widely, good, even the best possible; the first ruler through the intellect, and the ultimate end of all things, which is God.”\(^5\) God is thus understood as the primary, unmoved mover of the world. Insofar as God exists outside of the natural order of causality that governs the world, God is himself supernatural. The categorical distinction between the creator and the creation, or cause and effect, demonstrates that creationism is founded on a conception of external causality. In other words, causality here is a disjunctive relation, radically sundering effect from cause. The Creator stands metaphysically independent of his dependent creature.

Continuing her analysis, Black identifies three defining characteristics of *creation*:

> Here ‘creation’ seems to denote basically the conscious and deliberate making of something new. In other words, we have (1) an intelligent agent, (2) deliberate action, in the form of making according to an original conception of the maker’s, and (3) the thing made, dependent for existence on its source but also distinguishable from it, and new in some radical sense. (1989, p. 6)

Jullien makes this same point in his definition of simple cosmogony and the “philosophical necessity of a primary mover”:

> At least two traits appear to me to have essentially contributed to the conception of this representation: on the one hand, the anthropological valorization of a category of subject-agent as the unique and voluntary instance; and, on the other hand, the ideological valorization of the radical difference between the status of the Creator and his creation. (1989, p. 82)\(^6\)
In addition to the commitment to external causality, creationism further presupposes that the cause is an act of a volitional, purposive, rational agent. In theological terms, the creator conceives of the course of the world in accordance with divine Providence. He creates the world out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, and sets it in motion toward a predetermined end, *telos*. Seen through an Aristotelian lens, God is at once the efficient cause, setting all things into motion; the formal cause, shaping the world according to his own formal intellectual conceptions of order; the material cause, giving rise to the world out of nothing other than his own Being; and the final cause, regulating the changes and advent of the world so that they conform to a preconceived and determinate plan.

Although the Biblical account of creation provides a primary archetype for the creationist paradigm, Black explains that this model is a member of a greater “nexus” of theories that distinguish Western cosmogonies from Chinese cosmologies (1989, p. 7). Again, Jullien and Black mirror one another. Jullien writes, “The receipt of *Genesis*, as important as it is, finally represents only one possible version of the advent of the world in the midst of a panoply of occidental conceptions” (1989, p. 83). In the family of models that represent creationist thinking, yet another primary archetype of the creative agent is found in Plato’s *Timaeus* (Jullien 1989, pp. 18, 82–90; Black 1989, pp. 6–8).

Plato’s *Timaeus* purports to recount a “true story” of how the world was created out of Chaos by a divine artisan, known as, the Demiurge. The Demiurge is an agent who constructs the world according to an intentional deliberate plan. The Demiurge, it is said, contemplates the ideal, eternal realm of the Platonic forms, and constructs the world of change as an image of the

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instance unique et volontaire; et, d’autre part, la valorisation idéologique d’une différence radical de statut entre le Créateur et sa création” (Jullien 1989, p. 82).

7 Translation of Jullien’s claim: “Le récit de la Genèse, si important soit-il, ne représente somme toute qu’une version possible de l’avènement du monde au sein de la panoplie des conceptions occidentales” (Jullien 1989 p. 83).
eternal. Exercising his capacity for theoretical reason, the Demiurge constructs the world according to an *a priori* intelligent design (Jullien 1989, pp. 84–86). Insofar as the creator has a set form or blueprint in mind for the creation, he creates the world toward a determinate end. The root metaphor underlying the archetype of the creator is that of a divine *craftsman* (Jullien 1989, pp. 84 ff.; Black 1989, p.18). The craftsman is self-sufficient: ontologically independent from and prior to his creation. Conversely, the creation is ontologically dependent on and secondary to the creator. The craftsman makes, fashions, and molds the creation according to his own autonomous will, deliberation, and calculative plan (Jullien 1989, p. 84). The Creator causes the creation to come into being. As an external cause, the creator has also been likened to a watchmaker (*un horloger*) (Jullien 1989, p. 85). The watchmaker designs the mechanism such that once it is set in motion it will continue to function without further intervention by the maker. The maker sets the gears in place, winds it up, and then steps back while the mechanism continues to synchronically tick in local motion. This version of the creationist paradigm is thus represented as a mechanistic model of linear causation. Finally, to use yet one more analogy, one can say that the world is like a line of dominos, each discrete domino representing a separate subsequent moment in time. The creator sets up the linear structure, then taps the first tile and watches the causal chain play itself out until the end.

3. *Tian* 天 qua Nature

The present thesis asserts that the philosophy stemming from Wang Fuzhi’s root-categories of *tianrenheyi* 天人合一 and *tianrenzhiji* 天人之際 offers a rich resource for developing the model of ecological humanism. This thesis hinges on the recognition that in the context of Wang’s work the Chinese term *tian* functionally signifies *nature*. The thesis requires analytical proof that for Wang Fuzhi the concept of *tian* falls under the purview of naturalism.
According to the present interpretation, *tianrenheyi* and *tianrenzhiji* are respectively translated as “continuity of nature and persons” and “interstitial interrelations between nature and persons.”

Li Zhecheng (2003) sheds light on the hermeneutic prejudices that inform Wang Fuzhi’s naturalistic understanding of *tian*. “Among the pre-Qin philosophies of China,” he writes, “the scholarly traditions that chiefly advocate a kind of scientific naturalism are the Lao-Zhuang school and the school of Xunzi” (p. 56). Li argues that Wang Fuzhi’s understanding of nature reflects the influence of both of these lines of thought (Li 2003, p. 56). In his *Reading the Complete Compendium of Statements on the Four Books* (DSS), Wang expresses his appreciation for Xunzi’s philosophy as such:

The venerable Xun was fifty when he began his scholarship. Zhu Yun began his undertaking of the *Yijing* and the *Analects* at forty. As for what they understood, compared with the cunning lads of our age, whose understanding after all is higher and whose inferior? [...] Xun and Zhu most certainly pushed to the heights of Shun, Yao, and Confucius. They took action without intentional thought, without purposive action, and the brilliance of *tian* manifested of itself. While young, they were bright and intelligent, but did not depend on scholarly study. They avoided technical, self-serving, excessive prose and scholars that did not practice careful observation. They did not have any confusion in distinguishing persons from the rest of the animal kingdom. How unique! (DSS 1991, p. 222)

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8 Translated from Li Zhecheng’s original text: “中国先秦时期哲学中主张自然天的学派是老庄学与荀学” (2003, p. 56).
9 Li writes of Xunzi’s influence: “荀子的这种科学的自然观，对以后的中国哲学产生了很大影响。这种影响在船山身上亦有反映” (Li 2003, p.56). That is, “Xunzi’s kind of scientific naturalism held a considerable influence over later generations of Chinese philosophy. This influence is also reflected in the corpus of Wang Fuzhi” (my translation).
For Xunzi, “tian” means “ziran jie 自然界”—in the modern Mandarin sense of “natural world” (Zhang and Chen 1998, p. 785). Xunzi’s interpretation of tian qua ziran resonates with classical Daoist natural cosmology. Ziran literally translates as “self-so.” Wang employs it in this sense by stating of things: “of themselves they are so.” The Chinese term, ziran, is rich in semantic content. To qualify the cosmos as such means that it is a completely natural, spontaneous, autopoietic, auto-regulative, non-purposive, amoral event. In upholding this position, Wang Fuzhi, Xunzi and the early Lao-Zhuang authors are critical and skeptical of the view of tian celebrated by Confucius and Mencius.

Confucius relates to tian as a kind of a personified participant and ubiquitous, immanent force in human affairs. In accordance with the predominant religious culture of his time, Confucius viewed tian as an anthropomorphic and controlling power: “人格力量,” “主宰力量” (Zheng 2006, p. 52; Huang 2008, p. 38). Its subjective attributes include affectivity: it appreciates human actions at times and takes offense to them at others (Analects 14.25). Tian is held in awe in the Analects: for it controls the longevity and death of all creatures; moreover, it can enact cultural revolutions, socio-political capitulations, and epochal shifts in human history (Analects 9.5). Finally, tian is purposive, intentional, and deliberate in its actions. Thus,  

1 The definition of tian 天 qua ziran jie 自然界 is stated in the Peking University Press Classical Chinese Character Dictionary (1998, p. 785). The lexicon cites Xunzi to instantiate and contextualize this sense of the term.  
11 The similarity between Xunzi’s notion of tian and Daoism is also noted by Wing-tsit Chan (1963, p. 153).  
12 See Li Zhecheng’s claim along these lines: “老庄学批评孔孟的道德天思想, 强调自然天的无意志性.” In translation, “The Lao-Zhuang school criticized the Confucian-Mencian line of thought on a moral nature, and they emphasized the non-purposive character of a spontaneous nature.”  
13 See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr. (1998) for a reconstruction of Confucius’s nuanced understanding of tian as a non-theistic anthropomorphic force (p. 47).  
14 For a focused discussion on the differences between tian according Confucius and tian according to Wang Fuzhi, see Zheng Xiong’s article, “王夫之对孔子天命论的改造” (2006).  
15 See Zheng Xiong connects this aspect of Confucius’s belief in tian as an assertion of the general belief of the Western Zhou period: “孔子继承了西周关于“天”的思想，承认天具有主宰人的生死寿夭、富贵贫贱，乃至主宰历史文化的命运” (2006, p. 52).
contemporary scholars, such as Zheng Xiong (2006), represent *tian* in the context of the *Analects* as masterful and volitional: “主宰之天, 意志之天.”

Though *tian* carries these attributes in the eyes of Confucius, it would be a fallacy of equivocation to identify the *tian* of Confucius as a theistic God. The metaphysical assumptions of classical Confucianism are inconsistent with the metaphysics of theism. In brief the latter presupposes a metaphysical dualism between a transcendent, independent, ultimate reality, and a concrete, dependent, contingent reality. The theistic model functions according to a top-down causality. The relationship between God and persons is unilateral: persons depend on God for their existence and identity, but the converse is not the case. The metaphysical structure of the *tian*-person relationship for Confucius is bilateral or bi-conditional. In other words, *tian* continuously emerges in positive correlation to the moral and cultural achievements of persons.

*Tian* is a *spiritual culture* developed by persons over the course of history, and sustained through ancestral reverence. *Tian* serves as the consummate symbol and collective memory of one’s cultural heritage. Whereas the theistic model is based on the premise, God created man in his image, the model of *tian* assumes the opposite. The image of *tian* takes shape in the form of historical figures. This process is explained by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr.

“Culturally significant human beings—persons such as the Duke of Zhou and Confucius—are ‘theomorphized’ to become *tian*, and *tian* is itself made anthropocentric and determinate in their persons” (1998, p. 47). *Tian*’s intentions and affective responses are derived from and represent the ideal qualities of sagely persons. *Tian*’s personified perspective on any state affairs just is

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the idealized perspective taken by ancestral spirits. *Tian* sees as the people see, *tian* hears as the people hear.

Wang pushes neo-Confucianism toward a fully naturalistic understanding of *tian*. In his worldview, *tian* is fully immanent and completely devoid of anthropomorphic qualities. Thus, JeeLoo Liu rightly states that Wang Fuzhi’s *tian* “is simply the totality of the natural world” (2010, pp. 360). In Wang Fuzhi’s work, *tian* is nature qua *ziran*. That is, in the context of his cosmology, *tian* is fully natural and spontaneous, *ziranzhitian* 自然之天, as opposed to anthropomorphic, deliberate, and volitional, *yizhitian* 意志之天. A survey of recent scholarship in the field of Wang Fuzhi studies draws attention to this aspect of his thought:

王夫之批判了孔子的意志之天, 变意志之天为自然之天 (Zheng, 2006, p. 50).
Wang Fuzhi criticized Confucius’s ‘volitional nature,’ and transformed it into spontaneous nature.

王船山认为天没有意志, 目的, 只是其本身内部灵活地运动而已 (Li 2004, p. 27).
Wang Chuanshan believes that nature does not have volition or intention; it only adaptively moves within itself and nothing more.

天 ‘无心,’ ‘无为,’ 没有意志, 没有情感, 不能主宰人的命运 (Lü, Yang 2003, p. 27).
Nature is without a heart-and-mind; without purposive activity; it does not have volition; it does not have feelings; it cannot control persons’ destiny.

宇宙大化没有情感意义, 是无心的. 所谓无心,即为自然 (Deng 2003, p. 76).
Cosmic transformations do not have feeling or intentionality. They are without heart-and-mind. That which is called ‘without-heart-and-mind’ is also spontaneous.

Wang makes claims to this effect throughout his work: “*Tian* does not intentionally act, *wuwei* 無為...” Thus, when fortune and misfortune constantly change and the myriad patterns all come...
to fruition, they spontaneously achieve complete excellence” (Li 56). This claim further advances the idea of spontaneous nature by formulating it in terms of non-intentional action, *wuwei* 無為. Wang lifts this interpretive strategy straight from the Daoist playbook. Indeed, a host of corresponding negations or “*wu*-forms” are implied by Wang’s appropriation of the Daoist “*ziran*”: *wuwei* 無為, *wusi* 無思, *wusi* 無私, *wujī* 無己, *wuzhi* 無知, *wuxin* 無心. Respectively, nature is without intentional action, without deliberate thought, without personal inclinations, without self-awareness, without knowledge. In sum, nature is without heart-and-mind. Lacking a mind and will of its own, *tian* does not judge:

Raising the hands is an act of respectful salutation; kneeling in formal posture is an act of pride: these are the rituals of people. Nature, however, causes fear and trembling but does not instruct by means of ritual reverence; it establishes and underwrites divisions, but does not direct according to self-conceit. People fear the imperial corporeal punishments of tattooing, amputation, castration, and execution because they invoke condemnation. From the perspective of nature, however, crippled are *so not* because they were robbers, and the emasculated are *so not* because they are licentious. 19

4. Nature as Patterns of Energy

Spontaneous nature possesses a sublime power to enact transformations. Wang believes that the anthropomorphic worldview constitutes a diminution of nature’s sublimity. Making this point, he rhetorically questions the belief in *tian* as a quasi-personal force: “*Tian* is only *yinyang* and five phases, arising and descending, emerging and retracting in the heavens and earth. Why should it ever condescend to the level of giving orders as such?” (DSS 1991, p. 454). Insofar as Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy of nature presupposes the cosmological categories of neo-
Confucianism, it should come as no surprise that nature is here regarded as a dynamic holistic
structure of energetic forces. That is, *tian* is nothing more than patterns of energy, *qizhili* 氣之理.

In the perennial Chinese worldview, *qi* 氣 is an explanatory concept which conveys the
experience of the world and its constituent phenomena as dynamic vivacious processes. French
sinologist Jacques Gernet provides the following gloss on the term:

> Applied to the broken and continuous lines of the *Book of Changes* or *Zhouyi*, it seems
> that one can only best translate the word *qi*, a term without equivalent in our traditions, as
> energy. It is the sense that it has in the modern language where the composite *dianqi*
designates electricity... The Chinese concept of energy has by etymology a sense of
> “vapor” and has conserved over the course of history the diverse senses of vapor, breath,
> air, fumes, climate, or even vigor and vital force that can be weakened or reinforced.
> (Gernet 2005, p. 159)

Gernet’s analysis indicates ubiquitous presence of the term *qi* in Chinese discourse, and
correspondingly the ubiquitous presence of *qi* in reality. *Qi* is the continuous energy field that
resonates through, constitutes and interconnects all of nature. From the highest recesses of space
*tiankong* 天空 to the most miniscule pebble, there is nothing that is not fully constituted by *qi*.

“The continuous presence of *qi* in all modalities of being makes everything flow together as the
unfolding of a single process” (Tu 1998, p. 108). *Qi* is the active vital force driving the
continuous transformation of all events. Internal to the lived body it is blood *xueqi* 血氣, breath
*xiqi* 吸氣, and emotion, as in anger *shengqi* 生氣. Outside of the body it is atmosphere *kongqi*
空氣 and meteorological phenomena *tianqi* 天氣. As the weather always changes and respiration

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20 My translation of Gernet’s text:

> Appliqué aux lignes interrompues et continues du livre des Mutations ou Zhouyi, il semble qu’on ne puisse
> mieux traduire le mot *qi*, terme sans équivalent dans nos traditions, que par celui d’énergie. C’est le sens
> qu’il a dans la langue moderne où le composé *dianqi* désigne l’électricité... La notion chinoise d’énergie a
> pour étymologie celle de “vapeur” et a conservé au cours de l’histoire les sens divers de vapeur, souffle,
> air, émanations, climat, ou même vigueur et force vitale qui peut être affaiblie ou renforcée. (Gernet 2005,
> pp. 158–159)
is a continuous process, so \( qi \) is constantly in motion. Though spontaneous, the motions are not chaotic: \( Qi \) functions according to the self-regulated, patterned movements of \( yin \) and \( yang \) (negative and positive feedback loops). In a word, there is no energy that is not patterned, \( li \) 理.

Wang Fuzhi identifies the interdependence of energy and pattern: “Filling the space between the sky and earth, within people’s lived bodies, and external to people’s lived bodies, there is nothing that is not \( qi \). Thus, also, there is nothing that is not patterned, \( li \) 理. Pattern moves within \( qi \)” (1991 DSS, p. 857). The theme of pattern and energy as an inseparable pair is repeated throughout Wang’s work. Elsewhere in the same work, for example, he reiterates this fundamental premise: “Patterning, forthwith, is patterning of energy (or energetic patterning, 氣之理). Energy ought to be grasped like this, that is, as patterning. Patterning is not prior, nor is energy afterward…” (p. 1052).

\( Li \) like \( qi \) is one of those pugnacious words in Chinese philosophical discourse that refuses to cooperate with any attempt to find a one-to-one correspondence between it and an English term. Again, Gernet’s etymological investigation is informative: The term \( li \), Gernet explains, originally occurs in the \textit{Book of Odes} without the jade radical that it has in current form. In its original usage it referred to the division of fields for horticultural use. The jade radical was probably added in the normalization of Chinese script that occurred toward the end of the third century (Gernet 2005, p. 199). The character for \( li \)—the symmetrical subdivision of fields and the interconnected lines interior to jade—suggests a sense of “patterning.” Following its original sense, the meaning of \( li \) developed to signify a natural and harmonious order of particular events.

22 For an extensive discussion and ample citation regarding Wang’s idea of \( li \), see Gernet (2005, pp. 202–205).
Whereas *qi* functions to explain the dynamic self-presentation of life and process in the world, *li* explains that experience always presents itself with degrees of coherence and structure. *Qi* signifies flux; “*li* is the pattern amidst the flux which provides a means of establishing harmony” (Berthrong and Tucker 1998, p. xxxvii).

Wang sees a tendency in Song theorists of the Cheng-Zhu school to overemphasize, reify, and hypostatize *li* 理 as a metaphysical principle that is independent from the fluctuating energy that it patterns. Historian Peter Bol notes, “‘Neo-Confucianism’ is a modern, foreign term. The common Chinese names for this movement are quite different… Each of these names emphasizes one aspect of the philosophical discussions at the expense of the other” (2008, p. 78).

The term *lixue* 理學 (School of *Li*) as a popular appellation for neo-Confucian thought is a case in point. The lineage of *lixue* is founded on works of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the “great systematizer,” and his intellectual predecessor Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107). “When all is said and done,” writes Gernet, “Zhu Xi [following Cheng Yi] imagined an ideal *li*, independent of energies and anterior to the formation of beings” (2005, p. 201). 24 Gernet continues, “Hostile to abstractions and conscious of an analysis from concrete reality, and following his master Zhang Zai, Wang speculates that the products of the activity of the universal energy demonstrate in an irrefutable manner that this energy possesses in itself the ability to form organized beings” (2005, p. 206). 25 In agreement with Gernet, Allison Harley Black also concludes that Wang Fuzhi regards the *li* of the Cheng-Zhu school as a transcendent principle, a position which he staunchly opposes in favor of the immanence of *li* (1989, pp. 61–68). For Wang Fuzhi, in contrast to Zhu

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24 Gernet’s claim: “Zhu Xi imagine en fin de compte un *li* idéal, indépendant des énergies et antérieur à la formation des êtres” (Gernet 2005, p. 201).

25 Gernet’s claim: “Hostile aux abstractions et soucieux d’analyse à partir des réalités concrètes, Wang estime à la suite de son maître Zhang Zai que les produits de l’activité de l’énergie universelle démontrent de manière irréfutable que cette énergie possède en elle-même le pouvoir de former des êtres organisés puisque ce pouvoir se révèle clairement à nos yeux…” (Gernet 2005, p. 206).
Xi, li cannot be understood as a principle that governs the movements of qi from the top down. Li is not a static principle: It emerges in and as the pattern of interactive energies. The li, being the li of qi in Wang’s philosophy, is here generated in the internal dynamics of qi itself. Li in other words is the spontaneous and complex organization of qi. Insofar as li is emergent within the world of flux, it is perhaps better translated as “patterning” rather than “pattern.”

A paradigmatic example of holistic thought in neo-Confucian philosophy is found in the slogan accredited to Cheng Yi: “理一分殊.” “Li is continuous, its divisions many.” The one continuous li refers to the experience of the world as an integrative whole. The division and uniqueness of li represents the world as a plurality of events — patterns within patterns, and patterns becoming other patterns. Cheng Yi’s slogan indicates that one never has a unity apart from the diverse facts that constitute it, and one never has a plurality of facts that do not constitute a unity. As in the case of complex systems theory, the “one” and “many” or “whole” and “parts” are here mutually implicative. Each particular is a unique pattern of qi. Insofar as qi is continuous throughout the cosmos, each particular can be understood as focal expression of the whole. The idea resonates with Alfred North Whitehead’s brand of holism summarized by the Whiteheadian mantra: “the many become one and are increased by one” (Whitehead 1978, p. 21). In neo-Confucian discourse, each novel entity is a configuration of the cosmic qi that interconnects all things in a continuous energy field. Each particular draws all of the energetic relationships that it has with every other particular into itself, organizes these relationships into a unique pattern, and expresses these relationships in its own way. The one li is a cosmic nested hierarchy of patterns. It is a pattern of qi transformations or a holistic system of all particular events, but this pattern/structure never has an objective status that can be apprehended apart from

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a particular perspective. The pattern shifts according to shifting perspectives taken from within the order itself. There is no God’s eye view or universal arché to be found in the neo-Confucian account. Rather than a single pattern, the one li is an open set of possible ways to experience and imagine the world as a dynamic unity.

Gernet notes that in its current usage the term li is used as a translation of the Western terms of “principle” or “reason.” But Gernet immediately goes on to claim that it is perhaps better called the absence of reason, “dénuée de raison (wuli)” (2005, p. 198). “It is not the reason of logical discourse that excludes all contradiction: it maintains a connection with the idea of putting in order and of natural order. It is neither the Greek logos nor the Latin ratio,” which would imply a high level of abstraction. Gernet concludes that in the context of Wang Fuzhi’s thought discussing li “as an abstract entity, independent of energies and beings is absurd” (2005, pp, 199, 202). The order is an order attained by coordination of concrete particulars.

The conjoined force of the concepts li and qi indicate that the world is a complex dynamic system of complex dynamic systems. From a neo-Confucian perspective the world is comprised by different levels and fields of organized qi. This way of understanding li and qi

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27 Gernet’s claim: “Mais cette raison n’est pas la raison la raison logique du discours qui exclut toute contradiction: elle garde des liens avec l’idée de mise en ordre et d’ordre naturel. Elle n’est ni logos grec ni ratio latine” (Gernet 2005, p. 199).

28 Gernet also writes of li in terms of systems theory:

La notion d’organisation (li) et, par suite, celle de système s’appliquent chez Wang aussi bien aux sociétés humaines qu’aux êtres vivants. Les institutions de tout genre, les mentalités, les habitudes collectives, les idées dominantes… forment un ensemble qui est l’aboutissement de l’adaptation de ces éléments entre eux, au cours d’une longue évolution, et constituent des systèmes qui se modifient de façon plus ou moins progressive ou soudaine... (Gernet 2005, p. 145).

The notion of organization (li) and, consequently, that of a system is applied by Wang Fuzhi also to human societies as well as living beings. The institutions of all genres, the mentalities, the collective habits, the dominant ideas form an ensemble which is the culmination of the mutual adaption of these elements, over the course of a long evolution, and constitute a system that modifies itself in a more or less progressive or sudden fashion…. (my translation)
provides a means for recovering Wang Fuzhi’s thought as a complex systemic ecology. Kalton provides a sound approximation of the relevance for interpreting neo-Confucianism in this way:

Contemporary thought points toward an understanding of the cosmos, the world, physical systems, biosystems, ecosystems, and social systems as patterned energy of many levels and modes: not just pattern and not just energy; not just multiple and not just one… Arguments in this area and difficulties in explaining causality from pattern/system downward seem amusingly similar to the interminable arguments of traditional Neo-Confucians about *li* and *qi*. (1998, p. 83)

Each unique pattern of *qi* contributes to greater global patterns. The global patterns of energy and the unique patterns that constitute it are recursive mutually-informing processes. As a basis for ecological humanism, the concepts of *li* and *qi* work together to explain the integration of persons-in-the-world. Persons are complex systems within themselves, but they co-exist with and interpenetrate other complex systems on multiple levels. Though they are all interconnected in the patterned developments of cosmic *qi*, they retain their own internal systemic integrity as contributory functions in the midst of this flux.

Wang Fuzhi is a naturalist in the sense that he does not believe that anything exists outside of the natural world constituted by *qi*. Although he recognizes that the movements of *qi* often function so subtly that they are invisible to the human eye, he does not conclude that *qi* has any supernatural status. In place of a transcendent source or principle of the patterned changes and structural coordination of natural events, he advocates an emergent order that is immanent within the world itself. For Wang the operations of *qi* from the cosmic level of *tiandi* to the most infinitesimally small are not fathomable by ratiocination; nonetheless, they provide sources for aesthetic and religious appreciations of the dynamically sublime and intricate complexity of the cosmic tapestry. Wang Fuzhi regards the subtle and unfathomable ability of *qi* to transform on all levels of existence as a numinous and sublime quality of *qi*. 


5. Immanent Cosmological Source: Supreme Limit and Supreme Harmony

According to Chen Lai 陈来 (2004), “Wang Chuanshan’s Annotated Commentary on Master Zhang’s Zhengmeng is an interpretation and development of Zhang Zai’s Zhengmeng […] From the perspective of a theory of origin, the fundamental idea of the Zhengmeng’s naturalistic philosophy for the most part comes from the Zhouyi, primarily the Commentaries on the Changes” (p. 361). Chen Lai here advances the notion that Zhang Zai, Wang Fuzhi, and the Yijing are to be read as having a theory of origins, 理论渊源. The conjunction of Chen Lai’s claim with Jullien’s and Black’s rejection of reading Wang Fuzhi’s work as a theory of origins foregrounds a particular problématique, which Wang Fuzhi himself saw in the neo-Confucian tradition.

Wang Fuzhi’s dilemma of origins grows out of the question of how to interpret the concept of supreme limit taiji 太極 and the generative forces of yin 陰 and yang 陽 in the context of the Yijing’s claim:

易有太極，是生兩儀，兩儀生四象，四象生八卦．

Changes have a supreme limit, taiji: this produces two modes; two modes produce four figures; four figures produce eight trigrams (Xici shang 11.3). Wang Fuzhi adopts a mainstream position by interpreting the “two modes” as yin and yang (1988, ZYN, p. 561). These two terms have no meaning in and of themselves; that is to say, neither yin nor yang has any essence in itself. They are always defined as a mutually implicative and correlative pair. In terms of cosmology, yin and yang refer to opposing yet complementary modalities of qi. Qi always functions as yin and yang interactions. From the simplest and

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smallest to the most complex and magnanimous states of affairs, nothing exists apart from *yin* and *yang* transactions. So, the extension of these concepts covers all phenomenological oppositions: heavens above and the earth below; noble and base; movement and rest; hard and soft; fortune and misfortune; celestial image and concrete form; male and female; going and coming; initiating and complying; contracting and expanding; animating and embodying; outer and inner; sun and moon; day and night; inhale and exhale; concealment and disclosure; summer and winter; north and south; ease and difficulty; continuity and discontinuity, etc. The *Yijing* defines the processual way of the world, *dao*, specifically as a continuity of *yin* and *yang*: 一陰一陽之謂道 (*Xici shang* 5.1). “This description is an abstract way of making the empirical observation that all predicates give way to their opposites: order and disorder succeed each other and so on” (Hall and Ames 2003, p. 27). *Yin* and *yang* spontaneously interact, transform one another, and transition into one another. As explanatory categories, the incessant change as well as the continuity of the world is attributed to the cosmic interplay of these forces. *Yin* and *yang* are efficacious fecundate metaphysical forces. As Jullien makes clear throughout his text, the *Yijing* and Wang Fuzhi both present a radical process philosophy and correlative cosmology. In this context, every thing, *wu*, is conceived of as a dynamic event, *shi*. And everything is created and constituted by *yinyang* interactions. In addition, all events are interconnected to one another—and regulated by each other—in greater and lesser degrees through a pervasive continuity of *yinyang* interrelationships; thus, the coherence and holistic unity of the cosmos emerges as a complex system of *yin* and *yang* forces of *qi*.  

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31 For a supporting account of *yinyang* in the *Yijing* and Wang Fuzhi, also confer the section of Gernet’s text “Opposés complémentaires: La notion de phase,” (2005, p. 85 ff.). Again, Jullien (1989) takes the exposition of correlative cosmology and process philosophy in the *Yijing* and Wang Fuzhi to be his thesis, and provides a comprehensive and illustrative account of these themes.
On Black’s account, “The general import of his [Wang’s] argument was to remove from 
t’ai-chi \([taiji]\) the concept of generative source and define it as principle of harmony 
characterizing \(yin\) and \(yang\)” (1989, p. 65). Black’s intentions are in the right place; nonetheless, 
her unqualified claim that Wang did not recognize \(taiji\) as a generative source is too strong. It is 
not the case that he seeks to remove the connotations of generative source from the concept of 
\(taiji\) all together, nor is it the case that he sees \(taiji\) as a creator in the sense of Creationism. 
Wang Fuzhi is particularly concerned with the tendency of the neo-Confucian tradition to 
interpret the notion of \(taiji\) as a cosmogonic (external) cause that precedes the advent of the 
natural world and its multifarious concrete particulars (Jullien 1989, p. 69).\(^{32}\) Wang takes a 
critical posture when analyzing the cosmology of \(taiji\), \(yinyang\), and the productive activity of 
engendering, \(sheng\) 生. He intends for his philosophy to serve as an articulation of the neo-
Confucian commitment to an immanent source of change, life, novelty, and diversity. In this 
vein he seeks to purge the neo-Confucian tradition of implying the existence of a supernatural 
cause of the natural world. He intends to clearly distinguish his philosophy of the \(Yijing\) from 
any conceptions of origin that presuppose an atemporal beginning or cosmological priority of 
one state of affairs over and above all others. Wang maintains that \(taiji\) is a cosmological source

\(^{32}\) Jullien writes on this topic:

[A]u sein d’une telle tradition, Wang Fuzhi a poussé le souci encore plus loin que tout autre, pour évacuer 
des anciennes représentations cosmologique toute possibilité d’interprétation cosmogonique. Son attention 
critique est ici des plus rigoureuses et porte essentiellement sur la notion de limite suprême (taiji) qui a 
joué un rôle primordial dans toute la pensée néo confucéenne (à partir de Zhou Dunyi, au XIe siècle)” 
(Jullien 1989, p. 69).

My translation of this claim runs thus:

[I]n the midst of this tradition, Wang Fuzhi pushed the concern even further than all others, for evacuating 
the ancient cosmological representations of all possible cosmogonic interpretation. His critical attention is 
here most rigorous and essentially concerns the notion of the supreme limit (\(taiji\)) which plays a primordial 
role in all neo-Confucian thought (beginning with Zhou Dunyi in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century). (Jullien 1989, p. 69)
or origin, to be sure, but it is an immanent and participatory source identifiable with the world itself. In a word, *taiji* is the root-body of the world:

此太極之所以出生萬物，成萬理而起萬事者也，資始資生之本體也.

These [*yin* and *yang*] are how *taiji* brings forth the myriad things; becoming the myriad patterns, and giving rise to the myriad events. These are the *root-body* of beginnings and growth. (Wang 1988, ZYW, *Xici shang*, p. 989).

Rather than acting on the world according to a top-down structure, the *taiji* qua root-body is an emergent source of transformation, life, and diversity. As Wang Fuzhi describes it, *taiji* just is the globalized unity of all *yin* and *yang* interactions, on all levels of organizational structures and in all localities.

Although the idea of *taiji* is found in the *Appended Phrases, Xici, section of the Yijing*, it was not a prominent concept for philosophical speculation prior to Zhou Dunyi’s *Explanation of the Taiji Diagram* (Jullien 1989, p. 69; Black 1989, p. 65). After Zhou Dunyi, neo-Confucian thinkers “made it the foundation of their representation of the course of the world, the advent of all existence, and the ultimate limit, which amounts to all process” (Jullien 1989, p. 70).

Black provides the following translation of Zhou’s *Explanation*:

Without Ultimate—the Supreme Ultimate!
In the Supreme Ultimate there is movement and the birth of *yang*;
At the limit of movement: stillness.
In stillness is the birth of *yin*;
At the limit of stillness: the return of movement.
Movement and stillness alternating are one another’s root;

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33 Wang’s language of “beginnings and growth, 資始資生” here alludes to the *Yijing’s Image Commentary, Xiangzhuan* 象傳, which attributes these characteristics of fecundity and sustainment to the Qian and Kun hexagrams, respectively.
34 Translation of Jullien’s text: “… le fondement de leur représentation du cours du monde, et de l’avènement de toute existence, en tant que limite ultime en amont de tout procès” (1989, p. 70).
Yin and yang dividing constitute two modes. (Black 1989, p. 65)\(^5\)

Jullien explains Wang Fuzhi’ idea of taiji by paraphrasing the author: “One is not able to go farther, climb higher: because there is no farther and no higher. This ultimate limit is one of void itself, as non-actualization (wuji) at the source of all actualization: not the void qua non-existence, but on the contrary as absolute plenitude—in its phase of non-actualization it is but all possible actualizations…” (Jullien p. 69-70).\(^6\) Whereas taiji refers to the world as a holistic unity of all diverse phenomena, the concept of wuji is postulated to ensure that the world is understood as an unbound totality. Furthermore, wuji is not nothing in the sense of nihilo. As absolute plenitude, wuji refers to the boundless capacity of the cosmos to endlessly give rise to novel actual occasions from its own internal dimensions. Wuji is essentially a negative term, meaning without limits; wuji signifies that there is no determinate objectified source or limits to the transformations of the world (cf. Gernet 2005, p. 156). In this sense, moreover, the complexity and fecundate power of the world is beyond the bounds of reason, and thus opens itself up to profound aesthetic and religious appreciation of nature’s sublimity.

To take Wang Fuzhi’s position, Zhou Dunyi’s text and the Yijing passage that it is based on delineate a tightrope of interpretation that must be traversed with the utmost caution. The intention in Wang’s argument is to retain taiji’s sense of cosmological fecundity and yet avoid the fallacies of hypostatization and metaphysical reification. Alluding to this difficulty, Jullien writes of the rich ambiguity of Zhou Dunyi’s interpretation of the Yijing: “One is able to interpret it in a more cosmogonic sense, conferring on this limit [taiji] a status of a point of departure or of


\(^6\) Jullien’s text: “On ne peut aller plus loin, remonter plus haut : parce qu’il n’ y a pas plus loin ni plus haut. Cette limite ultime est celle du « vide » lui-même, en tant que non-actualisation (wuji) au départ de toute actualisation : non pas le vide en tant qu’inexistence, mais au contraire comme absolue plénitude – à son stade de non-actualisation mais contenant toutes les actualisations possibles” (Jullien 1989, p. 70). Emphasis in the translation is added.
Wang Fuzhi maintained the falsity of the former, and the verity of the latter. He provides the following warning against misinterpreting Zhou Dunyi’s *Explanation*:

Those who misunderstand the *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Limit* say the supreme limit originally does not yet have *yin* and *yang*. [They say] because of movement, then there is the fetal beginning and birth of *yang*, and because of stillness, then there is the fetal beginning and birth of *yin*. They do not know that movement and stillness are what are engendered by *yin* and *yang*, and [*taiji*] originally has them [*yin* and *yang*] contained. [*Yin* and *yang*] make the natures (*qingzhi*) of winter and summer, moistness and dryness, and male and female. Their comingling of *ying* and *yang* (*yinyun*) are prior to movement and stillness. As for movement and stillness, these are the movement and stillness of *yin* and *yang*. (Wang 1988, ZMZ, p. 24)

Chen Lai explains that Wang Fuzhi’s emphasis is that *taiji* is the supreme harmony *taihe* and co-mingling of *yin* and *yang* (*yinyun* 絪縕) (Chen 2004, p. 368). *Taiji* in other words originally contains the generative interactions of the two modalities, and it would be a mistake to conceive of it as a state of affairs that somehow precedes them (ibid.). In his *Inner Commentary to the Zhouyi* 周易內傳 Wang comments on the *Yijing’s* claim that *taiji* produces two modes:

“*Yin* and *yang* have no beginning,” he states. “*Taiji* is not something standing on its own over

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37 Translated from Jullien’s text: “on peut l’interpréter dans un sens plus cosmogonique, en conférant à cette limite un statut de point de départ et d’origine, ou dans un sens purement cosmologique, par éradication de tout statut exclusif d’antériorité…” (1989, p. 70). Emphasis added to the body text.

38 “And yet it is the pure cosmological sense that precisely provides support for Wang Fuzhi, because according to him the thought of process excludes from itself every notion of a point of possible departure for process” (Jullien 1989, p. 70). Translation of Jullien’s text: “Or c’est le pur sens cosmologique que soutient précisément Wang Fuzhi, puisque chez lui la pensée du procès exclut d’elle-même toute notion d’un point de départ possible du procès” (Jullien 1989, p. 70).


and above *yin* and *yang*” (Wang 1988, ZYN, p. 562).\(^{42}\) In accordance with Jullien’s thesis—Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy is a radical, process, correlative cosmology—Wang Fuzhi saw the world *qua* process as having no determinate beginning and no terminal:

The “virtue” inherent in the grand process that is continuously in operation in the world is that it “embraces all,” from the largest to the most minute, and that it is also at the origin of all (that is to say of all the particular actualizations). But there is never “a moment or an existent that would be able to serve as a point of departure for process,” of the sort that “all the rest follows it”… Just as it does not have an end, the ongoing movement will not have a beginning.” (Jullien 1989, pp. 68 – 69)\(^{43}\)

The generative interactions of *yin* and *yang* are always at work in a perpetual motion. Neither *yin* nor *yang*, Qian nor Kun, is primary in the cosmological order of things (Jullien 1989, pp. 46-49, et passim; Yan 1994, pp. 123–124). Each modality reflects, contains, penetrates, responds to, and implies the other. This dynamic interchange between the two modalities does not have any external cause. In other words, the interaction is sui generis, spontaneous and auto-regulative. Commenting on Black’s interpretation, Yan Shoucheng provides an analysis of *taiji* in relation to *yin* and *yang*:

*Taiji* embraces all kinds of the potentials of materials and forces which continuously and spontaneously develop into concrete things and later undergo other, endless transformations. In this sense, Alison Black’s interpretation of Wang’s philosophy as “expressionism” is applicable – that is it is characterized by innerness, spontaneity, and


\(^{43}\) My translation of Jullien’s claim:

*La « vertu » inhérente au grand procès qui est continûment à l’œuvre dans le monde est qu’il « embrasse tout », du plus grand au plus infime, et qu’il est aussi à l’origine de tout (c’est-à-dire de toutes les actualisations particulières). Mais il n’y a jamais « un moment ou un existant qui puisse servir des point de départ du procès », de sorte que « toute le reste en soit la suite »... De même qu’il ne saurait avoir de fin, le mouvement en cours ne saurait avoir de début...* (Jullien 1989, p 69)
continuity between the expressive source and the final outcome, and by organic form in which inner and outer are bound inseparably together. (1994, p. 123)

The processive correlative interaction between yin and yang serves as the font for all existence. yin and yang continuously change and transform in relation to one another; so, identifying a distinct primary cause as the cosmological source of existence is impossible. There is no determinate beginning to the interaction of yin and yang that one can call taiji, nor is there an end. Again, the procreative, sui generis, activity of the cosmos is without limits, wuji (Jullien 1989, pp. 68–69).

In reference to her translation of Zhou Dunyi’s text cited above, Black maintains that her interpretation reflects a traditional neo-Confucian reading of the text, but Wang Fuzhi would not agree with her translation of the verb sheng as ‘‘generate’ or ‘(give) birth’’ (1989, p. 65). Black goes on to cite the following passage from Wang Fuzhi’s Minor Commentary on the Zhouyi 周易稗疏 where Wang analyzes the Xici’s claim that taiji generates yin and yang:

In regards to birth (sheng 生), it is not the case that what is born is a son, or that which gives birth is called a father. If it were used thus, then there would be a time where there were taiji without two modalities, two modalities without four images, four images without of eight trigrams. The birth is the birth of giving rise, as in a person’s face giving rise to ears, eyes, mouth, and nose, naturally and completely, in their separation then we name them: this is what is now meant by birth… Taiji thus two modes, two modes thus four images, four images thus eight trigrams: as in a person’s face, thus, ears, eyes, mouth, nose. In particular, if that which gives rise to what is produced and established is divided up and named, then it is two; it is four, and it is eight. (Wang 1988, v. 1, p. 789)

My translation here is based on Black’s (1989, p. 66). Wang’s original passage runs as follows: “生者，非所生者為子，生之者為父之謂。使然，則有有太極無兩儀，有兩儀無四象，有四象無八卦之日矣。生者於上發生也，如人面生耳，目，口，鼻，自然賅具，分而言之，謂之生耳… 太極即兩儀，兩儀即四象，四象即八卦，猶人面即耳目口鼻；特於其上所生而固有者分言之，則為兩，為四，為八耳” (Wang 1988, v. 1, Baishu. p. 789).
In this passage Wang pays analytical attention to the verb *sheng* 生. The term *sheng* refers to the processes through which actual occasions or concrete particulars emerge in the world. As a verb, *sheng* 生 literally translates as “to produce, to bring forth, to beget” (Mathews’ p. 795). It means “to give birth, to engender.” But Wang Fuzhi maintains that the process of cosmological production is not that of a parent giving birth to a child (Black 1989, p. 66; Jullien 1989, p 70).

If the relation between *taiji* 太極 and the empirical world of protean particulars is thus characterized as a relation between a parent and a child, Wang worries that people would get the idea that there was a time in which the source of particulars could have existed apart from the particulars themselves.\(^45\) *Taiji* refers to the ability of the world to give rise to itself — in all of its novel and diversified transformations. In the language of the *Yijing*, *taiji* thus refers to the capacity of the world to renew itself daily, *rixin* 日新.

Wang Fuzhi uses *taiji* to refer to the relationship between *yin* and *yang*, but the intention of this usage is to depict this relationship under its unitary and global aspect. That is to say, it does not designate the differential functions of *yin* and *yang*. Wang understands *taiji* as a mode of generalized latency, where *yin* and *yang*, although implicitly different, do not actively manifest their difference and are intimately commingled. In terms of their referent, the synthetic

\(^45\) Cf. Jullien (1989) p. 70:

En commentant l’expression ancienne du Livre des mutations : « La limite suprême engendre les deux instances (c’est-à-dire le yin et le yang) », Wang Fuzhi précise bien que le terme « engendrer » ne signifie pas ici « donner naissance à », en un sens cosmogonique où la limite suprême jouerait le rôle de « parent » par rapport au yin et au yang, qui seraient en position d’ « enfants ». Non pas « genèse » ou « filiation », mais essor ou déploiement, en tant qu’essor de la dualité à partir de l’unité que cette dualité constitue totalement. Au sens où l’on pourrait dire que la dualité « sort » de l’unité (en même temps que l’unité n’est que la somme de cette dualité).

My translation runs thus:

In commenting on the ancient expression of the Book of Changes, “The supreme limit engenders the two instances (that is to say yin and yang), Wang clarifies (specifies) that the term “engender” does not here signify “giving birth to”, in a cosmological sense where the supreme limit plays the role of parent in relation to yin at yang, which would be in the position of “children.” Not “genesis” or “filiation”, but essor or déploiement; moreover, the essor of the duality from the unity which this duality totally constitutes.
concept of *yinyang* and the concept of *taiji* are the same: They have the same semantic value, namely, the immanent cosmological source and perpetual generative process pervading all experience. Analytically speaking, while the referent of these two concepts (*yinyang*, on the one hand, and *taiji*, on the other) is the same, the sense differs. Whereas *yin* and *yang* signify fundamentally different modes of process, *taiji* signifies that these modalities interpenetrate and harmonize in a global unity (Jullien 1989, p. 71).  

As Black, Jullien, and Chen all discuss, Wang Fuzhi explicitly identifies the notion of *taiji*, the supreme limit, with Zhang Zai’s notion of *taihe* 太和, supreme harmony. According to Jullien, this equation serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, the notion of *taiji* eliminates the risk, always present, of considering this limit as an origin and point of departure; and on the other, as the communal ground of all actualization, the notion of harmony provides a more

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46 The above is a close paraphrase of Jullien’s text:

La notion ne désigne – ne peut désigner – rien d’autre que ce rapport (puisque effectivement il n’y a rien d’autre que le yin-yang), mais elle évoque ce rapport sous son aspect unitaire et global et non pas sous l’angle de la différenciation (yin opposé à yang et inversement) ; c’est-à-dire qu’elle sert à appréhender le réel non seulement sur son mode d’actualisation déterminée (telle qu’elle « émane de l’interaction du yin-yang), mais aussi sur son mode de latence généralisée, où yin et yang, bien qu’implicitement différents, ne manifestent pas activement leur différence et sont intimement confondus. La notion de yin-yang d’une part, celle de limite suprême de l’autre signifient exactement la même chose, mais l’une sous l’angle de la dualité, l’autre sous l’angle de l’unité – l’une sous l’angle de la différenciation actualisatrice et l’autre sous l’angle de la résorption régulatrice… (Jullien 1989, p. 71).

A literal translation is as follows:

The notion [of taiji, or supreme ultimate] does not designate —is not able to designate — anything other than this relationship (because effectively there is nothing other than yin and yang), but it evokes this relationship under its unitary and global aspect, and not under the angle of the differentiation (the inverse opposition of yin and yang vice versa); it is to say that it serves to apprehend the real not only under its mode of determinate actualization (such as it emanates from the interaction of yin and yang), but also under its mode of generalized latency, where yin and yang although implicitly different, do not actively manifest their difference and are intimately commingled (confoundus). The notion of yinyang on the one hand, and the notion of supreme limit on the other hand, mean exactly the same thing, but one is under the angle of duality, the other under the angle of unity — one under the angle of actualizing differentiation and the other under the angle of the regulating resorption.

distinct characterization of the relationality that constitutes all process (1989, p. 72). Jullien uses the terms “communal ground” (*fonds commun*), “resorption of contraries” (*résorption des contraires*), and “regulative resorption” (*résorption régulatrice*) of “actualizing differentiation” (*différenciation actualisatrice*) to refer to the function of supreme harmony.

The idea behind Jullien’s vocabulary is perhaps conveyed more clearly by Wang’s claim: “Before there are yet formal particulars, there is originally nothing that is not harmonized; moreover, after there are formal particulars, this harmony is not lost” (Wang 1988, ZMZ, p. 15). In the same passage, Wang goes on to discuss supreme harmony in the following terms:

Supreme harmony is the reach of harmony. *Dao* is the pervasive pattern of the heavens and earth, and the myriad things, thus it is called supreme limit. *Yin* and *Yang* differentiate, but their intimate comingling (**yinyun**) in the midst of the supreme void comes together (**hetong**) and they do not cause injury to one another, they are evenly intermixed (**hunlun**) without interstice, thus is the extent of harmony. (ibid.)

Wang here identifies *taiji* with *dao*, which he defines as the pervasive pattern, *tongli* 通理, binding all of the events of the world together. Accordingly, *taiji* and *dao* convey the sense that a world is thoroughly interconnected in a global, spatio-temporal, holistic structure. *Taiji* bears more connotations of originary source, *dao* bears the connotation of ongoing origination and sustainment of life, structure, and novelty. *Yin* and *yang* are general categories that refer to phenomenal occurrences on all scales, from the most infinitesimally minute and mundane happenings to the greatest cosmological and sublime occurrences. That they commingle with

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48 This claim is a close paraphrase from the original French: “Or il y un double advantage... D’une part, l’effacement de l’idée de limite permet d’évacuer le risque, toujours présent, de penser cette limite comme origine et point de départ ; et, d’autre part, la notion d’harmonie met plus nettement en évidence le caractère de relationallité constitutif de tout procès, comme fonds commun de toute actualisation...” (Jullien 1989, p. 72).

49 Translation based on Wang’s text: “未有形器之先, 本无不和, 既有形器之后, 其和不失” (Wang 1988, ZMZ, p. 15).

50 Following Chen Lai, “浑沦” should be read as “混合的均匀” (2004, p. 364).

one another without causing harm indicates that the interconnection of events is functional and productive. Chen Lai explains the key terms employed here in Wang Fuzhi’s cosmological thought:

The supreme harmony and commingling of *yin* and *yang* (*taihe yinyun*) are the initial sources of the production of the myriad things. This is what is contained in the concept of *taiheyinyun*. Because in Chuanshan’s [Wang Fuzhi’s] cosmological theory, supreme harmony represents the most primitive existence and state of affairs, the separation of *yin* and *yang* and the production of the myriad things both follow from the capacity of the supreme harmony. Nonetheless, it is certainly not the case that supreme harmony only exists prior to the production of the myriad things and merely serves as the cosmological initial source. In reality, supreme harmony still exists after the production of the myriad things. (Chen 2004, p. 365)

Chen identifies *taihe* as a cosmological source in Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy. Again, the tightrope must be walked carefully. Given the continuity of harmony before and after the production of the plethora of existents, it cannot be said that *taihe* is a metaphysical being per se. *Taihe* is another way to allude to the unfathomable and numinous coordination of the fecund energies of *yin* and *yang*. Before the emergence of novelty in the world of particular events, *taihe* is the open indeterminate set of conditions that gives rise to the events themselves. In this sense, *taihe* can also be understood as the root-body *benti* 本體 of all that is. The conditions themselves are

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52 Chen Lai’s text: “太和絪緾是万物产生的初始本源。这是太和絪緾的观念所蕴涵的。因为在船山的宇宙理论，太和代表最原始的存在和状态，阴阳的分化和万物的产生，都是后于太和才有的。不过，太和并不是只存在于万物产生之先并仅仅作为宇宙的初始本源，实际上，万物产生之后太和仍然存在” (Chen 2004, p. 365).

53 Jullien refers to *taihe* in this context as the ground of grounds — *le fond du fonds*. As such, it allows for existents to emerge as formal figures, as plants break through the soil. It also supports the subsistence of concrete particulars. One problem with representing *taihe* as a ground, however, is the connotation of “substrate,” which is absent from the term “*taihe*,” but is implied in the term “ground.” The question of source is similar to Heidegger’s pursuit in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, and perhaps the problematic reading of ground in the context of Wang Fuzhi can be solved by an interpretive appropriation of Heidegger’s claim:

The scope of our question is so broad that we can never exceed it … What is put into question comes into relation with a ground. But because we are questioning, it remains an open question whether the ground is a truly grounding, foundation-effecting, originary ground; whether the ground refuses to provide a foundation,
not singular, but manifold. As a manifold, they are a unity of diversity and diversity in unity. *Taihe* refers to the spontaneously coordinated, patterned interaction of these events, which in turn gives rise to new life and new particulars. *Taihe* is a holistic concept that alludes to the interdependent and creative interactions of all events.

Wang Fuzhi’s thought provides a paradigmatic example of Chinese natural cosmology. David Hall and Roger T. Ames observe that “in early Chinese natural cosmology, there is no appeal to some substratum or independent metaphysical origin, no ‘One’ behind the ‘many’” (2003, p. 116). Instead, the source and the emergent events are co-involved in the creative process; in other words, the one and the many are mutually implicative and interactive. Ames and Hall make this argument in their commentary on the *Daodejing*, chapter 42:

Way-making (*dao*) gives rise to continuity,
Continuity gives rise to difference,
Difference gives rise to plurality,
And plurality gives rise to the manifold of everything that is happening (*wanwu*). (2003, p. 142)

In the original Chinese, the semiotics of this claim mirror the *Yijing*’s account of *taiji* as a source of diversity. Given Wang’s crucial analysis of the *Yijing*’s use of *sheng*, he would agree with Hall and Ames’s rendering of the verb *sheng* here as “give rise to,” as this translation is an attempt to avoid reading cosmogonic implications into *dao* as some metaphysical entity that stands prior to and independent from the pluralistic world. “Viewed as the creative source of all things that, at the same time, is only experiencable through them, *dao* is both continuity and

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54 Hall and Ames translation of the following text: “道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物…” (Hall and Ames 2003, p. 142).
proliferation” (Hall and Ames 2003, p. 143). Likewise falling within this paradigm of correlative cosmology, Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy is neither monistic nor pluralistic. Instead, it is more like a *via media* in between these two extremes — a “pluralistic universe.” Depending on one’s perspective or emphasis, the world is experienced as a set of continuous conjunctive relations or as a set of particularizing disjunctions. “That is, the multiplicity of things seen from another perspective is the continuity among things: Each unique focus is holographic, entailing its contextualizing field” (Hall and Ames 2003, p. 144). All parts are integrally interrelated with all other parts: They form an organic unity. But the unity is a unity of many particular individuals, and this sense of particularity is retained throughout the cosmology. Again, one finds in this mode of discourse a thoroughgoing commitment to complex holism.

6. **Holism not Monism**

According to Yan Shoucheng, “Wang maintains that *qi* is dynamic and all-inclusive, but he also stresses the normative character of *li* in the *li*-*qi* framework. Viewed from the first point, he may be considered a *qi*-monist who holds that *qi* is primary and *li* is the pattern of *qi*’s operation” (1994, p. 131). Yes, the dynamism of *qi* is a basis for reading Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy as process philosophy, and yes *qi* is a continuum, like an energy field. Yes, *li* has a normative sense, and yes *li* is a pattern of *qi*. Yan is on the mark with a majority of his interpretations, but he widely misses with his claim that Wang is a monist. Citing Yan as a basis for reading Wang Fuzhi as a monist, JeeLoo Liu writes the following of Wang’s worldview: “the realm of heaven (*tian* 天) and the realm of humans are simply one unified whole” (Liu 2010, p. 355). The addition of the term “simply” here suggests that Liu does not recognize the complexity of Wang’s holism. An analysis of the “inseparability of the one and the many, 一部不分” reveals that the world is *complex*. The whole is kept open and unbound by the predication
that it is “more than the sum of its parts.” The concept of unity applied to Wang’s thought is the “unity” of coherence, conjunction, social body, and continuity, but it does not exclude incoherence, disjunction, disorder, and discontinuity; the unity is the unity of holistic interdependence; the unity of a complex open system—as opposed to a simple unified whole.

The perennial neo-Confucian worldview should not be misconceived as the so called “block universe.” As complex systems theory recognizes the porous boundary between a system and its surroundings, so Wang Fuzhi understands the cosmos to have no ultimate boundary. The world is limitless in its complexity, subtlety and capacity of procreativity. The cosmos is constantly changing and giving rise to novel creations. “The many become the one and are increased by one,” to use Whiteheadian language. Each novel creation retains its particularity.

The world, in other words, does not ever produce more of the same, as the term monism would suggest.

Wang Fuzhi’s world is conceived of as a unification of plurality and a diversification of unity. From this perspective, the problem with monism is that it excludes pluralism, and the problem with pluralism is that it excludes monism. From a monistic point of view the individual patterns of qi are lost sight of in the overarching cosmic order. The whole supersedes the parts; the particularity of the parts is forfeited and sublated in the face of the whole. This sort of subordination of the individual to the whole is not warranted by Wang’s philosophy.

From a purely pluralistic point of view, each phenomenon is understood as a discrete atom that bears no internal or constitutive relations to any other part of the whole. Wang gives equal weight to the integrative unity as well as the persistent particularity of things. Rather than pluralistic or monistic, Wang’s theory is better understood as a kind of radical holism where the identity, value, and meaning of the cosmos shift according to perspectival orientation.
7. Wang Fuzhi’s Philosophy is not Materialism

A number of scholars have found Wang Fuzhi’s insistence on immanence and emphasis on *qi* as a justification for labeling his philosophy “materialism.” In a recent “State-of-the-Field” report on “Contemporary Chinese Studies of Wang Fuzhi in Mainland China,” the author, Sky Liu (2004), observes that this reading was a dominant trend in Wang Fuzhi studies during the second-half of the twentieth century was to depict Wang Fuzhi as a materialist philosopher (p. 310). Sky Liu further reports that the materialist reading of Wang Fuzhi has met with critical backlash from contemporary scholars.

Dating back to his 1994 dissertation at Indiana University, Yan Shoucheng begins to formulate his opposition to the materialist camp: “In the sense that *qi* refers to human vital force, the equation of the philosophy of *qi* with materialism cannot be considered correct” (Yan 1994, p. 125). In the same vein, Tu Wei-ming also vehemently contests the materialistic reading of Wang Fuzhi and Zhang Zai:

> Recent attempts to reconstruct the genealogy of materialist thinkers in China have been painful and, in some cases far-fetched. Indeed, to characterize the two great Confucian thinkers, Chang Tsai and Wang Fu-chih, as paradigmatic examples of Chinese materialism is predicated on the false assumption that *ch‘i* is materialistic... To them, *ch‘i* was not simply matter but vital force endowed with all-pervasive spirituality. (1998, p. 107)

Although *qi* constitutes concrete forms, it is not matter per se; instead, looking for an English rendition of the term, it may be said that *qi* has both a spiritual and a material dimension. Indeed, Gernet cites the incompatibility of the “*qi*” and “matter” as a justification for his rendering of “*qi*” as energy (2005, p. 158). Allison Black is also a proactive fighter in the anti-materialist camp. Black maintains that given the inequality of meaning between “matter” and “*qi,*” it is best
to forego the materialist reading and search for an alternative model for interpreting Wang’s philosophy (1989, p. 48). Black critiques Jullien’s apologetic reading of Wang as a materialist along these lines. “Given Jullien’s own cogent arguments about the ineradicable differences between the terms of this Chinese ‘materialism’ (replete with spiritual and ethical content) and those employed by the West,” she argues, “an equally possible conclusion might be that the categories of idealism and materialism simply do not fit” (Black 1991, p. 904). The anti-materialist reading of Wang Fuzhi is carried out most recently in the publication of *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Makeham 2010). In this compendium, Jeeloo Liu cites Yan Shoucheng’s work, and argues that the concepts of *qi* and *matter* are incompatible (2010, p. 357). Jeeloo Liu further grounds his conclusion in an argument that *qi* has vital, spiritual, and mental qualities that go beyond the category of matter. “It is therefore best to abandon use of the term materialism as applicable to his philosophy” (2010, p. 357).

The Chinese phrase for materialism, *weiwu zhuyi* 唯物主義, literally translates as “only thing doctrine.” As evidenced by the work of Martin Heidegger, the fundamental concept of “thing” cannot be taken for granted in philosophy, but must be subject to critical analysis:

What in truth is the thing, so far as it is a thing? When we inquire in this way, our aim is to come to know the thing-being (thingness) of the thing. The point is to discover the thingly character of the thing. To this end we have to be acquainted with the sphere to which all those entities belong which we have long called by the name of thing (Heidegger 1971: p. 21).

The “Appended Phrases Commentary” of the *Yijing* states frankly, “jingqi wei wu 精氣為物.” A preliminary translation of this claim reads, “Pure *qi* makes things.” The terms *jing* and *qi* work here as a semiotic pair: *jing* is pure refined *qi*, and *qi* is dispersed *jing*. My initial translation is based on a paronomastic definition of the first character “jing 精” in terms of its semiotic
associate “qing 清,” meaning pure. In addition to “pure,” each token instance of the character “jing 精” also carries with it connotations of bright luminosity, ming 明, and by extension signifies a beautiful quality. In addition, “jing 精,” is defined in terms of “beautiful, marvelous, wonderful, subtle, sublime, exquisite, excellent, fine, mysterious, and inconceivable”: all conveyed by the association of jing with miao 妙. Moreover, the concept jing is strongly related to the ideas of spirit and vigor, shen 神. From this proposition, it can be deduced that in Chinese discourse, the fundamental concepts of thing (物) and materiality (wuzhi 物质) are philosophically understood as qualitative terms.

The idea that qi has a numinous quality suggests that materialism in Chinese has a different meaning than it has in English. In accordance with Black’s and Liu’s insight, I agree that it is better to withhold the term altogether, rather than employ it with a long list of provisos. The concept of matter reduces life to its material cause, but for Wang Fuzhi life is not a quality that supervenes on or ingresses into organizations of matter. Qi does not metaphysically precede life as a kind of material substrate. Instead, it is more accurate to conceive of qi as a vital force or vivacious energy. Insofar as all things are constituted by qi, they are alive. Qi is life in general or life operating on all levels of existence. Even rocks, which are the most inert conglomerations of matter from a characteristically Western perspective, vibrate with their own frequencies of life energy in a qi-worldview. Life, moreover, is fundamentally qualitative and inherently valuable. The tenacity of life in its multifarious forms and transformations evokes a kind of spiritual reverence and aesthetic appreciation of nature’s transformative power.

7. Conclusion

The preceding account of the world describes the general cosmological categories of Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy. However, the discussion lacks an account of persons. As in Kerry
Whiteside’s proposal for ecological humanism, Wang Fuzhi does not assent to a belief that persons can be understood apart from the natural world, and vice-versa. Ultimately, Wang’s naturalism cannot be separated from his humanism: the two aspects of his thought are fully integrated. The discussion moves now to demonstrate that integration through analysis of the relationships between nature and persons.
Chapter 3

NATURAL PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Introduction

Wang Fuzhi does not assent to the belief that persons have discrete unchanging essences. Persons emerge in the world as a result of natural transformations and spontaneous organizations of energy. When the human organism is born into the world, it is endowed with an unparalleled potential to achieve a consummating experience of personhood. Persons are unique in Wang’s view, for persons alone are endowed with a capacity to transform their biologically-based existence into deep-felt moral experiences of concern, trust, sincerity, reverence, and love. Becoming a person requires a moral praxis of hard work, gongfu. It requires continuous effort to cultivate concern and efficacy in one’s daily life. The person-in-the-world is an event, that is, an event of humanizing nature.

The model of persons-in-the-world is here advanced by locating and developing a concept of ‘humanizing nature’ in Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy. The argument is that Wang holds an understanding of ‘humanizing nature’, which is fully consistent and resonant with the concept of ecological humanism. But Wang Fuzhi’s understanding of the event incorporates the full range of concepts in his neo-Confucian moral psychology, philosophical anthropology, and natural cosmology. Accordingly, adopting the model of person-in-the-world a la Wang Fuzhi into the paradigm of ecological humanism would add significant profundity and explanatory power to an already-robust paradigm.
2. Humanizing Nature… Continued

“Conventionally, ‘humanizing nature’ has implied that there is some knowable nonhuman world out there (‘nature’), which we then alter (‘humanize’) to make it better conform to our needs and wishes” (Whiteside 2002, p. 64). To be clear “humanizing nature” for Wang Fuzhi should not be understood in this conventional sense. “Humanizing nature” does not mean “dominating nature.” Contemporary scholar, Bai Xi, argues the case in point:

Wang Fuzhi says it well, “What spontaneously emerges are the heavens and the earth. What sustains them are the persons. Persons are the heart-and-mind of the heavens and earth.” Insofar as persons simultaneously institute themselves and take the significant position of the “heart-and-mind of the heavens and earth,” they do not possess the authority to dominate all living things. Rather, on their own accord they assume the responsibility and duty of being “what sustains” the spontaneous emergence of all living things. Persons act as “the spirit of all living things.” Their extraordinary characteristic is in this. (Bai 2008, p. 329)

Humanizing nature entails transforming natural-environmental phenomena into cultural forms of existence. Nonetheless, Wang harbored a kind of cautionary skepticism toward over-determining nature by reason and volition. That is, he was critical of practices that superimposed artificial structures onto the world. Humanizing nature ought to respect the integrity, indeterminacy, and resistance of nature-within-nature. It ought to be carried out with the intention of striking accord and creative harmonization, 中和, between persons and their

1 Translated from Bai’s text: “王夫之说的好：‘自然者天地，主持者人。人者天地之心。’ 人在为自己确立了‘天地之心’的价值定位的同时，不是拥有了主宰万物的权力，而是主动承担起了自然万物的‘主持者’的责任和义务，人作为‘万物之灵’，其特殊性即在于此” (2008, p. 329).
environments. Karyn Lai’s insight into the Confucian worldview discloses this sense of humanization: “The key operational concepts are adaptation, flexibility, versatility, appropriateness and fit, rather than management, domination, restraint, and control. With the former series of concepts, the focus is not on self-determinacy but on sensitivity to interdependencies and resonances” (Lai 2006, p. 156). Those who try to force nature into conformity with over-determinate principles are no different than Mencius’s man from Song—who uprooted his garden by trying to help his plants to grow.

The humanization of nature envisioned in Wang Fuzhi’s worldview is a multidimensional phenomenon. Humanizing nature belongs to the domain of moral praxis. In this respect, Confucian humanism is referred to as “Cultivation Humanism” (Cheng 1998). Cultivation of the environment reciprocally entails cultivation of persons’ subjective and intersubjective dimensions. Persons humanize nature by methodically sublimating their natural sensuality, emotions, and behaviors. The sublimation is directed toward establishing dynamic emotional equilibrium, experience of social harmony, and mutual concern amongst persons. The praxis assumes a rejection of substance, mind/body, subject/object dualism. Instead it assumes continuity and reciprocity between internal-embodied and external-environmental forces. The Confucian praxis is akin to what John Dewey says of living: it does not “go on below the skin surface of organism; it is always an inclusive affair involving connection, interaction of what is within the organic body and what lies outside in space and time” (p. 240).

2 See below, Chapter 5, for more intensive and extensive inquiry into ritual propriety as such.
3 In Chinese, this expression follows the formulations: 内外合一 and 内外交相.
3. Persons and Nature: Continuities and Discontinuities

In his *Du Sishu daquan shuo*, Wang Fuzhi develops a natural philosophical anthropology. The master concept of this line of thought is *tianrenzhiji* 天人之际. Wang asserts and develops the descriptive category of *tianrenzhiji* to add analytic depth and rigor to traditional Confucian discourse on the doctrine of continuity between nature and persons, *tianrenheyi* 天人合一. In Wang’s use of the term, *tianrenzhiji* “indicates the mutual opposition of persons, the heavens, the earth, and the myriad things toward being fully incorporated in the complete structure of the natural world” (2008, p. 317)\(^4\). Due to the polysemy of the relational term *ji*, the phrase *tianrenzhiji* suggests a number of translations: between nature and persons; interstice of nature and persons; boundaries of nature and persons; meeting of nature and persons. As a boundary, it is a boundary between two interconnected open systems. As such, both persons and non-personal orders of the environment are recognized to have a relative autonomy, internal structure, or integrity. “Even so, given ontological interconnectedness, the boundaries of ecological entities are imprecise, in part because of the entity’s openness (porousness or permeability). Linkages tend to blur the distinctness of ecological objects. The selection of a boundary is always arbitrary because boundaries vary over space and time” (Keller and Golley 2000, p. 23)\(^5\)

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\(^4\) This description is identified by Li Xiangjun as one sense of *tianrenzhiji* as it is sometimes used in Confucian discourse: “天人之际 … 有时指的是与人相对的包括天、地、万物在内的自然界全体” (2008, p. 316).

\(^5\) Ecological terminology provides a useful hermeneutic tool for interpreting Wang’s “boundaries of nature and persons”:

Systemic and organic entities have noticeable boundaries… and have some kind of internal structure. A closed entity would be isolated from its environment; no closed entities exist in nature… Linkages tend to
Wang’s philosophy of *tianrenzhiji* problematizes the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘persons’ by signifying manifold dimensions of their mutual entailment; thus, *tianrenzhiji* dialogically foregrounds the *problématique* ecological humanism.

The contemporary scholar Zhou Bing provides a discursive analysis of Wang’s terminology, which suggests a warrant for interpreting *tianrenzhiji* as category of ecological humanism:

> The claim of “*tianrenzhiji*” is extremely rich in content. From “nature” to “persons,” it covers a range of concepts or categories: including, nature, patterning-energy, *ming*, persons, natural disposition, feelings, heart-mind, *dao*, virtue, and more. The meanings of the “nature-persons” relationships also possess many levels and facets. This slogan, from “nature” to “persons” thus presents a particularly complex and problematic system. (2005, p. 5)

*Tianrenzhiji*, like Edgar Morin’s *la relation écosystémique*, signifies a nexus of conjunctive and disjunctive relations. In one frame of reference, the relata are interdependent and interpenetrating. In another frame, they mutually resist one another, retain a systemic integrity, and refuse to be reduced or equivocated to the other. Xiong Lúmao and Yang Zhengzheng also provide a succinct statement Wang’s use of the term: “Nature stands opposite to persons (mutually-divided), but they are also systemically unified (continuous). They are related by blur the distinctness of ecological objects. The selection of a boundary is always arbitrary because boundaries vary over space and time. (Keller and Golley 2000, p. 23)

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6 Translated from Zhou’s text: “天人之际”是一个内涵非常丰富的命题：从“天”到“人”涉及一系列的概念或者范畴，如“天”，“理气”，“命”，“人”，“性”，“情”，“心”，“道”，“德”等等。“天…人”之间也具有多层次、多角度的意义。因此，从“天”到“人”就是一个非常复杂的问题系统” (2005, p. 5).
opposition (division) and systemic unification (continuity)” (Xiong and Yang 2003, p. 26). On the one hand, Wang describes the relationships between nature and persons as an interstice: \textit{tianrenzhiji} 天人之际. On the other hand, the interstice is necessarily grounded in a fundamental continuum: \textit{tianrenheyi} 天人合一. The disjunctive interstice and conjunctive continuum mutually imply one another. Accordingly, though \textit{tianrenzhiji} signifies modes of differentiation, it does reify persons and nature as discrete self-contained entities. Neither has any essence \textit{propter se}.

Wang reformulates the \textit{problématic} of reciprocity and resistance by analyzing \textit{tianrenzhiji} into two categories: \textit{nature within nature} 在天之天 and \textit{nature within persons} 在人之天. The occurrence of “nature,” that is, \textit{tian} 天 in both terms is telling. The suggestiveness is identified by Zhou Bing: “With regard to the question of ‘tian,’ Wang Fuzhi does not endorse the proposition that persons only have a kind of external relation to nature [...] Instead, he advocates a discourse in which “tian” cannot be separated from \textit{ren}” (Zhou 2004, p. 53).\footnote{Translated from Zhou’s text: “关于‘天’的问题，王夫之不赞成人们对‘天’只是做一种外在的、与人无关式的理解，而是主张，言天不能脱离人而言‘天’” (Zhou 2004, p. 53).} \textit{Nature-within-nature} refers to those aspects of the natural world that resist and confound human understanding and influence. \textit{Nature-within-persons} refers to the range of embodied and environmental forces within persons’ locus of control and comprehension. Primarily, the locus of control includes person’s natural dispositions for moral sentiment and social cohesion.

\footnote{Translated from Xiong and Yang (2003): “‘天’与‘人’既是对立(‘相分’)的，又是统一(‘合一’)的，它们是对立统一的关系(‘分’)的，又是统一(‘合一’)的，它们是对立统一的关系(‘分’)的，又是统一(‘合一’)的，它们是对立统一的关系(‘分’)的，又是统一(‘合一’)的，它们是对立统一的关系(‘分’)的，又是统一(‘合一’)的，它们是对立统一的关系(p. 26). Parenthetical inserts are original to the authors.}
Nature-within-persons is humanized nature. It is the historical development of civilization or culture. François Jullien provides an insight into the significance that the humanizing processes of culture have for Wang Fuzhi:

It is clear at least that Wang Fuzhi is conscious of the specificity of human history (qua wen 文) in relation to the cyclical function of nature. Originally, man is only an “animal that holds itself upright,” and over the course of its gradual process of grand material invention it began to develop itself into civilization… There is thus “evolution” from one epoch to another by constant “adaptation” (事随势遷). Each defines itself by a certain stage of customs and civilization… [But] his consciousness of human order (rendao 人道) is never completely affranchised from the more global vision of the course of the world (tiandao 天道). (1989, p. 67)

The extensions of the concepts ‘nature-within-nature’ and ‘nature-within-persons’ change over the course of time. Wang Fuzhi signifies the temporal dynamics of the nature-culture interchange by reconstructing ‘nature-within-nature’ and ‘nature-within-persons’ in terms of way-of-nature and way-of-persons: tiandao 天道 and rendao 人道. “Way” in this context denotes a process, and should thereby be interpreted as gerundive: way-in-the-making.¹⁰ Wang

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¹⁰ This interpretation of dao as a gerund follows from the teachings of Roger T. Ames. For discussion of this interpretive strategy, see Roger T. Ames and David Hall (2003). Jullien’s cogent argument for interpreting Wang Fuzhi’s thought in terms of process philosophy supports taking the Hall and Ames interpretive strategy for dao in the present context.
alludes to the historicity of culture in this way: “The activities of the ancients are not our activities, and our activities are not the natural world’s activities. The suitability of the five flavors is not fixed; the patterns of the five colors are not fixed; the harmony of the five sounds are not fixed” (SL, XII, Guangzong 2, 275-276). The boundaries of nature and persons, tianrenzhiji, are redrawn throughout history—redrawn by humanizing nature.

Adopting Daoist terminology, Wang identifies nature-within-nature as a force that is without heart-and-mind and without acting: wuxin 無心 and wuwei 無為. Whereas he understands the phrase “without mind” literally, he uses “without acting” figuratively. In a manner akin to the Daodejing, Wang’s “without acting” just means that nature-in-nature is without intentional purposive action. In terms of contemporary ecology, the way-of-nature is stochastic. Conversely, nature-in-persons literally possesses a heart-and-mind, youxin 有心. As such, persons act with volition, purpose, or intention—they “have action,” youwei 有為.

Again recalling Morin’s relation écosystémique, persons and their natural environment respectively possess varying degrees of autonomy. The categorical distinction between ‘way-of-nature’ and ‘way-of-persons’ likewise implies the relative autonomy of nature and persons. Li Zhecheng alludes to the mutual autonomy in his analysis of Wang’s philosophical cosmology:

First and foremost, he separates nature and nature’s constant patterns from persons and persons’ reason… Wang Chuanshan believes that nature’s constant patterns do not shift according to persons’ will. He maintains that one must first contemplate persons’ reflexive subjective awareness and actions as reactionary responses to the objective

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11 Translated from Wang’s text, “古人之行，非我之行也；我之行非天下之所行也。五味無定適，五色無定文，五音無定和” (SL, XII, Guangzong 2, 275-276; qtd. in Gernet 2005, p. 76)
world. And only then contemplate the negotiation and systemic unification of persons and nature. (2002, p. 56)\textsuperscript{12}

Because persons are volitional and rational, they are able to purposively construct material culture and (at least partially) insulate themselves from effects environmental forces. By the same token, persons have the freedom of will to suspend and sublimate embodied, animalistic, instinctive drives. Thus, Wang writes, “Nature cannot order people to abide by its spontaneity: without thinking, without purposive activity, its way is already complete.”\textsuperscript{13} On the flipside of the coin, the self-sufficient “complete” way-of-nature indicates that it maintains its own order of autonomy apart from the influence of persons. “Being self-so, it has itself and is so” (Wang ZMZ, p. X).\textsuperscript{14}

Nature is again recognized to be resistant to persons’ intentional attempts to bring its forces under willful restraint. Wang presents the resistance to control and the mutual autonomy of the non-human and human orders in terms of strife, \textit{zheng} 争:

\textit{Tian} does not intentionally act (\textit{wuwei}). This non-intentional action (\textit{wuwei}) remains incomplete, and would always be incomplete privation. Thus, fortune and misfortune constantly change, the myriad patterns come to fruition, and then spontaneity achieves its full excellence. According to persons’ discriminatory decisions, persons intentionally act

\textsuperscript{12} Translation of Li’s text: “他首先区分自然与自然规律及人与人的道理… 王船山承认自然规律是不以人的意志为转移的, 主张一定要先考虑人的主观能动性, 然后再考虑人与自然的协调与统一” (2002, p. 56).

\textsuperscript{13} “天不能使人处乎自然, 無思無為而道已備” (尚書引義, 洪範) (qtd. in Li 56).

\textsuperscript{14} Translated from Wang’s formula: 自然者, 有自而然也. The claim may be alternatively translated as such: “Anything that is self-so, having a self, is then so.” For further analysis of this this formula, see Deng Hui’s article on Wang Fuzhi’s concept of nature, “论王船山的自然 概念” (2003).
Strife can be seen as a functional consequence of persons’ rational-volitional engagement with the autonomous and spontaneous orders of the natural world. It emerges as a phenomenological presentation of the felt discontinuities and resistance between nature and persons—tianrenzhiji 天人之際. If misunderstood, the experience of strife in persons’ engagement with their surroundings serves as an impetus for anthropocentric conquests to dominate the natural world. The term “strife” in the preceding passage, however, does not imply such a struggle for supremacy or domination. Properly conceived, Wang’s use of “strife” denotes a productive phase in the process of harmonization and symbiotic coordination of personal and impersonal forces.

Here Chung-ying Cheng’s work in Harmony and Strife (1988) is instructive. Based on arguments that parallel the above analysis of he 和 in traditional Chinese music and ritual, Cheng demonstrates that harmony entails differentiation. He postulates a concept of harmony as “unity of opposites” (1988, p. 245 ff.). The unity at play here is not the unity of strict identity, tong 同; rather, harmonious unity is akin to the dynamic structural unity of a complex system, tong 統. Cheng further develops his model of harmonization by subsequently reconstructing the unity of opposites into a kind of meta-systemic unity, which he formulates as “unity of unity and disunity” (1988, p. 246). With this kind of dialectical synthesis, disunity and its associated strife

15 Translated from Wang’s text: “天無為也，無為而缺，則終缺矣。故吉凶常變，萬理悉備，而後自然之德全，以听人之擇執，人有為也，有為而求盈，盈而與天爭勝” (尚書引義，洪范) (qtd. in Li 56). Given this recognition of the existential-environmental adversities (strife) facing the person-in-the-world, Wang cannot be called a romantic.
come to be sublated within a higher-order, more-inclusive, process of harmonization. He thus writes in closing “Even disunity and strife should contribute to the unity of things on a deeper level… Accordingly, ways can be developed for explaining the significance of strife in harmony as well as for transforming strife into harmony” (p. 247). Wang Fuzhi’s presentation of strife in the context philosophical ecology provides one such way.

Human and non-human natural forces are mutually opposed in the sense that they both resist being dominated by or reduced to the other. They are unified through their recursive transformation and reinforcement of one another. The simultaneous continuity and interstice between nature and persons in Wang’s worldview is well-represented by Cheng’s formula of “unity of unity and disunity.” The contemporary scholar, Bai Xi 白奚, represents Wang Fuzhi’s vision of deep ecological unity of nature and persons as a “common origin, homology, isomorphism, unified body, mutual affection and communication” (Bai 2009, p. 327). In terms of Wang’s neo-Confucian cosmology, the deep unity is the great harmony taihe 太和, ultimate limit 太極, or root body benti 本體, which engenders, supports, and encompasses the myriad things wanwu 萬物.

16 The use of Hegelian language here is intentional: for Cheng’s model structurally mirrors Hegel’s synthetic ideals of “the union of union and non-union” and “the identity of identity and non-identity.” Further resonance between Cheng’s proposal and Hegelian philosophy can be drawn out. For example, Cheng writes, “Even disunity and strife should contribute to the unity of things on a deeper level” (1988, p. 247). Using similar language, the Hegelian scholar, Michael Forster, comments on the above Hegelian formulas: “the aim was not so much to eliminate the dualisms altogether, but rather to mitigate them by conceiving them against the background of a deeper unity” (Forster 1998, p. 79).

17 Quoted terms based on Bai’s Chinese text: “…万物为与人同源、同构、同体而相感通” (2009, p. 327). Note: my translation draws two English terms, homology and common origins, from the single binomial Chinese term tongyuan 同源.
4. Wang Fuzhi’s Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy

Recalling Li Zehou’s theory of sedimentation, the history of Chinese philosophy dialectically progresses through antithetical phases of humanizing nature and naturalizing humans. In the taxonomy of schools, the dialectic is one between Confucian humanism and Daoist naturalism. The process achieves a synthesis, on Li’s account, in the cultural works of Song-Ming literati. Though Li does not call on Wang Fuzhi to instantiate this last claim, he could. Li Zhecheng 李哲承 describes Wang’s take on the traditions as critical and syncretic:

Wang Chuanshan’s point of view, in part, synthesizes traditional thought on *tianrenheyi* with Daoist naturalism; however, in this regard, Wang Chuanshan differs from other Confucians […] Wang Chuanshan stands in opposition to other Confucian points of view on the continuity of nature and persons; at the same time, he opposes the naturalistic point of view that reduces humanity’s condition by blindly returning it to nature […] He believes that a blind “continuity” that does not recognize “separateness” is not the correct idea of systemic unity (*tongyi*). (2002, p. 56)\(^{18}\)

Although he recognizes a fundamental continuity between *nature* and *persons*, he rejects any form of equivocation between the two.\(^{19}\) Wang sees both schools as guilty of categorical errors in their respective analyses of person-nature relationships. The Confucian makes an initial misstep, according to Wang’s critique, in literally ascribing anthropomorphic and moral qualities to nature. Thus understood, *tian*’s qualities are identified with those of the sage—a reduction of

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Daoism, on the other hand, reduces the activities of the sage to spontaneous nature. On this front, Wang charges Daoist naturalism with a failure to see the irreducible cultural, psychological, epistemological and moral capacities of persons. In sum, the critique runs, both schools tend to identify the qualities and functionality of the sage with the qualities and functionality of nature writ-large. Only they disagree as to what those qualities and functions are.

4.1 Rejecting Heterodoxy

The *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* celebrate nature as an uncivilized and unrefined event (as in Laozi’s imagery of “unhewn wood” and Zhuangzi’s representation of “the great clod”). In the Daoist vision, nature is sublime and spontaneous. As such, it confounds rational apprehension and resists coercive control. In terms familiar to the *Daodejing*, the naturalization of humans is like returning to the experience of a newborn babe: the babe is without prejudice or over-determined volition, without extraneous desires, without discriminatory and calculating intellection. In terms familiar to the *Zhuangzi*, naturalization of humans entails rejecting one’s inherited cultural edifice as “dregs of dead men.” Optimal experience is achieved by living in the same way that the wheelwright practices his craft. He acts without intellection, volition, or coercive effort, but through feeling and response, *ganying* 感應. The consummate experience is born out of unmediated intuition of the forces and patterns of change within one’s lived-body and environment. Such intuition enables one to efficaciously respond to adverse circumstances.

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20 The non-human perspective is portrayed by the many characters in Zhuangzi’s parables, such as insects, birds, tortoises, rivers, etc. Likewise, Zhuangzi (chapter 2) speaks of “a clod” as something of importance. The “uncarved block” and “infant” are popular images presented in the *Daodejing*. (See Laozi, chapters 10, 19, 20, 28, 32, 37, 55, 57, 65).
and travel the *path* of least resistance through precarious situations. Without projecting any form of volitional, judgmental, or coercive determination onto the transformations of self and world, persons may achieve aesthetic experiences of unobstructed ease, placidity, equanimity, efficacy and harmonization in their passage through life and the world.\(^1\) Daoism assumes that persons realize their full epistemic potential by deconstructing cultural constructs—with particular focus on linguistically-determined analytical distinctions. Like the view of the great Peng bird in flight, the Daoist epistemological ideal is to achieve a non-discriminatory experience in which phenomena continuously blend, merge, and transform into one another.

Pace the so-called “heterodox schools,” Wang writes, “For no reason at all the Buddhist and Daoist randomly lump the body and function of the sage together with the heavens-and-earth. Their broken down understandings and fantastical actions are based on wanton pretexts and falsifiable words” (DSS 1991, p. 709).\(^2\) He contests the Buddhist existential negation of the differentiating qualities, forms, and concrete particulars of the phenomenal world. From Wang Fuzhi’s point of view, the Buddhist is ultimately committed to an unjustifiable reduction of persons and the myriad things to a metaphysical state of non-differentiated emptiness. He applies the same reasoning in his critique of Daoism:

\(^1\) See *Zhuangzi* (chapter 13) for the parable of Wheelwright Bian.
Lao confuses this and states that *dao* exists within void, void by way voiding concrete particulars. Sakyamuni confuses this and says that *dao* exists within silence, silence by means of silencing concrete particulars. Though one may continuously utter such extravagant words to no end, one will never escape from concrete things…”

He maintains that phenomenal diversity is irreducibly real. “The world is only concrete particulars and that is all. *Dao* is *dao* of concrete particulars. Concrete particulars cannot be called the concrete particulars of *dao*” (Wang 1988, ZYW). The disjunctive relations between nature and persons, which present themselves in prima-facie experience, should be recognized as concrete and real. Wang sees no reason to make the Daoist or Buddhist speculative move toward a world beyond human experience. He fully embraces being-in-the-world.

The person-in-the-world has a perspectival existence:

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23 Translation based on Wang’s original text: “老氏瞀於此, 而曰道在虛, 虛以器之虛也。釋氏瞀於此, 而曰道在寂, 寂以器之寂。淫詞炙, 而不能離乎器...” (周易外传 系辞传上).

24 Translation based on Wang’s text: “天下唯器而已矣。道者器之道, 器者不可謂之道之器也” (周易外传 系辞传上). This celebrated passage has been interpreted as a statement of *realism*: “realism” in the sense that the empirical world is real. Unfortunately, the term *realism* has been overworked throughout the history philosophical discourse. In contemporary metaphysics, the *realism* is actually reserved for the ontological commitment to the existence of universals as opposed to concrete particulars. This contemporary usage of the term thus applies to the antithesis of Wang’s position. Using contemporary metaphysical categories, Wang’s statement expresses a commitment that is better referred to as *nominalism*, which asserts the irreducible reality of concrete particulars.
The dog and horse see in the darkness of night; the owl is blind in light of day; the dragon uses horns to hear; the ant uses antennae to communicate. There is no determinate auditory or visual modality. Sensations are different in accordance with the many different receptors… Tastes are different in accordance with many different benefits… Thus, what persons know is persons’ nature, renzhitian 人之天; what animals know is animals’ nature, wuzhitian 物之天. (Gernet 2005, p. 247)

His belief that knowledge is always leveled from a particular point of view is derived in part from his syncretic reading of the Zhuangzi (Gernet 2005, p. 247). The epistemology of the Zhuangzi is aptly described radical relativism. The work’s phantasmagoric allegories and deconstructive narratives challenge the assumption that truth, knowledge, or reality amounts to anything more than a matter of perspective. The Zhuangzi does not afford any particular significance to this human perspective as opposed to that perspectival experience of other sentient creatures. On this issue, Wang stands staunchly opposed to the Daoist. He sees Zhuangzi (whom he believed was the historical author of the text) as reducing the epistemological status of the human perspective to a position on par with all other sentient creatures—cicadas, doves, butterflies, fish, and the like. Daoist epistemology, in other words, asserts a reductive equivocation of all modes of experience; consequentially, the uniqueness of any perspective is ultimately negated. And this negation, in turn, renders the very concept of ‘perspective’ meaningless.

As opposed to Daoism, Wang’s brand of Confucianism celebrates persons’ unique disposition for knowing and transforming nature. Through hard-work, and study and practice,

gongfu 功夫 and xuexi 學習, this disposition can be intentionally developed over time. Wang observes:

In the early stages of an animal’s life, the physical development of their awareness arises quicker than that of persons, but in the end they are obtuse. Persons successively fashion clarity in minute details and accumulate functions. With regard to animals, persons’ developments are not quicker, but they are greater. Persons come to their adaptations through steadfast effort.26

In this context, adaptation is not an ad hoc reactionary response to adversity; instead, it is a creative and active effort to humanize nature. The uniqueness of human experience is demarcated by the presence of heart-and-mind, youxin 有心. The faculty enables persons to engage nature (in their embodied experience and in their environment) with volitional purpose, organic intelligence, and valuating emotion; respectively, the heart mind functions with zhi 志, si 思, qing 性.27 “Persons have their way,” Wang writes, “… if it is nature, then it is spontaneous. If it is animal, then it is spontaneous. Appropriate conduct for insects and rituals for mice are not cultivable activities. They are resigned to nature” (DSS, 1991, p. 345).28 Persons are not resigned to nature: their power resides in their ability to continuously cultivate their embodied biological nature and environment to “achieve heights of spiritual culture” (such as religion, ethics, and aesthetics) and “concrete forms of culture” (technology). As Li Zhecheng puts it,

27 The presence of the “heart-mind” radical in each of these Chinese characters has semantic significance.
“Wang believes that among the countless living organisms, only persons are able to grasp the regular patterns of nature and establish a cultural existence” (Li 2003, pp. 56–57).  

4.2 Correcting Orthodoxy

In carrying this critique forward, he similarly challenges “conventional Confucian” proposals that fail to recognize the full ontological significance of disjunctive relations:

Though it is said that sages place the common good over their own interests, to reach this place, they must take care of themselves first and stand their ground without regret. Afterward, they can establish the feeling and normative standard. Conventional Confucians do not take this into consideration. They roughly speak of the sage as if he views himself in the same way as he views others, without any distinction or scrutiny. But this takes the different measures of good and bad, merit and criminality, to be loose and open. Moreover, they say that the sage forms a single body with the heavens-and-earth. Those who make such claims slight subtle-distinction by means of candidness and capriciousness. Their claims and what heterodoxy says, “the heavens-and-earth has the same root as me; the myriad things and I share the same lot,” are of the same kind. The statements are unfounded and disingenuous deceit, for where is the difference!

29 Paraphrase and quotation based on Li Zhecheng’s original text:

他认为很好地适应自然天的生物虽然感觉功能发达，但是它不能产生高级的精神文明。而人的感觉功能虽没有动物发达, 但因理性发达能够形成文化…. 他认为, 无数的生命中, 只有人是能够把握自然规律建立起文化的存在. (2003, p. 56–57)
[...] In Hu Wending’s commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals, he calls Confucius’s Preface its merit. He places it high on a pedestal with exalted status, making the sage take the place of tian as if it were his own. Seeing myriad phenomena and differentiated physical forms, he yet identifies them in substance. Indeed, this discussion belongs to lofty fiction\(^\text{30}\) (DSS 1991, p. 1034)

His critique of Confucian discourse is not directed toward the illocutionary force of its descriptions of holistic interconnectivity and cosmological parity among persons and the natural world. His argument problematizes the perlocutionary and locutionary acts of such descriptions when they are left unqualified by conceptual analysis and empirical observation.

He delivers a padded blow to his esteemed predecessor for making a move toward an equivocation of persons and the cosmic force of tian. Zhang Zai’s commentary on Analects 7.27 opens with the claim, “The sage’s heart-mind is the heart-mind of the heavens and earth to give life to things” (ZMZ 1996, p. 47).\(^\text{31}\) The passage that Zhang is commenting on describes Confucius as being fair and sportsmanlike in his practices of hunting and fishing. Wang finds opportunity to exercise his analytic literal sensibility and correct Zhang Zai’s move toward equivocation:

\(^{30}\) Translation based on Wang’s text:

雖雲聖人大公無我，然到此處，亦須照顧自己先立於無憾之地，然後可以立情法之準。世儒不察，便謂聖人概將在己、在人作一視同等，無所分別，無所嫌忌，但以在彼善惡功罪之小大為弛張，而曰此聖人之以天地為一體者也。為此說者，衆差等以直情而徑行，其與異端所云“天地與我同根，萬物與我共命”一流荒誕無實之邪說又何以異！ [...] 衛文定傳《春秋》，謂孔子自序其績，與齊桓等，為聖人以天自處，視萬象異形而同體，亦是議論太高不切實處。（DSS 1991, p. 1034)

At the outset, he says, “The heart-mind of the sage is one with the heart-mind of the heavens and earth to give life to things.” This is fitting in this place; however, it is not exactly correct. In this context, the sage is cultivating and complementing, abiding by the spontaneity of nature’s patterns. Did he ever take the heart-mind of the natural world, which gives life, to be his own heart-mind? If he took the heart-mind that gives life to things to be his heart-mind during the time when he employed his methods of fishing and shooting, then he would have had to have given up fishing and shooting all together.

(DSS 1991, p. 709)  

“Life, consciousness, meaning, purpose, value—these were all implicit in the neo Confucian concept of Nature, either analogically or literally or in a sense that hovered between the two, depending on the individual thinker” (Black 1989, p. 60-1). For Wang Fuzhi, the ascription of heart-and-mind to the heavens and earth can only be a metaphorical representation of its tendency to spontaneously create and sustain life. In this light his argument demonstrates a need for recognizing the functional difference between nature and persons.

In Wang’s worldview, the continuity of nature and persons is not an identity relation: it is a relation of mutual complementation, symbiotic support, and creative transformation. He thus lays out his position: “The sage is only the sage. The heavens and earth are only the heavens and earth. The Zhongyong speaks of ‘matching tian,’ as in a wife’s matching a husband. Certainly, she does not purely take up the way of the husband” (DSS 1991, p. 709). Wang’s argument by analogy invokes a standard neo-Confucian strategy for maintaining Confucian orthodoxy while

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developing it into a cosmology that rivals the comprehensive scope of Daoist and Buddhist speculative metaphysics. The particulars of this methodology include extending the classical Confucian philosophy of relational self and constitutive relations beyond the traditional focus on social ecology (as is found in he Analects). This strategy is often grounded by looking to either the Zhongyong or the Yijing as the locus classicus for the Confucian cosmological vision. With this move, neo-Confucians take up the orthodox position that persons are constituted by their interpersonal relationships, and reconstruct it into the position that persons are also constituted by their relationships to the heavens-and-earth and the myriad things.34

He continues, “Although different from tian, sages recursively know and recursively match it” (DSS 1991, p. 540).35 Wang’s analogy and terminology of “matching tian” is significant in terms of his epistemology of persons-in-the-world. As a wife’s interpretive self-understanding is mediated through her relationship to her husband, the sage reflexively understands herself in relation to nature. Conversely, the wife sees the person that is her husband from a unique hermeneutic perspective. Due to the relativity and intentionality of her experience qua wife, the understanding that she has of her husband inevitably presupposes a tacit self-reference. The hermeneutic prejudice of the wife is such that she cannot help but to view her husband as just that — her husband. Analogously, the person-in-the-world is necessarily bound to understand nature from a uniquely human perspective. Given the relativity and intentionality of persons’ experience, the understanding that they have of nature (individually and collectively)

34 Zhang Zai’s “Western Inscription” can be viewed as a paragon of this strategy.
inevitably presupposes a tacit self-reference. The hermeneutic prejudice of the person-in-the-world is such that she cannot help but to view nature as nature-within-persons — zairenzhitian 在人之天. Thus, renzhitian 人之天 comes to mean “the world as humans know it” (Liu 2010, p. 360).36

The analogy from familial life represents the unity of nature and persons as a kind of mutual reflection and interactive functionality. As matrimony is a relationship of mutual support, negotiation, and complementation, so are persons’ relationships with their environing world.37 Wang advances his premise: “Sages are of themselves sages. Tian is of itself tian. Thus it is said of sages, ‘they can regulate,’ ‘they can support,’ ‘as if they are numinous,’ ‘they match tian’” (DSS 1991, p. 540). Persons are in a position to cultivate, develop, and disclose nature’s latent qualities. The sage, it may be said, relates to nature through husbandry.

In sum the nature-person continuity, he 合, is to be understood as nature-person harmony, he 和. Harmony is not sameness. It is predicated on plurality and diversity: a harmonization of unique yet interrelated symbiotic powers.38 Wang’s view is that nature and persons are continuous, yet persons and non-human nature play different roles in the dynamic transformations of the world at large.

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36 Emphasis original to JeeLoo Liu’s text.
37 “Matching tian” is here offered as a literal interpretation of the Chinese phrase, petian 配天, which Wang draws out of the Zhongyong, chapters 26 and 31. In their Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), David Hall and Roger T. Ames translate the phrase as “companion to the heavens” (chapter 26, p. 107) and “complement of tian” (chapter 31, p. 113). Hall and Ames thus highlights the active connotation of the term pei 配 (and active quality of the relationship denoted by the term).
38 See Analects 11.23 for the characterization of harmony in terms of differentiation. Contrary to recent expositions of Wang’s work (Yan 1995; Liu 2010), I maintain that Wang’s philosophy is committed to an irreducible plurality of existents; therefore, his philosophy is not monistic.
5. A Heart for Mencius

Wang Fuzhi’s philosophical anthropology is predicated on neo-Confucian cosmology and the moral psychology of the classical Confucian Zisizi-Mencius lineage. To extend the metaphors of Wang Fuzhi’s tradition, the way-of-nature and the way-of-persons are not separate paths leading in different directions. The latter is a developmental continuation of the former, *tianrenheyi* 天人合一. The presence of a heart-and-mind distinguishes nature-within-persons from all other orders of the natural world. Though it distinguishes them, it does not alienate them. The presence of the heart-and-mind, rather, qualifies persons as the heart-and-mind of the heavens-and-earth. The development of thinking-and-feeling in persons is viewed as a consummating realization in and of the natural processes that constitute the world. In this light Mencius expresses the continuity between nature and persons, and recognizes nature as the existential ground of persons’ thinking-and-feeling: “For a person to give full realization to thinking-and-feeling is for a person to realize his own natural disposition, and a person who realizes his own natural disposition will realize *tian* 天 (Mencius 7A1).

According to Mencius, the difference between persons and beasts is slight (4B19). The difference lies in their *natural dispositions*. “Natural disposition” is here offered as a translation of the Chinese *xing* 性. *Xing* 性 is derived in part from *sheng* 生, meaning *birth, growth, and life in general*. As is evidenced in Mencius’s debates with Gaozi, *xing* and *sheng* were used interchangeably in pre-Qin China. Given this synonymy, *xing* can mean “direction that a thing develops in its process of growth,” “natural tendencies, desires, and characteristic inclinations.
demonstrated by living organisms,” and “tendencies characteristic of a thing” (Shun pp. 37, 180, 183).

Following Mencius, Wang Fuzhi accepts this fundamentally biological signification of xing, and he concedes that all living creatures possess xing in this sense. In the domain of philosophical anthropology, however, there is much more to the meaning of the term. In addition to the component of biological life, sheng 生, the term xing 性 also contains the semantic signifier for heart-and-mind. (忄 = 心.) For Mencius and Wang Fuzhi alike, heart-and-mind is unique to the dispositional character of persons.

D.C. Lau notes this point the introduction to his translation of the Mencius:

The unique feature that makes up the human being is his heart and so when we speak of human nature we should have in mind, primarily, the human heart. This heart contains incipient moral tendencies which when nurtured with care can enable a man to become a sage. (xlvii)

In agreement, Kwong-loi Shun writes, “Mencius regarded xing as constituted by, or at least as having as a central component, the development of the ethical predispositions of the heart [xin 心]” (Shun 1997, p. 10). Based on this analysis three intractable propositions can be stated regarding the heart-and-mind: (1) It is a unique characteristic of human existence; (2) It is dispositional and requires cultivation; (3) It is provides the ground for morality. Whereas Hellenistic-based philosophy takes reason to be the measure of man, Confucianism takes morality (Gernet 2005, p. 331).
The moral processes of *xin* are implicated in emotions or feelings of compassion, shame, deference, and modesty (Mencius 6A6). For Mencius, one must cultivate these emotional qualities to achieve personhood.\(^{39}\) Thus, *xin* is an emotional and moral activity that is demonstrative of the person-in-the-world. Mencius explains these emotions as “four germs of morality.” In this context, moral qualities are given connotations of organic growth, development, and the possibility for cultivation. Indeed, Mencius repeatedly draws analogies between the four germs and the human body: if the four germs are not effectively put to use, they will become crippled, but if they are nourished they will show in a healthy and functional body (2A6, 7A21). The model of the human person given in the *Mencius* is one of an organism, an organism that has natural moral/social inclinations.

*Xin* is an emotional process, providing persons with impetus to foster a higher moral experience within a community. In passage 2A6, Mencius illustrates this conception of the *xin* by way of allegory: “All persons have thinking and feeling (*xin*) that does not bear the suffering of others, *burenren* 不忍人. Suppose a person were, all of a sudden, to see a young child about to fall into a well. All have the urge to be alarmed by natural sympathies.” Emphasis is placed on the spontaneity of the action. In this regard Lau is instructive: “The reaction was instantaneous, and therefore spontaneous, as there was no time to reflect, and a reaction which is spontaneous is a true manifestation of a man’s nature (*xing*)” (xx). Likewise, Shun states, “such

\(^{39}\) On this topic, Cheng observes: “Mencius, furthermore, insists that these four feelings are the defining characteristic of a man and that they are internal and inherent in the nature of man, for without them man is not a man” (238).
[spontaneous] reactions reveal something deep in the heart/mind (*xin*) and show one the kind of person one really is” (p. 140).

“All persons have a heart-and-mind that does not bear the suffering of others,” *bu ren ren* 不忍人. To understand the person in this context one must understand the meaning of this “other.” The final character, “*ren* 人 (person) is added here, because the discourse is entirely of a man’s feelings, *as exercised towards other men*” (ibid.). Shun further supports this view of *buren* 不忍 as fundamentally concerning one’s relationships toward other persons (p. 49).

One’s *xing* is a disposition to (efficaciously) adapt oneself to social-environmental conditions. This adaptation involves taking on the customs of one’s social environment and making them one’s own, personalizing them. In this case one acts to create culture and participate in society so as to foster a harmonious balance therein.

*Xing*, then, is not something unlearned, but it is a process of dispositional development undertaken within the context of pre-established (social) conditions. It is a process of refining, cultivating, and expressing one’s moral heart-and-mind in relation to others. The human being in Confucianism is a human becoming.

In light of the Mencius-Zisizi tradition of Confucianism, the person-in-the-world is not born with a determinate and finished essence. Initially, nature endows the human organism with a dispositional trajectory for achieving personhood. “Wang Fuzhi took the further step of defining the totality of *xing* 性 as the emerging, developing state of human existence. In other words, Wang Fuzhi took what we call *xing* 性 to be human potential” (Liu 2010, p. 364). Wang
Fuzhi’s form of ecological humanism, describes the ingression of persons-in-the-world in terms as phases of qi:

In the Huowen “primal qi” and “the events under the heavens” are two phases. The position where the transformation of qi resides just is the moment of demarcation between persons and base spirit. For this reason, the Zhongyong differentiates the language of tian and the language of ming. Ming means “to order” as in a “government order.” However, this not the appropriate language for tian. Necessarily, the language of tian is “to convey.” What it conveys is an event. This is the bequeathal of nature-within-nature. However, it does not necessarily bequeath the separation between human and animal body…

Persons do not come to exist like a bullet from a barrel. Human nature is not a given. The spontaneous creativity of primordial energy provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of life. The natural world provides the human organism with its inchoate beginnings; it gives persons their concrete biological existence, body and requisite disposition for developing higher cognitive and moral faculties. This initial phase of persons ingestion into the world is referred to as “primary disposition of nature,” 先天之性. The consummate achievement of persons-in-the-world is referred to as “later disposition of nature” 後天之性. The person-in-the-world is an undertaking, an unfolding historical event of humanizing nature.

40 “《或問》“一元之氣”，“天下之物”二段，扎住氣化上立義，正是人鬼关头分界語. 所以《中庸》劈頭言天，便言命. 命者，令也. 令猶政也. 未尾言天，必言载. 载者，事也. 此在天之天遺，亦未嘗遺乎人物而別有其體 […]” (DSS 1991, p. 529).
CHAPTER 4
THE COMPLEXITY OF THE YIJING

1. Introduction

The significance that the *Yijing* 易經 has in Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy cannot be overstated. Though Wang is an erudite scholar with interests in many domains of inquiry, he is particularly adept at classical studies. Of all of his areas of research, he devotes his most profound efforts to studying the *Yijing* and this text above all others takes an exclusive place in his oeuvre (Kang, p. 87; Gernet, p. 104).¹ Over the course his forty year exile Wang authored no less than six commentaries, *zhuan* 傳, in seventeen fascicles, *juan* 卷, dedicated to the *Yijing*.² Attesting to the breadth of his study, the recent compilation of his *Yijing* commentaries (1988) comprises a tome of over one-thousand pages in itself. Outside of these commentaries, moreover, he draws from the *Yijing* throughout his voluminous corpus.³ *The Inner Commentary on the Zhouyi* 周易內傳 (ZYN 1686), written in the author’s twilight years, speaks for his sanctification of the classic:

> With regard to the root-source, the fine and subtle, with regard to expressing the profound-merging of nature and persons (天人之蘊), the *Six Classics, Analects*, and *Mencius* reveal persons’ disposition to know nature (人之性知天), yet none of these reaches the depth, meaning, expression and acuity of this (*Yijing*). Truly, the tradition of studying natural

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¹ As Jacques Gernet writes, “*Il lui a consacré de façon exclusive un importante partie de son œuvre*” (2005, p. 104). In addition, this description draws from Kang Chuan-Cheng: “王船山…學識淵博，對天文，曆法，數學，地理學均有研究，尤其精於經學，史學，文學；治經於《易》致力最深” (Kang 2008, p. 87).

² See Kang: “其《易》學著作有《周易內傳》六卷，《周易外傳》七卷，《周易大象解》一卷,《周易稗疏》四卷…” (2008, p. 87). I would add the sub-commentary 《周易內傳發例》 to this list. In addition, insofar as Zhang Zai’s *Zhengmeng* 正蒙 is a representation of the *Yijing*, Wang’s commentary on Zhang Zai is also a focused commentary on the *Yijing*.

disposition (性學) and the essentials of the sages’ meritorious efforts (gong 功) are disclosed in the Yi. (ZYN 1988, p. 532)4

According to this perspective, the Yijing is not just one text among many. It provides the pinnacle expression of sagacious experience and the most profound articulation of the interconnection between persons and the world. Based on Wang’s commentaries, it may be said that he hermeneutically engaged the text in such a sustained and intensive manner throughout his life because he saw in it the fullest explication of the universe. For him, the multifaceted symbolism and textual layers in its totality presents a comprehensive model of the world and persons place within it.

Wang’s Inner Commentary represents the Yijing as the primary realization of persons’ disposition to know nature, “人之性知天.” The idea of “knowing nature, zhitian 知天,” in this context confounds theoretical and practical spheres of judgment. Beyond an objective model or theoretical system, Wang Fuzhi takes up the Yijing and its philosophy as a way of life, dao 道. He interprets himself, the world, and the relations that bind them together through the categories of the text. In other words, his self-understanding as a person-in-the-world is mediated through his reflection on the imagery and text. Yan Shoucheng succinctly states the case, “It may be said that Wang Fuzhi’s adult guideline for behavior, as well as his worldview, was based on his understanding of the Changes” (1998, p. 88).

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4 Translated from, Wang’s original text: “根極精微，發天人之藴，六經，語，孟，人之性知天，未有如此[易]之深切著明者，誠性學之統宗，聖功之要領，於易而顯” (Wang 1988, v. 1, ZYN, p. 532). The passage is referenced and paraphrased by Yan Shoucheng: “None of the other Classics—even the Spring and Autumn Annals or the Mencius—inquires into what is subtle and what is refined so perfectly as the Book of Changes” (Yan 1998, p. 88). Aside from Yan’s exclusion of certain key terms from the text, it is unclear why he chooses to translate the term, “yu 語,” as “Spring and Autumn Annals.” Three reasons can be cited in rejection of his translation: (1) The term “yu 語” does not appear in the Chinese title of the Spring and Autumn Annals; (2) The term is integral to the Chinese title of the Analects; (3) The Annals is one of the Six Classics, which Wang mentions under their collective heading; thus, it would be redundant for him to cite the same text back to back as Yan reads him.
2. Strata of the *Yijing*

The history of the *Yijing*’s evolution is a unique account of a manual that was originally intended as a tool for prognosticative forecasting, *zhanbu* 占卜 or *bushi* 卜筮, but was transformed over time into a treatise expounding a holistic process philosophy and systematic correlative cosmology. These two elements—the prognostic and philosophic—are not mutually exclusive in Wang Fuzhi’s worldview. The primary layers of the *Yijing* served as a prompt book for prognostication in the early Zhou aristocracy. Zhu Xi approximated this truth in his claim, “The *Yijing* was created merely as a divination manual… Fu Xi’s and King Wen’s *Yijing* was originally created for this use” (Adler 2002, p. vii). The foundational stratum of the book is constituted by the ordered sequence of sixty-four hexagrams. Even at this initial stage of evolution, the *Yijing* presents a correlative worldview of *yin* and *yang* forces, albeit in form of purely non-linguistic graphs and iconic imagery. Thus, scholars such as David Keightley suggest, based on archeological evidence, an *Yijing*-like method of prognostication and a worldview of complementary, correlative, polar opposition were present as early as the “Shang dynasty, during the closing centuries of the second millennium B.C.” (Keightley 1988, pp. 367, 373-375, 385).

The symbolism of the *Yijing* is alluded to in the later textual addendums of the *Appended Phrases* commentary: “Changes have a supreme limit, *taiji*: this produces two modes; two modes produce four figures; four figures produce eight trigrams” (*Xici shang* 11.3). Since high antiquity the “two modes” of *yin* 隱 and *yang* 陽 have been symbolized as line segments, *yao* 爻. A broken line segment, with a gap in the middle, ——, symbolizes *yin*. A solid-continuous segment, ——, symbolizes *yang*. The two modes combine to form “four figures, *sixiang* 四象,” which populate the complete set of possible *couplings* of these two segments, —— —— —— ——.
These four figures represent the interactions of *yinyang* in their simplest forms. The eight trigrams, *bagua* 八卦, emerge out of the “four figures.” The trigrams are iconic presentations of *yin* and *yang* interactions on a higher level of complexity. Each trigram has three positions, *wei* 位, stacked in tiers; each position is exclusively occupied by either a *yin* or *yang* line:

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☰ ☳ ☵ ☶ ☷ ☴ ☲ ☱
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乾 Qian  震 Zhen  坎 Kan  艮 Gen  坤 Kun  翼 Xun  離 Li  兌 Dui

Sky, Yang  Thunder  Water  Mountain  Earth, Yin  Wind  Flame  Lake

Finally, the *Yijing* systematically models the evolution and diversification of complex organizations of *yin* and *yang* modes of *qi* 氣 by further pairing each of the eight trigrams with one another, which yields an ordered set of sixty-four hexagrams, 重卦. Following the same structure as the trigrams, each hexagram is made up of a unique combination of six *yin* or *yang* lines. Take, for example, the first two hexagrams in the received text, Qian ☰ and Kun ☷, and the final two hexagrams, Jiji ☳ and Weiji ☴.

As seen in the imagery of the symbols themselves, each situation in nature is here understood as a structure of *yin* and *yang* modes of *qi*. In her recent work on the role of patterned *qi*, *wenqi* 文氣, in classical Chinese aesthetics, Ming Dong Gu articulates a concept of structure that is directly applicable to the trigrams, hexagrams, and the situations that they are thought to embody:

A pattern is a distinct structure. *Wenqi* [patterned *qi*] is not a chaotic and amorphous energy flowing and floating aimlessly; it is a structured and structuring force… At the same time it is also a totalizing force… [As such, a] structure is an arrangement of entities that embodies three fundamental ideas: wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation… A structure is not static but dynamic. It is endowed with an internal fluidity that inheres in each of the component parts… Moreover, a structure is capable of transformational processes; a structure is self-regulating (2009, p. 37).
Wang Fuzhi maintains that pattern, structure, or systematization always emerges within the activities of *qi*. *Qi* is never found in nature without an emergent structure. Further details of how the hexagrams are intended to model the patterns of energy that constitute the world is taken up below.

The second layer of the *Yijing*, which was also committed to the manual during the early Zhou, provides two categories of text: (1) a “hexagram statement,” *guaci* 卦辭, or “hexagram judgment,” *guatuan* 卦彖, associated with each hexagram; (2) and a respective statement, *yaoci* 爻辭, or judgment, *yaotuan* 爻彖, corresponding to each line of each hexagram. The language of much of this level of text is archaic and enigmatic from a modern hermeneutic perspective. Indeed, as the manual was transmitted through the centuries and the original context of its claims had faded into antiquity, the meanings of the initial judgments seem to have become opaque to interpreters in China as early as the Spring and Autumn Period (722–479 BCE). On this point, Wang Fuzhi’s explication is instructive: Confucian literati, *ru* 儒, saw a need for appending exegetical explanation to the original layers of the text. One may infer, nonetheless, that the hexagram and line judgments alluded to significant events or culturally relevant images for the authors and intended audience of the text. The texts would have called to mind a value judgment of the emerging phenomenon in relation to one’s situated experience or position within the context of the event. When used in forecasting, the texts provide a positive or negative response for a charge asked of the text. As Wang writes in his explanation of the hexagram judgments, the text uses terms such as “grasping, losing, fortune, and misfortune” as attributes of naturally occurring phenomena so as to convey the qualitative experience that each event is likely to
engender. In order to attain or evade the experience associated with a particular hexagram-situation, the judgments are to be interpreted as prescribing certain efficacious actions.

The third and final accretion to the received *Yijing* is a set of seven commentaries, *zhuan*傳. The final layer may be read as a philosophical systematization of the correlative cosmology and axiology tacitly contained in the older strata. In the received text,\(^5\) three of the seven commentaries are subdivided into two parts each, thus yielding ten total sections of commentary.\(^6\) Collectively, these ten sections are referred to as the *Ten Wings*, *Shiyi 十翼*, or simply *Commentaries on the Changes*, *Yizhuan 易傳*. Of these commentaries, the “*Xici* or *Appended Statements* commentary—integrating man and nature through the medium of the *Yijing*—is arguably the most sophisticated (it is certainly the most subtle) statement of the correlative thought that has been so fundamental to all of China’s philosophical systems” (Shaughnessy 1996, p. 1).\(^7\)

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\(^5\) From the time of its redaction in the Han (206 BCE–220 CE), the received text was the only known version of the *Yijing* (i.e. the Zhouyi) in existence up until the 1973 archeological discovery of another version of the text, “written on two pieces of silk.” The latter is referred to as the “Mawangdui” version after the site at which it was discovered, Mawangdui, in Changsha, Hunan. The Mawangdui text was uncovered from the “tomb of Li Cang, Lord of Dai (d. 168 BCE)” (Shaughnessy 1996, pp. 1, 14–16). The *Appended Phrases* is the only Commentary found in both the received *Yijing* and the Mawangdui manuscript. In the Mawangdui manuscript, this commentary is not subdivided as it is in the received redaction. In addition, the Mawangdui text contains four commentaries that are not contained in the received edition. (See Shaughnessy (1996) pp. 20–26; and Field 2008, p. 45.) The King Wen order of the sixty-four hexagrams is presented in the received version of the *Yijing*. The order of the hexagrams in the Mawangdui text differs from the received version.

\(^6\) Though accounts may differ on this point (see Adler 2002), I refer to the following subdivided commentaries: Judgment Commentary, *Tuan zhuan 象傳*; Image Commentary, *Xiang zhuan 象傳*; and the *Appended Phrases* Commentary, *Xici zhuan 繫辭傳*. The latter is divided into an “upper” (shang 上) and lower (xia 下) part.

\(^7\) Bracketed insert inside quotation is original to Shaughnessy.
3. Holistic Hermeneutics

For nearly two millennia prior to Wang Fuzhi’s authorship—dating back at least to the Han dynasty—two major schools of thought vied for recognition as the authoritative method for interpreting the multilayered Yijing: the (1) Meaning-Pattern, Yili 義理, school; and (2) the, Image-Number, Xiangshu 象數, school. “The yili (meaning-pattern) school emphasizes how the Chinese language texts can be read figuratively. The xiangshu (image and number) school emphasizes the rationality of hexagram structure and seeks objective methods for interpreting the text” (Smith 1993, p. 1). Wang Fuzhi takes a syncretic yet critical approach to these two lines of thought. Contrary to the Image-Number emphasis on the symbolic imagery and numerological structure of the hexagrams, and equally contrary to the Meaning-Pattern emphasis on the textually-based interpretation of the book, Wang critically integrates the rationalistic understanding of the former with the figurative interpretations of the latter.

Wang understands the Yijing in much the same way that he understands a poem, that is, as an organic whole (Wong 1987 pp. xiv, 32, 145, 157). The holistic structure of Wang Fuzhi’s thought is exemplified by his hermeneutical understanding of the Yijing’s intentionality. Thus, he expresses his conception of the text as a synthesis of complementary parts:

“The judgments are the timber; the lines are the resulting-function.” The timber is made by chopping it up with an ax; however, when in the chariot, it is a chariot: the wheel and cart—

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8 For a discussion on the difference between the xiangshu and yili schools, also see Joseph Adler, translator, “Introduction” to Introduction to the Study of the Classic of Change (I-hsüeh ch’i-meng), by Chu Hsi (Provo, Utah: Global Scholarly Publications, 2002), pages v–vii. See also Cheng Chung-ying, “On Zhu Xi’s Integration of Yi Li and Xiang Shu in the Study of the Yijing”.

9 Confer Adler (2002) and Nielsen (2003) for further discussion of the differences between these two schools: “The hsiang-shu, or ‘image and number’ school, focused on the graphic and numerological symbolism of the hexagrams and other diagrams associated with the I […] The i-li, or ‘moral principle’ school, on the other hand, focused on the textual layers of the I, deriving moral principles from the hexagram texts, the line texts, and appendices” (Adler 2002, pp. v-vi). “Meaning and pattern studies are primarily based on the textual tradition in its exegesis. The textual tradition is here first and foremost the Ten Wings” (Nielsen 2003, p. 303).

This description calls to mind one of Wang’s favored dyadic categories, *ti* 體 and *yong* 用. In short, the text is a unified body, *ti*, of disparate parts; as such, all parts contribute to a singular functionality, *yong*, or meaning. In his view, the meaning of any part of the text can only be adequately disclosed when the part is understood in relation to the totality. As in the world, any part of the text is taken to be a contextualized, situated, constituent of a system. Wang effectively argues for multivalent hermeneutic circles between each part of the text and the whole. In accordance with its structural complexity—the layers of textual interpretation, and its myriad iconic allusions—the *Yijing* is a quintessential text for generating meaning. Again, Young-Chan Ro’s description of Yi Yulgok’s work on the *Yijing* directly applies to Wang’s view of the text: “The Sixty-four Hexagrams, for example, appear to be a limited number of variations but when taken in symbolic form, they can provide unlimited possibilities of being in the universe” (1998, p. 178). Meaning is generated, in other words, through a seemingly infinite set of hermeneutic circles connecting its disparate parts.

Wang’s understanding of the *Yijing* as an organic whole, or an integrative synthesis of parts, may be further elucidated by looking toward the basic hermeneutic circle as it is explicated by Hans-Georg Gadamer:

> [T]he movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed. (Gadamer 1989, p. 291)

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Wang Fuzhi, like Gadamer, sees understanding a text as an ongoing integration of information provided by the accumulated study of the text by parts. Wang recommends sustained study of the text as a whole through successively working through the parts. His prescription is to study with intense sincerity, *cheng* 誠, so as to exhaustively study the mysteries of the sublime, *qiongshen* 窮神. As knowledge is successively and recursively built up through sustained study, understanding the parts of the text is continuously augmented by new information and context. Understanding is a process of oscillation between part and whole, and the harmony or organic whole of the text is disclosed over time.\(^{12}\)

Hermeneutic circles are not vicious: they are not closed within the text itself.\(^{13}\) As a general tenet of classical Chinese cosmology, the ongoing world is not circular in the sense that it keeps coming back to the same without producing novelty (Hall and Ames 2003, p. 28).

Likewise, in Wang’s reading of the *Yijing*, interpretation spirals out from the text, incorporating information from the other *Classics, Four Books*, and commentaries; accordingly, interpretation is intended to funnel new information back into the text. The internal system of the text itself is fundamentally situated within a greater inter-textual system.

In Wang’s view, moreover, the ancient text and the modern interpreter become contemporaneous through a circle between text and reader—a fusion of horizons:

\(^{12}\) For a discussion of the different senses of hermeneutic circle, see Ronald Bontekoe’s *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books 2000), see especially Bontekoe’s “Introduction.” Bontekoe’s account of the basic hermeneutic circle also elucidates Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation of the *Yijing*:

The whole is what it is by virtue of its being composed of these [integrated] parts… [T]he individual parts of the object of comprehension are understood, in their turn, in terms of their participation in the whole, and this understanding involves the recognitions of how the whole contextualizes each of its parts. In the process of contextualization, each of the parts is illuminated in its own integrity. The part is what it is by virtue of its being located here—and consequently serving this function—within the whole. The two ‘poles’ of the hermeneutic circle are thus bound together in a relationship of mutual clarification. (Bontekoe 2000, p. 3)

\(^{13}\) See Bontekoe (ibid.) for an in-depth discussion on the difference between a hermeneutic circle and a vicious circle.
Study develops through accumulation; the present and the ancient mutually profit one another, hence [the new] refreshes the old. Thought grasps through an endless effort; [over the course of this process] the subtle and the manifest are mutually successive phases; hence the manifest is found in the subtle. (Wang 1988, ZYW, p. 1008)

The *Yijing* is always open to interpretation; indeed, the ancient (encrypted) text and iconic form and content of the book call for it. Each new reader brings a world (or worldview) to bear on the text while bringing the text to bear on a world (or worldview). Through the intercourse of text and world, the text and world continuously attain novel meaning. Wang’s prescription for advancing understanding of the book in light of one’s own situatedness in time, space, and culture pushes the *Yijing* forward into novel interpretations. Thus the text is able to serve as a basis for dealing with contemporary philosophical crises, namely, the *problématique* of appropriating ancient wisdom for dealing with current issues. In this vein, Wang’s hermeneutics justify interpreting the *Yijing* as a basis for ecological humanism.

As he develops his holistic hermeneutics, Wang Fuzhi launches an attack on previous interpretations of the *Yijing* as being analytically decontextualized and overly speculative.

Those who explicate the classics grasp the sentence but neglect the section, grasp the section, but neglect the chapter. The tradition from ancient times to present has been sickened by this. Nowadays, the disciples of Yao Hong (Wang Yangming) pick single phrases and thereby extend their presumptions—all of these techniques are like this […] If one reads books one claim (at a time) and seeks the meaning of this claim (in itself), then the meaning of the claim is necessarily erroneous. How much more so when one seeks to know the complete body and great function of nature-and-persons (*天人之全體大用*) in the study of the *Yi*? If one takes up one line of a hexagram and seeks the meaning of this line, then the meaning of this line cannot be known […] When one (attempts to) grasp the meaning of one sentence at a time (a sentence in and of itself) and discuss the texts of the former sages, the subtle language of the text remains hidden, and
Wang seamlessly moves from discussing the interpretation of the text into making claims for interpreting the person and the natural world as an organic structure—a complete body, *quan ti* 全體, with a magnanimous functionality, *da yong* 大用. According to Wang, the *Yijing* is not duplicitous or simply a product of human artifice, *wei* 備. Again, the symbolism and text together constitute an emergent phenomenon, which is taken to be a paradigmatic expression and embodiment of persons’ rootedness and ontological grounding, *genben* 根本, in the immanent creative source of the world, *benti* 本體. As a comprehensive model of the integrated person-nature system, the totality of the *Yijing* is more than the sum of its parts. To reiterate, not only are there seemingly infinite meaning-productive relationships between the linguistic and non-linguistic components of the book, as there are seemingly infinite interrelations between the constituents of the world; in addition, the text like the world requires interpretation at every level for the generation of meaning and value. The interpretation disappears into the text, or is absorbed into the model, thereby becoming part and parcel of the ongoing creation text. In this way, the model opens itself up to incorporate the fundamental situatedness of persons as the heart-and-mind of the heavens-and-earth.

From Wang Fuzhi’s perspective, the Image-Number school, represented by Jing Fang 京房 (78–37 BCE) in the Han, and Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077) in the Song, presents a hyper-rational systematization of the numerological-mathematical relations between the different

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14 *Wang’s original text:*

釋經者得句而忘其章，得章而忘其篇，古今之通病也。今世姚紅之徒，拈單辭片語以伸其妄，皆此術爾 […] 蓋讀書者一句而求一句之義，則句義必忒，況于易之為學，以求知天人之全體大用；于以爻而求一爻之義，則爻義必不可知 […] 執一句一義而論先聖之書，微言隱，大義乖，他經且然，奚況易哉! (1988, ZYFL, p. 662, 670)
trigrams, hexagrams, and lines. Shao Yong arranges the *gua* and *yao* symbols into various charts and sequences according to the binary structural relationships between the broken *yin* and continuous *yang* line segments. He then applies these a priori orderings to the natural world, thereby superimposing mathematically-determined structures onto the changing world. With this methodical approach, Shao Yong ultimately reduces all phenomena to an underlying numerological structure. Thus, Shao states, “The existence of meanings presupposes the existence of speech; the existence of speech presupposes the existence of images; the existence of images presupposes the existence of numbers…” (qtd. in Wyatt 2010, p. 20).

As one recent scholar of Shao Yong’s system has stated, the numerological methodology is intended to remove the subjective element from interpretation of the text, by presenting the text as an objective model of change (ibid.). Although this perspective might find a congenial reception amongst modern positivistic, reductive, scientistic, mathematical models of ecosystems, it is not an acceptable methodology by the standards of philosophical ecology—especially ecological humanism. Wang takes a skeptical posture in relation to the view that the world can be fully understood outside of an evaluative, subjective, interpretive perspective. In his critical synthesis of the Image-Number and Meaning-Pattern schools, Wang can be said to have sought an integration of subjective and objective modes of understanding the world. To recall a premise

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15 For a concise and informative exposition of Shao Yong’s method for interpreting the *Yijing*, see Don J. Wyatt, “Shao Yong’s Numerological-Cosmological System,” in *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, John Makeham (ed.) (New York: Springer 2010). For further discussion of Wang’s reproach to Shao Yong and Jing Fang, see also Jullien 1989, p. 198. See also, Gernet 2005, pp. 77.

16 It may be interesting and elucidating to note that while Wang was developing his 17th century critique of Shao Yong’s binary analysis of the *Yijing*, G.W. Liebniz (1646–1716), the quintessential European rationalist, took up Shao’s work as a model for developing his own binary calculus.

set forth in the methodology of ecological humanism, Wang’s philosophy may be understood here as an instantiation of epistemological pluralism.

At the turn of the twentieth-century, William James, John Dewey, and Alfred North Whitehead leveled a joint attack against reification and over-determination of the world by those who would construct closed, a priori, ratiocinative, philosophical systems.18 Looking back on Wang Fuzhi’s discontent with Shao Yong and his ilk from a modern perspective, it is likely that Wang would have embraced this critique. Using James’s language, it may be said that the Image-Number School commits a “vicious abstraction”; in Dewey’s parlance, the school is guilty of “the philosophic fallacy”; and in Whitheadian terms, it falls victim to the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness.” In sum, the terms employed by these three philosophers identify a tendency of rationalistic and speculative philosophy to reify abstract models of the world, which are at best only partial accounts, and mistake them for full representation of concrete reality. The Image-Number School abstracts one aspect out of the Yijing, the rational-mathematical orders of the hexagrams, and reduces all other meaning of the text to these structured orders. For Wang Fuzhi, to approach the text in this way is to project an artificial edifice onto the symbols, whereas the symbols are intended to be grounded in experience and a posteriori, diagnostic and prognostic interpretation. 19


19 Gernet writes following of Wang’s critique of numerologists of the Xiang-Shu school:

Dans plusieurs passages de son œuvre, Wang critique les efforts des Shao Yong (1012-1077) et de ses prédécesseurs pour soumettre le livre des Mutations à des régularités inspirées par des calculs numéologiques. Si le monde pouvait être analysé de façon immédiate et intégrale, comme l’imagine Shao Yong, il serait dépourvu de tout ce qu’il comporte, dans sa constitution même, de hasard et d’incertitude. Les divisions systématiques que Jing Fang, Shao Yong… ont introduites dans leurs interprétations du livre des Mutations sont artificielles et, par suite, contraires à son esprit” (Gernet 2005, p. 77).
The biggest problem that Wang has with the Image-Number approach comes by way of belief that the reductive method produces sterile patterns, which do not model nature’s spontaneity and creativity. In the commentarial layers of the book, most notably in the *Appended Phrases*, the text indicates that the *Yijing* is to be taken as a model for (1) ceaseless creativity, (2) novelty, and (3) diversity and nested levels of complexity. Wang Fuzhi will concede that the world does change in accordance with natural patterns, such as from the process of aging, life-leading-to-death-leading-life, seasonal and diurnal-nocturnal cycles, ongoing respiration, expanding-contracting, opening-closing, flourishing-decline, etcetera. François Jullien captures Wang’s position along these lines, “The day and night are like the respiration of the heavens; the summer and winter reproduce the rhythm of the day and night. Only the scale differs. All manifestations are regulated by an uninterrupted going and coming, contraction-expansion, advance-retreat, opening and closing…” (1989, p. 27). Nonetheless, Wang does not believe that the patterns of change conform to an absolutely determinate structure, that is, a standard or fixed rule, *dianyao* 典要. Indeed, the *Appended Phrases* itself indicates that no such rule is to be found—“不可為典要” (*Xici xia* 8.1). Following Wang’s critique, the Image-Number project of mathematical modeling precludes those of this school from recognizing the

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20 These three principles are expressed in the following propositions: (1) “日新之謂盛德 (*Xici shang* 5.1). Daily novelty, this is called flourishing virtue.” (2) “生生之謂易. (*Xici shang* 5.1) Procreation of life, this is called change.” (3) “易有太極, 是生兩儀, 兩儀生四象, 四象生八卦 (*Xici shang* 11.3) The Changes have a taiji; this engenders the two norms (*yin* and *yang*); the two norms engender four images; four images engender eight trigrams.

aleatory nature of change, novelty and diversity, which is represented in the textual interpretations of the Yijing’s symbolic structure. Wang expresses his appreciation for novelty and diversity in nature throughout his work:

The ancients taught us to use heights and depths in study of the incipient tendencies, *ji*, but we rashly and hastily employ [their lessons]. In the enumeration of the feelings of the masses, the feelings are driven into the cages of names. Reflecting on the world, one can grasp [its patterns]; through study, one can know its patterns (*li*, 理) […] [But the things and the beings themselves (in their inexhaustible diversity) escape the reflection and study.] The names and numbers are limited, while in their reality, beings and things distinguish themselves in infinite species and subspecies; and if one wants to go to the end of these distinctions, one is not able to come to an end. The leaves of a grand tree are counted by the myriads, and amongst them, one cannot find one that is exactly like another. How are the names able to limit them? The changes are infinite. Only one passes in review the events of the day and the night, nothing is like the anterior states of affairs. Good weather and rain, here is a reduction to words, which we are disposed to use. But we never find a time which does not present the least difference with another. How can numbers demarcate all of these differences. (SL, XII, Guangzong (1189–1194) 2, 275–276; qtd. in Gernet, pp. 76–7)

Diversity and novelty are thus presented as fundamental characteristics of the world-as-process. Nature’s capacity for spontaneously creating novel life forms is inexhaustible and not subject to any absolute systematization. Rather than closed and determinate, the world is an open indeterminate system—it is without limits, *wuji*, 無極.

Wang continues this line of thought, emphasizing the transience and interconnection of all things:

Wang’s text:

古之人教我以極深研幾之學, 而我淺嘗而躁用之, 舉天下萬民之情, 皆以名相籠而驅入其中。。。天下之思而可得、學而可知者, 理也; 思而不能得、學而不能知者, 物也。今夫物名則有涯矣, 數則有量矣。乃若其實, 則皆有類焉, 類之中又有類焉, 詳而極之, 尽巧辯之終身而不能悉舉。大木之葉, 其數億萬, 求一相肖而毫髮之差者無有也, 而名惡足以限之? 必有變焉, 变之余又有變焉, 流而覘之, 一日夜之閑, 而不知其故。晴雨之候, 二端而止, 猶一必然而無意外之差者無有也, 而數惡足以期之? (SL, XII, Guangzong (1189–1194) 2, 275–276; qtd. in Gernet, pp. 76–7, italicized is translated based on Gernet’s French)
The sixty-four hexagrams are repartitioned in 8 palaces of Jing Fang. It is in the “Before Heavens Diagram” and the “Nine and Nine Numerical Chart” that we have left Master Shao [Yong] and Cai Jiufeng. But, investigating between the heavens and the earth [global-environmental system], there is nothing that is so perfectly regular. These are only things of the genre ‘made by man.’ From the circles that one is able to trace with a compass, of rectangles that one can trace with a square, all of this relevant to human artifice; there is never anything of this sort created by nature. The Yi says, “(yin and yang) circulate in the 6 spaces (of the hexagrams); and yet they cannot have an immutable norm.” If the Yi was able to normalize the [transformations thus], as our sight is able to penetrate bodies, and our ears able to penetrate sounds, we would not still be unable to synthetically comprehend things. Only the Sages were capable of penetrating to the limits of the numinous and reach knowledge of the transformations. (SWW, note 27, 440)

The aim of [Shao Yong’s] Huangji jingshi is written by Zhu Xi’s account as “breaking into two,” which is to say that everything in the world is mutually opposed. But how could the hard and soft of yin and yang, and the great and small be mutually opposed? Yin and yang are qi; hard and soft, are substances. If there is this qi, then it becomes this substance, if there is this substance then it comprises these energies, how could they be divided? If they could be divided, then substances would be dead bodies, and qi would be wondering energy. The small is the young of the great; the great is the old of the small; the young and the old are continuous through a person’s life; would the young and old make two persons? The old is achieved from the young through gradual transformations without any divisions and sharp boundaries: otherwise, would it be that in one day youth ends and old-age begins? These theories by two and by four, these suppositions and categorical classifications are without relation to the spontaneous order of the nature world. (SWW, note 29, p. 441)

Wang Fuzhi does not only insist on the continuity and inherent holistic structure qi, but he also maintains a sense of indeterminacy as a fundamental aspect of the world. Wang finds in the

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23 The above English translation is here informed by Gernet’s French translation (2005, pp. 77-78). Wang’s Text:

24 Wang’s text:

《皇極經世》之旨，盡于朱子“破作两片”之语，謂天下無不相對待者耳。乃陰陽之與剛柔，太之與少，豈相對待者乎？陰陽，氣也；剛柔，質也。有是氣則成是質，有是質則具是氣；其可析乎？析之則質為死形，而氣為游氣矣。少即太之稚也，太即少之老也；將一人之生，老、少稱為二人乎？自稚至老，漸移而無分畫之涯際，將以何一日焉為老之始而少之終乎？故两片四片之说，猜量比拟，非自然之理也。(SWW, note 29, p. 441; cf. Gernet 2005, p. 79)
world a creative tension between the overall coherence and aleatoric spontaneity of natural transformations. Structure and variance thus come to form a dyadic pair in his worldview as “two indissociable aspects of the same reality” (Jullien 1989, p. 194, 196). These two components are well represented by Wang’s insistence on the integration of the categories of \textit{li} and \textit{qi}. As patterning, the former indicates an organic system or body, \textit{ti}, of all change. As energy, \textit{qi} drives the world toward creating novel forms of life and fulfillment of particular functions, \textit{yong}, or niches within the system.

In reference to the place of indeterminacy in Wang Fuzhi’s philosophical system, Allison Black writes, “It was a necessary part of his total conception that one aspect of the universe should elude precise specification… This element receives various descriptions at Wang’s hands, but it can most comprehensively be described as shen” (1989, p. 72). Wang derives his conception of \textit{shen} from the \textit{Appended Phrases} claim, “\textit{Yinyang} are unfathomable: this is called shen” (\textit{Xici shang} 5.1).\textsuperscript{25} Although the term “\textit{shen}” may be approximately translated into English as “numinous” or “spirit,” it does not denote supernatural spiritual presence. In line with his naturalistic philosophy, Wang regards \textit{shen} as a quality of \textit{qi}. Thus, he states, “Outside of \textit{qi}, \textit{shen} has no presence.”\textsuperscript{26} In his commentary on the \textit{Appended Phrases}, Wang defines \textit{shen} in terms of \textit{miao}, meaning \textit{marvelous} and \textit{mysterious}. He writes, “神者，道之妙萬物者也”:

\textit{Shen is dao} mysteriously going out through the myriad things” (1988, ZYW, p. 531). Wang’s claim suggests an experience of profundity in relation to the simultaneous integration and individual integrity of all events. Mysterious is the complexity of the world. He further discusses the very notion of change, \textit{yi}, which titles the \textit{Yijing}, as “numinous and

\textsuperscript{25} Translation based on original text: “陰陽不測之謂神” (\textit{Xici shang} 5.1)

\textsuperscript{26} Translation based on original text: “非氣之外有神也” (Wang ZMZ. 卷二，神化篇。1956. p. 57).
mysterious.” Shen alludes to the unfathomable finesse and subtlety (jingwei 精衛), complexity, and magnanimity of cosmic change and structure. Along these lines, the extension of the concept further contains nature’s boundlessness, wuji 無極, and the invisible you 幽 processes of nature’s inner-workings. In a word, shen functions as sublime. The quality of shen engenders experiences of profound wonder and awe. It elicits reverence for a natural world that is greater than the individual person, and yet provides an intimate place and participatory function for each and every person and thing.

On this point, Wang Fuzhi is again strikingly close to the Korean neo-Confucian thinker, Yi Yulgok. Like Yi, Wang also regarded the hexagram system of the Yijing to symbolize “neither a fixed physical object nor a mere mechanical entity; rather, it is a living, dynamic, changing reality” (Ro 1998, p. 177). Moreover, because of the dynamism, procreativity, complexity, and open nature of the world-system and its constituent sub-systems, the world is a source of “sanctity and mystery” (ibid.). Ro’s description of Yi’s cosmology likewise serves as an apt summary of Wang’s conception of indeterminacy:

[He] believed the universe could not be completely comprehended by human intelligence or through human thought processes. He believed that the universe is a ‘mystery’ not to be reduced to the rational or conceptual framework of the human intellectual system. This dimension of mystery causes us to feel that the universe is sacred; hence, we have a sense of awe toward the universe. The universe ‘manifests’ itself to us as much as it ‘conceals’ itself from us…” (ibid.).

Although Wang appropriated a sense of penumbral indeterminacy as a positive value into his philosophy of nature, he believed that the Yijing yet modeled both the sides of the correlative dyad of determinacy and indeterminacy, you 有 and wu 無; concealed and manifest, you 幽 and

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27 Yan Shoucheng calls attention to Wang’s claim, “King Wen grasped the meaning of marvelous transformations and named it change,” “文王取其變易神妙之旨而名之易.” 周易内傳發例 2.A.
xian 顯; or hidden and illuminated, *yin* 隱 and *ming* 明. This correlative dyad of hidden and manifest is fundamental to Wang’s hermeneutics of the symbolism and text. Thus, in the same breath that he critiques the over-determinate systematization of the Image-Number school, he also critiques the Meaning-Pattern school, which neglects the systematic structure of the world and *Yijing* symbolism in favor of subjective, figurative interpretation.

To summarize his critique of the Meaning-Pattern school, Wang argues, there is no *dao* or whole apart from the concrete particulars that constitute it. “The world is only concrete particulars and that is all. As for *dao*, it is the *dao* of concrete particulars” (1988, ZYW, p. 420). The critique is akin to the problem of reverse reduction on the whole stated in chapter one. It can thus be formulated by stating that Meaning-Pattern school sought transcendence of the *Yijing*’s symbolism, and this marks an abnegation or sublimation of the concrete particularity of each situation in light of the whole.

Wang Fuzhi’s critique of the Meaning-Pattern School is directed by and large toward one of the traditions early champions, Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), who lived in the Kingdom of Wei (220-265) just after the fall of the Han dynasty. Steeped in both the Confucian and Daoist traditions, Wang Bi regarded the *Yijing*, the *Analects*, the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* alike as signatory allusions to an ineffable reality. As Rudolph Wagner explains in his magnum opus trilogy on Wang Bi’s authorship, reality is not ineffable for Wang Bi because there exists an absolute unchanging Being beyond the empirical realm of beings; rather, the transience and complexity of the world preclude assigning any fixed (nominal or predicative) reference to world (Wagner 2000; see especially, pp. 42 and 67). Wang Bi harbors an acute skepticism toward

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29 In order to avoid confusing Wang Bi with Wang Fuzhi, the former is always referred to herein by his full name, and never by his surname alone.
language and ratiocinative systematization as means of providing an adequate metaphysical worldview. He maintains throughout his work that reality can only be pointed to via negativa (as in the Daodejing’s wu 無 forms), or by contradictory or metaphorical constructs.

For Wang Bi the Daodejing in particular is a marked attempt to “turn discourse against itself,” and “make it deviate from its usual [propositional] functioning.” One finds a fundamental example in the opening passage of the Daodejing, where the functions of the world are referred to as “darkest of dark,” “玄之又玄.” The term, “dark,” “xuan 玄,” is a metaphorical means of alluding to the indeterminacy of the world. By “indeterminacy” it is understood that the world can neither be referred to simply as a plurality nor simply as a unity; nothing in the world is a determinate discrete object, and yet all things maintain a persistent particularity—nothing in the world is absolutely reducible to its relations or abnegated in the face of the whole. Rather than reifying the indeterminate aspect of the world as some kind of substance, entity, or object, the phrase “darkest of the dark” shows how the world slips through the hypostasis of denotation. “Through this repetition, the term is kept open beyond itself, exceeding its bounds” (Jullien 2003, p. 286). Based on Wang Bi’s adoption of this Daoist line, his philosophy is referred to within Chinese philosophic taxonomy as “Study of the Dark-Mysterious,” xuanxue 玄學.

Perhaps Wang Bi’s general disposition toward discourse is best represented in an adage taken from his biography: An interlocutor asked of Wang Bi, “Speaking of indeterminacy, truly it is that which constitutes the myriad things. The sage [Confucius] is not willing to discourse on it; however, Laozi’s repeats it without end. Why?” Wang Bi, then replied, “The sage embodies indeterminacy, and indeterminacy cannot be taught; the reason being, speaking is necessarily
determinate. Laozi and Zhuangzi have not yet let go of the determinate; ultimately, their exegeses are insufficient” (Liu Yiqing, 世說新語, 文學, 8). At the end of the day, for Wang Bi, language and symbolism must be put aside, for the world can only be known through unmediated praxis and intuition. Accordingly, he attacked the Han dynasty scholars of the Image-Number School and sought to undercut their methodical systematization.

Wang Bi makes use of a line from Zhuangzi (Chapter 27) to convey his position on semantic reference: “the rabbit snare exists for the sake of the rabbit; once one gets the rabbit, he forgets the snare. And the fish trap exists for the sake of fish; once one gets the fish, he forgets the trap.’ If this is so, then the words are snares for the images, and the images are traps for the ideas (meanings).” Wang Bi interprets this claim to indicate that truth is understood by transcending the meaningful world insofar as it is determined by the ratiocinative use of language. The transcendence is not a movement beyond the world; rather, it is an inner movement to “that which” is the world—conveyed in Chinese by the character suo 所. Wang Fuzhi adopts a distinction between the world-as-it-naturally-occurs, 天之道, 物之理, on the one hand, and the world-as-it-is-categorized-by-human-artifice, 人之道, 人之理, on the other. However, Wang Fuzhi believes that the symbolism and text of the Yijing serves as an intermediary, a bridge, between the two.

In a relatively short passage, Wang Fuzhi follows Wang Bi’s critique of the Han dynasty numerologists, but Wang Fuzhi reproaches Wang Bi as well:

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30 Translated from the original: “夫無者，誠萬物之所資，聖人莫肯致言，而老子申之無已，何邪？”弼曰：“聖人體無，無又不可以訓，故言必及有；老、莊未免於有，恆訓其所不足”（世說新語，文學, 8). Source text online at Donald Sturgeon’s Chinese Text Project. <www.ctext.org>; accessed April 11, 2011.
31 Wang Bi Ming xiang 明象; Richard John Lynn translation 2004, p. 31.
When the Confucians of the Han dynasty discoursed on images (xiang 象), they chose many forced analogies... Wang Bi returned to the dao, and discarded the Han discourses. He said: “Grasp the images and forget the words. Grasp the meaning and forget the image.” However, the (Great) Commentary definitively states, “the Changes are images” (ZYWZ, Xici xia 3, 1039).  

Although Wang Fuzhi agrees that the Image-Number school should be critiqued for their fallacious over-determinism, to neglect the significance of the hexagrams, their organic symbolism, and their structure all-together is a mistake in itself.

As stated above and is developed further below, Wang Fuzhi took the iconic symbols of the Yijing to have grown out of persons’ onto-hermeneutic relationship with the natural world.

In a somewhat longer passage composed at a later date, Wang Fuzhi continues this line of attack on Wang Bi:

The Qin burned books, but the Yijing was taken up as a divination book, and did not suffer this disaster; thus, of the six classics, only the Yijing remained a complete book, and afterward its study was prosperous. However, following from this, the Yijing fell into disorder. Though the Qin forthwith stripped it away from prognosticators, for a long time it endured and its discussion remained unchanged... Those people of the Han who commented on it did not systematize the teachings of the three sages. And after the Qin, the various prognostic techniques were diverse, confused, and brought disorder to one another.... Wang Bi was aware of this meanness, and relinquished these sayings. He singularly took dao to be separate [from the earlier methods of prognostication], hidden to some degree in the meaning of the three sages. However, Wang Bi studied the root [of all things] in the Lao-Zhuang [Daoist] significations of vacuity and indeterminacy, and was mystified by dao. Accordingly, he writes, “Grasp the meaning and forget the language, grasp the language and forget the images.” But he did not realize that the language is integral to the images and the meaning is integral to the language. [This integration of

32 “漢儒說象，多取附會。。。王弼反其道而概廢之，曰 “得象而忘言。得意而忘象” 乃傳固曰 “易者，象也” (ZYWZ, Xici xia 3, 1039). The original quote that Wang Fuzhi accredits to Wang Bi is in Wang Bi’s Zhouyi lueli. For the full translation the text containing Wang Bi’s claim, see Richard Lynne’s translation The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 31. Wang Bi, living in the relatively chaotic and difficult time just after the fall of the Han, was in a unique historical position to shift the discourse away from the Han status quo.

33 Gernet notes that the “three sages” here referred to are Fu Xi, King Wen, and Confucius (2005, p. 128).
images, language, and meaning] is what is expressed in the world as the profound-merging between persons and nature (天人之蘊). How could one forget? (Wang 1988, ZYFL, p. 652)\textsuperscript{34}

In a strong sense, the hexagrams are symbolic representations of reality. Hence, Kipper Smith suggests that the term “xiang” may be translated as “symbol.” However, as Young-Chan Ro points out, the very idea of a representational symbol is not fully adequate for understanding the nature of the hexagrams and their images. “Here ‘symbolic’ does not mean a mere formality,” writes Ro, “but rather it means a holistic approach, beyond concept, to the reality… For example, the trigrams and hexagrams… are symbolic manifestations, not mechanical representations of the reality of the universe” (1998, p. 176). The hexagrams emerge from Fu Xi’s interaction with the world, that is, through his comprehensive observation. The act is creative in that it is an expression of the world as it presents itself to the human interpreter, but the symbolization is not an abstraction; like the person, the symbolism is grounded and sustained by the root-body of the world. Wang Fuzhi conceives of the hexagram-images as non-linguistic interpretations, creative representations, extensions and expressions of “the phase: insensible passage from one to another of two inseparable opposing terms, of flourishing and decline, of the coexistence of the indeterminacy and constancy… which is constitutive of all natural and biological phenomena” (Gernet 2005, p. 73).

Wang Fuzhi’s critique of Wang Bi and the Meaning-Pattern School calls on a concept of symbolism that does not radically separate the symbol from its referent. Symbolism, in this case,

\textsuperscript{34} Translated from Wang’s original text:

\textit{秦焚書, 而易以卜筮之書, 不罹其災, 故六經唯易有全書, 後學之幸也. 然而易之亂也, 自此事... 乃秦既夷之於卜筮之家, 入者不敢講... 漢人所傳者非純乎三聖之教. 而秦以來, 雜占之術紛紜而相亂... 王弼氏知其陋也, 棄其說, 一以道為斷, 蓋庶幾於三聖之意. 而弼學本老莊虛無之旨, 蓋詭於道, 且其言曰"得意忘言, 得言忘象", 則不知象中之言, 言中之意為天人之蘊所昭示於天下者, 而何可忘那?} (Wang 1988, ZYFL, p. 652)
belongs to the realm of pathos. That is to say, a *gua* is not a symbol in the sense that it refers to something outside of itself; the *gua* is more like an emergent symptom or consummative quality that expresses the full situation as it comes to fruition. The concept of ‘*xiang*’ is more akin to that of a genome than it is to the concept of a ‘road sign’ or a ‘denotative term.’ The symbol, in other words, is a microscopic embodiment and expression of the macroscopic situation from which it emerges. In Wang Fuzhi’s view, Wang Bi’s rejection of the book’s linguistic and non-linguistic symbolism misses the mark on what *Yijing*’s symbols are.

In one critique of constructing the *gua* based on the method used in divination, Wang suggests the idea that the *Yijing* symbolism provides a *cosmography*:

> If one discusses prognostication, then one has three changes whereby one obtains a single inscription taken as the beginning [of a hexagram], step by step, through eighteen transformations, on then develops the hexagram. In the natural development of *gua*, the heaven and earth certainly have their transformation; the myriad things certainly have their patterns; personal affairs certainly have their feelings… It is not the case that because of divination one then has a *gua*. (ZYFL 1988, p. 108)

The idea conveyed by this passage is that hexagrams emerge from nature, not from artificial manipulation. The *gua* thereby categorically resonate, *ganlei* 感類, with natural events.

In a recent commentary on Fu Xi’s observation and creation of the hexagrams, Kipper Smith provides an analysis of the *Yijing*’s symbolism that supports the hermeneutic perspective of reading the tradition as a form ecological humanism. “It is a text less of culture than of Heaven-and-Earth, of nature,” he writes (1993, p. 5). He goes on to redirect his claim, however, by making a case for interpreting the terms of image, *xiang* 象; order, *fa* 法; and pattern, *wen* 文, as demonstrative of the continuity between nature and culture. *Xiang*, or images, are emblematic

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pre-linguistic symbols. The gua themselves are interpreted as images of the most prominent situations found in nature-and-society. As images, they are understood as non-linguistic symbols. Unmediated by linguistic interpretation, images are immediate presentations of the persons-and-nature. According to Smith, “Hexagrams are considered an alternative sign-system, one that offers more potent means for expressing otherwise hidden meaning through their super-linguistic clarity.” He continues by citing the Appended Phrases line, “The sages set up images (xiang 象) to fully express intended meaning (yi 意). They established hexagrams to fully express actuality. They attached verbalizations (ci 詞) to these to fully express speech” (Xici shang 12.2; translated in Smith p. 8). Based on this claim, Smith concludes, “hexagrams, then, offer various promises-of a clear ‘expression of the actual’” (ibid.). Wang Fuzhi, like Wang Bi and others, expresses a concern that propositional discourse and philosophical systematization are ultimately incapable of presenting the incessant and sublime processes that constitute the world. However, Fuzhi sees the Yijing symbolism—with the warp and weft, disclosure and concealment of the changing lines—as a model of the fluid structure of the cosmos as a holistic process. This model neither reduces the world to a determinate system, nor neglects the coherence and particularity of the patterns that present themselves in concrete experience. The hexagrams taken singularly and in tandem have a systemic structure; at the same time, the penumbral indeterminacy of transience, chance, and holistic complexity is built into part and parcel of imagery and required interpretation.

For Wang Fuzhi, only when the Yijing is taken as a totalizing structure does it provide a comprehensive worldview that overcomes the shortfalls of over-determinate and hyper-rational, speculative, discursive models. Conversely, when taken as a totality, the book likewise presents
an aesthetic order that is grounded in the comprehensive observation of patterns of change. The book can neither be taken as an objective model, nor a prompt for pure subjective interpretative fancy. As it synthesizes nature and persons, so it also synthesizes the subjective (interpretive, indeterminate) and objective (rational, determinate) poles of experience in a hermeneutic circle. Each pole depends on the other, informs the other, and is integrated in the fullness of experience.

5. Mapping Complexity, Transformation, and Structure

The cosmology of the Yijing maintains that all phenomena exist in the midst of a continuous transition between polar opposition. Everything in nature is connected in patterns of reciprocal interactions and transactions of yin and yang modes of qi. Along these lines Wang Fuzhi holds that natural phenomena constantly undergo mutual reversion and mutual becoming, 相反相成. Gua are dynamic presentations in which yin and yang lines exchange places and move through the different positions of the structure; accordingly, each gua can be understood as transforming into other gua. This form of process philosophy can be interpreted in terms of A.N. Whitehead’s principle of relativity: “it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming’” (Whitehead 1978, 22). Along these lines the complete set of gua present an organic worldview in which all phenomena are interrelated by their mutual transformability and constant becoming.

The Yijing provides a naturalistic account of the world as a coherent, dynamic, self regulating, holistic system. As such, the philosophy of the Yijing does not define any given phenomenon in terms of a discrete essence, species or kind: the identity of any phenomenon does not come by way of analytically extracting or isolating the phenomenon from its environment and attempting to find its atomic core; instead, the phenomenon is identified by the way it

functions and alters in relation to other phenomena. In other words, the phenomenon is understood according to the role that it plays within the context of its (local and global) environment. Jullien explains that in this context one is not to consider any reality unilaterally or individually. Without exception each existent has an existential reliance on all other existents. Every phenomenon is constituted by its relationships to others. In other words, relationships are internal as opposed to external and primary as opposed to secondary. That which is apparent in the analysis of any phenomenon is never “une réalité individualisable.” No phenomenon, according to the manner of analysis in the Yijing, ever attains existence in the world as a singular and autonomous existence; instead, each phenomenon is a phase or moment in the midst of a world constituted by interrelated process (Jullien 1989, p. 52, 53). In terms of holism, every part comes to embody, contain, or express the whole in one way or another.

Wang Fuzhi expresses his vision of a complex and holistic world in his earliest commentary on the Yijing:

Does the world have radically separable and necessarily mutually opposed things? Searching for such a thing in the heavens and earth, this kind of entity does not exist; searching the myriad things, this does not exist; introspecting into one’s thinking-and-feeling (xin 心), one is not yet certain or aware of such a thing. The heavens are venerable aloft, and yet they enter the midst of the earth; there is no depth that they do not inspect. The earth is humble below, and yet the earth hoists the horizon, there is no height that it does not penetrate. One cannot take and separate the world [into hard and

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37 This description of holism is based on the work of Brook Ziporyn (2000). Confer page 28 in particular.
38 In Jullien’s account, “La relation n’est ni extérieure ni seconde, c’est elle qui fait exister intrinsèquement: la corrélativité est le sens de la réalité. C’est pourquoi la réalité ne s’analyse qu’en termes d’enchaînement et de procès ” (1989, p. 53). To translate: “The relation is neither exterior nor secondary, it is what exists intrinsically: the correlativity is the sense of reality. It is because the reality is only analyzed in terms of sequence and of process.”
39 Translated from the following claim: “car ce qui se manifeste à l’analyse n’est jamais une existence singulière et autonome mais une certain séquence au sein d’un enchaînement (celui du procès)” (Jullien 1989, p. 52).
Like Zhang Zai before him, Wang Fuzhi takes the *Yijing* to be a “translation of the universe” (Gernet 2005, p. 109). Each *gua* has a complex internal structure of interacting *yin* and *yang* lines, which can be referred to as a vertical dimension. At the same time, each *gua* is constituted by a complex set of relations to every other *gua* in the system, or a horizontal dimension. The interrelationships between *gua* are internal and constitutive, and are symbolic of the correlations that link actual phenomenon. The basic symbolism of the continuous segment of *yang* and the discontinuous segment for *yin* provides a visual representation for conceiving of events as relatively conjoined and disjoined in nature. The idea, in other words, is that all events are porous; all events qua systems are open systems; all events are relatively particular and individual and relatively shared and environmental.

As phenomena are mutually transformable, so the hexagrams have the capacity to transform into one another. In line with their interconnection and principle of relativity, the set of hexagrams is seen as a parsimonious model—a cosmography—of the complex structure, and spontaneous and incessant change that is the world. The set of sixty-four hexagrams do not form an amorphous whole (Gernet 2005, p. 117). They are isomorphic and homologous with the

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40 Wang’s text reads:

 watt有截然分析而必相對待之物乎？求之于天地，無有此也；求之于萬物，無有此；反而求之于心，抑未諗其必然也。天尊于上，而天入地中，無深不察；地卑于下，而地升天際，無高不徹。其界不可得而剖也。截然分析而必相對待者，天地無有也，萬物無有也，人心無有也。(1988, ZYW, pp. 1073-1074)  

Wang’s language here mirrors Cheng Hao’s earlier work: “天地萬物之理，無獨，必有對。皆自然而然，非有安排也。萬物莫不有對。” In translation, “With regard to the patterning of the natural world and the myriad things, there is nothing that is alone. Everything must have a correlative opposite. Everything spontaneously occurs (ziran), and thus it is so. It is not the case that there is a prearranged plan” (Mingdao xue’an, shang, 550; qtd. in Gernet p. 86).

41 Cf, Jullien 1989, p. 194
actual world. The fundamental premise of Wang’s metaphysics should always be kept close when engaging his philosophy: the world is energy, qi 氣, and energy only exists in emergent structures, li 理. Within the homologous and isomorphic structures of the world and the hexagrams, each and every phenomenon, xiang 象, derives its identity, meanings, and values in relation to the systems in which it is situated. The situatedness or position, wei 位, of any phenomenon within the system is constitutive of that phenomenon. As the situation and one’s position shift, so does one’s identity. Contrary to Aristotelian ontology, the identity, meaning, and value of any phenomenon are not thought to be located in an unchanging essence, which retains its “thisness” regardless of its contextualizing relata. Accordingly, the philosophy of the Yijing prioritizes situation over agency.

With regard to the horizontal dimension, it can be said that all gua interlock through transformation of the constituent lines—they interlink in a changing bricolage (Smith 1993, p. 7; Gernet 2005, p. 110). Wang identifies two primary relations between gua to discuss their interconnections, mutual containment, transformation, and mutual expressiveness. The relationships are referred to as: (1) negative, cuo 錯; (2) inverse, zong 至。

The ‘cuo’ is an instrument to polish metal, which removes the external (cover) and discloses the internal. The ‘zong’ is a woven thread, using the machine it goes, one up and one down (without interruption). The gua each have six yin and six yang. When yin is seen, then yang is hidden within. Cuo removes that which is seen as yin, then yang is seen. Cuo removes that which is seen as yang, then yin is seen, it is like the relationship between qian and kun.. The yao that are seen, up and down they interact and change, it is like holding the
thread in weaving, repeatedly, alternately, raising and dropping, as in the relation between zhun 纜 and meng 棟 (Wang 1988, ZYBS III, pp. 788-789) 42

Many different kinds of change attain in the world. Radical and momentous changes are suggested by the relationship of inversion, zong. Subtle and hidden changes are interpreted in terms of the negative, cuo. The zong relation is attained by flipping a hexagram on its head; the cuo relation is demonstrated by substituting each of a hexagram’s yin line with a yang, and vice versa. Within the ordered set of hexagrams in the received version of the Yijing, twenty eight pairs of hexagrams are sequenced according to the zong relation: one hexagram is immediately followed by its inverse. The remaining four pairs—“Qian and Kun, Kan and Li, Yi and Daguo, Zhongfu and Xiaoguo”—are related by virtue of being negatives, cuo, of one another (Gernet 2005, p. 112).

The sequential zong order suggests that the natural world follows patterns of continuous transition between opposites, such as extropy and entropy. Drawing upon the imagery of weaving, Wang makes use of the classical sense of the term, zong. The Shuowen jiezi defines zong 纜 as “a machine for weaving,” and identifies the silk radical, 糸, as the significant semantic component of the character. As stated in the previous chapter, the same classical lexicon defines the character tong 统, meaning “to unify” and by extension “to unify in a system,” in terms of zong 纜. Due to the close-knit semiotic relationship between tong and zong, and based on explicit definition of zong in itself, zong also signifies a systematic interconnection between the different hexagrams. Each gua implies its inverse and is indeed understood as transforming from and into its inverse. But inversion is only one modality of change.

42 Wang’s text: “錯”者，金之械器，汰去其外而發見中者也。“綜”者，繫經之線，以機動之，一上一下也。卦各有六陰六陽，陰見則陽隱于中。錯去其所見之陰則陽見，錯去其所見之陽則陰見，如乾 之與坤。。。就所見之爻，上下交易，若織之提綜，迭相升降， 如屯 之與蒙。 (ZYBS III, pp. 788-789)
Wang discusses the complexity of the hexagram relations and their ability to transform in accord with the complex nature of change in reality. He alludes to a “network of linkages” as referred to by Cheng’s description above. Commenting on the “Appended Phrases” line, “Changing and moving without residing, freely wandering through the six spaces, from up to down without constancy, hard and soft exchanging places, without a determinate rule, only change is suitable” Wang writes:

The Yi embodies this as dao, thus Qian and Kun established, and Zhun Meng succeed, the intercourse of yin and yang cannot abide by sequence; by ten transformations one obtains Tai Pi [then] eight transformations and one obtains Lin Guan, again transforming and one obtains Bo Fu. Their decline and flourishing is without regular progressive order (Wang 1988, ZYN p. 605).

The gua are not static entities. As symbolic representations of dynamic situations, gua are understood as transformational. Each gua and each line contained within it is in flux. In other words the individual gua and their constituent parts are parsed phases in an ongoing systemic process. Not only does this passage suggest the mutual entailment of opposites, as in the inverted hexagrams here cited, but it further indicates that more than one modality of change is present in the transformation of the hexagrams. In accord with the complex nature of change in the world, the hexagrams cannot be understood as transforming solely according to inversion. If this were the case, then the hexagrams would be subject to a kind of vicious circle in and of themselves: any two inverted hexagrams would be locked in an eternal loop of mutual reference, and unable to become any other gua outside of the inversion relation. Therefore, they would be

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43 Original text: “變動不居，周流六虛，上下無常，剛柔相易，不可為典要，唯變所適” (Xici shang).
unable to signify the novelty and indeterminacy that presents itself in ongoing experience. The presence of the *cuo*, negative, relationship offsets and opens up the *zong* relationship, thereby, freeing the model from a fixed and determinate rule. The negative incorporates and models the invisible forces and chance one finds in the empirical world.

Recalling the microcosm-macrocosm relationship, which Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong identify as definitive of Chinese naturalism, each *gua* can be considered an embodiment or expression of all other *gua*. And in words familiar to Wang Fuzhi, each *gua* “contains,” *han* 囊, the other sixty-three within it. Wang describes this mutual containment in terms of the correlative dyad of the visible and the invisible, or the disclosed and concealed: “One writes *yin* or *yang* six times; the positions, however, have twelve: half concealed, half seen” (Wang 1988, ZYW, p. 225). The six lines that are seen are manifest traits of the situation; however, the six unseen lines, the complete negative of the displayed hexagram are regarded as an underlying latent modality. The idea that each hexagram has within it hidden hexagrams, which it expresses, lends support to Allison Black’s (1989) reading of Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy as a form of expressionism. The six hidden lines are tacit and implied; they are the hidden face behind the expressive face of each hexagram. Insofar as each hexagram is permutated by its negative, Qian, pure *yang*, also contains Kun, pure *yin*, but “only in the mode of latency” (Jullien

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45 Along these lines, Jullien writes, “*Chaque figuration peut devenir l’autre puisqu’elle contient déjà celui-ci en son sein.*” In translation, “Each figuration is able to become the other because it already contains the other within it” (Jullien 1989, p. 103)


47 Confer Jullien, “*Chaque hexagramme possède donc toujours la même somme de douze traits, six traits yin et six traits yang, et ceux-ci se répartissent toujours différemment mais également entre le visible et l’invisible.* In translation, “Each hexagram always possesses not only the six manifest traits which characterize it, but also an underlying latent modality, the six other traits which lie in waiting” (Jullien 1989, pp. 102, 103).

48 Although this form of expressionism is a fundamental aspect of Wang’s philosophy, it cannot be considered the organizing paradigm as Black maintains. The expression of the invisible by the visible is a singular modality in a greater holistic system.
1989, p. 102). 49 “Similarly,” Jullien writes, “all the real possesses at the same time an exterior and an interior, one open and one closed. The hexagram is a double structure, containing the parity of manifest and latency.” He continues his explication, “All experience is able to be elucidated globally from this model, for example between yesterday’s projects, today’s execution, and the transformation of it on another day” (ibid.). 50 Wang Fuzhi expresses his conception of the transformation between invisibility and visibility, indeterminacy and determinacy, concealment and disclosure in a metaphor familiar to Chinese philosophy: the swinging gate, which opens up for disclosure of particularity and closing for concealment within mystery (ZYW 1988, p. 425). What is determinate now is indeterminate later, and vice versa. 51 In his later work, Detour and Access, Jullien again nods to this line (using slightly different language): “specific actualization is never trapped in its specificity but remains open to the lack of differentiation, finally returning to it” (2000, p. 286). As soon as beings stand forth, they begin to weaken; hence, they embark on the retrogressive way (Dao) toward their vanishing.

With reference to the vertical structure of the gua, Gernet makes the following claim on behalf of the systems reading of Wang Fuzhi and the Yijing:

The position of the lines in the hexagrams is in itself significant. Now, when all the elements together only have a sense by reason of the place that it occupies and that all is not

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49 Jullien’s French text, “…sur le seul mode de la latence” (ibid.).

50 Jullien’s text:

De même que tout réel possède à la pois un extérieur et un intérieur, un envers et un endroit, l’hexagramme est un structure double, contenant à parité le manifeste et le latent… Or touteexpérience peut être élucidée globalement à partir d’un tel modèle, par exemple entre le projet d’hier et l’exécution d’aujourd’hui, entre l’exécution d’aujourd’hui et sa transformation un autre jour. (Jullien 1989, p. 102)

a simple addition of parts, it is here where one is in the presence of a system. One of the ideas frequently expressed by Wang is in effect that of a system. (Gernet 2005, p. 143)

Similarly, Kipper Smith explains, “the hexagram structure becomes a potent set of relationships, not just a collection of six serial places” (1993, p. 11). As in any ecosystem, the inner workings of the gua are complex indeed. Each hexagram symbolizes energy-flow, and interactions, exchange, and dynamic tensions between opposing forces on multiple levels. The Appended Phrases commentary states, “The movement of the six lines is the dao of the three extremes.” Wang’s commentary on this line reads: “The beginning 2 are the position of earth; 3 and 4, the position of persons; 5 and 6, the position of the heavens. Each position is necessarily significant; the yin yang of qi, the hard-soft of concrete form; the humanity and appropriate conduct of disposition: all these intercourse to becoming a complete body and magnificent functionality” (1988 ZYN, p. 515). The numbering of hexagram lines procedes from the base upward. Take hexagram number 63, Jiji, for example:

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6 6
5 5
4 4
3 3
2 2
1 1
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By Wang’s explication the bottom two tiers symbolize the hard and soft qualities of the earth; the central two tiers is the virtues of humanity and appropriate conduct of persons; the top two tiers symbolizes the yang and yin forces within the heavens. Persons and nature are integrated within the six lines of the hexagram. In this integration, each gua presents a totality, a globalized whole,

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52 Gernet’s original text reads:

La position des lignes dans les hexagrammes est à elle seule significative. Or, quand tout élément d’un ensemble n’a de sens qu’en raison de la place qu’il i occupe et que le tout n’est pas la simple addition des parties, c’est qu’on est en présence d’un système. Une des idées fréquemment exprimées par Wang est en effet celle de système. (2004, p. 143)
or functional organic system (Jullien 1989, p. 195). Each of the three powers, sancai, has a place (niche) to fulfill in the cosmic order. Wang states this: “Dao is a continuous becoming, and the three powers are complete, the gua is a continuous becoming and the six positions are complete… The dao of the three powers is a great whole system in a single seed, and the single seed is reflected in the great whole” (Wang 1988 ZYW, pp. 1064, 1066).

The Yijing’s symbolic system models change in a number of ways. In addition to the inverse and negative relational-transformations, gua also change as lines age from bottom to top. The bottom-most line of any gua is considered its youngest line, the top-most line is the oldest. Each line is considered young relative to the line immediately above it, and old relative to the line just below it. Lines are then understood as having a propensity to change according to these relationships. “A young yin (shaoyin) has in effect the tendency to transform itself into an old yin (taiyin), and the old yin to transform itself in its turn to a young yang, which becomes an old yang… this is what gives a continuous succession of transformation” (Gernet 2005, p. 113).

The lines and their corresponding powers are further integrated within the gua through relationships of “responsiveness” or “correspondence,” ying 應. The responsiveness relationship is based on analysis of each hexagram into its component superior and inferior trigrams. To note, the upper trigram is also referred to as the “outer” trigram, and the lower is referred to as the “inner” thus adding a third dimension to the hexagram. Based on this subdivision, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the first, second, and third lines of each respective hexagram. In other words, “responsiveness obtains (in a hexagram) between lines 1 and 4, 2 and 5, or 3 and 6

53 “道一成而三才備, 卦一成而六位備。三才之道, 大全統乎一端, 而一端領乎大全也” (Wang 1988 ZYW, pp. 1064, 1066).
54 “Un jeune yin (shaoyin) aura en effet tendance à se transformer en vieux yin (taiyin) et ce vieux yin à transformer à son tour en un jeune yang (shaoyang) qui deviendra un vieux yang (taiyang)... ce qui donne une succession continue de transformations ” (Gernet 2005, p. 113).
when one is broken and the other solid” (Smith 1993, p. 11).\textsuperscript{55} The above example of Jiji is a paradigm case of obtaining the proper position, \textit{dewei 得位}, according to the relation of responsiveness. Attaining responsiveness is symbolic of harmonization and equilibrium of forces within the situation presented by the \textit{gua}. Not obtaining it presents a case of ‘‘missing the right positions’’ (\textit{shi wei 失位}), ‘not having the right position’ (\textit{bu dang wei 不當位})… and ‘lacking correspondence’ (\textit{di ying 敵應})” (Cheng 2011, pp. 408), which indicates an imbalance and instability within the environment—an undesirable and precarious situation for those involved.

More significant than all other qualities of positioning within a \textit{gua}-structure and an actual situation is the positional quality of centrality, \textit{zhong 中}. Cheng writes of the centrality in this context:

We can see “centrality” (\textit{zhong}) as the right combination of positions and forces, which answer to all requirements of coherence, order, harmony, and concordance in positional, qualitative as well as evaluative aspects… \textit{Zhong} is the right configuration of position and forces that move and develop in the right relationships to other configurations. This means that \textit{zhong} is a structure of harmony, order, and coherence as well as a concordance and process of producing and maintaining more order, harmony, coherence and concordance. (Cheng 2011, p. 407)

The central position, \textit{zhongwei 中位}, is understood as the place of the organizing, driving, controlling and integrating force within any system. The Chinese “\textit{tianti 天地}” most literally translates as “heavens and earth.” The phrase always bears connotations of natural environment, habitat, natural world, and \textit{oikos}. The basic spatial relationship implies a sense of a natural hearth that persons occupy in the world: heavens above, earth below, and persons in the middle.

\textsuperscript{55} Confer also Jullien (1989, p. 195) and Cheng (2011, p. 408).
In his exposition of holistic philosophy, Brook Ziporyn (2000) explains that any holistic system has certain parts, or positions, that can be construed as more significant than others. The significance of these positions is that they, above all others, serve as the metaphorical centers from which all other points derive their identity, value, and meaning. In other words, all points in the whole derive their meaning, value, and identity only when they are related in some way or another to the center. Any thing has as many identities or meanings as it has relations to the center. To push the notions of center and whole even further, we can say that since any whole is defined as the way in which the constituent parts relate to one another, and the only relation that has real significance is the relationship held between the part and the center, then the whole is completely determined and expressed by the center as it relates to all things. The center itself determines the identities not only of the constituent parts, but it determines the identity of the whole itself (Ziporyn 2000, p. 33). In this sense, Brook Ziporyn argues that the center “is representative of the whole and may be said to include the whole, in some form or another” (ibid. p. 36). In that the center includes the whole, or represents the whole, one might say that the center is a unity, embodiment, and expression of all of the systems constituents within itself.

In Wang Fuzhi’s representation of the hexagram—with the heavens above (lines 5 and 6), the earth below (lines 1 and 2), and persons in between (lines 3 and 4)—persons can be considered central to the structure of the global system. Indeed, the centrality of persons-in-the-world is a belief that Wang presents throughout his Yi Jing-based philosophy. The proposition of persons as the center of the world, however, must be immediately qualified. “L’hexagramme ne possédant pas de centre unique (entre les traits 3 et 4),” explains François Jullien in his monograph on Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy, “en même temps qu’il possède deux centres parallèles (les traits 2 et 5)” (1989, p. 197). Each hexagram is understood as comprised of two primary
trigrams: each trigram has in itself a central position, namely, lines 2 and 5, of the hexagram. When understood in terms of the global structure of earth-persons-heavens, then, all three forces equally serve as centers in the world-system. Both nature and persons are central; neither serves as an absolute center; both are relative to one another in their mutually defining positioning within the whole.

Wang Fuzhi believes “Everything in the world is unified, [and yet] there is nothing that does not serve as the center” (1988, ZYW, p. 1065). Speaking to this claim, Jullien explains that the structure of the hexagram, which is the functional equivalent to the structure of an actual event, is “polyvalent” (1989, p. 197). In contrastive complement to Jullien’s explication in terms of “polyvalence,” Ziporyn’s term “omnicentric holism” provides a more apt description of Wang’s Yijing-based worldview. Ziporyn writes:

In short, omnicentrism holds that the identity and significance of any entity is so thoroughly and completely a function of its relations to other entities—so completely ‘holistic’—that every identity is a sliding identity whose significance is always susceptible to grounding in something else, always ambiguous, changeable, and instrumental. However, since this is also true of all the other entities in which it is so grounded, every entity equally can and must itself serve as a ground, as a center, as a master signifier from which every thing else attains its significance and identity. (2000, p. 38)

One of the peculiar implications of this omnicentric model is that the world, i.e. the whole, can be defined completely by reference to any point within it. Depending upon which point is referenced as the center, the same whole simultaneously takes on qualitatively different (even conflicting) identities. By the same token, the constituent parts of the whole can take on different meanings, identities, and values depending upon which point of the whole is taken to be the center. Since all things must orient themselves around the center to gain any sense of

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identity, meaning, and value, and there are seemingly infinite centers that can relate to all things in seemingly infinite ways, there is here an indefinite number of identities, meanings, and values that can be equally ascribed to any one point within the system. Also, without changing the content of the whole, there is here an indefinite number of identities, meanings, and values that can be ascribed to the whole itself. There is no “one way” that any thing is. With this insight, the complexity of the system can be understood. The particularity as well as the fundamental relationality of each phenomenon can be accounted for depending on which organizing sub-paradigm is taken as the emphasis, orientation, or center of the explication.

The symbolism of the Yijing and its derivative philosophy thereby presents a model for ecological humanism: a non-reductive worldview, which is neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric. Insofar as the system of the world is omnicentric, it is acentric—in the sense that it lacks any absolute center. The complexity of the world-system is thereby modelled by the Yijing in that it can account at the same time for the particularity and the interrelationality, as well as the relative stability and relative transience of any one thing.

5. Conclusion

The Yijing serves as a basis for Wang’s naturalistic cosmology. The symbolic system of gua provides a means of modeling the holistic albeit indeterminate structure of the world and interpreting one’s place within it. But Wang’s interest in the text is not solely epistemological. In Wang’s view, the Yijing is to be consulted as a normative guide in the event of a moral dilemma: What is the appropriate course of action given a complex and dynamic set of circumstances? In the tapestry of the world spun within the Yijing, fact and value (objectivity
and subjectivity) are thoroughly interwoven. The natural order is thereby simultaneously conceived of as a moral order.

Implicit in this worldview is the belief that each situation presents itself with a path of least resistance. That is to say, the appropriate, fitting, or right action, yi 義, is always determined by one’s context. Nature establishes normative demands for the individual in the form of hypothetical imperatives. If one wants to avoid suffering and strife, and cultivate happiness and well-being, one must realize the most efficacious means of attaining and sustaining one’s ends-in-view. Absent from this worldview is the belief in an absolute Good, a categorical imperative, or a universal maxim. The idea is expressed by Gernet in his reading of Wang Fuzhi: “There is neither a good nor a bad in and of itself. The good is an affair of situation (wei) and of moment (shi)... One is always only in the presence of relative realities” (2005, p. 91). The hexagrams and the natural occurrences that they embody are neither good nor bad in themselves; rather, they attain their value in relation to persons’ ends.

Within Wang’s worldview, the concept of indeterminacy further extends to the natural world’s capacity to ceaselessly engender life, 生生不己, and create novelty on a daily basis, rixin 日新. This fecundate creativity likewise acts as a reservoir for feelings of reverence and appreciation—a reverence for life and procreativity, zunsheng 尊生.

In Wang’s philosophy, cosmic creativity is a function of systemic equilibrium and harmony, zhong 中 and he 和. Life is engendered and sustained through the harmonization of cosmic forces. Further grounded in the belief that persons have a fundamental role to play in this immanent creative process, the ultimate concern in the Yijing and Wang Fuzhi takes shape

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57 Gernet’s text: “Le bien est affaire de situation (wei) et de moment (shi)... On n’est jamais en présence que de continuités et de réalités relatives” (2005, p. 91).
in the form of a question: How do I efficaciously contribute to the harmonization of local and global forces within the world-system, and thereby contribute to cosmic fecundity?
1. Immanence of Persons-in-the-World

Wang Fuzhi maintains a steadfast doctrine of immanence regarding persons-in-the-world. Vis-à-vis Daoism and Buddhism, he argues that the person-in-the-world is inseparable from the world. In the following passage he alludes to the Mahāyāna Buddhist, Yogācarā School of ideation only. After outlining premises of their metaphysics and soteriology, he rejects the doctrine as a harmful disdain for worldly existence:

Buddhism takes genuine emptiness to be the storehouse consciousness of the Thus Come One. It claims that within the great void there is not a single thing, and the nascent energies of qi emerge from illusion and become all that is harmful. This illusion is the fundamental basis of obstruction and hindrance to realizing the true suchness of things [...] They are absurd in their wish to annihilate the world in order to establish great nirvana. After all how could they annihilate it? (ZMZ 1996, p. 83)

The Mahayana Buddhist Heart Sutra encapsulates the Buddhist ideal of transcendence in “the great mantra of the perfection of wisdom,” which the scripture presents as “true, for there is nothing lacking in it.” The mantra reads: Gone, gone, gone beyond, utterly gone beyond, Awakening; O joy” (Mitchell 2002, p. 102). One reaches the “other shore,” in the words of the tradition, by deeply realizing that all discriminations are ultimately without basis in reality such as it truly is. In its suchness (Sanskrit, tathātā), reality is empty of own being (svabāva-śūnya); coming to such realization, the phenomenal world is left behind.

Arguing on behalf of orthodox Confucianism, Wang takes the Buddhist call for
transcendence and abnegation of distinctions to be a threat to the coherence of social-and-natural
orders. The doctrine is immoral, in his view, for it advocates forsaking the praxis of cultivating
the ecological relationships that sustain persons along with the myriad things. It is not only
immoral, but also metaphysically unsound. Wang Fuzhi, thus, critiques both the Daoist and the
Buddhist along the following lines:

Thus they discard the orders of human relations, denigrate the interconnected patterns of
things, hold fast to a recalcitrant void, tread upon death with attractive interest, and say “I
find peace in what is peaceful.” This abnegates the other, and demonstrates a
misunderstanding of the fact that one cannot break away from the things of this world
[…] Continuously, whether sleeping or eating, without exception we are all related to
other things. Continuously, whether moving or speaking, in each occurrence we are

Though he maintains an agonistic stance on religious transcendence, he is neither antireligious
nor without religion. Like his cosmology and philosophical anthropology, Wang Fuzhi’s
religiosity is wholly naturalistic.

Firstly, the religious modalities of his worldview are fully consistent with a mitigated
scientific realism as outlined in the methodology of this dissertation. In the context of Wang
Fuzhi’s neo-Confucianism, the epistemology of mitigated scientific realism may be
reconstructed as a \textit{mode of being-in-the-world} based on a method of comprehensive observation
\textit{guan} 觀 and investigation of things \textit{gewu} 格物. The method differs from natural science and
unmitigated realism in that it does not take the intentionality of its phenomenology to be value-

² “乃以廢人倫，壞物理，握顽虛，蹈死趣，而曰吾以安于所安也。” 此无他，不明于物之不可绝也。且夫物
之不可绝也以己有物物之不容绝也以物有己 […] 一眠一食，而皆与物俱；一动一言，而必依物起”
\textit{(Shangshu yinyi} 尚書引義, p. 237–240) (qtd. in Gernet 2005 p. 296). Gernet further cites the following passage,
where Wang makes a similar case: “人之所以为人，不能離君民親友以為道，則亦不能舍人倫物曲以盡道，其
固然也。今使絕物而始靜焉，舍天下之惡而不取天下之善，塑其志，息其意，外其身，于是而洞洞焉，晃
晃焉，若有一澄澈之境，置吾心而偷以安。又使解析万物，求物之始而不可得” (ibid.).

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neutral. The account of knowledge derived from the method of comprehensive observation is a moral epistemology, for it entails an axiology and normative ethics.

Secondly, ethico-religious modalities of Wang Fuzhi’s worldview are disclosed in the praxis of ritual propriety—a long standing praxis characteristic of Confucian humanism. The praxis is undertaken with the intention of fully integrating the subjective dimensions of each person’s experience with the intersubjective experience of a community and the patterns of change inherent in the natural world. Ritual propriety, in other words, is an established means of making this life significant by actively positioning persons (individually and collectively) in relationship to their surroundings so as to engender an experience of harmony.

A sense of place, situatedness, or positioning is central to the axiological dimensions of Wang Fuzhi’s worldview. Positioning is key to both the moral epistemology and the praxis of ritual propriety. Both of these modes of being-in-the-world ultimately lead to an expansive sense of place: a reflexive self-understanding of persons as creative participants in the orders of all living and life-creating forces of the world. Such a cosmic experience is portrayed by Wang Fuzhi not as a determinative judgment, but as a sense of wonder and awe.

2. Moral Epistemology

The reconstructive moral epistemology presented here has its basis in the work of Cheng Chung-ying; however, as Cheng argues, its roots run deep through the layers of the Yijing. The Appended Phrases Commentary (Xici xia 2.1) provides the locus classicus recounting Fu Xi’s original act of creating the trigrams. Here Fu Xi is said to have turned his gaze upwards and comprehensively observed the images in the sky, 觀象於天. He turned his gaze downwards and comprehensively observed the lawful-order of the earth, 觀法於地. He comprehensively observed the patterns displayed by birds and beasts and the suitability of the earth, 觀鳥獸之文
與地之宜．He took up that which was near to his lived body, *shen* 身, and that which was far away. From this observation he began to construct the eight trigrams, which are said to be of a penetrating, numinous, and illuminating character, 通神明之德．He thereby categorized the affairs of the myriad things, 類萬物之情．

The philosophical importance of the “*Appended Phrases*” narrative of Fu Xi’s originary act lies in the comprehensive observation, *guan*, of the celestial images (*xiang* 象), terrestrial order (*fa* 法), and fauna patterns (*wen* 文), and the codification of these experiences as the eight trigrams. *Guan* is a phenomenology of nature qua “flux and continuity” *biantong* 變通．The account of Fu Xi’s survey of the vertical dimension of the world (from the sky to earth) and the horizontal dimension (from his own body to distant regions of space) indicates that the observation described in the text is comprehensive. Indeed, the language of the text alludes to a complete local and global understanding of the world and the phenomena that emerge therein.

Cheng maintains that *guan* provides the methodological foundation for a holistic and systemic account of all things as they are found in nature. On this account, the method requires a sustained observation of natural (cosmological) changes over a long course of time:

> These observations would lead to an understanding of the world with a unity of vision, a totality of scope, to be seen also in a network of linkages and relations as well as a multitude of relevant concrete references and identifications… [The] resulting vision of the world is a cosmography of well-placed and well-related powers and processes, namely a dynamical picture of the natural world in which things are to be situated.
> (Cheng 2011)

The symbolization that is derived from the observation serves as a schema for interpreting minute and particular experiences as well as experience at large. The schema acts as a functional map or model of the cosmos—a *cosmography* in which every natural phenomenon has a situatedness or proper position, *zhengwei* 正位, in correlation with all other events. In terms of
timeliness and positioning, shiwei 時位, this model depicts all phenomena as fulfilling functional niches in a complex system or an ecological order of things. In other words, the “moment and the position provide the two coordinates” in terms of which all processes are understood as functional components of local and global systems.\(^3\)

The *Yijing*-based philosophy of Wang Fuzhi is not a form of natural science, nor does it necessarily result in an anthropocentric instrumentalist evaluation of nature. As Cheng explains in his analysis of *guan* as a method:

> In the formation of the *Yijing* we witness a dynamic unity between theory and action, understanding and practice in the sense that the system of the *yi* symbols is not developed simply for intellectual knowledge, but for understanding the world-reality and life-world for the sake of practice and action (Cheng 2003, p. 294).

The continuity of knowledge and action, *zhixingheyi* 知行合一, here instantiates the simultaneous cosmological, normative, and axiological dimensions of Wang Fuzhi’s thought. Through sustained and comprehensive observation of the transformations in one’s life and environment *bianhua* 變化, one should come to discern the incipient tendencies and subtle propensities, *ji* 几, of change within one’s situation.\(^4\) One should then engage the changing environment through patterns of initiation and deference; to use Wang’s favored dyad, one

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\(^4\) Gernet discusses the notion of *ji* as the point of transition between two phases:

> La notion de phase, passage insensible de l’un à l’autre de deux termes opposes et indissociables, est symbolisée par le dessin bien inconnu qui représente l’enchaînement des énergies yin et yang à l’intérieur d’un cercle. Leur unité est continuité, puisqu’ils coexistent et que les proportions de l’un varient en fonction inverse de l’autre. Leurs signes ne s’inversent qu’au cours d’un instant infinïesimal. Tel est le sens du mot *ji*, l’impondérable qui, dans tous les domaines, aboutit à une inversion des signes.

The notion of a phase, an insensible passage from one to the other of two opposed yet inseparable terms is symbolized by the well-known design which represents the chain of yin and yang energies in the interior of a circle. Their unity is continuity since they coexist and the proportions of one vary in inverse function to the other. Their signs only invert themselves in the course of an infinitesimal instant. This is the sense of the word “*ji* 几”, the imponderable which, in all domains, leads to an inversion of signs. (Gernet 2005, p. 86)
should relate to the changing environment through initiation, *jian* 健, and compliance, *shun* 順.
Recognizing what is within one’s locus of control, as in one’s *xing* 性, and what is outside of it, as in one’s *ming* 命, one responds by positioning certain forces such as oneself within the environment so that the forces harmoniously interact with one another. This requires acting in a timely manner. As stated in the *Appended Commentaries*, “The exemplary person sees, *jian* 見, incipient tendencies, *ji* 程, and initiates action; he does not wait for the day to end” (*Xici xia* 5.10). Timeliness is hitting the mark every time, *shizhong* 時中 and *zhongshi* 中時; timeliness, alternatively stated, entails neither transgressing the mark nor falling short of it. The ideal of *shizhong* is exemplified by the middle ground between two of Confucius disciples: “The master says, ‘Zizhang oversteps the mark (*guo*), and Zixia falls short of it (*buji*)’” (*Analects* 11.15). For Wang Fuzhi, *knowledge is a moral capacity*. Again, reified distinctions between fact and value have no place in the horizons of his worldview. Knowledge, on this account, is only complete insofar as it is carried out in space and time (as indicated by the concepts *shi* 時 and *wei* 位). It is embodied, lived, and enacted.

To use an environmental example, if one waits until the waterways are thoroughly polluted before one attempts to conserve one’s reservoir, it is already too late. In light of the ongoing ecological-humanist catastrophe in North East Japan following the tsunami of March 11, 2011, the model can be interpreted in hindsight as a caution for nuclear power sources in areas

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7 The so called fact/value, is/ought, description/prescription distinction has had its foothold in Western philosophical discourse since David Hume’s publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). Although analytically useful, especially in the advent of natural science, the distinction compartmentalizes experience, and thus detracts from understanding the fullness of experience.
that demonstrate an incipient tendency to quake and flood, which may be symbolized by the
hexagrams zhen and zhun (the former being named “quake” with two thunder
hexagrams stacked on top of one another, and the latter with thunder below water, named birth-
throes, indicating a precarious and painful situation).

On this view, to know nature, zhi tian 知天, is to know natural patterns, tianli 天理. The
idea of natural pattern, li 理, refers to the coherence, organization, and interconnection of
disparate parts, which is in effect a system. Each particular is what it is in relation to all other
parts of the system. Thus, following Zhu Xi, Wang regards pattern as suoyiran zhi gu 所以然之
故, that is, “the reason why things are as they are.” In addition to this descriptive sense of
pattern, Wang also critically advances Zhu Xi’s prescriptive sense of patterning, lishi zhi
dangran “理勢之當然”; which is to say, nature qua pattern is a normative force. Wang Fuzhi
writes, “All under the heavens is timeliness and force of circumstance, and that is all. Take
advantage of timeliness and accord with the force of circumstance…”8 As Wang’s philosophy is
here proposed as a model for ecological humanism, it thus stands in contrast to an ecology based
in scientism. As opposed to a purely factual description of the world, ecological humanism here
integrates fact and value within its paradigm.9

The normative force of the world, 當然之勢理, pushes persons and the myriad things
toward harmonious accord, heshun 和順, with one another. Neither anthropocentric nor
ecocentric, Wang Fuzhi’s moral epistemology prioritizes situation over agency. Wang Fuzhi
recognizes that humans have a power over nature; in a sense, persons direct and order nature, 人
主天. But conversely nature has power over persons, 天主人, and persons (should) model nature,

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8 Wang’s text: “天下者，時勢而已矣。乘其時，順其勢...” (Gernet 296).
The relationship is mutually purposive, symbiotic, and conducive toward a general harmonization. From an *Yijing*-based perspective, harmony between natural forces is fecundate; harmony is that which creates and sustains biodiversity. This harmony is conducive to change, life novelty, and procreativity (such as 生生, 易, and 日新 in *Xici shang*, 5.1). The harmony is experienced subjectively, not only as a sensory-aesthetic experience, but also a deep felt existential feeling of ease (jianyi 简易), freedom from anxiety (wuyou 無憂), and psychophysical equilibrium and integration (zhong 中). “When persons achieve positions in equilibrium (with the cosmic forces of heavens and earth),” writes Wang, “then they can follow the model of the heavens and the earth and be without dread” (ZYN 1988, p. 1037). A consummate experience of peace in one’s self, anshen 安身, and unobstructed passage in one’s daily affairs emerges from the cultivation of practical knowledge. Acting contrary to the normative push toward harmonization is acting contrary to the procreation of life and coherence within an ecological order. Thus, if one fails to harmoniously comply with the needs and demands of one’s local and global environments, one subjects oneself and one’s environing systems to accelerated entropy.

Lost in translation, the original Chinese indicates that “change,” *yi* 易, which titles the *Yijing* 易經, also bears the significant meaning of “ease and simplicity,” *yi* 易. The connection between these two senses of the graph is not at all fortuitous: change and ease necessarily imply one another in the *Yijing*’s language and philosophy. When one sense serves as the literal meaning or signification in a token use of the term, then the other sense acts as a tacit

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11 Wang’s guideline for the good life may be summed up in a principle of practical parsimony: *Seek the path of least resistance*—where resistance is defined as agitation in one’s emotional equilibrium and obstruction of one’s participation in the procreative harmony of one’s environment.
connotation. Wang’s meditation over the symbolic imagery and text of the Guan hexagram indicates that comprehensive observation, guan 觀, leads to knowledge.

This kind of experience is at once moral, aesthetic, and spiritual: moral in that it is prescriptive and efficacious (intentionally good for increasing the value of life and quality of experience); aesthetic in that it brings all modalities of experience (cognitive, emotive, perceptual, sensational) into harmonious accord with one another and the environment; spiritual in the sense that is marked by deep and transformative experience of quietude, peace, equilibrium, and calm—a feeling of being at home in the world (as in the Greek oikos).

Though comprehensive, the observation is always attained from an embodied perspective, a position within the system, as is represented by the reference to Fu Xi’s observation of that which is near and far to his body. This perspectival position within an environment is constitutive of being a person-in-the-world. Robert Cummings Neville captures this idea in his short article, “Orientation, Self, and Ecological Posture.” “To be a person is to have, as constituent elements of the self, orientations, well or badly formed, to ecological matters as well as to all the other orders of the ‘ten thousand things.’ A self should not be conceived at all except as framed by how it is oriented to the many dimensions or orders of nature” (1998, p. 265). The person-in-the-world is a situated constituent of the world. Ideas of self and knowledge from this perspective do not presuppose a subject/object distinction. Both the subjective and objective modes of experience are integrated in the fullness of experience. In one sense, interpretation emerges as a consummation of evolving forces and patterns of qi: the development of the world has given rise to a particular structure and moment in which a person

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is present in the world. Interpretation emerges out of the achieved interaction of persons with their situating environment.

As such, the interpretation and evaluation of the world-system occur as part of the system itself. The world-system comes to be self-reflective through the eyes of the persons that inhabit it. In terms more familiar to the tradition, the Classic Book of Ritual Propriety, Liji 禮記 describes the situated presence of persons in the world as such: “Persons are therefore the heart-mind of the heavens and earth.”¹³ As seen in chapter 3, Wang assents to and asserts this classical formula in his own work. With the presence of persons-in-the-world, the world is irreducible to its mereological sum.

Interpretation has ontological significance: not only does it initiate the transformation of the person, but it also transforms the world. Young-Chan Ro’s description of the Yijing-based worldview nicely articulates this position:

The universe is not a mere physical reality but, more importantly, a hermeneutical reality: human understanding and interpretation of the universe, through the images, numbers, and hexagrams play a critical role in the comprehensive process of the universe. For this reason, we may even say that human interpretation and understanding of the universe becomes a part of being the universe. (1998, p. 177)

From Wang Fuzhi’s perspective, Fu Xi’s interpretation of the world is not an a priori superimposition of conceptual categories onto an amorphous non-qualitative world. Neither a priori nor arbitrary, the trigrams are based in the concrete experience of natural phenomena. The symbolism of the Yijing is intended to be an integration of persons’ capacity for interpretation and creation with nature’s sui generis power to generate and disclose novel patterns of creative energy.

3. Ritual Propriety

From high antiquity forward, the praxis of ritual propriety has been celebrated in China as a defining feature of its civilization.¹⁴ Hence, Li Zehou identifies the ancient traditions of ritual as the initial phase of humanizing nature, superseding prehistoric shamanism. The praxis is a process of humanizing nature in that it purposively integrates and regulates subjective emotions, interpersonal relationships, and the environing world. Ritual propriety is carried out as a means of cultivating and disclosing the individual, society, and the natural world as recursive, mutually-complementary forces (Li 2009, pp. 13–14). It is undertaken with the intention of establishing a nested hierarchy of organizational orders: individual, social, natural-cosmic. Li cites the pre-Qin narrative-history Zuozhuan 左傳 as an early depiction of this correlation:

Ritual is the standard of heaven [tian], the proper conduct of the earth, and the practice of the people. Heaven and earth have their standard, and the people take this as their model… If a man is not amiss in either joy or grief, he is in harmony with the nature of heaven and earth. (Li 2010, p. 13)

This passage implies a claim, which is adopted by Wang Fuzhi and supported throughout Li’s discussion: the individual, society, and the natural world are correlated on multiple levels by similitude, homology, and isomorphism. In addition, this early text speaks to the potential for persons to act in concert with the forces of their environments by means of engaging the world with a balanced emotional disposition. As Allison Black has demonstrated in her thesis (1989), this continuity or “organic dyad” between the internal-embodied and external-environing dimensions of persons-in-the-world is a prominent theme in the work of Wang Fuzhi.

Ritual propriety and music are prescribed within the tradition as a means for harnessing and creatively expressing one’s sensations, emotions, and thoughts (Li 2010, pp. 11 ff.). “They

¹⁴ Following Jacques Gernet, “La Chine se glorifie d’avoir des rites et les a même considérés comme la caractéristique principale de sa civilisation…” (2005, p. 384). Literally, “China glorified herself for having the rites and had even considered them as the principle characteristic of her civilization.”
calm the violence of the sentiments or excite them according to circumstance” (Gernet 384). The normative demand of the moral praxis is not to eradicate natural sensuousness feelings, or desires, or emotions; rather, the praxis is intended to sublimate, cultivate and humanize the primal modalities of experience so that they are conducive to a higher-quality of shared communal life and cultural achievements. This is the meaning of Wang’s statement, “Appetite and lust are the beauties of ritual propriety. Benefits are the dependencies of the masses.” Ritual humanizes nature by intentionally transforming biologically-based emotive forces into moral sentiments. Rather than antagonistically opposed, nature and culture are understood in this case in terms of continuity. Confucian morality is predicated on an appropriate fusion of ritualized praxis and feeling. Without sincerity, ritual is empty. Without the practice of ritual, sincerity is left uncultivated.

Ritual propriety and music are intended to foster an aesthetic order or harmony within and amongst persons-in-world. The aesthetic experience is predicated on the Confucian mantra: *harmony but not sameness.* Li explains the dictum as such:

15 Jacques Gernet also makes this point in setting up the function of the rites as seen by Wang Fuzhi: *Contrarier des désirs inhérents à la nature humaine, c’est méconnaître la véritable fonction des rites, car les rites visent à régler les désirs, sans forcer la nature, à les intégrer à l’ordre social et à les y faire concourir. Ils exigent et développent un sens aigu des psychologie et une grande maîtrise du comportements puisqu’ils doivent tenir compte à la fois du moment et des lieux, des hiérarchies et des âges. La bonne entente entre les hommes doit beaucoup au respect de cet ensemble de comportements que nous appelons rites.* (2005, p. 381)

16 王夫之. 尚书引义(卷 5) 北京：中华书局，1975, p. 45.


18 “和而不同.” Cf. *Analects* 12.11
Within this system, first of all, “Harmony begets things; identity produces nothing.” And, “If sound is singular, it finds no audience; if things are singular, there is no pattern; if flavors are singular, they have no effect.” This is to say, singularity cannot produce harmony; harmony is by necessity the unification of plurality. Second, this unity tends particularly to manifest itself as the “mutual complementarity” of opposing elements. (2010, p. 20).

The Confucian tradition conceives of harmony as a creative coordination of multiple forces. This fundamental premise is suggested by the pictographic signification of the Chinese character for harmony, 韧 和. The graph is comprised of two components: grain 禾 and mouth 口中.

Accordingly, harmony is something tasty. That is to say, harmony takes its root metaphor in the aesthetic experience of culinary art. In this experience each ingredient should contribute its own unique flavor to the holistic sensuous quality of taste. Though each ingredient retains its own flavor, each should mutually complement and enhance one another.

Analogously, ritual propriety entails that every human activity and artifice within any given situation should symbiotically support one another. Each situation provides a potential for achieving an experience. Though ritual and music are practiced in tandem, they have “a division of labor” (Li 2010, p. 17). Insofar as “ritual propriety” refers to a set of culturally constructed norms or a code of conduct, it “regulates and restrains people externally” (ibid. p. 16). Insofar as music directly emerges from and resonates with one’s felt-emotions, “it is not an external, coercive institution, but an internal guide” (ibid. p. 19). In Confucian discourse humanizing nature entails an integration of the inner dimensions of cognitive-emotional experience and external-environmental states of affairs. The dyadic practice of ritual and music establishes a positive feedback loop between the harmony of one’s internal emotional experience and the

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harmony achieved in one’s external social environment. Thus, Li cites the *Rites*: “Music is the ultimate harmonization, the rites the ultimate orderliness; the inner being is harmonized, while the external is ordered” (2010, p. 18).\(^{20}\) Personal faculties are brought into a dynamic equilibrium *zhong* 中 through their contact with harmony in the environment *he* 和, and harmony develops in a humanized environment through persons shaping it in accord with regulated measures of desires and emotion. Wang Fuzhi expresses the view in the following passage:

Du Yu (222 –284) wanted to abbreviate the crown prince funeral ceremony, saying, “In the ritual propriety of the exemplary person, everything internal is all there is.” How could he take this savage claim as suitable! Now, consider a person, who in his heart does not lose respect for his father, yet sits obstinately when receiving him. He has a feeling that is not indifferent in his love of his elder brother, yet he angrily twists his arm. Would you also that everything internal is all there is? The internal and external intersect in mutual establishment and mutual support… Thus, the former kings regulated funeral rituals to reach the interior of worthy persons from the exterior, so as to bring them peace within. They regulated the external-environment for those with moderate temperament so as to affectively stimulate them…\(^{21}\)

Ritualistic music does not only serve to temper the emotions and integrate them into a shared communal experience: it maintains communion with nature (Li 2010, p. 28). Traditional Chinese music is intended to represent natural patterns. The representation is thought to attune emotional experience so that it resonates with regular transformations and orders of things. “The key was to establish a unifying system of correspondences in which (1) the cadence of music (including song and dance), (2) the activity of the natural world, and (3) the emotions of the human person, found their counterparts in rhythm and meter” (Li 2010, p. 20). As Wang Fuzhi

\(^{20}\) *Liji*. 19.26/104/11.

understands it, ritual is not only a means for establishing a symbiotic harmony between persons and the natural world, it is also a natural development of the world itself—a fulfillment of the natural dispositions unique to persons.

4. Sense of Place

Zhang Zai (张载 1020-1077) inscribed the following verse on the western wall of his study:

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\text{Qian is called “father,” Kun is called “mother.” Now, I am insignificant herein the world, and yet I have a home in the midst of their intermingling. And so that which fills the space between the heavens and the earth is my body; the controller of the heavens and earth (is) my natural disposition. The people and I are of the same womb, and I transform along with things…}^{22}
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With this claim, Zhang Zai expresses a feeling of intimate (familial) connection with the natural world. Zhang Zai’s experience of the sublime is not one of fear and trembling, it is one of being at home in the world. His experience is one of harmonious accord with the world, not overcoming it. His experience is one of humble appreciation for his lot, ming.

Qian 乾 and Kun 坤 are the names of the first two hexagrams in the Yijing’s series of sixty-four hexagrams. Respectively, the first two hexagrams symbolize pure yang 阳, or “creativity,” and pure yin 險, or receptivity. The Qian hexagram (☰) is completely composed of solid “yang” lines; the Kun hexagram (☷☷) is composed of all broken “yin” lines. Through categorical resonance (ganlei 感類), Qian is a symbol of the heavens and masculinity, and Kun is

\(^{22}\) Translation based on Zhang Zai’s text, "乾稱父，坤稱母；子茲藐焉，乃混然中處。故天地之塞，吾其體；天地之帥，吾其性。民吾同胞，物吾與也。” (Original Chinese text found at Steve Angle’s, “Chinese Philosophical Etext Archive”: http://sangle.web.wesleyan.edu/etext/pre-qin/pre-qin.html. 10-31-09.) Compare to Wing-tsit Chan’s translation, “Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. That which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions” (Chan 1963, p. 497).
symbolically refers to earth and femininity. With the conjunction of Qian and Kun, the author alludes to a conception of the natural world as a whole, which is constituted by interacting correlative forces. Zhang Zai is here presenting a holistic vision of the cosmos as a habitat, home, or intimate hearth for persons. Moreover, in Zhang’s experience, the unbound totality of the ever expanding cosmos is co-extensive with his own body. As Tu Weiming remarks, the experience is one of “continuity of being.”

Wang Fuzhi takes an analytical approach to the texts that he comments on. In the case of his Annotations on Zhang Zai’s “Western Inscription,” Wang writes, “It says, ‘Qian is called father, Kun is called mother. It does not say, ‘tian is my father, and earth is my mother.’”²³ Wang means that Zhang Zai cannot be taken literally in his ascription of fatherhood and motherhood to the cosmic forces of yin and yang or tian and earth. Instead, Zhang’s claim here must be understood as a metaphorical extension of the experience of familial relations (qin 親).

In Wang’s reading, Zhang Zai should be understood as expressing an appreciation for the life creating force of nature. All things are born of nature. Wang reads Zhang in particular as expressing a felt intimacy with nature akin to the felt intimacy that one feels for one’s parents. Nonetheless, Wang Fuzhi argues that one’s birth parents, as the literal and most direct sources of one’s life, should be respected above all else as the intentions of one’s filial piety (xiao 孝). In prefacing his discussion, he compares and contrasts Zhang’s work to Zhou Dunyi’s (周敦頤 1017-1073). “Master Zhou Lianxi first made the Taiji Tushuo, and took up the research into the (cosmological) origins of the continuity of nature and persons as a means for illuminating human life.”²⁴ Wang uses this integration as a basis for his own philosophy, and argues that Zhang Zai believed in it as well. According to Wang Fuzhi, Zhang Zai’s work serves as a development of

²⁴“濂溪周子首为太极图说, 以究天人合一之原, 所以明夫人之生也...” (ibid.).
Zhou’s original conception by incorporating the intimate connection that one experiences with the natural world. Thus, Wang argues, Zhang Zai goes beyond Zhou Dunyi by advocating a further cosmological principle of “the continuity of nature and familial intimacy,” 天親合一. Wang interprets Zhang Zai to be saying that one should use the feeling of familial intimacy that one experiences in regard to one’s parents as a basis for extending one’s feelings to nature, but one should not literally take the natural world as one’s birth parents. The filial piety that one bears toward one’s parents is thus the basis for the extension of one’s service to nature.

With regard to Zhang Zai’s claim to the intimate abode that one experiences in the world, Wang comments, “The life of the father and mother comes together to form one continuous lived body; at once, the natural dispositions and feeling of tian and the earth come together in one continuous (process) of thinking and feeling.”25 With this comment, Wang is saying that just as one’s life (lived body) is an extension of the life and bodies of one’s parents; so one’s natural disposition, thinking and feeling are developments of the natural world. In response to Zhang Zai’s claims that one has an intimate abode in the world, and one’s body fills the cosmos, Wang writes that “what fills the cosmos is qi. Qi, in turn, becomes concrete forms.”26 The qi of tian and earth is life producing; it gives birth to things and through its movements and patterned changes it gives persons their concrete forms and qualities. The person is neither dualistically separable from his or her parents, nor is he or she dualistically separable from tian and earth (the natural world). 27 As expressed in the foregoing discussion, persons here are regarded as natural developments in and of the world’s sui-generis transformations.

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26 “塞者, 氣也, 氣以成形” (Ibid.).
27 “…天地運行之氣, 生物之心在是, 而吾之形色天性; 與父母無二, 即與天地無二也” (Ibid.).
5. Sense of Wonder

In reference to the place of indeterminacy in Wang Fuzhi’s philosophical system, Allison Black writes, “It was a necessary part of his total conception that one aspect of the universe should elude precise specification... This element receives various descriptions at Wang’s hands, but it can most comprehensively be described as shen” (1989, p. 72). Wang derives his conception of shen神 from the Appended Phrases claim, “Yinyang are unfathomable: this is called shen” (Xici shang 5.1). Although the term “shen” may be approximately translated into English as “numinous” or “spirit,” it does not denote supernatural spiritual presence. In line with his naturalistic philosophy, Wang regards shen as a quality of qi. Thus, he states, “Outside of qi, shen has no presence.”

In his commentary on the Appended Phrases, Wang defines shen in terms of miao妙, meaning marvelous and mysterious. He writes, “神者，道之妙萬物者也”:

“Shen is dao mysteriously going out through the myriad things” (1988, ZYW, p. 531). Wang’s claim suggests an experience of profundity in relation to the simultaneous integration and individual integrity of all events. Mysterious is the complexity of the world. He further discusses the very notion of change, yi易, which titles the Yijing, as “numinous and mysterious.” Shen alludes to the unfathomable finesse and subtlety, complexity, and magnanimity of cosmic change and structure. Along these lines, the extension of the concept further contains nature’s boundlessness, wuji無極, and the invisible you幽 processes of nature’s inner-workings. In a word, shen functions as sublime. The quality of shen engenders experiences of profound wonder and awe. It elicits reverence for a natural world that is greater

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28 Translation based on original text: “陰陽不測之謂神” (Xici shang 5.1)
29 Translation based on original text: “非氣之外有神也” (Wang ZMZ。卷二，神化篇。1996. p. 57).
30 Yan Shoucheng calls attention to Wang’s claim, “文王取其變易神妙之旨而名之易,” “文王取其變易神妙之旨而名之易.” 周易内傳發例 2.A.
than the individual person, and yet provides an intimate place and participatory function for each and every person and thing.

On this point, Wang Fuzhi is again strikingly close to the Korean neo-Confucian thinker, Yi Yulgok. Like Yi, Wang also regarded the hexagram system of the *Yijing* to symbolize “neither a fixed physical object nor a mere mechanical entity; rather, it is a living, dynamic, changing reality” (Ro 1998, p. 177). Moreover, because of the dynamism, procreativity, complexity, and open nature of the world-system and its constituent sub-systems, the world is a source of “sanctity and mystery” (ibid.). Ro’s description of Yi’s cosmology likewise serves as an apt summary of Wang’s conception of indeterminacy:

[He] believed the universe could not be completely comprehended by human intelligence or through human thought processes. He believed that the universe is a ‘mystery’ not to be reduced to the rational or conceptual framework of the human intellectual system.

This dimension of mystery causes us to feel that the universe is sacred; hence, we have a sense of awe toward the universe. The universe ‘manifests’ itself to us as much as it ‘conceals’ itself from us…” (ibid.).

Wang finds in the text a source and expression of the most profound and transformative experiences—experiences that can rightly be called religious. In the *Inner Commentary*, for example, Wang denotes the relationship between nature and persons using the character *yun* 蘸.

Elsewhere in his work, he describes the *yun* relationship as a “continuity and efficacy of *qi*” (1988, DSS p. 660). Interpreting this continuity in terms of Wang’s text, the energetic relationship integrates nature and persons as correlative forces in a marvelous, fine, subtle, beautiful, and mysterious cosmic pattern. ³¹ ³¹ Wang’s denotation of the relationship as *yun* 蘚,

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³¹ “理只是象二儀之妙，氣方是二儀之實。健者，氣之健也。順者，氣之順也。天人之蘊，一氣而已。從乎氣之善而為之理” (1988, DSS, p. 660). Underlined terms are referenced in the noted discussion. In translation, “Patterning is only images of the mystery of the two norms, *qi* everywhere is the actuality of the two norms. Initiating is only the initiating of *qi*. Compliance is only the compliance of *qi*. The profound-mixing of nature and persons is a continuity of *qi*, and that is all. From this efficacy of *qi* then there is patterning.”

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moreover, suggests in and of itself that he believed the continuity of nature and persons as a source for sublime experience. In addition to the sense of “merging,” the term yun 蘊, like its cognate yun 繕 (without the grass-top radical), connotes a “muddled-and-confused, helter-skelter (紛亂), profound and abstruse (深奧),” state of affairs. 32 In this sense, yun 蘊 is defined paranomastically as yun 繕. 33 Insofar as the former instantiates the latter, the former semiotically refers to Wang Fuzhi’s cosmological category of yinyun 絪縕, which is glossed above in chapter 2 as “the creative inchoate co-mingling of yin and yang in great harmony.” The profundity lies in the subtlety and sublimity of the complex set of relationships. The interconnectedness of persons and the world is experienced at its depths as a qualitative feeling. This feeling opens an axiological dimension in Wang’s worldview. As a fundamental component of Wang’s philosophy, this aspect of indeterminacy must be part of any ecological humanism modeled on the basis of his philosophy.

6. Conclusion and Directions
— or Every End Is a Beginning

This dissertation has set out to disclose a complex and comprehensive neo-Confucian worldview. It has been carried out with the intention of recovering and foregrounding the work of a profound scholar, who has hitherto been unbeknownst to scholars in the English-speaking world of philosophical discourse. More specifically, the research offers a recovery and foregrounding of the work of a significant figure in Chinese intellectual history, who has hitherto been overshadowed in the specialized fields of Chinese and comparative philosophy. Beyond

32 See, Zhang, Shuangdi 张双棣 and Chen Tao 陈涛. eds. 《古代汉语字典》(1998), entries for 蘊 and 繕, pp. 1018, 1019.
33 For the semiotic principle of paronomasia see Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr. Translator’s Introduction to the Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Interpretation (1998)
historical significance, Wang Fuzhi’s naturalistic philosophy retains a cogent explanatory power in the domains of contemporary metaphysics, philosophical anthropology, and axiology.

By taking up the position of ecological humanism in the hermeneutic engagement with his neo-Confucian perspective, the intention has been to demonstrate that the theoretical components inherent in his historically-rooted worldview may provide a potent resource for post-modern philosophies of human nature and the natural world. Wang Fuzhi’s uniquely analytic, critical, and literal reading of the neo-Confucian tradition represents the discourse as an undeniable naturalistic account of persons and the world. The naturalistic representation opens the discourse as a resource for advancing philosophical inquiry during a post-Darwin/post-Einstein era of natural science. Conversely, according to its statement of mitigated scientific realism and commitment to holistic accounts of the natural world, the philosophy of ecology (or philosophical ecology) provides a place for recovery and reconstruction of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism in the twenty-first century. The thesis of this dissertation indicates the potential for creative advance and symbiotic growth of neo-Confucianism and philosophical ecology if and when the hermeneutic horizons of these disparate theories are fused.

A continued development of neo-Confucian philosophical ecology has the potential for advancing knowledge in a post-Darwin/post-Einstein era of natural science while contemporaneously cultivating qualitative, subjective and intersubjective experiences that are rightly called religious. Within the dialogical structure between neo-Confucianism and philosophical ecology there is no reason to believe that science and religion have to conflict with one another. Science is afforded its full credit as a cogent force for the advance of knowledge. At the same time, the depth of religious experience is fully recognized as a valuable source of reflexive understanding and transformation of persons and the world. A neo-Confucian
philosophical ecology offers a fusion of naturalism and humanism. It offers a model of ecological humanism.


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Referred to herein as ZYN.

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Zheng, Xiong 郑熊. “王夫之对孔子天命论的改造”《湖南大学学报 (社会科学版)》.


Following the tradition transmitted by Zhu Xi, Wang believed that the received Yijing was created by four sages with the same intention, 四聖同揆:

Fu Xi originated the inscriptions of the trigrams and hexagrams (gua), and the patterns of nature and persons were exhausted within them. High antiquity was simple and unadorned; they did not yet have the leisure to clearly write out their reasoning for the understanding of later generations. Fortunately, diviners (筮氏) were like commentaries [for] the images that they inscribed, and there was not yet any confusion. King Wen arose several thousand years later, and by means of a heart-and-mind that was “unseen yet under a watchful eye, tireless yet safeguarding”¹ he forthwith grasped the trigram and hexagram images and embodied them. Then he appended the hexagram statements, which provided clear interpretations of the hexagram images [in terms of] grasping, losing, fortune, and misfortune. The Duke of Zhou then further extended the transformations of King Wen’s “judgments” to the “lines of the hexagrams” by means of investigating the incipient trajectories of timing and positioning, and by sharpening his morality (研時位之幾而精其義). Confucius then further brought to light the patterns of reasoning in Wen’s and Zhou’s “judgments” and “line statements,” and he made the Commentary on the Words of the Text along with the Judgment and Image Commentaries. Then he threaded his moral precedents through the alterations [of the original layers of the Zhouyi],² making the Appended Phrases, the Discussion of the Trigrams and the Ordering of the Hexagrams. Those who employ prognostication and those who study [the Yijing] grasp its significations retrospectively by connecting its different extensions.

¹ This line comes from the Book of Songs 詩經, song number 240, titled “Si Qi 思齊.” The song quoted here is an ode to King Wen and his mother.
² The original claim reads, “又以其義例之貫通與其變動者，為〈繫辭〉、〈說卦〉、〈雜卦〉…” (Wang 1996, ZYNFL, p. 649). A more literal translation of this line treats term “guantong 貫通” nominally: “Then he used the continuous thread of his moral precedent along with their alternations…” Wang’s reference to the continuous thread “guan 貫” alludes to Analects 4.15: “子曰：‘參乎！吾道一以貫之。’ […] 曾子曰：‘夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。’” “The Master said, ‘Zeng, my friend! My way (dao 道) is bound together with one continuous strand (guan 貫),’ […] [Explaining this comment,] Master Zeng said, ‘The way of the Master is doing one’s utmost (zhong 忠) and putting oneself in the other’s place (shu 恕), nothing more’” (Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont translation, 1998, p. 92).
According to the above, what Confucius brings to light in his discussion of the *Judgment Commentary* and the *Image Commentary* is a guiding principle of clarification, and these two commentaries [clarify] the “judgments” and “lines” of Wen and Zhou; and the “judgments” and “lines” of Wen and Zhou [clarify] the inscribed images of Fu Xi. Four sages with the same intention: Later sages take up and extend the meaning of the former sages, and yet there is not once an increase or a decrease. (Wang 1988, ZYNFL, p. 649)

Zhu Xi traced the doctrinal lineage of his school back through the four sages mentioned in Wang’s account, and presented Fu Xi as the forefather of Confucian lineage, *daotong* 道統.

Insofar as Wang saw himself as part of this ongoing tradition, it can be concluded that he understood his own commentaries as extensions of the four sages’ intentions; in this vein, he saw his work as elucidating and amplifying the shared concern of his ancestral fore bearers while carrying their way forward through his own life and time.

Jacques Gernet represents Wang Fuzhi as being *fidèle à la tradition* (Gernet 2005, p. 104). His language is unfortunately misleading on this point, for he implies that he is presenting *the* (French, *la*) traditional account, as if there were only one. Both Stephen L. Field (2008, p. 39) and Richard John Lynn (1994, p. 4) present alternatives accounts of the origins, and like Gernet they both claim to report *the* traditional account of the text’s creation. These several studies fail to note the plurality of traditional accounts regarding the genesis of the text. Field and Lynn,

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3 Wang’s original text:

伏羲氏始畫卦，而天人之理盡在其中矣。上古簡樸，未遑明著其所以然者以詔天下後世，幸筮氏猶傳其所畫之象，而未之亂。文王起於數千年之後，以「不顯亦臨，無射亦保」之心得，即卦象而體之，乃繫之〈彖辭〉，以發明卦象得失吉凶之所繇。周公又即文王之〈彖〉，達其變於〈爻〉，以研時位之幾而精其義。孔子又即文、周〈彖〉、〈爻〉之辭，贊其所以然之理，而為〈文言〉與〈彖〉、〈象〉之傳；又以其義例之貫通與其變動者，為〈繫辭〉、〈說卦〉、〈雜卦〉，使占者、學者得其指歸以通其殊致。蓋孔子所贊之說，即以明〈彖傳〉、〈象傳〉之綱領，而〈彖〉、〈象〉二傳即文、周之〈彖〉、〈爻〉，文、周之〈彖〉、〈爻〉即伏羲之畫象，四聖同揆，後聖以達先聖之意，而未嘗有損益也。(Wang 1996, ZYNFL, p. 649)

4 “Comme la majorité de ses contemporains, Wang croit que les documents les plus anciens de la tradition chinoise, ceux qui ont été promus au rang de Classiques à la fin du 1er siècle avant notre ère, provenaient de sages d’exception” (Gernet 2005, p. 104). “As the majority of his contemporaries, Wang believed that the most ancient documents of Chinese tradition, which were in fact promoted to the rank of Classics at the end of the first century BCE, had come from exceptional sages.”
moreover, do not cite the primary Chinese sources that they are working from in these sections of their respective works; thus, one must deduce what line of the tradition that they are representing. Along these lines, one finds a fallacy of incomplete representation trending in recent Western language studies on the *Yijing*. Recognizing the plurality of traditional narratives on this point serves as a corrective to the fallacy. At least three mutually exclusive mainstream lines on the *Yijing*’s origin can be found woven through Chinese exegetical tradition. The Chinese exegetical tradition in general thus contains internal contradictions between these different accounts. This discrepancy may seem banal and digressive; however, if the diversity of traditional narratives is not duly noted in Western sources, then students working with these resources may be left with an inconsistent account of the Chinese exegetical tradition. This inconsistency without resolution may very well frustrate the advancement of *Yijing* studies outside of China.

From a modern perspective, the origins of the *Yijing* cannot be identified with any certainty or precision. According to different traditional accounts, such as Wang Fuzhi’s, the forefathers of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) had a hand in the authorship of the text’s earliest layer. These accounts, however, are based on a specious, pre-modern, concept of history,

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5 For a clear, concise, and complete account of the different exegetical takes on the *Yijing*’s genesis, see the article 王船山《易》學源, by Kang Chuan-Cheng 康全誠 (2008).

6 Contrary to Wang’s narrative of the four sages, for example, Ban Gu 班固 (32 CE–92 CE) writes in his *Book of the Former Han* 漢書 that the *Yijing* was composed by “three sages during three ancient epochs, 人更三聖，世歷三古.” One contradiction between Ban’s and Wang’s beliefs lies the conjunction of Wang’s claim that Fu Xi composed the sixty-four hexagrams and Ban’s claim that King Wen is responsible for this achievement. 班固.《漢書》在百衲本二十四史 (臺北. 臺灣商務印書館, 1996 年) p. 436. Full text for the entire *Hanshu* is online at Donald Sturgeon’s Chinese Text Project <www.ctext.org>. See the *Hanshu* “藝文志” passage 16. As in Wang Fuzhi’s “history,” Ban also recounts that Fu Xi originally discerned and transcribed the eight trigrams, and he claims that Confucius authored the Ten Wings. Ban transmits this line of tradition: “文王以諸侯順命而行道，天人之占，可得而效，於是重《易》六爻，作上下篇” (Ban Gu, qtd. in Kang 2008, p. 88).
shi 史, which presupposes a tendentious method of historicizing mythos. Rather than giving purely factual accounts of actual happenings, authors in imperial China often embellished hagiographies by falsely crediting popular historical (sometimes fictional) figures with pivotal cultural achievements. So long as such narratives contributed to posterity’s self-understanding as the inheritors of a rich cultural legacy, they were deemed historical.

Modern scholarship and traditional Chinese commentators agree on one point: the Yijing accrued several layers of symbolic imagery and text over approximately 800 to 900 years of ancient Chinese history. Modern scholars concur that the oldest strata of the text were likely to have been compiled in the relatively early years of the Western Zhou (1046–771 BCE), perhaps as early as the ninth century BCE, but they reject the traditional notion that the authorship of the text can be identified with particular individuals (Field 2008, p. 39; Lynn 1994, p. 4).

Given the traditional accounts of the text’s origins in the Zhou, commentators throughout history refer to the received Yijing as the Zhouyi 周易, Zhou Changes, thereby distinguishing it from the reputed divination manuals of the Xia (2100 –1600 BCE) and Shang (1600 –1046 BCE) dynasties. The received Zhouyi as a whole was redacted in the early Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) under the editorial management of Confucian scholars. At this time, the complete text was put into its received form and elevated to the primary position amongst the Five Classics, wujing 五經, of the Confucian canon. Once it was given the status of a classic, jing 經, the Zhouyi took on the title Yijing.

Since the Han dynasty, Chinese commentators have maintained that Confucius (551–479 BCE) is the author or editor of these later additions. Contemporary sources pronounce a strong

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7 The Five Classics are the Book of Changes, Yijing 易經; Book of Songs, Shijing 詩經; Spring and Autumn Annals, Chunqiu 春秋; Book of Documents, Shujing 書經; Book of Rites, Liji 禮記. Wang was of the persuasion that the Book of Music, Yuejing 樂經, which was almost completely destroyed in the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) Burning of the Books, should be considered a sixth Classic. Thus, his preferred term to refer to the set is Six Classics.
skepticism toward the attribution of the *Ten Wings* to Confucius. But doubting Confucius’s authorship of the Wings is not a new innovation. During the Song dynasty (960–1249), literati had begun to contest the authenticity of certain Classics (Gernet, p. 104; Adler 2002). The esteemed Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), for one, argued that “Confucius could not have written the Ten Wings” (Adler, p. 72). Scholars in Wang Fuzhi’s time similarly took up methods of textual criticism to demonstrate that certain *Classics*, which were considered to be transmissions from high antiquity, were actually compositions of a later date (Gernet, p. 104). Despite the rising tides of skepticism regarding the origins of the *Classics* during his era, Wang Fuzhi follows a traditional line.

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8 Although scholars do not always agree on the time frames in which the appended Commentaries were written, they concur in the belief that the “individual Wings actually date from different periods” (Lynn 2005, p. 3; cf. Adler 2002, p. xxi). Some of the Commentaries probably predate Confucius; some are roughly contemporaneous with his life; while others, such as the *Appended Phrases*, appear to have been written (or rewritten) one to two centuries after his death (Lynn 1994, p. 3; Field 2008, p. 50; Gernet 2004, p. 104).

9 Gernet specifies the significant case of Yan Ruoju, which occurred during this era:


During Wang Fuzhi’s time, Yan Ruoju 閻若璩 (1636–1704) had infamously demonstrated by textual critique that key passages from the Classic Book of Documents (*Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經, thought to have been composed in the Xia) were false compositions of a later date…