WANG Fuzhi's Philosophy of Principle (*Li*) Inherent in *Qi*

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WANG Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692), literary name Chuanshan 船山, is the most prolific philosopher in Chinese history. *The Complete Posthumous Works of Chuanshan* (*Chuanshan yishu quanji* 船山遺書全集) includes twenty-one volumes of his writings, and this is not even his complete oeuvre as some of his writings were destroyed or lost during the turmoil of his life. The extensive commentaries he wrote on the Four Books and the Five Classics contain his highly sophisticated metaphysics, epistemology, and moral philosophy. He gave detailed analysis of historical trends and events, and developed an innovative philosophy of history. He presented his perspective on Chinese politics and his patriotism in a small book *On the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangshu* 黃書), which inspired many Chinese intellectuals after his times. He also expounded his views on two major Daoist thinkers, Laozi and Zhuangzi, in several complete commentaries on their works. His aesthetics are represented in his commentaries on ancient, Tang dynasty, and Song dynasty poems. In addition, he was an inspired author of voluminous fine poetry, which also exemplifies his aesthetic views.

This essay opens with an account of WANG Fuzhi's metaphysics and proceeds to give an account of his views on the human world. For Wang, the realm of heaven (*tian* 天) and the realm of humans are simply one unified whole. There is no transcendent realm beyond the human world, and it is the same vital energy (*qi* 氣) and the same principle (*li* 理) that permeate the realm of heaven and the realm of humans. Hence, his metaphysical views undergird his philosophy of human affairs, in particular, his philosophy of human nature, his moral philosophy, as well as his philosophy of human history. The title of my essay characterizes WANG Fuzhi's philosophy as the philosophy of "principle inherent in *qi*" (理在氣中) since this relation between *li* and *qi* is central to his thinking.

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Wang Fuzhi's Metaphysics—The Principle of *Qi* (氣之理)

Wang Fuzhi's metaphysics has conventionally been depicted as a form of monism by contemporary commentators. Furthermore, his monism has been characterized as materialism or naïve materialism (樸素唯物論) by most contemporary commentators in China. Another common and more apt label for Wang's metaphysics is realism (Xiao and Xu [2002]; Chen [2002]; Zhang [2004], among others). These labels highlight a core concept in his philosophy: *qi*.

Wang Fuzhi derived his metaphysical view primarily from the *Book of Change*, and he was also heavily influenced by Zhang Zai's philosophy, which, according to him, is nothing but the study of the *Book of Change* (Wang 1967: 4). Six hundred years prior to Wang Fuzhi, Zhang Zai had developed a new philosophy of *qi*. He constructed a systematic philosophy that built on the traditional concept of *qi*. For Zhang, *qi* is ordered and real and the essence of concrete forms. The coalescence and the dispersion of *qi* underlie the phenomena of life and death. *Qi* solidifies into concrete things; concrete things disintegrate back to the vacuous *qi*. *Qi* is real, not empty; *qi* is genuine (*cheng* 誠), not vacuous. Wang Fuzhi built upon Zhang Zai's philosophy of *qi* and added a moral dimension. For Wang, *qi* is not merely manifested in the physical realm, it is also manifested in the abstract and moral realms. There is good in *qi*, and the development of *qi* is necessarily ordered. Chen Lai 陳來, a distinguished contemporary scholar of Neo-Confucian philosophy, refers to it as Wang's "doctrine of the goodness of *qi* (氣善論)" (Chen 2004). He quotes the following passage by Wang: "[The *Book of Change* says,] '*Yi* has the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), whence generates the Two Modes (*lianyi* 兩儀).' The Two Modes are nothing but *qi*, only when it is good (*shan* 善) can it become the mode. Therefore the six *yang* in Qian 乾 and the six *yin* in Kun 坤 all contain the four virtues of greatness, endurance, benefit, and stability (*yuan heng li zhen* 元亨利貞)" (Chen 2004: 167). From this passage we can see that the goodness of *qi* lies not just in its having an internal logic (*li* 理), but also in its having the virtues associated with creation. This moralized *qi* is the foundation of Wang Fuzhi's moral metaphysics, in which he elevated *qi* to a new ontological status. His *qi* is self-sufficient, self-propelling, self-regulating, and above all, good.

Another major concept in Wang's metaphysics is that of *li* 理. He employs this concept in various contexts where it takes on different connotations: the *li* inherent in *qi* (氣之理), the *li* of heaven (天理), the *li* in human nature (性之理), and the *li* in human affairs (事中之理). The foundation of all these usages is the *li* inherent in *qi*. For Wang, *qi* is not a blind force, working under the regulation of some independent higher principle. Rather, *qi* is regulated with its own internal logic which he calls "*li* 理." Rather than removing principle (理) from his ontology, he combines it with *qi* itself. His philosophy of "principled *qi*" (有理之氣) lays the groundwork not only for his metaphysics, but also for his

theory of human nature, his moral philosophy, and his philosophy of history. This section begins with the introduction of his notion of *li-qi* (理-氣), but I will first clarify some issues of nomenclature.

Beginning with Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1961), contemporary Chinese scholars have often interpreted Wang Fuzhi's *qi* monism as a form of materialism. However, this interpretation greatly misrepresents Wang Fuzhi's metaphysics. As contemporary Chinese scholar Yan Shouzheng 嚴壽徵 has pointed out, Wang Fuzhi's monism should not be seen as materialism, because the nature of *qi* is not the same as the materialist's notion of "matter," which is traditionally seen to be inanimate, inert and has to be supplemented with energy in order to form living things. *Qi*, on the other hand, contains energy within and is thus self-propelling. *Qi* is the source of life, but it also underlies the realm of death. According to Yan, "The living and the dead are simply various forms of *qi* itself. Hence, the nature of *qi* is both material and spiritual. . .There is no duality of mind and body in Chinese thought" (Yan 2000: 9). Taiwanese scholar Zeng Zhaoxu 曾昭旭 has also criticized previous scholars for attributing materialism to Wang Fuzhi, accusing them of "not understanding that *qi* for Wang Fuzhi includes not just the material world, but also spirit and mind" (Zeng 1983: 212). Furthermore, materialism in contemporary usage is identified with physicalism, the view that everything in the universe is governed by physical laws and can ultimately be explicable in physical terms. Wang Fuzhi's theory certainly does not allow for such a reductionist implication. His monistic worldview includes a moral dimension that cannot be reduced to the physical realm, and in his understanding, *qi*, with its internal logic and law, is responsible for both the material and the spiritual realms. It is therefore best to abandon use of the term materialism as applicable to his philosophy.

The Sole Constituent of the Universe: Qi

Wang Fuzhi's philosophy is a form of monism, and to him, *qi* is the only constituent of the universe. In this respect Wang's view is very similar to that of Zhang Zai. However, for Zhang Zai *qi* itself is the fundamental state (*ti* 體) of the cosmos. When it consolidates, it forms material objects; when it disintegrates, it is simply a massive formless *qi*, which he calls Ultimate Void (*taixu* 太虛). Thus, for Zhang Zai *qi* remains an abstract entity divided into two mode of existence: its fundamental state/condition (*ti*) and its function (*yong* 用). Material objects are the manifestations of *qi*; they are where the function of *qi* is revealed. The Ultimate Void is the fundamental state of *qi*; it is invisible and formless. Wang Fuzhi, on the other hand, does not posit a separate state independent of its function (*yong*). He carries Zhang Zai's monism one step further to argue that the universe is *one* not just in its constitutive elements, but also in its ontological order:

> When we talk about state and function, we cannot separate the two. With such a state there must be such a function; with such a function there must be such a state. When we talk about state, the function is already contained; when we talk about function, the state must already reside within. (Wang 1974a: 7:473)

On his view, it is wrong to assume that there is another state of existence for *qi* that is separate from, and logically prior to, the existence of material objects. It is also wrong to treat principle as *the* state/condition and *qi* as *the* function. Wang Fuzhi thinks that *li* and *qi* can serve as each other's *ti* or *yong*. There is thus no substance that stands behind reality. Reality is nothing but *qi* and its function: concrete things (*qi* 器).

Qi 氣 consists of two forms: *yin* and *yang*. The totality of the universe is called the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極). Wang Fuzhi says:

> *Yin* and *yang* exhaust the totality of the Supreme Ultimate. Whatever lies between the two realms of heaven and earth, be it shape or form, spirit or energy, clear or turbid, is all made up of *yin* and *yang*. From natural phenomena such as snow and wind, water and fire, mountains and lakes, to tiny creatures such as lava or sprouts; from that which has a material form to that which has not yet been formed, and even to the beginning state of the formless harmonious whole which is called the Great Harmony (*taihe* 太和), it is all just the permeation of *yin* and *yang*. However, each thing is distinctly its own. The nature, quality, and efficacy of things cannot be unified as the same. (Wang 1980: 478)

In other words, *qi* alone is responsible for the commonality as well as the differences among particular things.

Wang Fuzhi adopted Zhang Zai's view that *qi* condenses into solid forms and concrete things, while concrete things again disintegrate back to formless *qi*. Forms and the formless are simply various stages of the manifestations of *qi*. *Qi* exists from the beginning of the universe and is in constant movement and transformation. Wang Fuzhi endorsed Zhang Zai's depiction of the initial cosmic state, a formless *qi*. Zhang Zai called it the Great Void (*taixu* 太虛), but this description could easily lead to a Buddhist reading of emptiness or a Daoist reading of nothingness. According to Wang, "What humans perceive as the Great Void is simply *qi* itself, not void. The Void contains *qi* and *qi* permeates the Void. There is no so-called 'nothingness'" (Wang 1967: 13). For his cosmology, he seems to have preferred Zhang Zai's other term, Great Harmony, which Zhang Zai himself used to depict *dao*. Wang Fuzhi often used Great Harmony in conjunction with another concept derived from the *Book of Change*: *yinyun* 絪縕, describing it as "the original state of the intermingling of the Great Harmony, which necessarily contains the logic as well as the tendency to oscillate mutually" (Wang 1967: 1). This remark shows that Wang Fuzhi took the original state of the universe to be a dynamic state that contains a perfectly harmonious internal order in the integration of *yin* and *yang*. In its original state, the universe is not yet divided into myriad things, and yet *qi* is perpetually moving and transforming harmoniously. The nature of *qi* is simply the movement and integration of both *yin* and *yang*, and there is an internal order within such a movement.

The Status and Nature of Li 理

Li is the inherent logic or the pattern of the distribution as well as the development of *qi*. WANG Fuzhi described this internal logic as what *qi* "necessarily is"; in other words, *qi* cannot fail to deviate from this logic. Wang described principle or internal logic as "one *yin* and one *yang* (一陰一陽)," which is also called *dao*. The development of *qi* consists in the perpetual movement of *yin* and *yang*. The two forms of *qi* constantly interact with each other; while one expands, the other withdraws. However, expansion can never reach the point of exhaustion and withdrawal cannot become extinction. Hence, there is a pattern of once *yin* and once *yang*, and there is also the principle of the impossibility of either lone *yin* (*du yin* 獨陰) or lone *yang* (*du yang* 獨陽). Everything contains both *yin* and *yang* in various distributions. This manifested regularity is what *qi* necessarily demonstrates, but according to WANG Fuzhi, it is because this is how *qi* actually is: "*Qi* originally possesses an internal logic (氣原是有理底)" (Wang 1974a: 10:666).

WANG Fuzhi rejected ZHU Xi's separation of *li* (principle) and *qi* into distinct ontological categories and rendering the former transcendent. Even though Zhu often emphasized the co-existence and inseparability of *li* and *qi*, he did put them into distinct ontological categories and considered them different entities. When ZHU Xi was pressed to trace the origin of *li* and *qi*, he put *li* prior to *qi*. WANG Fuzhi maintained that Zhu was mistaken. On ZHU Xi's understanding, principle effectively becomes a "metaphysical dangler." WANG Fuzhi points out that *li* is not independent of or separable from *qi*: "only when there is *qi* can there be *li*" (Wang 1977a: 31:13). Furthermore, "outside of *qi* there cannot be any dangling, isolated *li*" (Wang 1974a: 10:660). Wang regarded *qi* to be the fundamental element of the universe. Principle is simply the principle of *qi*; it is the order inherent in *qi* itself. Therefore, principle does not have any transcendent status; it is also not logically prior to *qi*: "Principle is simply the principle of *qi*. The way *qi* is necessarily so is principle itself. Principle is not prior and *qi* is not posterior" (ibid.).

*The Principle of Heaven (*天理*): The Connection between Heaven-As-Heaven (*天之天*) and Heaven-As-Human (*人之天*)*

WANG Fuzhi not only talked about the principle of *qi*, he also discussed the principle of heaven (*tian li* 天理). In the latter context, the notion of *li* takes on a moral dimension. It is what places men in the world of nature, what combines the moral or the good with what is natural. In this context, *li* could be rendered as moral principle, and the term *tianli* could be rendered as the universal moral principle.

What WANG Fuzhi meant by "heaven" is neither a personified, mysterious being, nor a transcendent ontological category. He distinguished "heaven-as-heaven"

(天之天) and "heaven-as-human" (人之天), and reasserted an objective, realistic status for heaven-as-it-is. Heaven is not what humans define or create, and it is not ontologically reducible to the human mind or consciousness. Heaven-as-heaven can be viewed as *the world as it is*, while heaven-as-human can be interpreted as *the world as humans know it*. The former is not completely exhaustible by human understanding, and human conceptions often present partial aspects of heaven-as-it-is. For example, the sun and the moon operate in their own order, but for men they represent light and darkness and they bring about day and light. Human conceptions add a different dimension, which is often accompanied by value assignments, to the way the world is. But there are restrictions. Wang Fuzhi says:

> The logic and the circumstances of heaven are not what human affairs can completely cover. With the vastness of heaven and earth, the changes of wind and thunder, the operation of the sun and the moon, or the fluidity of lakes and the durability of mountains, there must be what humans do not know and cannot participate in negotiating. (Wang 1980: 617)

Such limitations, however, are not permanently fixed. In time, with the progression of human history and the expansion of human knowledge, "what used to be heaven-as-heaven is now heaven-as-human; what will be heaven-as-human in the future is still just heaven-as-heaven for now" (Wang 1974b: 132). Human endeavors partake in the formation, creation, and understanding of the world; hence, what lies outside of the human world gets progressively transformed into part of the human world in time. In other words, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged the limitation of human knowledge and human accomplishments, but he did not think that it poses an insurmountable obstacle between heaven and men. His notion of heaven is simply the totality of the natural world, and in his view, human knowledge approximates the truth of this totality, and human accomplishments help to complete heaven's creation. In this sense, the progressive creation of *qi* is not only a function of naturalized *qi* but is also the function of human beings. It is nature and culture, heaven and human beings, which collaboratively construct this dynamic universe. Without human contribution, the world cannot be complete. As Wang says, "There is originally no bound to the transformation and the virtues of heaven and earth. They are manifested only through humans" (Wang 1974a: 5:312).

According to Wang, "Whatever is in heaven is principle. One cannot speculate on what heaven is like by stipulating on principle" (Wang 1967: 26). He posits a realist sense of heavenly principle, and deems it as independent of human conceptions: "Humans must follow the principle of heaven as *the* principle, while heaven does not employ the principle of humans as its principle" (Wang 1977b: 225). There is a way the world is, which is not prescribed by the human world. What he means by the principle of heaven is simply the way the world is.

What is the content of heavenly principle? According to Wang, heaven is nothing but "the accumulation of *qi* (*ji qi* 積氣)" (Wang 1974a: 10:719).

Therefore, the principle of heaven is simply the principle (the internal logic) of *qi*. We can say that here "heaven" refers to heaven-as-heaven. In other contexts, Wang also says that heaven is nothing but the combination of *yin*, *yang* and the Five Phases (*wu xing* 五行): "Separated, they are called *yin yang* and the Five Phases; combined, it is called heaven.... How could there be anything else outside of *yin yang* and the Five Phases that employs them?" (Wang 1974a: 2:69). Here he connects heaven with the Five Phases that constitute human nature. We can say that "heaven" here refers to heaven-as-human. It is in the context of heaven-as-human that Wang introduced a second sense of *li*, by assigning it the seven virtues associated with *yin*, *yang* and the Five Phases:

> What is referred to as *li* has two senses: one is the existing order and pattern of the myriad things in nature; the other is the ultimate principle of the virtues of perseverance (*jian* 健), accord (*shun* 順), humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), [1] propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智) and faithfulness (*xin* 信). It is what heaven endows in men and what humans receive as their nature. (Wang 1974a: 5:324)

This passage shows that Wang separated the *li* that is the natural order of things and the *li* that is the ultimate moral completion in the human world. We can say that the former represents *what is* while the latter represents what ought to be. According to CHEN Lai 陳來, the former is "the principle of things" (*wu li* 物理) and the latter is "the principle of human nature" (*xing li* 性理) (Chen 2004: 107). By using this notion of *li* as associated with the notion of heavenly principle, Wang sought to connect the world of nature and the human world, and place morality in the center of reality. When *li* represents not just what things are, but also what things ought to be, it is synonymous with another notion: *dao* 道.

Dao and Li

The connection between *dao* 道 and *li* 理 is a complicated issue. Each notion has a long philosophical tradition in Chinese history, and different philosophers accord these terms very different philosophical significances. This essay makes no attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of *dao* and *li*; rather, my aim is simply to examine the way WANG Fuzhi used the concepts and see how they relate to each other in his philosophy.

One way to distinguish the two concepts is to say that *dao* represents the dynamic progressive order of the movement of *qi* while *li* represents the finished order or the internal logic of *qi*. But this distinction may not apply in all cases. In his exposition of *dao* WANG Fuzhi embraced the thesis expressed in the *Book of Change*: "one *yin* one *yang* is what is referred to as *dao* (一陰一陽之謂道)." According to Francois Jullien's analysis, the "one-one" could mean either that *yin* and *yang* are inseparable, or that *yin* and *yang* succeed each other

[1] I translate *yi* as "righteousness" rather than "rightness" because what Mencius had in mind was a sense closer to "uprightness" than to "correctness."

with no interruption. On this reading, the phrase means that *yin* and *yang* are interdependent and/or mutually alternating (Jullien 1993: 247). If the concept of *dao* denotes both sets of relations, then it signifies not only the static internal logic (*li*) in *qi*, but also the essential order of the dynamic process of *yin* and *yang*. So in some contexts *dao* includes *li* and the two terms are interchangeable in these contexts.

Another distinction that can be drawn between *dao* and *li* is that the former has a sense of origination, universality, and comprehensiveness. According to WANG Fuzhi: "*Dao* is the common principle (*li*) of heaven and earth, humans and things. It is also the so-called 'Supreme Ultimate' (*taiji*)" (Wang 1967: 1). He uses this comment to interpret ZHANG Zai's remark, "The Great Harmony (*taiji* 太和) is the so-called *dao*," so apparently in this context, Supreme Ultimate, Great Harmony, and *dao* are co-referential—they all refer to the unity of *yin* and *yang*, the totality of things, or the origin of the universe. It does not seem that Wang uses the term *li* to depict the totality of things or the origin of the universe:

> The Supreme Ultimate is initially one and all, harmoniously unified and intermingled. Certainly it cannot be named *li*. Only after it has evolved ... and sameness and differentiation [among things] as well as the evident order or pattern in them are manifested, do we have the name of *li*. (Wang 1974a: 10:720)

Here is one clear usage where the connotation of *dao* would include *li*, but not vice versa.

A third plausible distinction between the two concepts is that *dao* has the normative connotation of "what should be the case," whereas *li* seems to denote "what is" or "what is necessarily so." We can also say that *dao* is prescriptive while *li* is descriptive. *Li* is how things naturally are and how *qi* naturally is. All things have their internal principles and all developments of *qi* have their internal logic. But *dao* is uniquely human. What WANG Fuzhi means by "what should be the case" is not an ontological necessity (as *li* is), but a moral necessity. *Dao* prescribes the norms of human conduct:

> Today I can sum it up in one sentence: Objects themselves simply do not have *dao*. When we discuss the *dao* of cattle's cultivating the land or the *dao* of riding horses, we are only speaking of the *dao* of how humans use things. So in a way things and objects do have *dao*—it is only the *dao* of humans' interaction with things or treatment of objects. Therefore, *dao* pertains only to human beings. (Wang 1974a: 2:70)

Only humans have the ability to make moral judgments and to aim for doing what is right. This is why he also says, "Objects all have their nature, but we cannot say that they have *dao*. *Dao* is what distinguishes men and objects, what separates human beings from beasts" (Wang 1967: 79).

In some contexts, the word *dao* means particularized *dao*—the *dao* in various things and objects. This is where WANG Fuzhi introduces his theory of the relationship between *dao* and concrete things (*qi* 器)—his famous doctrine of *dao-qi* unification (道器合一論).

The Realization of Dao in Concrete Things (Qi)—the Doctrine of Dao-Qi Unification

The emphasis on material objects and concrete existence is an important aspect of WANG Fuzhi's metaphysics. "Concrete existence" (*qi* 器) is a notion derived from the *Book of Change* which posits *dao* as metaphysical (what is beyond physical form [形而上]) and concrete existence as physical (what has a physical form [形而下]). Chinese philosophers generally put *dao* on a transcendent level, treating it as above and beyond concrete existence. *Dao* prescribes the way concrete things ought to be; it has an a priori content and an everlasting value. WANG Fuzhi's theory is revolutionary in his placing *dao* as an *a posteriori*, post-instantiation order of concrete things. *Dao* is realized in concrete things; without a particular kind of concrete things there cannot be the *dao* of that kind. He argues that *dao* does not pre-determine the world; rather, it is developed as the world evolves: "What exists in this world is nothing but concrete things. *Dao* is simply the *dao* of concrete things; concrete things may not be called the concrete things of *dao"* (Wang 1977b*:* 5:25). He further explains:

> There is no *dao* of the father before there is a son, there is no *dao* of the elder brother before there is a younger brother. There are many *dao*s that could exist but are not yet existent. Therefore it is indeed true that without a concrete thing, there cannot be its *dao*. (Wang 1967: 5:25)

WANG Fuzhi explains the differences between "beyond physical form" (形而上) and "having physical form" (形而下) as the difference between the invisible blueprint of how things ought to be and the actualized objects:

> What is called "beyond physical form" is what has not taken form, where there is implicitly an inviolable heavenly rule. . .. When shapes are formed and become visible, what those forms can be used for in order to fulfill their natural capacities . . . are still hidden in the forms and not visible. This is called "what is beyond physical form." What is called "having physical form" is what can be seen and followed after concrete things are formed. The *dao* that is beyond physical form is obscure. Only after forms are set can what each thing is supposed to be and what function it is supposed to have become determined. This is why what is beyond physical form cannot be separated from forms. (Wang 1980: 568)

In his examples of what "has physical form," Wang includes both concrete objects (such as carriages or containers) and actual relationships (such as those between fathers and sons, between the ruler and the ministers). We can see that in his worldview, as the world evolves and as human society progresses, more and more things will emerge and more and more *dao* will be realized. The *dao* of each thing does not exist before the thing is invented or a relationship developed; it is simply that there is a way each thing should be and that is its *dao*. *Dao* as particularized is not a mysterious order "beyond physical form"; it is simply what is already contained in each object and each human affair.

In summary, WANG Fuzhi constructed a sophisticated metaphysical system which unifies the two ontological categories, *li* and *qi*, separated by the ZHU Xi

School. Since *qi* is traditionally viewed as a blind physical force that requires the regulation of *li*, it could lead to misrepresentation to say that Wang Fuzhi's ontology is merely *qi* monism, in that his theory does not leave out the element of *li*. Wang Fuzhi's monism is rather a form of *li-qi* monism—*li* is internal to *qi* as *qi* is necessarily self-regulating. Zhu Xi takes *li* to be the ontological, or at least the logical, foundation of *qi*—*li* is what makes *qi* possible. Wang Fuzhi, on the other hand, takes *qi* to be the ontological foundation of *li*—*qi* is what manifests and completes *li*. His *li-qi* monism, or the philosophy of *li* inherent in *qi*, serves as the foundation for his philosophy of human nature and human mind.

Wang Fuzhi's Philosophy of Human Nature: The Principle of Nature

Wang's philosophy of human nature is basically a Mencian view: human nature is good. Mencius identified the four moral sprouts (*si duan* 四端) as what is contained within human nature. The connotation of *duan* 端 is that it is the beginning state and requires development. 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. He says, "What is derived from heaven and in accordance with *dao*, what is contained within the forms and *qi*, which *makes it possible to know all and to do all*—this is what we call *xing* 性" (Wang 1967: 16, emphasis mine). This shows that he regarded human nature (*xing* 性) to be a state of our existence that is full of potential. It is not simply what is given and determined at birth.

Neo-Confucians, especially the Cheng-Zhu School, treat human nature as that which heaven confers on human beings. Humans and other creatures derive their nature from the heavenly principle (*tianli*). It is the same heavenly principle that makes possible the nature of different creatures. Therefore, humans and other creatures share the same nature. What makes humans different from other creatures lies in the varied endowment of *qi*. The purity or impurity of *qi* in each being is responsible for the good or the bad in different lives. Wang Fuzhi, however, rejected the theory that the nature for humans and other creatures is the same. He argues that the nature is determined by the stuff from which a life is formed. Humans and animals are made of different *qi*, and thus, they must have different natures. The nature of vegetation includes growth and decay; the nature of animals includes perception and motion. Human nature, on the other hand, includes moral essence, which is simply the realization of *dao* within our existence. It is this essence that separates human beings from other animals. Wang Fuzhi says, "The *dao* of heaven does not leave animals out, while the *dao* of humans only pertains to human beings" (Wang 1974c: Inner Chapter, 5). The focus of his theory of human nature is on the realization of *dao* as the essence of human beings:

> Humans have their *qi*, and that is how they have their nature. Dogs and cattle also have their *qi* and their nature. The coalesced *qi* of humans is good (*shan* 善), therefore their nature is good. The *qi* that constitutes dogs and cattle does not have this good quality, and thus their nature cannot be said to be good. (Wang 1974a: 10: 662)

Here he singles out the combination of *qi* that is good as the constituent of human beings. It is not clear how *qi* can be either good or not good. Wang's explanation is that there is the alternation (*bian* 變) and conjoining (*he* 合) of *yin* and *yang*: "When there are both alternation and conjoining, not all can be good" (ibid.: 660). He takes the natural qualities (intelligence, talents, appearance, etc.) of human beings to be rooted in the constitution of *qi*, in the alternation and conjoining of *yin* and *yang*. It seems that he included humans' moral qualities in their natural qualities as well.

What is the content of human nature if human nature is derived from *qi*? To WANG Fuzhi, human nature is simply the principle (*li*) endowed in the constitution of *qi*. Humans are nothing but the congregation of *qi*; principle is the order of *qi*, which is necessarily contained in the congregation of *qi*. Hence, human beings are necessarily endowed with principle. This is human nature: "Human nature is simply *li*. *Li* is the order of *qi* and it is the *li* of *qi*. How could there be any external *li* to roam about within *qi*?" (ibid.: 684). The connotation of *li* here takes on a moral dimension. WANG Fuzhi defines human nature as the virtues of *yin* and *yang*: perseverance (*jian* 健), accord (*shun* 順), as well as the Five Virtues of humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and faithfulness (*xin* 信). It is thus probably more appropriate to translate WANG Fuzhi's notion of *xing* 性 as "moral essence" or as "essence," rather than simply as "nature."

Since human nature is constituted by *qi* and *qi* is constantly in mutation, human nature cannot be a fixed state. Wang thus devised his most ingenious doctrine of the "daily renewal and daily completion of human essence (性日生日成說)."

The Daily Renewal and Daily Completion of Human Essence

WANG Fuzhi held that the nature is not simply what one is endowed with at birth; it is also what is developed throughout one's life: "What heaven endows in men is uninterrupted *qi*. If *qi* is uninterrupted, then *li* must also be uninterrupted. Therefore, as long as life continues, one's nature gets daily renewal" (Wang 1974a*:* 10:685). Daily renewal is also a progression towards perfection: "Human essence (*xing* 性) is principle of life (*sheng li* 生理); as one grows daily it gets daily completion. How could it be that what heaven commands (*ming* 命) in men is only what is given at birth?" (Wang 1975: 3:55). XIAO Jiefu 蕭萐父 and XU Sumin 許蘇民 explain that what WANG Fuzhi meant by "heaven's command (*tian ming*)" is simply the natural process of the transformation of *qi* (Xiao and Xu: 295). As we continue to interact with the natural environment and to receive the

permeation of *qi*, our natural qualities and our moral essence become developed and perfected on a daily basis. We may have a certain natural intelligence which does not restrict our intellect since the more we learn, the smarter we become. We may be born with certain natural talents, but our natural talents will not materialize into real capacities if we do not cultivate them. Only when we die do we stop progressing and improving.

"Heaven daily commands humans; humans daily receive commands from heaven. That is why we say human nature is life itself, it is daily generated and daily completed" (Wang 1975: 3:55). What heaven endows in humans at birth is called *ming* 命 because at the beginning of one's birth, one has no control over what is given. Everything comes from heaven and all is pure and pristine. After birth, one gains control over one's life and can take or utilize what is given. Wang maintains that what one takes and utilizes is due to one's repeated practice or habits (*xi* 習) in life, and with one's repeated practice (*xi* 習), the pure nature becomes adulterated. However, he also calls the affected and impure nature heaven's command: "What one takes and what one utilizes is none other but *yin*, *yang* and the Five Phases. It is all from heaven's command. So how could we not also call it [heaven's] command (*ming* 命)?" (ibid.: 56). What we do in life becomes part of our essence, and our thoughts and deeds bring about our maturation. Hence, not only is heaven daily renewing our endowment, we are also in charge of daily renewing and daily completing our own essence. This is what Wang means by the daily renewal and daily completion of human essence (*xing*).

According to a contemporary scholar Zhou Bing 周冰, Wang Fuzhi's doctrine of the "daily renewal and daily completion of human essence" can be further analyzed into two theses: "the daily renewed nature" refers to the a priori nature (先天之性); "the daily completed nature" refers to the *a posteriori* nature (後天之性) (Zhou 2006: 171). Wang Fuzhi distinguished the a priori nature and the *a posteriori* nature, and included both in human essence (*xing* 性): "The a priori nature is what heaven accomplishes; the *a posteriori* nature is what repeated practice (*xi*) accomplishes" (Wang 1974a: 8:570). We can say that what he meant by the a priori nature is the fundamental order (*li*) of *qi*, which he has defined as human's moral essence such as humaneness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. What he meant by the *a posteriori* nature, on the other hand, is what individuals end up having as their essence. The moral essence is innate in us; the individual essence is what we accomplish through our lifelong repeated practice (*xi*) of various thoughts and deeds. With the former, essence precedes existence; with the latter, *existence completes essence*. This view liberates human beings from the sense of predetermination to seek fulfillment of their potential and to define their own essence.

The inclusion of both the a priori nature and the *a posteriori* nature into human "essence" shows that for Wang there is no sharp division between nature and nurture. At any moment of our lives, we can change our nature for the better or for the worse. Since human nature is developed and perfected on a daily basis, he does not think that evil is external to human nature. Individuals

are thus responsible for their being good or bad; their a priori nature does not determine the way they are. This view clearly opposes the purely a priori status of human nature that was at the center of the debates between Mencius, Gaozi, and Xunzi on whether human nature is good, bad, or neither. It seems moreover to explicate Confucius' remark: "Humans are close to one another by nature. They diverge from one another through habituation 性相近也, 習相遠也" (*Analects* 17.2).

Xing and Xin: "The Heart/Mind of Dao" and "The Heart/Mind of Humans"

WANG Fuzhi's theory of human nature and his theory of human heart/mind are closely connected:

> Human nature is contained within human heart/mind and becomes activated when the heart/mind interacts with things. . .. Speaking from one direction, we say that only heaven contains *dao* and *dao* is realized in human nature. Thus, human nature is what enables us to know *dao*. Speaking from the opposite direction, however, we say that maximizing the heart/mind's functions is the way to bring human nature to completion, to unified human nature with *dao*, and to go with *dao* to serve heaven. (Wang 1967: 16)

Sometimes WANG Fuzhi calls the nature "the heart/mind of *dao* (*daoxin* 道心)," and emotions (*qing* 情) "the heart/mind of humans (*renxin* 人心)" (Wang 1974: 10:674). In other words, he takes the nature and the heart/mind to be simply two aspects of the human heart/mind. "The heart/mind of *dao"* is the *dao* realized in human nature, and this is the same thing as the principle (*li*) of the nature (*xing li* 性理). Wang identified Mencius' four moral sprouts as the heart of *dao*:

> What is the nature/essence is what cannot be spoiled, whereas emotions need to be restrained. This is how we know that the heart/mind of commiseration, the heart/mind of shame and loathing, the heart/mind of respect and deference, and the heart/mind of knowing right from wrong, are all within our nature and not just our emotions. As for emotions, they include the feelings of joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, love, loathing, and yearning. (Wang 1974a*:* 10:673)

We can say that herein lies the distinction between moral sentiments and natural emotions.

In summary, according to WANG Fuzhi, our moral sentiments constitute our essence (*xing*). These four moral sentiments can develop into four virtues: humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). They are also the foundation for morality. Hence, what makes morality possible comes from within, from our very existence. Morality is internal to us, and it is a natural development of human essence. This view of human nature leads to Wang's moral psychology: the development of moral sentiments.

Wang Fuzhi's Moral Psychology

Wang Fuzhi's moral psychology is also built upon Mencius' theory of human mind which delineates several important notions of humans' innate moral as well as non-moral capacities. Wang Fuzhi further defines and develops each of these notions, and constructs a more complete theory to explain the possibility and the root of human morality.

Functions of the Heart/Mind

Wang Fuzhi's theory of human mind includes six key functions of the heart/mind.

Natural Emotions (*qing* 情)

Wang identifies seven categories of emotions (as conventionally categorized in Chinese thought): joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, love, loathing, and yearning. He maintains that our emotions arise from contacts with external objects, hence they are "neither strictly outside of us nor within us" (Wang 1974a*:* 10:675). The human heart/mind does not contain any emotions until it has contact with external objects. Emotion must be triggered by the outside world: "It exists when it is discernible; it does not exist when it is not discernible. This is called 'emotion.' Emotion is at the intersection between the heart/mind and objects. It comes from the heart/mind, but it is not the moral essence (*xing*) in the heart/mind" (Wang 1974a: 8:573). Even though natural emotions are not the same as our moral essence, Wang takes them to be essential to our moral cultivation. They are the foundation for morality, as well as the source of immorality. Wang's moral philosophy builds heavily on the role these natural emotions play in our moral lives.

Natural Desires (*yu* 欲)

Wang defines desire as the heart/mind's interaction with that which is desirable: "Things like sounds and colors, goods and wealth, power and authority, achievement and success, anything that is desirable such that I would desire it, is called 'desire' " (Wang 1974a: 6:369). From this quotation, it seems that desiring and what is being desired are incorporated into the same act. As long as we are alive, we cannot avoid interacting with objects; once we interact with objects, we cannot avoid the generation of our desires. Therefore, "expecting to rid oneself completely of human desires is an impossible demand" (Wang 1974a: 6:371).

There are, however, certain desires which are not "natural." These non-natural desires seem to be derived from prior experiences or repeated practice

(*xi* 習). Wang gives the example of puffer fish: If one has never tasted puffer fish before, how would one possess a strong desire to eat it? (Wang 1974a: 8:570). Our experiences and our repeated practice account for how different people could have different desires that go beyond our common natural desires.

There are also certain desires that are not just "non-natural," but are morally unacceptable: "Loving someone, one desires that person's longevity; hating someone, one desires that person's imminent death. These can still be called human desires. However, if one embarks on massive warfare and desires to kill others even though one bears no personal hatred against them, then these desires are simply desires of beasts" (Wang 1974a: 8:507). In other words, desires that are not prompted by natural emotions, but are motivated by other questionable motives, can easily lead to immoral deeds.

Natural Talents (*cai* 才)

WANG Fuzhi interprets the Mencian notion of *cai* as natural talents pertaining to our sensory organs and our intelligence. Humans are not alike in their natural talents: some are smart while some are stupid. These natural capacities, however, have nothing to do with our moral potentials or our moral actuality. Elaborating on Mencius' remark that "immorality is not to be blamed on natural talents," Wang argues that if natural talents cannot be blamed for our immorality, then they certainly cannot be credited with our morality either (Wang 1974a: 10:661). In other words, humans are indeed unequal in natural talents, but this inequality does not bring out inequality in our moral essence. There are smarter or more stupid people by birth, but there are no moral or immoral people by birth.

Natural Moral Sentiments (The Heart/Mind of *Dao*)

Following Mencius, Wang maintains that human beings naturally have the moral sentiments of compassion, shame, humility, and righteousness. He sometimes uses Mencius' descriptions in calling these moral sentiments "the heart of not bearing to see others suffer (不忍人之心)," "the heart/mind of shame and loathing (羞惡之心)," "the heart/mind of respect and deference (辭讓之心)," and "the heart/mind of knowing right from wrong (是非之心)." We can even call these moral sentiments our "moral instincts." They are what we spontaneously feel in various given contexts. WANG Fuzhi emphasizes the distinction between moral sentiments and natural emotions, even though one could conceivably argue that sentiment is simply a form of emotion:

> When one sees a little child about to fall into a well and feels something inside, is it simply sorrow? Is it simply love? When one loathes theft, is one simply feeling angry? It is especially obvious that the heart/mind of respect and the heart/mind of righteousness are not to be confused with the seven modes of emotions. Scholars must not conflate the sentiment of compassion (*ren*) with the emotion of love (*ai*). (Wang 1974a: 10:674)

We can see that he does not identify the two. Later we shall explain how he connects natural emotions and moral sentiments in the pursuit of moral cultivation.

Will (*zhi* 志)

WANG Fuzhi defines the will as "that which is motivated by the heart/mind towards a certain direction" (Wang 1974a: 8:531). The will directs our thought as well as our actions. According to Wang, our will is accompanied by the internal force (*qi*) within our body. The heart/mind makes a decision, and incites the internal force (*qi*) to pursue the direction the heart/mind is set upon. This direction must be set in accordance with *dao*. With this prior directive, our internal force can be employed in the right way. Without having any prior directive, we would be acting out of impulse and so easily become distracted by our temporary desires or inclinations. WANG Fuzhi says, "*Dao* is what sets our will straight. If we will *dao* and appeal to *dao* as the standard of our will, then our will can have the right foundation" (Wang 1974a: 8:537). He also claims that the will is unique to human beings (Wang 1974c: Outer Chapter, 55).

Without the aid of *qi*, however, our will would accomplish nothing (Wang 1974a: 8:531). The cultivation of our internal *qi* relies on "the accumulation of right thought and right action." WANG Fuzhi explains that Mencius' "flood-like *qi* (浩然之氣)" is the outcome of our accumulating the righteousness to cultivate this *qi* (Wang 1974a: 8: 540). As explained before, "righteousness," or the sentiment of loathing and shame, is one of our natural moral sentiments. If we refrain from taking any indefensible act then we can enhance our internal strength to support the will that was initially set in accord with *dao*.

In other words, the heart/mind's function of the will is a determination to go one way or another. The will itself can go either towards the good or towards the bad. If our will is set in the direction of *dao*, and we can accumulate right actions to amass a flood-like *qi*, then we will find it easy to follow the moral path. Weakness of the will results from the lack of practice (*xi*). If we are not accustomed to being good and doing good deeds, then we will find the internal force (*qi*) weakened day by day. The will is a resolve, which must be maintained by our daily righteous conduct.

Reflection (*si* 思)

One capacity essential to the fulfillment of moral agency is reflection. Wang separates the heart/mind's cognitive functions into sense perceptions and reflection. His notion of reflection is not just the cognitive aspect of our mental activities; it is more akin to a form of moral self-examination: "Reflection is the reflection on right and wrong, and on benefit and harm" (Wang 1974a: 4:266). For Wang, reflection is simply moral reflection. He thinks that our sensory perceptions do not depend on reflection, but our moral cultivation does. If we

think about moral principles, then we are employing the faculty of reflection; if, on the other hand, we think only about food and sex, then that form of thinking is not deemed to be reflection: "Humaneness and righteousness are part of human nature; they are what heaven accomplishes. Reflection is the function of the heart/mind, it is what humans accomplish" (Wang 1974a: 10:700). Without this capacity, we would simply be like other animals with merely the capacities of sensory perception and bodily motion. Thus, he says, "What separates humans from beasts, is only this" (ibid.: 705).

*The Affirmation of Human Desires: The Principle (li) within Human Desires (*理在欲中*)*

Wang departs from many other thinkers in his affirmation of the value of human desires. The Cheng-Zhu School emphasized that it is only with the extinction of human desires that we are able to see the prevalence of heavenly principle (人欲淨盡, 天理流行). He argues against what he perceives to be the Cheng-Zhu School's antithetical representation of the relationship between heavenly principle and human desires. Basic human desires are nothing but the desire for food and sex. He thinks that even the sages could not purge themselves of these desires. Desires are not evil; they do not stand in the way of our moral cultivation. On the contrary, to cultivate one's moral self, one has to appreciate the heavenly principle inherent in human desires. "Where we see human desires, is where we see heavenly principle" (Wang 1974a: 8:520). Wang also rejects Buddhism's denouncing human desire for material objects and for clinging to the material world: "All desirable objects are the products of heaven and earth. To blame natural products of heaven and earth and not blaming people, is like blaming the owner for having too many treasures while acquitting the thieves" (Wang 1974a: 10:675).

Wang takes heavenly principle to be nothing but the moderation and fairness of desires; it does not have a separate ontological status. In other words, for Wang heavenly principle is merely a standard for regulating emotions and desires. Its content is human emotions and human desires. He compares principle without desires to a pond without water—it is simply empty. The relationship between the two can be best summarized as such: "Without principle, desires become excessive; without desires, principle gets abolished (無理則欲濫, 無欲則理亦廢)" (Wang 1980: 212). If individual desires are not moderated by the individual's rationality, then they can become excessive; if the universal moral principle is not a principle that deals with human desires, then it has no content or application and gets abolished in the end. The word "principle" in this context can be taken in two senses: universal moral principle (the heavenly principle); and the internalized moral principle or the individual's rationality, what we have previously called "the principle of nature" (性之理). As contemporary scholar ZHANG Liwen 張立文 explains, "*li* is both the universal moral

principle, and the particularized form of concrete moral norms or moral principles" (Zhang 2001: 384).

Wang Fuzhi places the heavenly principle within the human world and connects moral principle with desires. He says, "There cannot be heaven apart from human; there cannot be moral principle apart from desires" (Wang 1974a: 8:519). Wang affirms what is essential to human existence: the need to survive. To survive, one must deal with one's physical needs. A moral agent is first and foremost a biological being; hence, there is nothing shameful or immoral about wanting to gratify one's physical needs and material desires. To reject human desires is to isolate human beings from the natural world and to cut them off from their biological nature.

Even though desires themselves are not immoral, Wang does not condone indulgence in material desires. If one's desires are not moderated, then they go against moral principle or we say they lack reasonableness (*bu heli* 不合理). His notion of moderation is paired with the notion of fairness (*gong* 公): "Fairness lies in everyone's getting a share of his own (人人之獨得即公也)" (Wang 1967: 141). In other words, if everyone's desires can be gratified, then there is nothing wrong with desires *per se*. However, one needs to be prepared to modify one's selfish desires so that the gratification of everyone's desires is fair (*gong* 公). The word *gong* also means "public." We should, however, distinguish public desire from fairness in desires, because for one person (the moral leader, perhaps) to proclaim certain desires as those that others must share would be to impose one's desires on others.

Wang Fuzhi contrasts the public with the private or the personal (*si* 私). Just as *gong* can be used in two senses, *si* can also mean either "the personal" or "the selfish." Here we need to draw an important distinction between "personal desires" and "selfish desires." Personal desires are what everyone would want to gratify for him or herself, and there is nothing wrong about having personal desires as long as they do not become selfish desires, which is to place one's own needs and desires over and above those of others. In other words, Wang does not condemn self-interest as long as it is not a form of egoism, an exaggerated sense of self-interestedness to the exclusion of consideration for others. The removal of selfishness is the first step towards moral fulfillment. Wang's proposal for moral cultivation is to transform one's personal desires to seek the gratification of others' personal desires, rather than to demand the elimination of personal desires.

The impediment to moral cultivation is selfishness (*si*): "What one simply must not have are selfish desires" (Wang 1974a: 8:508). He also says, "One's selfish ideas and selfish desires are what obstruct the manifestation of heavenly principle" (Wang 1974a: 10:691). If everyone can have his or her natural desires gratified, then the world would be in a state of manifesting heavenly principle. Thus, he says, "What is universal in heavenly principle, is simply that everyone gets his or her desires gratified (人欲之各得即天理之大同)" (Wang 1974a: 4: 248).

If a moral agent does not have personal desires, then she is not able to relate to others and feel empathy for others' deprivation. The foundation for altruism lies in understanding that one is a biological and social being, sharing the same basic physical needs and material desires as others. This is why Wang says, "Sages have desires too; their desire is the principle of heaven" (Wang 1974a: 4:248). He takes this view from Mencius, who advised the king that if he loved material possessions and sexual gratification, he should just share his desires with the people. WANG Fuzhi explains, "In these sights, sounds, fragrance and tastes, one sees the shared desires of everything, and this is exactly the common principle of everything" (Wang 1974a: 8:520). What sages have achieved is the perfect harmony of reason and desire, such that they can "follow their hearts' desires and never deviate from the right path (從心所欲不逾矩)." For the rest of the people on the path to moral cultivation, what is required is the guidance of reason to eliminate selfishness and to extend the gratification of one's personal desires to the gratification of others' desires. As expressed by Wang: "Once one fully realizes moral principle, one is in accord with human desires; once one extends (*tui* 推) one's desires, one is in concord with the principle of heaven" (ibid.). This "extension of desires" is the key to transforming one's natural emotions to the realization of one's moral sentiments.

From Natural Emotions to the Cultivation of Moral Sentiments

To WANG Fuzhi, natural emotions are "amoral": they can be credited for moral progress or blamed for immoral advancement, but they themselves do not have moral values (Wang 1974a: 10:678). Non-human animals also have emotions, but they do not have any moral sentiment. Therefore, morality must be rooted in moral sentiments, and moral sentiments should serve as the guideline for emotions. At the same time, moral sentiments need emotions to be manifested: "The heart/mind of *dao* [namely, our moral sentiments] is subtle, it must rely on emotions to improve its power and influence so as to prevail" (Wang 1974a: 10:677). Therefore, what make morality possible are both our inborn moral sentiments and our natural emotions. For example, when we see people starving to death, we spontaneously feel sorrow for them. This is one of our inborn moral sentiments. And yet most people simply feel sympathetic but take no action. If those starving people were their own family members, on the other hand, then most people would immediately try to alleviate their hunger. This is our natural emotion of love. Natural emotions directly lead to actions. What is needed for altruistic behavior is thus the extension of natural emotions for the loved ones to the enhancement of moral sentiments toward strangers.

For Wang, our sensory perceptions correspond to our emotions, not to our moral sentiments. If, however, we can govern our perceptions with reflection (*si* 思), then even our perception of external objects can cohere with our moral sentiments: "Sensory perceptions usually react to desires; only when they are

governed by reflection can they cohere with moral principle" (Wang 1974a: 10:716). In other words, if we are constantly reflecting on our emotions and desires, then we can guide them towards a moral path. If we do not reflect on whether our emotions are temperate and whether our desires are proper, then we end up indulging in violent emotions and excessive desires. This is when natural emotions and moral sentiments are sharply divided. Therefore, Wang thinks that even though we should not curtail our natural moral sentiments, we must try to restrain our natural emotions (Wang 1974a: 10:673).

According to Wang, our natural emotions are not just the foundation for morality; they are also the roots of evil (Wang 1974a: 10:677). Our emotions are naturally aroused by external objects, and fundamentally, natural emotions are compatible with moral sentiments. However, if we pursue external objects without checking our emotions, then we can easily be led astray. The moral sentiments are in our heart/mind; the external objects are outside of our heart/mind. If we go with the objects and do not reflect on the moral sentiments, then we end up smothering our moral sentiments. This is how Wang interprets Mencius remark about "letting go of one's heart/mind." Moral sentiments must always accompany natural emotions.

Basically, Wang believed that there is innate goodness in human nature. Human nature is not separable from the *qi* that makes up human existence, and "there is nothing that is not good in *qi"* (Wang 1974a: 10:663). Evil, on the other hand, is simply the lack of moderation of desires and the absence of consideration for others. In other words, evil does not reside in emotions themselves; nor does it reside in the objects of our desires. What makes emotions and desires "immoral" is the absence of reflection (*si*), which leads to the lack of propriety. When an object arouses our desire and we pursue it, there may be nothing immoral about gratifying our desire. When a thing or an affair stimulates our emotions, there may be nothing immoral about releasing our emotions. However, when the gratification of desires and the release of emotions become "improper" (*bu dang* 不當) because they are excessive or because they take place at the wrong time and in the wrong circumstance, then these emotions and desires become the cause of our immorality (Wang 1974a: 8:570). When they are proper, then they are in agreement with our natural moral sentiments. Natural emotions and natural moral sentiments come together as the basis of our morality, and such a union must be accomplished by the heart/mind's reflection.

Human essence includes natural moral sentiments, but these sentiments alone are not sufficient to foster moral agents. In addition to the mental function of reflection, the heart/mind must also exercise the will (*zhi* 志) to expand and fill in (*kuo chong* 擴充) the initial moral sentiments and extend (*tui* 推) our feelings for others. For Wang, this extension is not a mental attitude of empathy or compassion. Extension is a skill which must be manifested in one's conduct and in one's principles. Without actually acting to care for others and to ease others' suffering, the moral sentiments one has towards others are of little worth. Extension needs external manifestation; what gets extended,

however, are internal to one's heart/mind: the moral sentiments or the heart/mind of *dao*:

> The heart/mind already contains the skill. [The heart/mind itself] is complete and effectual. Expanding it, one accomplishes grandeur; fulfilling it, one achieves splendor. This one heart/mind is what Mencius alludes to when he says "everything in the world is contained within me." The *dao* of the king comes from within; it is not from outside the heart/mind. (Wang 1974a: 8:516)

The skill of extension cannot even be motivated if one does not reflect. This "extension" is wholly dependent on the mind's reflection (Wang 1974a: 10:703). Wang interprets the "it" in Confucius' comment "if one reflects, one gets it; if one does not reflect, one does not get it" as "what separates humans from beasts"; in other words, it is our moral essence. (Wang 1974a: 10:742). He maintains that we should desire others' wellbeing, not simply because we are compassionate towards others, but because we should see that there are, ontologically speaking, no "others." He says, "Humans are all constituted by the same *qi*; our happiness and sorrow are all interrelated" (Wang 1974a: 8: 549). When we fail to extend, we are committing not just a moral failure, but also epistemic failure (*bu zhi* 不知) (Wang 1974a: 8:556). Once we see that all things are interconnected in their existence, it should be natural for us to want to extend. To accomplish this kind of knowledge or awareness, we must use our faculty of reflection. Wang asserts that the essence of the virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) lies in the absence of selfishness (Wang 1974a: 10:745). Selfishness comes from the lack of reflection on the unity of all human beings. He explains the connection between reflection and morality as follows: "What makes people do evil deeds is all due to a lack of reflection" (Wang 1974a: 4:268). We see that in WANG Fuzhi's moral philosophy there is a close tie between knowledge and action, between thinking and behavior.

In Wang's moral psychology, human emotions are the foundation for morality as well as for immorality. Morality is not simply the natural extension of human emotions. To qualify as a moral agent, one needs to employ reflection. The role of reflection is not to restrain emotions but to guide them in the right direction. Wang does not advocate eliminating emotions and desires: "If humans did not have emotions, they would not become evil; however, they would not be able to be good either" (Wang 1974a: 10:678). Having emotions and desires itself is not a problem. What makes emotions and desires lead to immorality is the absence of reflection on our innate moral essence (our moral sentiments), and the failure to allow our emotions and desires to be guided by *dao*.

As we have explained, WANG Fuzhi believed that there is innate goodness in the essence of humans. Evil is the lack of moderation of selfish desires and the absence of consideration for others. We need to reflect on the objective truth of *dao* and to see that *dao* is already manifested in our own existence: our moral sentiments. Even with our natural moral sentiments as part of our essence, we also need to employ reflection to see that all humans are interconnected as a

whole and to eliminate our selfishness. Morality is not simply being "ruled by passions"; neither is it the rejection of passions. In this way, Wang acknowledges the role of human emotions in the cultivation of morality, and yet his moral psychology does not turn towards the direction of any form of non-cognitivism.

From the above introduction, we can see that WANG Fuzhi takes the basis of morality to be our moral essence: moral sentiments that are intrinsic to our existence. He thinks humans' natural emotions and natural desires do not obstruct the development of moral agents, but they are insufficient to serve as the foundation of moral sense. Emotions are needed for the expansion of moral sentiments, but they are not moral sentiments. Furthermore, morality is not simply based on emotions and sentiments. One needs to employ the faculty of reflection and thinking to guide one's emotions and desires. To be fully moral, one needs to strengthen moral sentiments and to further realize them in one's actions.

WANG Fuzhi's contribution to Neo-Confucian moral psychology is exactly his recognition of our biological existence and his linking our moral essence to our biological existence. Moral cultivation does not require one to deny one's biological needs and material desires; on the contrary, it is based on the fact that all human beings have these needs and desires. As ZHANG Liwen explains, WANG Fuzhi "treats our universal biological needs for sex and food as the content of desires. Since these desires are what humans share in common and not any individual's exotic whims, they must have their natural reasonableness [agreement with *li*]. Hence, desires do not stand against *li"* (Zhang 2001: 386).

WANG Fuzhi's theory of human nature and his moral psychology reaffirm the value of human's natural sentiments and human desires. One does not have to go with the Buddhist credo of renouncing one's natural feelings and yearnings in order to become enlightened; one also does not need to heed the Cheng-Zhu School's teaching of eradicating material desires in order to manifest the principle of heaven. A contemporary Chinese scholar CHEN Yun 陳贇 puts it well:

> In the philosophical consciousness of the Neo-Confucian era, existence is reduced to the existence of reason, and the elimination of desires constitutes the means to one's returning to one's true being. However, WANG Chuanshan tries hard to show that only when sensibility is completely liberated can reason be truly manifested.... In a humanistic sense, true being lies in the unification of both sensible and rational existence; sensibility and reason alike constitute the ontological prescript for human-as-human. (Chen 2002: 350)

Conclusion

It is no exaggeration to claim that among Neo-Confucians, WANG Fuzhi has the most sophisticated system of philosophy. His contribution to Confucianism is that he went back to classical Confucianism to revive its true spirit. His

philosophy incorporated the quintessence of the *Book of Change* and the other Five Classics as well as the doctrines of the *Analects* and *Mencius*. His personal credo was "The Six Classics make it incumbent upon me to break a new path and present a new facet (六經責我開生面)" and he devoted most of his mature life to the reconstruction of these classics. In his reconstruction, he brought the discourse of Confucianism to a new level. In Chen Yun's words: "Wang Chuanshan extended human cultivation of the self to human acts of reforming the world; and reintroduced the topics of the nature and culture into Confucian ontology. Confucianism was truly released from the study of the internal nature and heart/mind. Only at this juncture did the holistic lifeworld (*lebenswelt*), as well as a cultural creation in the broad sense, obtain an ontological legitimacy" (Chen 2002: 225).

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